



Borough of Penns Grove  
**Master Plan**

April 22, 2024

**DRAFT**

Adopted by Penns Grove Borough Planning Board under Resolution \_\_\_\_\_.



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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

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## I. Executive Summary

The Penns Grove Master Plan is a comprehensive document that outlines the long-term vision and goals for the development and growth of Penns Grove Borough. The development of this Master Plan involved valuable input from various stakeholders, including the Master Plan Steering Committee, community residents and Municipal staff. The master plan addresses land use, environmental concerns, and economic development strategies. It serves as a guide for decision-making and provides a framework for land use regulations and policies, and development strategies to ensure the sustainable and cohesive growth of the community. This Master Plan outlines two critical plan elements – the ***Land Use Plan Element*** and ***Economic Development Plan Element***.

Adopting both a land use plan element and an economic development plan element is crucial for fostering sustainable growth and prosperity within the Borough and it is important that these elements work cohesively to ensure development goals and strategies are aligned. By aligning these elements, the community can ensure that land use decisions support economic objectives and vice versa. Furthermore, integrating land use and economic development planning helps in allocating resources more effectively. For instance, identifying areas for commercial development in the land use plan can guide economic development efforts to attract businesses to those areas, leveraging existing infrastructure and resources.

Both elements necessitate considerations for community development and investment. A land use plan element may identify the need for new roads, utilities, and public facilities to support growth, while an economic development plan element may prioritize investments in infrastructure to attract businesses and stimulate job creation. Coordinating these efforts ensures that community investments are strategically aligned with land use and economic goals. Collaboration between land use and economic development planning contributes to enhancing the overall quality of life in

the community. By promoting mixed-use development, walkable neighborhoods, and access to amenities, these plans can create attractive environments for residents, workers, and visitors, fostering a sense of community and well-being.

In essence, the integration of land use and economic development planning allows Penns Grove to pursue a comprehensive approach to community development, where land use decisions are informed by economic considerations and economic strategies are supported by thoughtful land use policies. This synergy ultimately leads to more resilient, vibrant, and sustainable community.

### **Master Plan Chapters Organization**

The Penns Grove Borough Master Plan document is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** – This chapter introduces the Penns Grove Master Plan, including a community overview, scope of the master plan, statement of objectives, master planning process, and community engagement.
- **Chapter 2: Land Use Plan Element** – This chapter guides the development, allocation, and management of land within the Borough, outlining policies, regulations, and strategies related to how land should be used, developed, conserved, and protected to achieve community goals and objectives. It considers population growth, economic development, environmental conservation, transportation needs, housing demand, infrastructure requirements, and quality of life considerations.

The Land Use Plan Element strategically allocates land for various purposes, such as commercial, residential, and recreational zones, ensuring efficient use of available space while minimizing conflicts between different land uses. This clarity can attract businesses by providing suitable locations for their operations and investments. Moreover, the Land Use Plan Element promotes mixed-use development, fostering vibrant and walkable communities that attract residents and visitors alike. By encouraging the integration of housing and commercial uses, the Land Use Plan Element can support local businesses and enhance the quality of life for residents.

- **Chapter 2.1: Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCRHVA)** – A sub-element of the Land Use Plan Element that addresses environmental impacts of climate change and encompassing extreme weather, increasing temperature, droughts, fires, floods, and sea-level rise, through a Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCRHVA). The assessment analyzes current and future threats and vulnerabilities associated with climate change-induced natural hazards,



integrates build-out analyses of future development, identifies critical infrastructure for disaster management, assesses potential impacts on the Borough's Master Plan, and provides mitigation strategies.

- **Chapter 3: Economic Development Plan Element** – This chapter provides a strategic framework designed to promote and enhance the economic vitality, growth, and prosperity of the Borough, outlining policies, initiatives, and strategies aimed at attracting investment, creating jobs, fostering entrepreneurship, and improving overall economic competitiveness.

The Plan Element identifies key areas for economic development and provides guidelines for attracting businesses and investment to these areas. By providing a strategic framework and actionable recommendations, the Plan Element aligns the efforts of the Borough, businesses, and community stakeholders towards sustainable economic development.

## II. Community Overview

The Borough of Penns Grove is located on the banks of the Delaware River in Salem County. The Borough shares a municipal border with the Township of Carney's Point to the north, south, and east. To the west, the Borough is bounded by the Delaware River. A small, historic community with a population of around 4,800 residents, it offers a tight-knit community atmosphere and a rich cultural heritage. Historically, Penns Grove was an industrial hub, with industries like glass manufacturing and shipbuilding playing significant roles in its economy.

The Borough features a mix of residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and industrial zones. Its downtown area boasts historic buildings and local businesses, while its waterfront offers scenic views and recreational opportunities along the Delaware River. Despite facing economic challenges, Penns Grove is working to revitalize its economy and attract new businesses and investments. Efforts to improve existing infrastructure, promote tourism, and support entrepreneurship are hoped to be supported by the adoption of this Master Plan. The Borough aims to create opportunities for economic growth and development while preserving the Borough's unique character and heritage.

Like many communities located along rivers or coastal areas, Penns Grove faces flooding challenges, particularly during severe weather events. Factors such as aging infrastructure, urbanization, deforestation, and climate change only exacerbate flooding risks.

Urban areas like Penns Grove experience heightened effects due to increased temperatures, known as heat islands. High impervious surfaces in urban areas absorb and emit more heat, exacerbating heat stress, especially among vulnerable populations. Understanding and addressing the compounding effects of heat islands, especially in low-income communities, is crucial for mitigating the impacts of climate change and promoting community resilience.

Penns Grove's housing landscape reveals that majority of its housing predates 1979, with only limited housing constructed in the last 23 years. This data suggests that a significant portion of Penns Grove's housing stock may be vulnerable to energy insecurity, warranting targeted interventions to enhance energy efficiency and affordability for its residents. Aging housing stock is also vulnerable to other various issues, including structural integrity concerns, health hazards from lead, asbestos, and mold, water damage risks, fire hazards due to aging electrical systems, accessibility challenges, and limited resilience to natural disasters. Retrofitting and renovation are often necessary to address these vulnerabilities and improve energy efficiency, safety, and resilience of older homes against environmental hazards and modern living standards.

As discovered in this Master Plan, the Borough has experienced limited housing and economic growth over the past two decades. Data, further explored in the Economic Development Plan, indicates the Borough's economic distress condition, including reliance on State Aids, structural deficit, low property tax collection rates, and a shrinking tax base. The Borough aims to develop and implement strategic pathway toward economic stability and address underlying fiscal challenges.

This Master Plan establishes a comprehensive vision for Penns Grove. Through extensive community engagement, the plan ensures that revitalization efforts are inclusive, responsive to local needs, and reflective of community priorities. By strategically prioritizing investments and targeting key areas for development, as explored in the Economic Development Plan, the plan fosters socio-economic diversity and resilience. It guides infrastructure improvement and economic development strategies to improve the quality of life and stimulate job creation and economic growth in the Borough.

### **III. Scope of Master Plan**

The Penns Grove Borough Master Plan is a composite of several elements, which must function in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. It is a policy document that

updates and outlines the Borough's goals, policies, and objectives and presents a vision for the future. It has been prepared in accordance with the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (NJ MLUL) (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28 et seq.) and includes a variety of required and optional content including:

1. A statement of objectives, principles, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the constituent proposals for the physical, economic, and social development of the municipality are based;
2. A Land Use Plan element:
  - (a) taking into account and stating its relationship to the statement provided for in paragraph (1) hereof, and other master plan elements provided for in paragraphs (3) through (17) hereof and natural conditions, including, but not necessarily limited to, topography, soil conditions, water supply, drainage, flood plain areas, marshes, and woodlands;
  - (b) showing the existing and proposed location, extent and intensity of development of land to be used in the future for varying types of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, open space, educational and other public and private purposes or combination of purposes including any provisions for cluster development; and stating the relationship thereof to the existing and any proposed zone plan and zoning ordinance;
  - (c) showing the existing and proposed location of any airports and the boundaries of any airport safety zones delineated pursuant to the "Air Safety and Zoning Act of 1983," P.L.1983, c.260 (C.6:1-80 et al.);
  - (d) including a statement of the standards of population density and development intensity recommended for the municipality;
  - (e) showing the existing and proposed location of military facilities and incorporating strategies to minimize undue encroachment upon, and conflicts with, military facilities, including but not limited to limiting heights of buildings and structures nearby flight paths or sight lines of aircraft; buffering residential areas from noise associated with a military facility; and allowing for the potential expansion of military facilities;
  - (f) including, for any land use plan element adopted after the effective date of P.L.2017, c.275, a statement of strategy concerning:
    - i. smart growth which, in part, shall consider potential locations for the installation of electric vehicle charging stations,

- ii. storm resiliency with respect to energy supply, flood-prone areas, and environmental infrastructure, and
  - iii. environmental sustainability;
- (g) showing the existing and proposed location of public electric vehicle charging infrastructure; and
- (h) including, for any land use plan element adopted after the effective date of P.L.2021, c.6, a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment which shall
- i. analyze current and future threats to, and vulnerabilities of, the municipality associated with climate change-related natural hazards, including, but not limited to increased temperatures, drought, flooding, hurricanes, and sea-level rise;
  - ii. include a build-out analysis of future residential, commercial, industrial, and other development in the municipality, and an assessment of the threats and vulnerabilities identified in subsubparagraph (i) of this subparagraph related to that development;
  - iii. identify critical facilities, utilities, roadways, and other infrastructure that is necessary for evacuation purposes and for sustaining quality of life during a natural disaster, to be maintained at all times in an operational state;
  - iv. analyze the potential impact of natural hazards on relevant components and elements of the master plan;
  - v. provide strategies and design standards that may be implemented to reduce or avoid risks associated with natural hazards;
  - vi. include a specific policy statement on the consistency, coordination, and integration of the climate-change related hazard vulnerability assessment with any existing or proposed natural hazard mitigation plan, floodplain management plan, comprehensive emergency management plan, emergency response plan, post-disaster recovery plan, or capital improvement plan; and
  - vii. rely on the most recent natural hazard projections and best available science provided by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection;

- (9) An Economic Development Plan element considering all aspects of economic development and sustained economic vitality, including (a) a comparison of the types of employment expected to be provided by the economic development to be promoted with the characteristics of the labor pool resident in the municipality and nearby areas and (b) an analysis of the stability and diversity of the economic development to be promoted.

## **IV. Statement of Objectives**

The 2024 Master Plan is intended to provide a set of policies for the Borough of Penns Grove that will guide municipal officials, the planning and zoning boards, and citizens on decisions and regulations within the Borough. The Master Plan is a broad policy document that guides the use of land and the future physical, economic, and social development of the Borough. It contains an inventory of the municipality's existing conditions, articulates the community's vision and goals, identifies its needs, and provides long-range policy recommendations for achieving the community's vision and goals for the future. It is the principal document used to formulate the contents of a community's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. The Master Plan serves as a reference guide so that future land use decisions are made in a consistent and reasoned manner.

The Penns Grove Borough Planning Board, with input from the Master Plan Steering Committee, community residents, and Borough staff, has established the subsequent goals and objectives.

## **V. Master Plan Goals and Objectives**

The established goals and objectives for this Master Plan provides a clear vision and direction for the community's growth. These goals define priorities such as economic prosperity, infrastructure enhancement, natural resource preservation, and community well-being, articulating the community's aspirations and guiding principles. Additionally, these goals and objectives serve as measurable benchmarks for progress and accountability. By setting clear targets and timelines, the community can gauge its achievements and ensure alignment with its long-term vision. Moreover, these goals foster coordination and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, encouraging collective action towards shared objectives and creating a sustainable and thriving community for present and future generations.

The following goals and objectives are categorized into three sections: Overall, Land Use Plan Element, and Economic Development Plan Element.

### **Overall Goals and Objectives**

The following goals will serve as a basis to address the specific issues facing Penns Grove. These goals serve as the foundation upon which more detailed policies can be drawn and create a vision for the Borough.

- a. Develop methods and strategies to encourage and facilitate commercial development investments and economic revitalization in Penns Grove.
- b. Improving the material appearance of commercial establishments, storefronts, and homes along targeted sections of the two main traffic arteries in the Borough (Main Street from Virginia Avenue to State Street and Broad Street from Beach Avenue to Harmony Street.)
- c. Enhanced revitalization of the Borough through high quality private investment, controlled commercial growth, high standards land use controls, and equal housing opportunities.
- d. Promote sustainable and vibrant infill development through smart growth planning, mixed-use development, transit-oriented development, environmental stewardship, community engagement, and zoning and regulatory reforms.
- e. Enhance resilience against flooding and other natural hazards through risk assessment and planning, public awareness and education, community engagement, integration of nature-based solutions, policy advocacy and governance, and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

### **Land Use Plan Element Goals**

- a. Emphasize the proper utilization of the Borough's limited physical resources in order to sustain the value of the community's natural environment.
- b. Promote sustainable land use practices that balance economic, environmental, and social considerations to meet the needs of current and future generations.
- c. Increase housing stock and promote homeownership to meet the diverse housing needs of the community and enhance residential stability and prosperity.
- d. Encourage compact, mixed-use development patterns that minimize sprawl, preserve open space, and optimize land use efficiency.

- e. Enhance the quality of life for residents by fostering vibrant, walkable neighborhoods with access to amenities, parks, and recreational facilities.
- f. Incorporate climate resilience measures into land use planning to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and other climate-related hazards.
- g. Promote the availability of affordable housing options for residents of diverse income levels, including workforce housing and supportive housing for vulnerable populations.
- h. Support economic development initiatives by identifying areas for commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development that stimulate job creation and investment.
- i. Coordinate land use and transportation planning efforts to improve mobility, reduce congestion, and enhance connectivity between residential, commercial, and employment areas.
- j. Preserve and protect historic and cultural landmarks, buildings, and districts that contribute to the community's identity and heritage.
- k. Foster public participation and stakeholder involvement in the land use planning process to ensure transparency, inclusivity, and accountability.

### **Economic Development Plan Element Goals**

- a. Foster sustainable economic growth by attracting new businesses, supporting existing enterprises, and creating job opportunities.
- b. Encourage diversification of industries and sectors and enhance resilience to economic fluctuations.
- c. Support and nurture entrepreneurship by providing resources, funding, and mentorship programs to aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners.
- d. Create a favorable business environment by reducing regulatory barriers, streamlining permitting processes, and providing incentives for business expansion and investment.
- e. Attract domestic and foreign investment by showcasing the community's strengths, infrastructure, workforce, and quality of life amenities.
- f. Invest in workforce development programs, vocational training, and education initiatives to equip residents with the skills needed for current and emerging industries.

- g. Engage with local community members, government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, and other relevant stakeholders to understand their needs and perspectives and garner support and insights to develop comprehensive revitalization strategies.

## **VI. Master Planning Process**

The Master Plan process is a comprehensive and collaborative approach to shaping the long-term development of the Borough. The process began with defining objectives and collecting data to understand current conditions and identify challenges and opportunities. Through community engagement, stakeholders contribute ideas, priorities, and feedback to shape a shared vision and establish goals for the future. Alternatives are developed, evaluated, and refined to create a comprehensive master plan that includes land use policies, infrastructure improvements, economic strategies, and environmental protections. The adoption of this Master Plan, including implementation of formal mechanisms, will follow ongoing monitoring and evaluation to track progress, adapt to changing circumstances, and ensure alignment with community needs and aspirations.

### ***Community Engagement***

Public outreach is integral to the development of this Master Plan. The planning process facilitated community engagement, ensured diverse perspectives were considered, and promoted transparency and accountability. By actively involving key community stakeholders, the Borough was able to gather valuable insights into the community's needs, interests, and priorities, fostering a sense of ownership and support for the final plan. Through public outreach, local knowledge and expertise were garnered, enabling the Borough and its professional consultants to leverage community insights, build relationships, and forge partnerships to implement the master plan effectively. The public outreach has helped the Borough create an inclusive, transparent, and responsive planning processes that reflect the collective vision and aspirations of the community, leading to more equitable, sustainable, and resilient outcomes.

The Master Plan process was led by a steering committee including representatives from the Planning Board, the Mayor and professional consultants. The committee met regularly with the professional consultants to review project deliverables, discuss issues and recommendations, and plan for public engagement. Public engagement was a vital component of the Master Plan process, to assure that the recommendations



were generated and supported by the Borough's residence. At one of the meetings, a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted. The goal of this analysis is to increase the awareness of key components to prepare the framework for the Borough's future. The result of the SWOT analysis is further explored in the next section.



Photos from community-wide public meeting in October 2023.

### ***SWOT Analysis***

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was conducted to garner further input from the community. This analysis serves as a strategic planning tool, enabling the Borough to make informed decisions, capitalize on strengths, address weaknesses, seize opportunities, and proactively manage threats in order to achieve their objectives effectively. The following factors were identified by the community:

#### ***Strengths:***

- Waterfront area
- Community diversity
- Location
- Leadership
- Strong State relationship
- Proximity to Delaware River
- Engaged local investors
- Designated recreation space
- Buildings with historic character
- Small town feel/dense community/tight knit

#### ***Weakness:***

- Limited grocery stores
- Limited restaurants, entertainment, retail

- Limited housing
- Aging infrastructure
- Dilapidated housing & commercial buildings
- Abandoned & vacant properties
- Overly dependent on State aid
- Declining population
- Food desert
- Code enforcement issues
- Low connectivity to riverfront
- Excess of vacant land
- Unmaintained properties
- Lack of policies/regulations supporting businesses
- Flooding
- Lack of economic development
- Negative perception of the Borough
- Inconsistent housing regulations
- Aging housing stock
- High unemployment
- Low education attainment
- Persistent arrearage of property taxes
- Parking demand

#### *Opportunities:*

- Waterfront area
- Route 130, Main Street, and Broad Street corridors
- Infill development for both residential and commercial uses
- Demand for amenities
- Pedestrian and bike friendly
- Walkability
- Historic character
- Increase code enforcement efforts
- Public-private partnership
- Streetscape improvements
- Smart infrastructure
- Rehabilitation opportunities

#### *Threats:*

- Low home ownership
- Late with policy development
- Aging infrastructure
- Low tax collection rate
- Reliant on state aid
- Crime and violence
- Blight
- Vandalism
- Issues with rental housing
- Homelessness
- Flooding and other natural hazards
- Declining population

# CHAPTER 2

# LAND USE PLAN

# ELEMENT

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The Borough of Penns Grove is located in Salem County, New Jersey, in the southwestern portion of the State. The Borough is surrounded by the Township of Carneys Point on three sides and bounded on the west by the Delaware River. As of the 2020 Census, there were 4,837 residents and 2,010 housing units within the Borough. The municipality covers a land area of approximately 570 acres, or about 0.9 square miles.

The Borough's last Master Plan was adopted in 1980 and was reexamined most recently in 2021. Since 1980, there have been many changes in conditions within the Borough, County, and State, which were discussed in the 2021 Master Plan Reexamination report.

This Land Use Plan Element is intended to summarize existing land use conditions regarding zoning, recreation, redevelopment, environmental conditions, utilities, historical assets, and community facilities and services. Additionally, this Element indicates goals and objectives which should help guide future policy decisions. Lastly, this Element provides for actionable ordinance recommendations that will improve the municipal code through clarity and additional details.

Since 2021, the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) requires that Land Use Elements include a Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCRHVA). The CCRHVA presented in this Master Plan provides a comprehensive overview of the climate change-related hazards impacting the Borough and presents a land use planning strategy that is designed to increase the Township's resiliency. By adopting the recommended strategies and design standards presented in the CCRHVA, the Borough can build a sustainable planning foundation and implement regulatory policies that encourage development that is resilient to the impacts of climate change-related natural hazards, minimize loss due to natural hazards, and sustain the quality of life of the community.

## I. Existing Conditions

According to NJDEP’s land use/land cover data (2020), the Borough is comprised predominantly of Urban land, indicating that the Borough has been developed extensively and that future development is predominately available through in-fill and redevelopment of existing vacant or abandoned properties. Infill development and adaptive reuse should become a primary focus of the municipality’s goals and objectives as a tool to redevelop existing vacant or abandoned properties. Forest and Wetland land use classifications represent approximately 2% and 1% of the municipality, respectively. The wetland areas are clustered mainly to the northwest and southeast areas of the Borough, and the forest areas representing green spaces are found generally to the north and south areas of the Borough.

### *Land Use*

The existing land use of a municipality helps guide the effort and mission to enhance the visual, physical, environmental, social and economic health of a community. The Borough’s existing land use patterns in coordination with local concerns require specific strategies. The Land Use Map provides the current land use patterns within the Borough.

Located directly on the Delaware River in northwestern Salem County the Borough is directly opposite Wilmington, DE and approximately 25 miles south of Philadelphia, with access to major thoroughfares including the New Jersey Turnpike, Interstates 295 and 95.

Penns Grove was incorporated as a municipality in 1894 and has a land area of approximately 0.91 square miles, or about 582 acres. Throughout its history, the Borough has supported fishing and agricultural industries which are aligned with Penns Grove’s proximity to farmlands throughout Salem County and the Delaware River. While these industries were prominent ratables in the past, the Borough has not seen the economic investment or growth that is desired from a waterfront community over the past few decades. As a result, this land use element is intended to outline the existing conditions and provide recommendations based on the efficient and effective use of the limited available lands within the Borough.

### *Residential Land Use*

Single-family detached housing makes up the predominate housing type within the Borough. Remaining housing types include duplexes, single-family to multi-family conversions, apartments, townhouses, and mid-rise buildings.

### *Commercial Land Use*

Commercial land use has been separated via zoning districts into office/service uses, and highway commercial/industrial activity, in increasing order of intensity. Office use represents a small portion of the total commercial uses, many being located in converted single family residences. While this type of use can coexist with residential uses often harmoniously, zoning and/or parking issues can sometimes arise. Business owners and developers desiring to establish office space in Penns Grove should be directed to those areas which are appropriately zoned for those types of uses.

The retail and commercial district focus of Penns Grove was historically located at or near the intersection of Broad Street and Main Street but commercial development in more recent years has shifted to the more heavily travelled Virginia Avenue (Route 130). In general, the commercial uses in the Broad and Main Street areas are smaller-scale and are located on lots that do not provide significant room for horizontal expansion or adequate parking. Many of the stores are located in mixed-use buildings, with one- and two-family residential units located above them. This arrangement can be valuable in a municipality such as Penns Grove, where the availability of land for further residential development is at a premium.

### *Industrial Land Use*

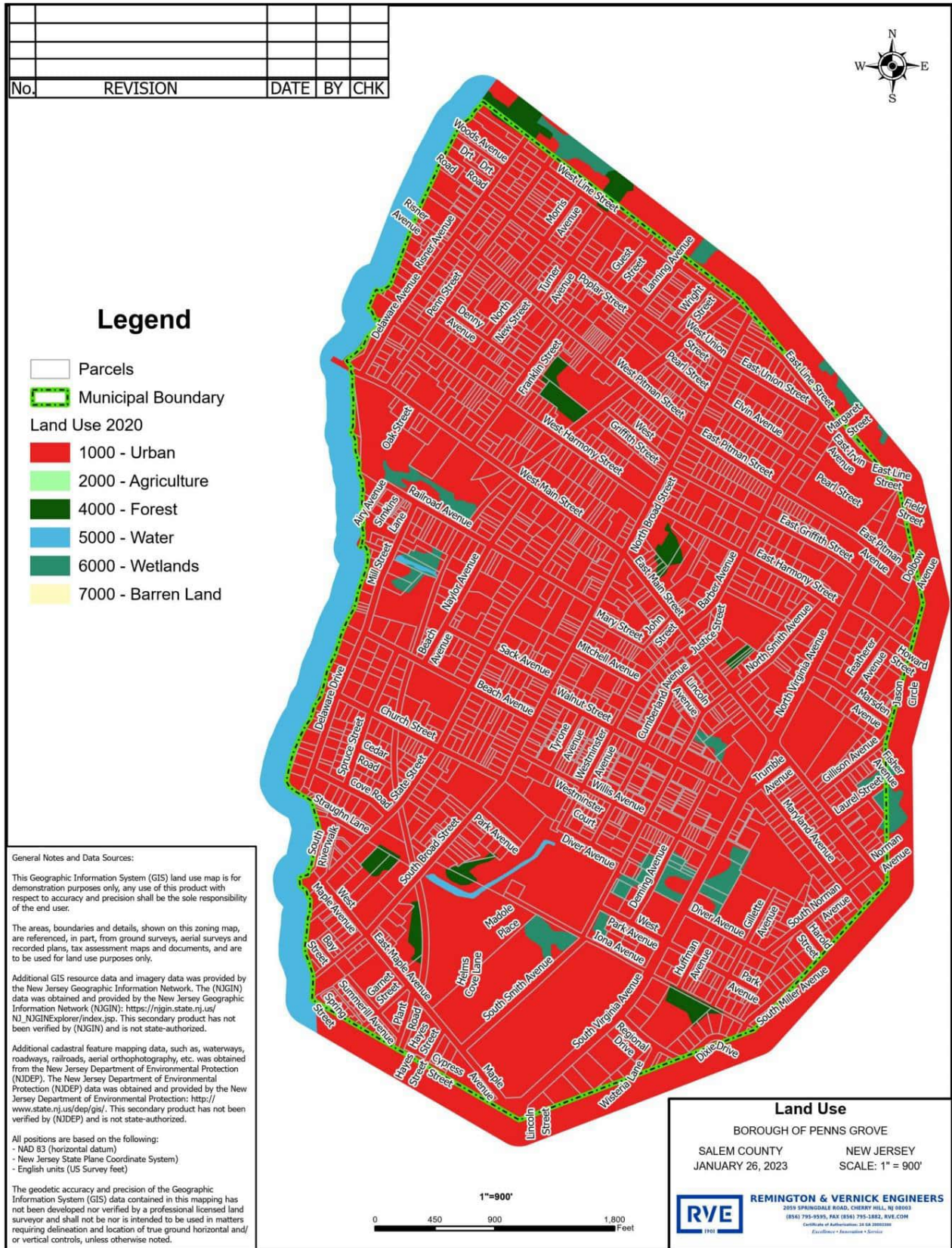
Industrial development within the Borough is very limited. Given the existing pattern of vacant land, limited small lots, major industrial development is not likely.

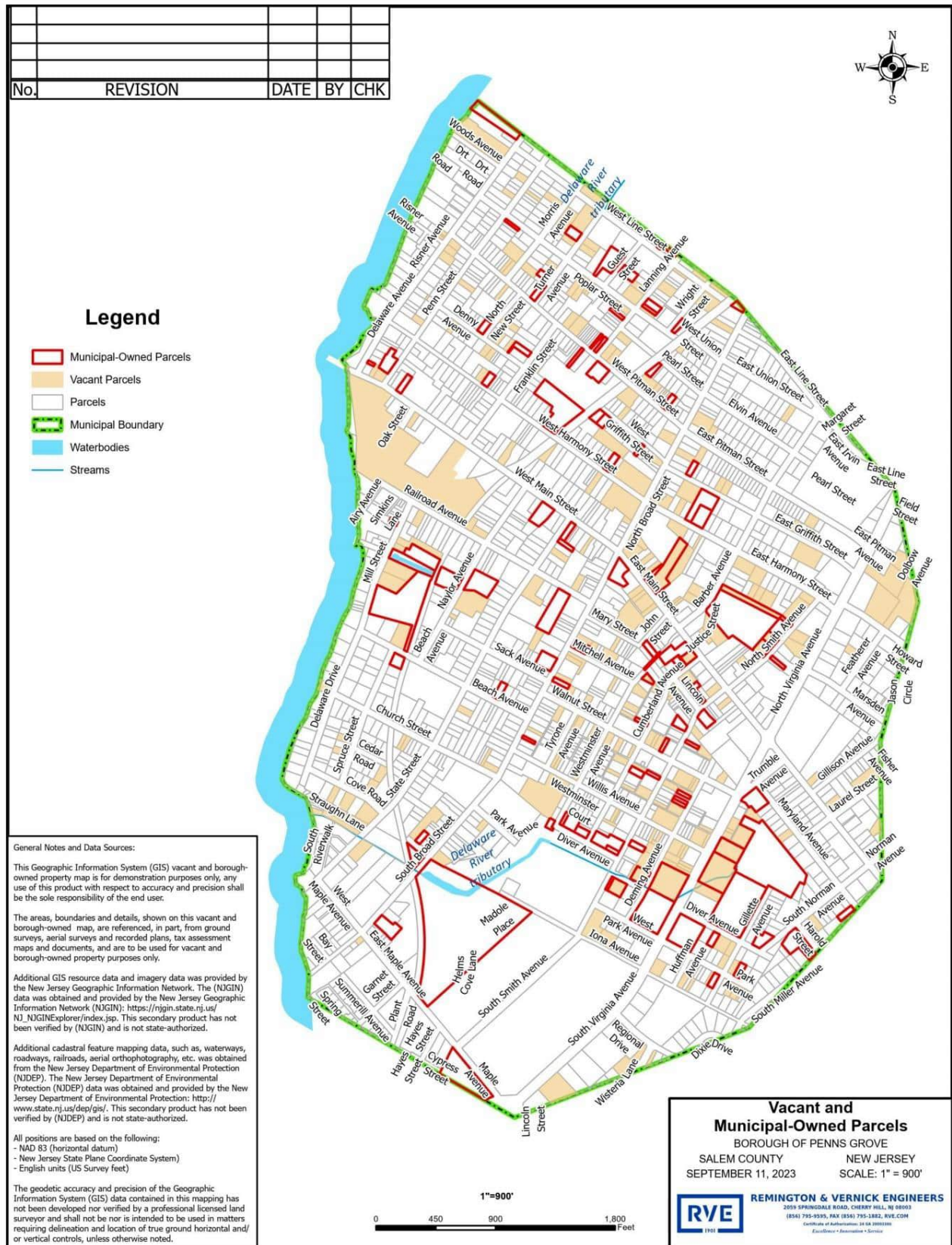
### *Vacant Land Use*

Due to the Borough's small overall land area and development history, there is not a significant amount of vacant land remaining to support future development projects. As a result, much of the future anticipated development can be expected to be completed through infill development, redevelopment, or adaptive reuse of existing structures.

### *Public Property*

The predominant use of public land in the borough is for schools. Additional public uses include the municipal building, firehouse, Streets Department facility, library, recycling facility, and Salem County Board of Social Services offices.





## **Zoning**

Land development in the Borough is regulated by the Penn Grove Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. The Zoning Map contains six districts: Residential 1, Residential 2, Residential 3, Commercial/Office/Service, Highway-Commercial/Industrial, Marina District 1, and Marina District 2.

<b>Existing Zoning Districts</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
R-1 Residential 1	±138.0	±24.2%
R-2 Residential 2	±265.2	±46.4%
R-3 Residential 3	±35.2	±6.2%
COS Commercial, Office, Service	±41.9	±7.3%
H-C/I Highway Commercial Industrial	±48.6	±8.5%
MD-1 Marina District 1	±23.2	±4.1%
MD-2 Marina District 2	±19.0	±3.3%

### ***R-1 Residential 1 District***

The R-1 Residential 1 District is located in four areas throughout the Borough, comprising roughly 24% of the Borough. The largest area of R-1 zoning is located at the southern end of the municipality, then stretches north, bound to the west by the Delaware River and bound to the east by the Conrail railroad line. This area contains Penns Grove Middle School and Paul W. Carleton Elementary School. The second area of R-1 zoning is along the eastern municipal boundary, located adjacent to the H/C/I zone which extends along the north/south corridor of Virginia Avenue (aka Route 130). The next area of R-1 zoning is a small area, consisting of two parcels located at the corner of North Broad Street and West Harmony Street. Finally, the last area of R-1 zoning is located in the northwestern portion of the municipality, bound to the north by Woods Avenue, the east by Delaware Avenue, the west by the Delaware River, and finally ending around West Harmony Street to the South. These areas of R-1 zoning are characterized predominantly by smaller lot single family development, with a maximum density of 3.2 units/acre and a minimum lot area of 10,500 square feet.

### ***R-2 Residential 2 District***

The R-2 Residential 2 District encompasses nearly 50% of the Borough and is comprised of three areas. The largest R-2 district is located from the northern municipal boundary extending south to the Commercial, Office, Service District which is intended to be the smaller scale commercial district for providing goods and services to residents. Another R-2 zoned area exists just south of the commercial district and Marina District 2. The final R-2 district is towards the southeastern portion



of the Borough and wraps around the existing R-3 district containing multi-family uses. The R-2 district is characterized by medium residential density areas where residential uses range from single-family detached or attached dwellings, atrium housing, patio housing, and multiplex housing. The minimum lot areas within this district range from 2,500 square feet for atrium housing, up to 9,000 square feet for single-family dwellings. Additionally, the densities vary from 6.5 dwelling units per acre for atrium housing, to 3.8 dwelling units per acre for single-family development.

### *R-3 Residential District*

The R-3 Residential 3 district represents only 6.2% of the land within the Borough, but with densities ranging from 12 dwelling units per acre for townhouse development, to 25 dwelling units an acre for a mid-rise tower development, the district provides for the increased density that multi-family housing typically requires. There are four areas zoned R-3 as indicated in the Borough zoning map which contain the following existing multi-family residential developments: Penns Grove Gardens, Penn Village Apartments, Mallard Park Apartments, and Penn Towers. The R-3 zoned areas all exist south of the main commercial district along Main Street.

### *COS – Commercial, Office, Service District*

The COS – Commercial, Office, Service District is located centrally within the Borough and contains 8.5% of the land within Penns Grove. The COS District provides areas for modern office, retail, specialty, personal service, and business uses and civic offices; this zone extends outward from the intersection of Broad Street and Main Street. The bulk standards for this zone are very limited within the Borough ordinance, as the only requirements indicated are a maximum height of five stories, and a maximum impervious coverage limit of 85%.

### *MD-1 and MD-2 Marina Districts*

MD-1 and MD-2 Marina Districts are located at the terminus of West Main Street fronting the Delaware River. M-1 provides opportunities for mixed-use commercial development in the area directly adjacent and proximate to the Delaware River, while M-2 provides for limited conversion of residential uses to commercial uses that are compatible with the existing neighborhoods and uses that accommodates the outgrowth of business uses from M-1 district. Both districts encompass about 7% of the land in the Borough.

### *H-C/I Highway-Commercial/Industrial District*

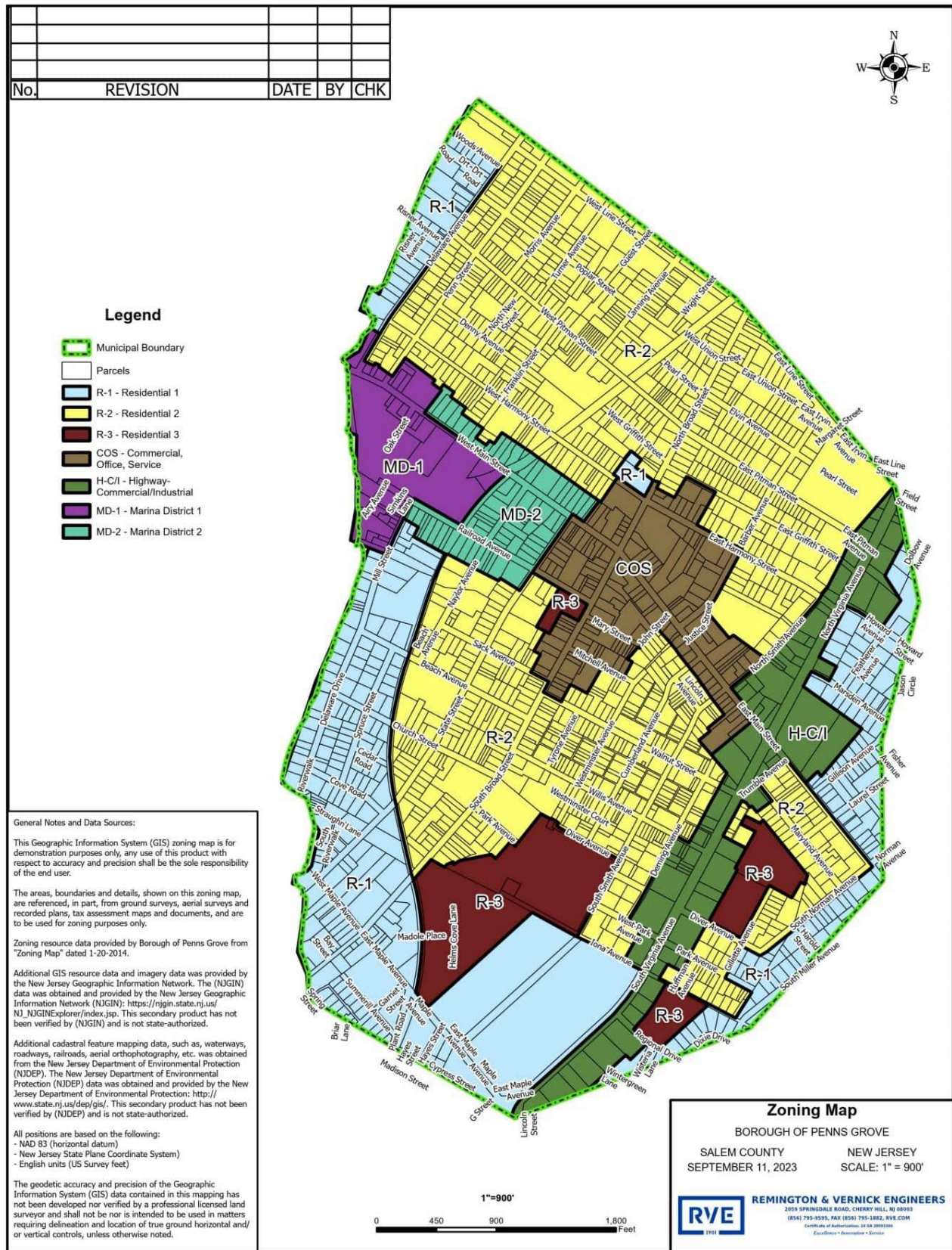
The H-C/I Highway-Commercial/Industrial District encompasses the entire US Route 130 corridor within the municipal boundary. As its name indicates, it provides

opportunities for more intense highway-oriented businesses, commercial uses, and industrial uses with direct frontage on a major road. This zoning district is appropriate along the main vehicular corridor of Virginia Avenue (aka US Route 130), as it allows for proper circulation conducive to carrying out the operations for this type of use.

The following table provides a comprehensive breakdown of the permitted uses within each respective zoning district.

<b>Zoning District</b>	<b>Permitted Uses</b>
R-1 Residential 1	Single-family detached dwelling; Community residence; School; Recreational facility governmental & Sanitary utility
R-2 Residential 2	Single-family detached dwelling; Single-family attached dwelling; Community residence; School; Recreational facility, governmental & Sanitary utility
R-3 Residential 3	Single-family attached dwelling; Multi-family, garden apartment; Multi-family, mid-rise; Community residence; Religious use; School; Auditorium, community center, etc.; Recreational facility, governmental & sanitary utility
COS Commercial, Office, Service	Dwelling in combination with commercial; Religious use; School; Cultural facility; Auditorium, community center, etc.; Day nursery, nursery school, etc.; Recreational facility, governmental; Professional service; Business service, nongovernmental; Health service; Trade, professional, music or dancing school; Retail shop; Personal service; Retail service; Eating place, sit-down; Mortuary or funeral home; Public entertainment facility; Parking area or garage & Fire station
H-C/I Highway Commercial Industrial	Religious use; School; Cultural facility; Auditorium, community center, etc.; Day nursery, nursery school, etc.; Recreational facility, governmental; Private club or lodge; Business service, nongovernmental; Business service, governmental; Health service; Trade, professional, music or dancing school; Retail shop; Bulk commercial; Personal service; Repair service; Eating place, sit-down; eating place, drive-in/take-out; Mortuary or funeral home ; Public entertainment facility; Motel, hotel or tourist home; Parking area or garage; Gasoline service station; Repair garage; Sale of auto

	parts, tires or batteries; Bus or taxi terminal; School bus yard ;Truck terminal; Sanitary utility &Fire station
MD-1 Marina District 1	Single-family detached dwelling; single-family attached dwelling; Dwelling in combination with commercial; School; Recreational facility, governmental; Recreational facility, nongovernmental; Professional service; Trade, professional, music or dancing school; Retail shop; Eating place, sit-down, Eating place, drive-in/take-out; Public entertainment facility; Motel, hotel or tourist home, Supply utility, Sanitary utility & Fire station
MD-2 Marina District 2	Single-family detached dwelling; single-family attached dwelling; School; Recreational facility, governmental & Professional service



### ***Parks and Recreation***

The Borough of Penns Grove contains five (5) properties on the Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI), which indicates all Green Acres funded properties (“funded parkland”), as well as other lands held for conservation and or recreation purposes at the time the Borough last received funding from the Green Acres program.

Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI)

<b>Facility Name</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>Lot</b>	<b>Features</b>
Barber Ave Park	40	4 and 5	Park contains playground equipment, shaded pavilion, basketball court, asphalt walking trail, and an open field.
Memorial Park	43	19	Park contains a 9/11 memorial.
Riverwalk	57	1	Currently exists as open space, with a small portion of the riverwalk.
	59	17	Parcel appears to no longer exist. Review and update ROSI with NJDEP

While the Borough of Penns Grove has been predominantly built out, there are small pockets of vacant parcels scattered throughout existing residential communities that should be evaluated as opportunities to provide future recreational opportunities for residents. Small, pocket parks within residential areas can be developed with a smaller cost burden on the municipality due to the scale and intensity of development.

### ***Redevelopment***

In August of 2022, the Borough of Penns Grove adopted a preliminary investigation report which designated the entire Borough as an area in need of rehabilitation. The designation was predominantly based on the conditions that more than half of the housing stock in the Borough is at least 50 years old, there is a persistent arrearage of property tax payments, and that environmental contamination is discouraging improvements and investment in properties in the area. With this designation, the Borough is now authorized to adopt and implement Redevelopment Plans on all properties within the municipality.

The adoption of Redevelopment Plans offers the Borough additional alternatives to support the development and redevelopment of properties to support the future goals of Penns Grove. Since the designation in August of 2022, the Borough has not adopted any site-specific redevelopment plans. This Land Use Element of the Master Plan will

provide for additional recommendations regarding potential redevelopment areas and projects which will further support the overall goals of the Borough.

A particular focus should be given to the major corridors (Main Street and Virginia Avenue) and the waterfront area as these areas provide a unique opportunity for the Borough to support mixed-use development.

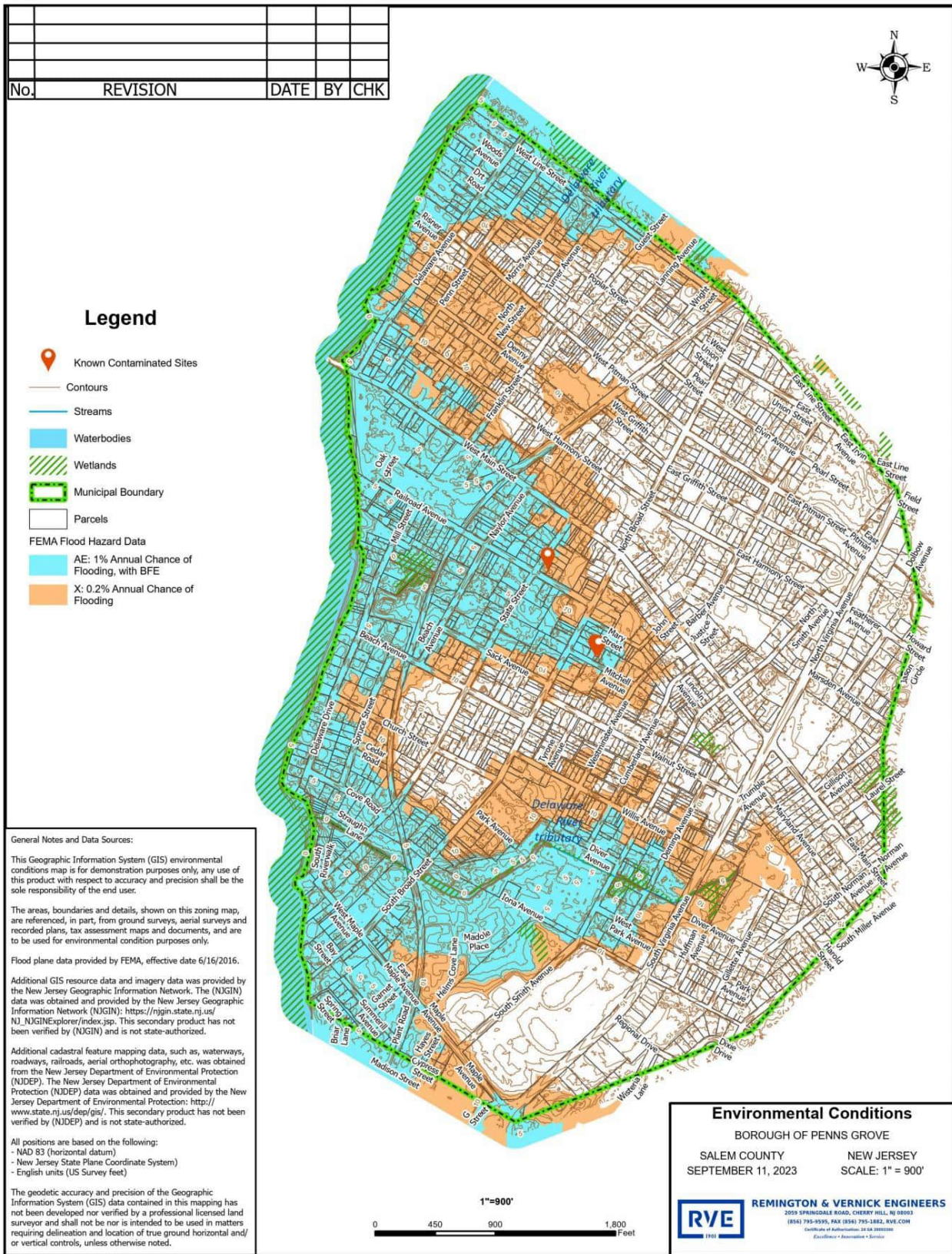
### ***Environmental Conditions***

As a community located along the Delaware River, a necessary part of the development of the land use plan is the evaluation of existing and future environmental conditions. As will be discussed in the Climate Change Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCRHVA), climate change impacts will continue to impact lands in the Borough, and development around the anticipated issues such as flooding should become paramount in planning for the future of the Borough.

As discussed previously, the Borough contains various, small pockets of wetlands, comprising approximately 1% of the land within Penns Grove. While this may not seem like a significant amount, for a community like Penns Grove that has been predominantly built out, it is important to consider protection of these environmentally sensitive areas while planning for land use.

### ***Topography***

Slope and topography of land is an important consideration when planning for land use. Steep slopes can significantly hinder the development potential of properties, and furthermore, have serious impacts on flood inundation levels. Overall, the Borough of Penns Grove is generally flat, with a minimum elevation of 0 feet above sea level, and a maximum elevation of 33 feet above sea level. The average elevation within the Borough is 13 feet above sea level. The lowest lying areas within the Borough exist along the coast, and generally along the Delaware River Tributary that extends east to west along the southern portion of the Borough.



## Utilities

### *Power*

The Borough of Penns Grove is served by Atlantic City Electric for power supply. In 2022, Atlantic City Electric completed its “Salem County Reliability Project”, which rebuilt approximately 3.5 miles of critical transmission lines between Penns Grove and Pennsville, mostly along Route 130. The project included the installation of stronger and more durable steel utility poles capable of withstanding hurricane force winds, and in other areas, new, stronger wooden utility poles will replace smaller existing infrastructure. This project replaced old utility lines, which were constructed in 1930, and most recently upgraded in the 1950s and 1960s.

### *Wastewater*

The entirety of the Borough is located within the mapped Sewer Service Area, and waste treatment is managed by the Penns Grove Sewerage Authority, with a treatment facility located at 81 Beach Ave, Penns Grove, NJ. The facility is located one block from the Delaware River and is located within the 100-year floodplain. Additional discussions regarding the resiliency of this facility in the wake of climate-change impacts will be discussed within the Climate Change Resiliency and Hazard Vulnerability Assessment at the end of this chapter. Based on a build-out analysis of the entire Borough, future expansion of the treatment facility is not required to accommodate future development.<sup>1</sup>

### *Water Supply*

The New Jersey American Water Company (NJAW) provides water service to the entire Borough of Penns Grove. As of the most recent Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) update, NJAW utilizes seven ground water wells within Carneys Point to provide water to the Borough. In 2010, NJAW completed improvements to interconnect the Penns Grove water system to the Logan Township water system to allow for operational flexibility.

### *Historical and Cultural Assets*

The following table indicates the properties located within the Borough of Penns Grove which are recognized by the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). SHPO Opinions were issued for these properties, which indicate an opinion of eligibility and is in response to a federally funded activity that will have an effect on

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<sup>1</sup> *Wastewater Management Plan for Salem County, New Jersey, Lower Delaware Water Quality Management Planning Area, Borough of Penns Grove Chapter*



historic properties not listed on the National Register. The Borough does not contain any historic sites recognized by the National Register of Historic Places.

<b>ID</b>	<b>Historic Site</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>SHPO Opinion</b>
ID# 4319	Leap House	193 West Main Street	09-09-2004
ID# 2440	Penns Grove Municipal Building	Corner of Main and State streets	01-27-1978
ID# 4405	River Walk Site 1	Riverwalk	02-10-2005
ID# 4406	River Walk Site 2	Riverwalk	02-10-2005

Source: New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places

The Borough contains additional properties which represent a historical or cultural asset to the community, and these are listed below.

<b>Cultural Site</b>	<b>Location</b>
Penns Grove Middle School	East Maple Avenue
94 Walnut St	94 Walnut St
29 N Smith Ave	29 N Smith Ave
Helm's Cove Tavern	24 East Maple Street (built in 1732)

## ***Community Facilities and Services***

### ***Bishop L. Colene Williams Community Center – 44 Willis Street***

The Bishop L. Colene Williams Community Center also operates under the name Holy Temple Church of the Fresh Harvest. The center is estimated to generate \$74,621 in annual revenues and employs approximately 1 person. It has been in business for about 35 years and is currently deemed a religious organization.

### ***Police Dept. – 1 State Street***

The Penns Grove Police Department consists of 10 officers. The station is located in the rear of Borough Hall. The mission and purpose of this Police Department are generally threefold: to preserve life and property; to provide a general police service for the residents of the Borough of Penns Grove, Salem County, State of New Jersey; to enforce federal, state, county and municipal laws, statutes and ordinances; and as hereinafter may be more expressly defined.

### *Liberty Fire Hall (Fire Dept.) – 36 E. Harmony Street*

The Penns Grove Volunteer Fire Department is staffed by volunteers to serve their community. The department is currently servicing out of one station located at 36 E. Harmony Street housing 25 volunteer firefighters that are led by Chief Adam Hartsough.

### *Salem County Adult Day Care – 53 S. Broad Street*

The Salem County Adult Day Care was founded in 2009 by two New Jersey physicians for medically needy adults 18 years of age and older, who require assistance with chronic health conditions, activities of daily living or both. The program offers eligible Salem County New Jersey residents much-needed daily health/wellness support within a secure environment and designed with the overall goal of assisting their clients to maintain their optimal level of health, wellness, and functioning by helping to restore or maintain the independence.

### *Post Office – 56 W. Main Street*

The Penns Grove Post Office is located in the state of New Jersey within Salem County. This location serves 13,076 Penns Grove residents with a median income of \$42,528. It is estimated that approximately 20,871 packages pass through this post office each year.

### *Penns Grove High School*

Penns Grove-Carneys Point Regional School District is a comprehensive regional public school district consisting of one high school, one middle school and three elementary schools. It has 2,185 students from Carneys Point Township and Penns Grove in grades PK, K-12 with a student-teacher ratio of 12 to 1. A majority of students in grades 9-12 from Oldmans Township attend the district's high school as part of a sending/receiving relationship with the Oldmans Township School district. The Penns Grove-Carneys Point Regional School District Administrative office is located at 100 Iona Avenue in Penns Grove. The Lafayette- Pershing School located on 237 Shell Road is for students in grades pre-kindergarten through kindergarten. The Field Street School located at 144 Field Street is for students in grades 1 through 3. The Paul W. Carleton School located at 251 East Maple Avenue is for students in grades 4 through 5. Penns Grove Middle School is located at 351 East Maple Avenue for students grades 6 through 8. Penns Grove High School is located at 334 Harding Highway for students grades 9 through 12.

### *Historical Society*

The Historical Society was established in 1999 by a small group that decided it was important to preserve the history of Penns Grove. Over the years the Society has expanded to include Carneys Point and Oldmans Township since the history of the communities is so heavily intertwined. The “museum” is located at 48 West Main Street in a house of worship that was erected in 1956.

## **II. Relationship to Other Planning Documents**

### **2016 Salem County Growth Management Element**

In 2016, Salem County adopted its Growth Management Element of the Comprehensive County Master Plan, updating and amending the previous Growth Management Plan of 1999. As related specifically to the Borough of Penns Grove, the Growth Management Plan identifies the entire Borough of Penns Grove to be within the smart growth corridor, where most of the future county growth should be directed due to the existence of infrastructure and major roadways. The Smart Growth Zone-Corridor is approximately 10.92% of the total land within the County, and is located within Carneys Point Township, Oldmans Township, Penns Grove Borough, Pennsville Township, and Pilesgrove Township.

The Growth Management Plan identified 314 vacant lots within the Borough in 2016, which is consistent with the 304 vacant parcels that, per current MOD IV tax records, exist today.

As discussed below, being located within the Metropolitan Planning Area (PA1), as identified by the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, further supports the vision that Penns Grove should become a primary focus of development within the County.

### **State Development and Redevelopment Plan**

In 1985, the Legislature of the State of New Jersey adopted the State Planning Act (N.J.S.A. 52:18A-196 et seq.). Adopted in its current form on March 1, 2001, the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) establishes a vision and a plan for the future of New Jersey. It is intended to serve as a guide for how public policy decisions should be made at all levels of government to achieve the goals of the State Planning Act. The State Plan identifies these goals as well as strategies and public policy measures that, when applied flexibly by all levels of government, will shape growth in ways that will help achieve the intent and purpose of the State Planning Act. Key

concepts in allocating the use of state resources to guide population and employment growth are the State Plan's delineation of "Planning Areas." The Plan includes a general description, statement of intent, delineation criteria and policy objectives for each of five (5) different Planning Area designations. The Planning Areas are:

- Metropolitan Planning Area (PA1)
- Suburban Planning Area (PA2)
- Fringe Planning Area (PA3)
- Rural Planning Area (PA4) and Rural / Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (PA4B)
- Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (PA5) and Environmentally Sensitive/Barrier Island Planning Area (PA5B)

The entirety of the Borough of Penns Grove is located within the Metropolitan Planning Area (PA1). Metropolitan Planning Areas include large Urban Centers and postwar suburbs that are fully or almost fully developed, so further development is dominated by intensification of land uses through redevelopment and reuse. They are characterized by a wide range of public services and land uses. Municipal boundaries have become blurred and many functional problems such as traffic congestion management have become "extra-municipal" in scope. The State Plan envisions the creation of cooperative regional programs aimed at addressing these issues. It also makes public and private investment and reinvestment in PA1 a high priority to sustain and leverage the existing investment in public and private infrastructure, facilities, and services that exist there. Five criteria delineate the Metropolitan Planning Area (SDRP, Page 190):

- Densities of more than 1,000 persons per square mile.
- Existing public water and sewer systems, or physical accessibility to such systems, and access to public transit systems.
- Land area greater than one square mile.
- A population of not less than 25,000 people.
- Areas that are totally surrounded by land areas that meet the criteria of a Metropolitan Planning Area, are geographically interrelated with the Metropolitan Planning Area and meet the intent of this Planning Area.

Policy objectives for the Metropolitan Planning Area include (SDRP page 191):

- Using land use controls focusing on development and redevelopment where efficient use of public facilities and services can be achieved;

- Preserving housing stock and providing a range of housing choices;
- Promote economic development by encouraging infill developments, assembly of parcels into efficiently developed sites, and creation of public / private partnerships;
- Capitalizing on high density settlement patterns to encourage use of public and non-automobile transportation;
- Reclaiming environmentally damaged sites (brownfields) and preventing future damage, with particular emphasis on waterfronts, scenic vistas, remaining wildlife habitat, air quality, open space and recreational opportunities;
- Maximizing recreational opportunities by enhancing existing parks and facilities and creating new sites;
- Encourage redevelopment at intensities sufficient to support transit, a broad range of uses and efficient use of infrastructure;
- Integrating historic preservation into redevelopment efforts;
- Eliminating deficiencies in public facilities and expanding them where necessary to accommodate future growth and redevelopment, and;
- Regionalizing and coordinating as many public services as feasible and economical.

### **III. Statement of Strategy**

#### **Smart Growth**

Smart Growth plans for development that attempts to curb “suburban sprawl” and lessen the negative impacts on the environment. As the Borough is just under one square mile in area, there have not been many opportunities for the development of the typical sprawl that is commonly seen throughout rural communities in Southern New Jersey. The Borough’s size conveniently allowed for development to occur in a more concentrated form, and therefore, concerns of sprawl are not prevalent within Penns Grove. While the Borough will continue to support mixed-use developments along its main corridors and intersections, the existing nature of the single-family homes is expected to remain and is appropriate considering the existing character of these residential areas.

There are numerous environmental benefits of smart growth, including:

- Reducing vehicle miles traveled and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions;
- Incorporating environmental awareness into land use decisions;
- Conserving areas for natural processes of water absorption and filtering; and
- Creating links between neighborhoods and areas set aside for nature-based recreation.

The Borough will continue to seek opportunities to capitalize on vacant land where appropriate and develop sustainable and resilient planning principles that protect the residents of the community from climate change and natural hazards associated with over development.

### **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure**

This Land Use Plan Element encourages principles of smart growth by considering the Borough's environmental resources to support a healthy mix of land uses in the future. In addition to the land use recommendations in this Land Use Plan Element, the Borough can take proactive steps to enhance this smart growth pattern of development with greater sustainability. One such step is to encourage the use of electric vehicles.

As of September 1, 2021, the Model Statewide Municipal Electric Vehicle (EV) Ordinance published by the DCA was written with support from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to comply with P.L. 2021, c.171, signed into law on July 9, 2021. The law requires that Electric Vehicle Supply/Service Equipment (EVSE) and Make-Ready parking spaces be designated as a permitted accessory use in all zoning districts and establishes associated installation and parking requirements related to EVSE.

There are currently no existing electric vehicle charging stations within the Borough of Penns Grove. The nearest public electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure is located in Carney's Point Township<sup>2</sup>. Through contemplating the existing and future conditions of land use, the Borough has determined that the following locations should be targeted to provide for public electric vehicle charging stations:

- Penns Grove Borough Hall, 1 State Street
- Delaware River Walkway, between Railroad Avenue and Main Street
- Commercial uses along Route 130 (Virginia Avenue)

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<sup>2</sup> US Department of Energy, Alternative Fuels Data Center,  
[https://afdc.energy.gov/fuels/electricity\\_locations.html#/find/nearest?fuel=ELEC](https://afdc.energy.gov/fuels/electricity_locations.html#/find/nearest?fuel=ELEC)

## **Storm Resiliency**

The National Academies of Science defines resilience as "...the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events."<sup>3</sup>

Infrastructure plays a critical role in storm resiliency and in turn creates numerous benefits for the community. Advances in green infrastructure are improving communities' ability to prevent flooding and pollution runoff during increasingly frequent wet weather events. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines green infrastructure as "...the range of measures that use plant or soil systems, permeable pavement or other permeable surfaces or substrates, stormwater harvest and reuse, or landscaping to store, infiltrate, or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to sewer systems or to reduce surface waters."<sup>4</sup> Green infrastructure plays a critical part in stormwater management to help reduce stormwater flows and the ability of pollutants and harmful toxins from entering into critical watersheds.

On October 25, 2019, NJDEP adopted new stormwater rules (N.J.A.C. 7:8) to replace the current requirement that major developments incorporate nonstructural stormwater management strategies to the "maximum extent possible" to meet groundwater recharge standards, stormwater runoff quantity standards and stormwater runoff quality standards, with a requirement that green infrastructure be utilized to meet these same standards. The new rules went into effect on March 2, 2021. In essence, the new rules will require a more objective review standard for stormwater management than the more subjective "maximum extent possible" by creating a mathematically based set of standards for projects to comply to with regards to stormwater design. The adopted changes also include changes to the infiltration of captured stormwater. The infiltration through best management practices can now be included in engineering calculations.

## **Energy Supply**

Strong weather events and stressor events such as heat waves creating brown outs have caused increasing stress on the resiliency of the energy supply throughout New Jersey. Further, there are more recent concerns with vulnerabilities in the energy

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<sup>3</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Resilience 101: How America can withstand wild weather, January 21, 2016, <https://www.noaa.gov/resilience-101-science-helps-america-withstand-wild-weather#:~:text=Resilience%20is%20the%20ability%20to.and%20improve%20long%2Dterm%20sustainability>.

<sup>4</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), What is Green Infrastructure?, <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20Congress%20enacted%20the.to%20store%2C%20infiltrate%2C%20or%20evapotranspire>

supply during cases of extreme weather events. In Penns Grove and most of Salem County, Atlantic City Electric is the main energy service provider. Power failure is a key hazard in the County, which results from high winds, lightning, winter weather, and technological failures. Widespread power outages during the winter months can directly impact vulnerable populations such as the elderly and medically frail, which makes the mitigation of these hazards a high priority for Penns Grove to plan for.

### **Flood-Prone Areas**

Adopted in 2014, and last updated in 2020, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) prepared the Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Map (PFIRM) in order to give residents a look at their homes projected risk to flood hazards. The FIRMs contain the most recent data of all high-risk flood areas in the United States. This information allows municipalities to create informed decisions about how to deal with flood zones as well as implement flood plans to protect their community and residents. By using the FIRM and elevating structures above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE), the Borough can help increase community resiliency and decrease vulnerability.

The Legislature of the State of New Jersey in NJSA 40:48-1 et seq., delegates the responsibility of the municipality to adopt ordinances that are designed to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the community. In relation to flood ordinances, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has created a model ordinance which many municipalities have adopted, “The Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance” that aims to protect citizens and minimize damage caused by flood events. An emerging issue faced by owners when attempting to elevate structures to lower flood damage risk is related to stricter building codes. Sometimes homeowners face issues with the Borough ordinance given the height of an elevated structure exceeds the maximum building height allowed by municipal zoning, requiring a zoning variance. If Penns Grove faces this issue, the Borough could implement a new ordinance allowing structures to elevate above the maximum building height when attempting to comply with the NFIP. This can help Penns Grove create a more resilient and sustainable community in the long term.

### **Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)**

Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) is an adaptable term used to describe an array of products, technologies and practices that use natural systems or engineered systems to enhance overall environmental quality and provide utility services. As a



general principle, green stormwater infrastructure techniques use soils and vegetation to infiltrate, evapotranspiration, cleanse, and/or recycle stormwater runoff and help resolve environmental issues related to non-point source pollution, water quality and storage. These technologies can simultaneously help improve air quality, reduce energy demands, mitigate urban heat islands, and sequester carbon while also providing communities with aesthetic and natural resource benefits.

Some examples of low-impact techniques of green stormwater infrastructure include rain gardens, swales, porous or permeable pavers, and rooftop gardens. Parks are also an ideal place to install highly visible demonstration rain gardens and other green infrastructure facilities. Ideally, all subdivisions and site plans subject to Borough approval should include the use of green stormwater infrastructure and continue to use non-structural best management practices (BMPs) identified in the NJ DEP Stormwater Best Management Practices Manual. In order to work towards a more resilient community and to preserve key natural resources within the Borough, it is critical to have the stormwater infrastructure in place to prevent the polluting of local waterways from runoff containing toxic and harmful materials. These practices can also better prepare Penns Grove for future threats, such as hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires.

During Superstorm Sandy, many New Jersey municipalities experienced heavy stormwater runoff from excessive rain, storm surges, and nearby flooding of rivers, streams, and lakes, sometimes all three at once. Standing floodwater remained in neighborhoods for days. To improve infiltration of stormwater Penns Grove can implement stormwater management practices that aim to collect stormwater runoff onsite or create natural ways to get runoff back into the ground before it can cause erosion, flooding, and damage to habitats, property, and infrastructure. A major advantage of GSI is their feasibility, given this approach to resiliency can be implemented at any location by any level of government or individual. Property owners, for example, have the option to capture stormwater through rain gardens, vegetated rooftops, and/or rain barrels. This makes implementation at different levels of government much easier, and it helps mitigate future threats in the long term.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Sustainability is the practice “to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations,” according to the National

Environmental Policy Act of 1969.<sup>5</sup> It is possible to think of sustainability as focusing on People, Planet, and Profit where the emphasis is on the social, economic and environmental. This fulfillment of social, economic and other requirements has been further refined and known collectively as the three E's or the triple bottom line: a stronger Economy, a healthier Environment, and a more Equitable community. Sustainability is important because it allows for healthier communities. It delivers results for cleaner soil, water, and air, ensures natural resources are not depleted, and overall, it ensures a nontoxic environment. Penns Grove recognizes the importance of sustainability and its positive effects on its residents and on the natural environment.

## IV. Recommendations

The following list of recommendations shall be considered and implemented as the Borough continues to amend and supplement its ordinances and policies to promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the Borough as related to land use:

1. The Borough ordinances shall be amended to address the following requirements:
  - a. Sidewalks and pedestrian connections shall be required along all street frontages.
  - b. All utilities shall be required to be installed underground.
  - c. Electric vehicle (EV) parking spaces and “make-ready” EV spaces shall be provided in accordance with State regulations.
  - d. Solar facilities should be considered as either permitted or accessory uses within certain zoning districts.
  - e. Stormwater management ordinance shall continue to be updated in accordance with State regulations.
  - f. Flood damage prevention ordinances shall continue to be updated in accordance with State/Federal regulations.
  - g. Adaptive reuse ordinances should be established to support the conversion and reuse of existing buildings, infrastructure, utilities, etc.

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<sup>5</sup> *United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Learn About Sustainability, <https://www.epa.gov/sustainability/learn-about-sustainability#:~:text=The%20National%20Environmental%20Policy%20Act.requirements%20of%20present%20and%20future>*

- h. An infill ordinance should be adopted to support development of vacant properties and provide incentives for development in areas of increased vacant lands.
- i. Establish a provision within the ordinance to allow for simplified change of use application processes when site improvements are not required.
- j. Sign regulations should be examined for continued viability and updated as necessary. Regulations should reflect the Borough's desired aesthetic and the reality of applications being approved.
- k. Revisions to parking regulations should be considered. Considerations include, but are not limited to, reducing required parking for certain uses or areas, the creation of a maximum parking requirement, electric vehicle charging stations, alternative paving materials such as porous pavement and reserve parking.
- l. Investigate current conditional uses and consider revisions or additional regulations. Uses under consideration include, but are not limited to, car washes, home occupations, apartments/dormitories, rooming house, religious institutions, accessory uses, educational facilities, repair facilities, drive-thru facilities and other car dependent uses.
- m. Evaluate specific uses permitted within each zoning district to determine additional appropriate uses to support economic development within the Borough.
- n. Consider expanding the R-3 zoning district to provide for additional multi-family residential development.
- o. Establish ordinance requirements to provide green stormwater infrastructure (GSI). Much of the Borough is built out (impervious coverage) resulting in periodic flooding of streets and basements during and immediately after rainstorm episodes. This combination has strained the storm sewer collection systems in the municipality. Requiring new single-family residential construction to install such GSI as dry wells and vegetated swales and incentivizing more widespread use of rain barrels by existing dwellings are just a few measures that can lessen the impact of storms and promote Penns Grove's sustainability.
- p. In addition to the existing known vacant properties, an additional assessment of the houses within the Borough should be undertaken to begin the process of assessing the appropriate means to remediate the issue.
- q. The Borough should continue to evaluate appropriate lands to be acquired and placed on the ROSI to benefit from funding offered through the Green Acres program through NJDEP.

- r. As part of its sustainability efforts, Penns Grove should consider becoming Sustainable Jersey certified, and adopting actions such as the Supporting NJ Wildlife Action Plan, a Tree Protection Ordinance, a Green Building Policy, and/or an Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) Report, which could provide key information about the Borough's environmental resources. An Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) Report can provide baseline documentation for measuring, evaluating, and protecting natural resources, and it is an important step in ensuring that future development or redevelopment projects will protect public health, safety, and welfare.
  - s. Establish bulk standards and design criteria to regulate development within the COS District and Marina Districts 1 and 2.
  - t. Add building height requirements for COS, H-C/I, and MD1 and 2.
  - u. Revise floor area ratio requirements to regulate floor area ratios, not percentages.
  - v. Section 450-61, which sets forth parking requirements, should be updated to reflect the requirements of the New Jersey Residential Site Improvement Standards N.J.A.C.5:21-1 et seq. Existing parking ratios should also be studied to determine whether existing requirements remain appropriate. Parking Standards - There is a need to reevaluate parking standards in order to encourage smart growth, ensure adequate parking availability, and balance parking needs with other community goals.
  - w. The Borough should develop regulations regarding the protection, removal or compensation of trees to be removed. Regulations should be considered so that when development occurs, the Borough has a mechanism to revegetate and compensate for tree loss.
  - x. Performance Guarantees. Ordinances should be updated to comply with revisions to state bonding requirements.
  - y. Review, update and refine definitions within the ordinance. It is important to consider the definition of words and confirm that the purpose of the ordinance is being satisfied. If additional classifications or standards are added to the Zoning Ordinance, the definition section should be updated accordingly. A definition should be provided for all verbiage which might otherwise leave room for interpretation.
2. Evaluate additional locations for the expansion of the Borough Municipal Building and Police Station. Currently, the existing municipal building is not sufficient to house municipal staff and police staff.
  3. Adopt Redevelopment Plans to incentivize development where appropriate.

- a. Draft and adopt a Redevelopment Plan for the recently designated Area in Need of Redevelopment – Block 95, Lots 10 and 14.
  - b. Waterfront area along Riverwalk
  - c. Main Street Corridor
  - d. Route 130 (Virginia Avenue) Corridor
  - e. Broad and Main Street Intersection
4. Evaluate potential uses for the waterfront property and abandoned pier extending into the Delaware River along the Riverwalk.
  5. Provide additional opportunities for recreation throughout the Borough through the development of tot-lots and other alternative recreational facilities.
  6. Consideration should be given to improving the Borough’s property maintenance ordinance to ensure occupied and vacant properties within Penns Grove are appropriately maintained. Resources and efficient code enforcement procedures will help prevent neighborhood decline, hold the responsible party accountable, and promote the overall well-being of the community. A foreclosure ordinance should be considered to address vacant and abandoned properties that are often the result of foreclosure. These ordinances would reduce the impact of poorly maintained and abandoned parcels on the community.
  7. Begin participating in the Community Rating System, a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management practices that exceed the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

## Chapter 2.1

# CLIMATE CHANGE-RELATED HAZARD VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT (CCRHVA)

### **A sub-element of the Land Use Plan Element.**

On February 4, 2021, Governor Murphy signed into law P.L. 2021, Chapter 6, an amendment to the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28), requiring any Master Plan Land Use Plan element to include a Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCRHVA). The Amendment shall rely on the most recent natural hazard projections and best available science provided by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).<sup>6</sup>

In the assessment, municipalities must consider the environmental effects associated with climate change, including, but not limited to, extreme weather, temperature, drought, fire, flooding and sea-level rise; and measures to mitigate reasonably anticipated natural hazards, such as coastal storms, shoreline erosion, flooding, storm surge, and wind.<sup>7</sup>

The CCRHVA is required to include:

1. Analyze current and future threats to, and vulnerabilities of, the municipality associated with climate change-related natural hazards, including, but not limited to increased temperatures, drought, flooding, hurricanes, and sea-level rise;
2. Include a build-out analysis of future residential, commercial, industrial, and other development in the municipality, and an assessment of the threats and vulnerabilities identified in subparagraph (i) of this subparagraph related to that development;
3. Identify critical facilities, utilities, roadways, and other infrastructure that is necessary for evacuation purposes and for sustaining quality of life during a natural disaster, to be maintained at all times in an operational state;
4. Analyze the potential impact of natural hazards on relevant components and elements of the master plan;

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<sup>6</sup> *New Jersey Legislature, P.L. 2021, CHAPTER 6, approved February 4, 2021, Senate, No. 2607 (First Reprint), <https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2020/AL21/6..HTM>*

<sup>7</sup> *Office of Planning Advocacy Department of State, Business Action Center, Municipal Climate Resilience Planning Guide, May 2022, <https://nj.gov/state/planning/assets/pdf/resilience-plan-guide.pdf>*

5. Provide strategies and design standards that may be implemented to reduce or avoid risks associated with natural hazards;
6. Include a specific policy statement on the consistency, coordination, and integration of the climate-change related hazard vulnerability assessment with any existing or proposed natural hazard mitigation plan, floodplain management plan, comprehensive emergency management plan, emergency response plan, post-disaster recovery plan, or capital improvement plan; and
7. Rely on the most recent natural hazard projections and best available science provided by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection;

## I. Analysis of Current and Future Threats and Vulnerabilities

*Analyze current and future threats to, and vulnerabilities of, the municipality associated with climate change-related natural hazards, including, but not limited to increased temperatures, drought, flooding, hurricanes, and sea-level rise.*

According to the 2016 Mitigation Plan for Four New Jersey Counties, through a process called the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA), Penns Grove is particularly vulnerable to coastal related hazards, including coastal erosion, sea level rise, flood, high wind, and levee failure. These natural hazards were identified as a high priority for the Borough. Other hazards identified as low priority include dam failure, drought, earthquake, extreme temperature (hot and cold), severe weather (summer and winter), and wildfire. The following subsections outline the Borough's assessment of the high priority natural hazards.

### **Coastal Hazards and Sea Level Rise**

Coastal hazards, specifically erosion and flooding, pose significant risks in developed coastal areas, leading to loss of life, property damage, and infrastructure disruption. Coastal storms, which can occur year-round and vary in intensity, contribute to these hazards. Storm surge-induced coastal flooding is a major threat, inundating land along the oceanic coast and estuarine shoreline. Factors like shoreline morphology, orientation, and storm frequency influence erosion. Coastal shorelines are dynamic, changing due to natural processes like wind, waves, tides, and human impact. Hazardous conditions like high winds, heavy surf, erosion, and fog often occur during storms, exacerbating coastal impacts. Coastal erosion causes economic losses by

destroying buildings, infrastructure, natural resources, and habitats. Attempts to counter erosion with structures like seawalls can worsen the problem. With reduced sediment transport, valuable coastal assets like beaches, dunes, and estuaries face a gradual disappearance due to vanishing sediment sources.

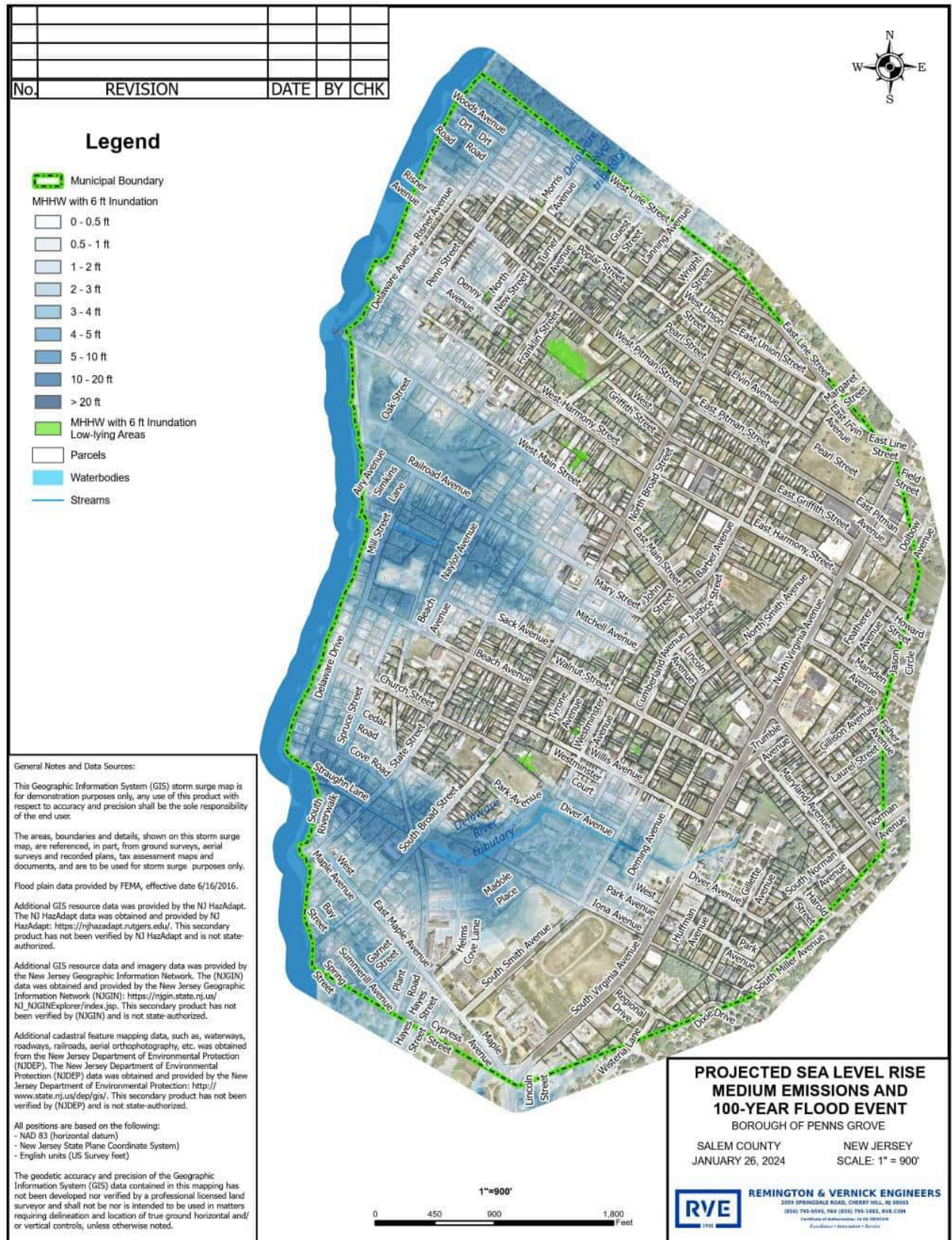
Using the Total Water Levels (TWL) Tool of the *New Jersey Floodmapper*, flood exposure analysis for Penns Grove can be developed using different scenarios of sea level rise estimates. The projections below have been created based on future emission projections and planning horizons to develop exposure maps for permanent inundation. Permanent inundation refers to the result of mean higher high water (MHHW) and sea level rise. Furthermore, in the projections below, a custom flood event height, such as 100-year-flood (1% Annual Exceedance Probability or AEP), was added to the permanent inundation exposure map to project future episodic flood events. TWL refers to the sea level rise and flood event height. The map below more closely corresponds to FEMA's Still Water Flood Elevations (SWEL), not the Base Flood Elevation (BFE). Therefore, this analysis could under-represent the amount of inundation, as the calculations do not consider wave velocity and other dynamic effects from storms.

As demonstrated by the mapping exposure below for the 2050 planning horizon, a 6 feet total water level would inundate much of the Borough's west side. This exposure map was developed using a 100-year flood event (1% AEP) (about 4.1 feet above the mean higher high watermark) with the assumption of moderate greenhouse gas (GHG) emission.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Corresponds to a future consistent with current global policies. (*NJ Floodmapper*)





There are three (3) types of flooding events: riverine (or fluvial) flood, flash (or pluvial) flood, and coastal flood.<sup>9</sup>

- Riverine or fluvial floods occur when intense rain events cause rivers and streams to overtop their banks.
- Flash or pluvial floods occur when intense rainfall causes a flood event that is not directly associated with a body of water.
- Coastal floods occur when sea level rises, high tides, and storm surge combine to create flood events.

While flooding risk due to climate change differs cross the various regions in the country, it is expected that the Northeast region of the United States will be susceptible to increased seasonal flooding. The findings of the New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change include that as annual precipitation has increased in the Northeast, the size and frequency of floods and flood potential in warmer months is increasing. Changes in the timing of floods could have serious implications for the communities impacted. Increased precipitation increases flooding risk. In addition, coastal areas are vulnerable to flooding from storm surge and increased intensity of coastal storms, as well as increased sea level rise.

Using the 100-year-flood (1% AEP) flood event, the following sea level rise heights are estimated according to the chances or percentages of sea level rise exceedance, level of GHG emissions, and planning horizon. In each of these sea level rise estimates scenarios, the total water level will vary. In particular, the higher the sea level rise estimate, emissions estimate scenario, and flood event height, the higher the total water level will be.

### Sea Level Rise Estimates Based on 100-Year Flood Event

		2030*	2050*	2070			2100			2150		
	Chance SLR Exceeds			Low GHG	Moderate GHG	High GHG	Low GHG	Moderate GHG	High GHG	Low GHG	Moderate GHG	High GHG
Low End	>95% chance	0.3	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.3	2.1	2.9
Likely Range	>83% chance	0.5	0.9	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.8
	~50% chance	0.8	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.4	2.8	3.3	3.9	4.2	5.2	6.2

<sup>9</sup> Climate Snapshots, Natural and Working Lands Exposure Snapshot, Penns Grove Borough, Salem County, August 29, 2022, <https://climatesnapshots.rutgers.edu/report/1708/naturalAndWorkingLands/>

		2030*	2050*	2070			2100			2150		
	<17% chance	1.1	2.1	2.7	3.1	3.5	3.9	5.1	6.3	6.3	8.3	10.3
High End	<5% chance	1.3	2.6	3.2	3.8	4.4	5.0	6.9	8.8	8.0	13.8	19.6

Source: NJ Floodmapper, August 2023 (\*Note: Same estimates for high, moderate, and low emission levels.)

Penns Grove sits on the Delaware River and has approximately one and a half mile of coastline. As identified in the Borough’s ordinance, the flood hazard areas of the Borough are subject to periodic inundation which results in loss of life and property, health and safety hazards, disruption of commerce and governmental services, extraordinary public expenditures for flood protection and relief, and impairment of the tax base, all of which adversely affect the public health, safety, and general welfare. These flood losses are caused by the cumulative effect of obstructions in areas of special flood hazard which increase flood heights and velocities and, when inadequately anchored, cause damage in other areas. Uses that are inadequately floodproofed, elevated or otherwise protected from flood damage also contribute to the flood loss.

### ***Increasing Temperatures***

According to the 2020 New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change, GHG emissions have risen since the late 1890s, leading to a 3.5°F increase in the State’s average temperature. This increase in temperature has increased faster than that of the northeast region and world. Temperatures in the State are expected to increase by 4.1°F to 5.7°F by 2050. With this change in temperate, it is expected that 70% of summers will be hotter than the warmest summer and less intense cold temperatures in the winter. Due to the high levels of urbanization in New Jersey, increased temperatures are felt more strongly. Increased temperatures also greatly impact human health due to heat stress factors. Populations living in urban areas are found to be more vulnerable to these factors. Additionally, respiratory and cardiovascular health problems can be exacerbated by poor air quality.<sup>10</sup> The 2022 Healthy Community Planning Report identified young children, senior citizens, outside

<sup>10</sup> 2020 New Jersey, *Scientific Report on Climate Change, June 30, 2020*, <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/data.html>

workers, and individuals taking certain medications are most susceptible to heat stress, such as dehydration, heat exhaustion, or heat stroke.

The Borough has been classified as predominantly (97%) “urban” land area, according to NJDEP land use cover data.<sup>11</sup> This classification depicts that the Borough has been developed extensively and that future development will be predominately through in-fill and the redevelopment of existing abandoned properties. As demonstrated in the map below, areas with impervious surface coverage between 81% and 100% are located predominantly on major corridors, including Main Street and Route 130.

While heat affects everyone, people who live in densely built areas are more at risk than those in suburban or rural areas. Penns Grove exemplifies an area with high impervious coverage. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), urbanized areas that experience higher temperatures than surrounding areas are known as heat islands. High impervious areas absorb and re-emit the sun’s heat more than natural landscapes. This is evident in that EPA data finds that daytime temperatures in urban areas are about 1°F to 7°F higher than temperatures in outlying areas and nighttime temperatures are about 2°F to 5°F higher.<sup>12</sup>

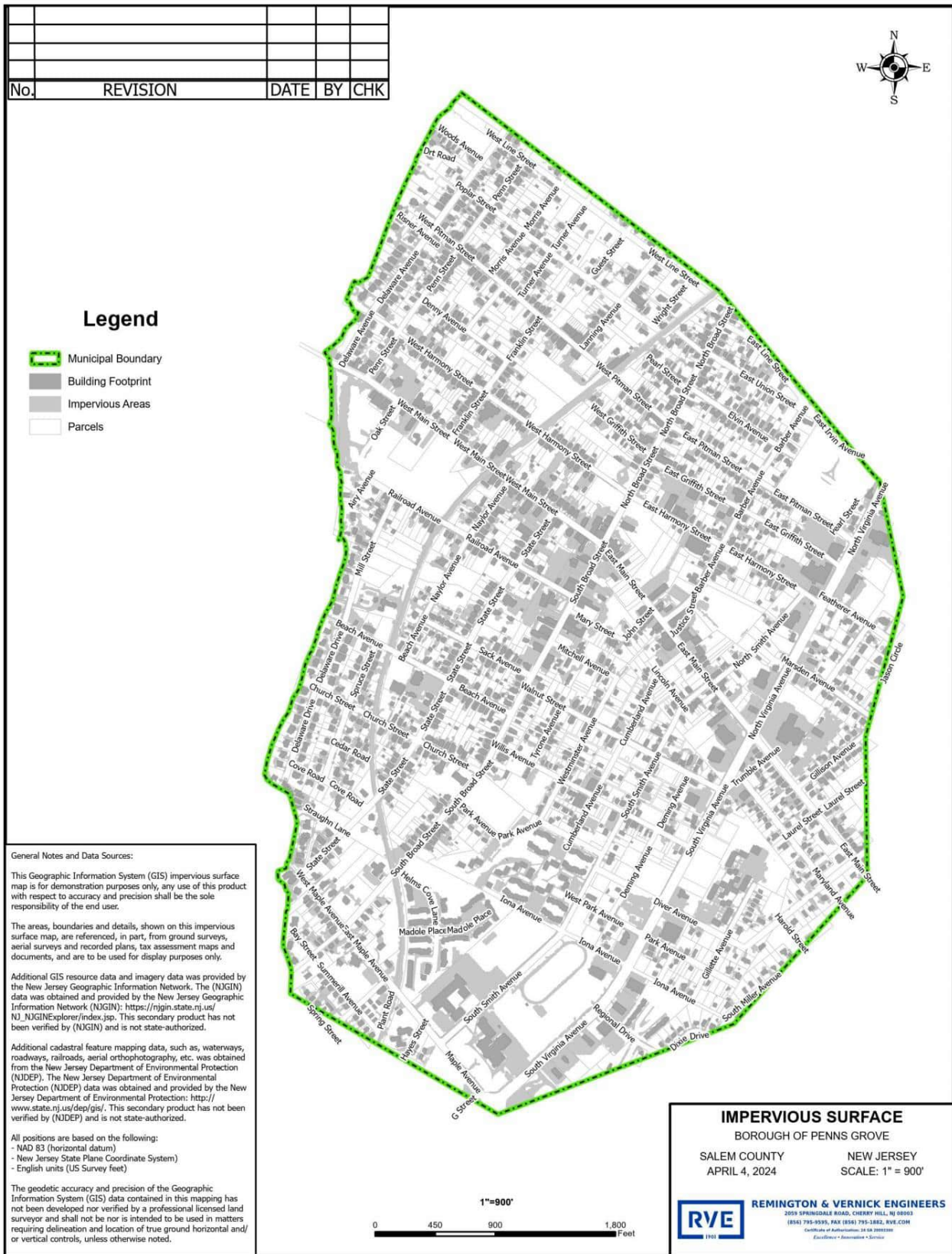
Heat islands can also compound days or periods of times that are already hot and humid in the summer season. This impacts a more sensitive group of people that are particularly at risk in this condition. These particular groups of people include older adults, young children, populations with low-income, people working outdoors, and people in poor health.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Bureau of GIS, <https://gisdata-njdep.opendata.arcgis.com/documents/021493a534e042be85aac0b96142a65f/about>

<sup>12</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Heat Island Effect, <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands>

<sup>13</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Heat Island Impacts, <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/heat-island-impacts>



## Air Quality

With the excessive impervious coverage and fiscal conditions faced by Penns Grove, which is further discussed in Chapter 3, the Borough is more likely to experience heat island effects and demographic inequities. These factors also intersect with other risk factors, such as air quality, especially in the summer season. The impact of heat island is high demand for electricity in the summer season. Usually, the increase in demand for electricity leads to an increase in air pollutant and greenhouse gas emission, as they are powered by fossil fuel. Air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions are harmful to the environment and human health.<sup>13</sup>

The 2020 Scientific Report on Climate Change indicates that the increase in air pollution is likely the cause of climate change. Air pollution increases respiratory and cardiovascular issues and premature deaths. Additionally, reduction in visibility and damage to crops and forests can also be expected with exacerbated air quality.

According to the Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP), New Jersey has been monitoring air quality since 1965 and the data shows that, as a result of state, regional and national air pollution reduction efforts, pollution levels have improved significantly over the decades . These efforts include the phase-out of leaded gasoline and removal of lead from paint and other products. The graphs available below illustrate more recent trends in pollutant concentrations.<sup>14</sup>

NJDEP prepares an air pollution forecast daily using the Air Quality Index (AQI) format. The AQI is a national air quality rating system based on the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). An index value of 100 is equal to the primary, or health-based, NAAQS for each pollutant, which includes ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and lead. If an area does not meet one or more of the NAAQS, it is designated by the EPA as a “nonattainment area,” and the state must develop a plan of action to meet the standard. EPA maintains a list of nonattainment areas for all six principal pollutants on its Green Book, which provides detailed information about the NAAQS designations, classifications, and nonattainment status.

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<sup>14</sup> New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), *Air Quality Trend Report, 2020*, <https://www.nj.gov/dep/airmon/pdf/2020-nj-aq-report.pdf#page=4>

According to the nonattainment area status for the 8-Hour Ozone (2015) NAAQS, the entirety of New Jersey is at a moderate ozone nonattainment classification, which is an area with a design value of 0.081 up to but not including 0.093 ppm.<sup>15</sup>

**New Jersey 8-hour Ozone Nonattainment Areas (2015 Standard)**

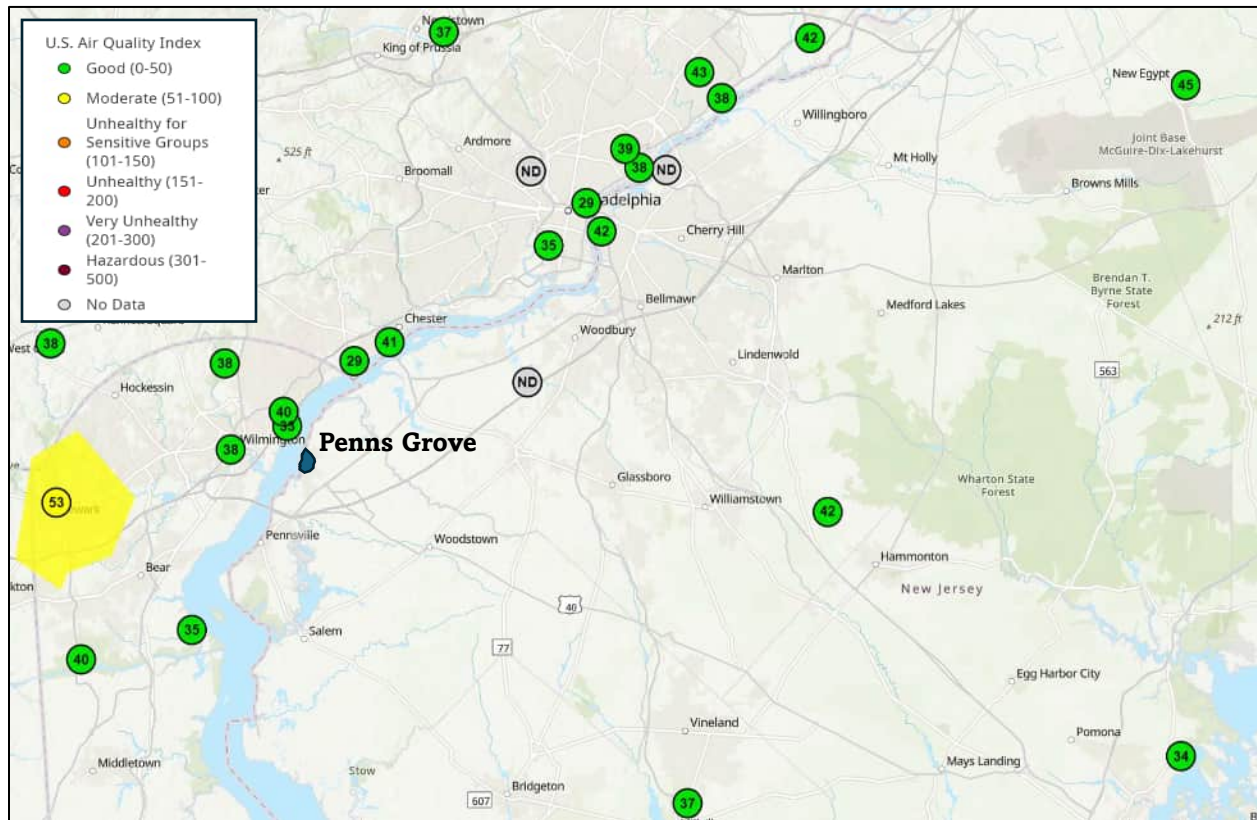
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**New Jersey 8-Hour Ozone Nonattainment Areas (2015 Standard)**

Based on the current AQI (see map below), New Jersey is generally at an acceptable level, which is represented by a numerical value between 0 to 50, and the air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk. Accordingly, no actions to protect public health are suggested at this level.

<sup>15</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Green Book, <https://www.epa.gov/green-book/green-book-8-hour-ozone-2015-area-information>



Air Quality Map (Ozone and Particulate Matter) <sup>16</sup>

### **Hurricanes and Other Extreme Weather Events**

The increase in temperature in the atmosphere also contributes to the warming of the oceans, which causes tropical storms to increase in intensity. Heavy precipitation events in the summer and fall season are normally caused by tropical storms in the northeast. Thus, changes in the temperature are likely to cause more intense conditions compared to past storms.

In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall in New Jersey. Along with Elsinboro and Carneys Point, Penns Grove rescued its residents from flooded areas, particularly for the residents near the Delaware River.<sup>17</sup> A study, *The Impact of Superstorm Sandy on New Jersey Towns and Households*, conducted by Rutgers, provided a measure of the impact of Hurricane Sandy on New Jersey municipalities by utilizing a Community

<sup>16</sup> AirNow, *Interactive map of Air Quality*, [https://gispub.epa.gov/airnow/?contours=ozonemp&monitors=ozonemp&basemap=basemap\\_2&tab=current&showlegend=yes&xmin=-8430562.282299362&xmax=-8169606.267733671&ymin=4829838.930845299&ymax=4949692.1911965](https://gispub.epa.gov/airnow/?contours=ozonemp&monitors=ozonemp&basemap=basemap_2&tab=current&showlegend=yes&xmin=-8430562.282299362&xmax=-8169606.267733671&ymin=4829838.930845299&ymax=4949692.1911965)

<sup>17</sup> *South Jersey Times*, *Hurricane Sandy in Salem County: 'We dodged a major bullet,' officials say*, Michael Williams, October 30, 2012, [https://www.nj.com/salem/2012/10/hurricane\\_sandy\\_in\\_salem\\_count.html](https://www.nj.com/salem/2012/10/hurricane_sandy_in_salem_count.html)

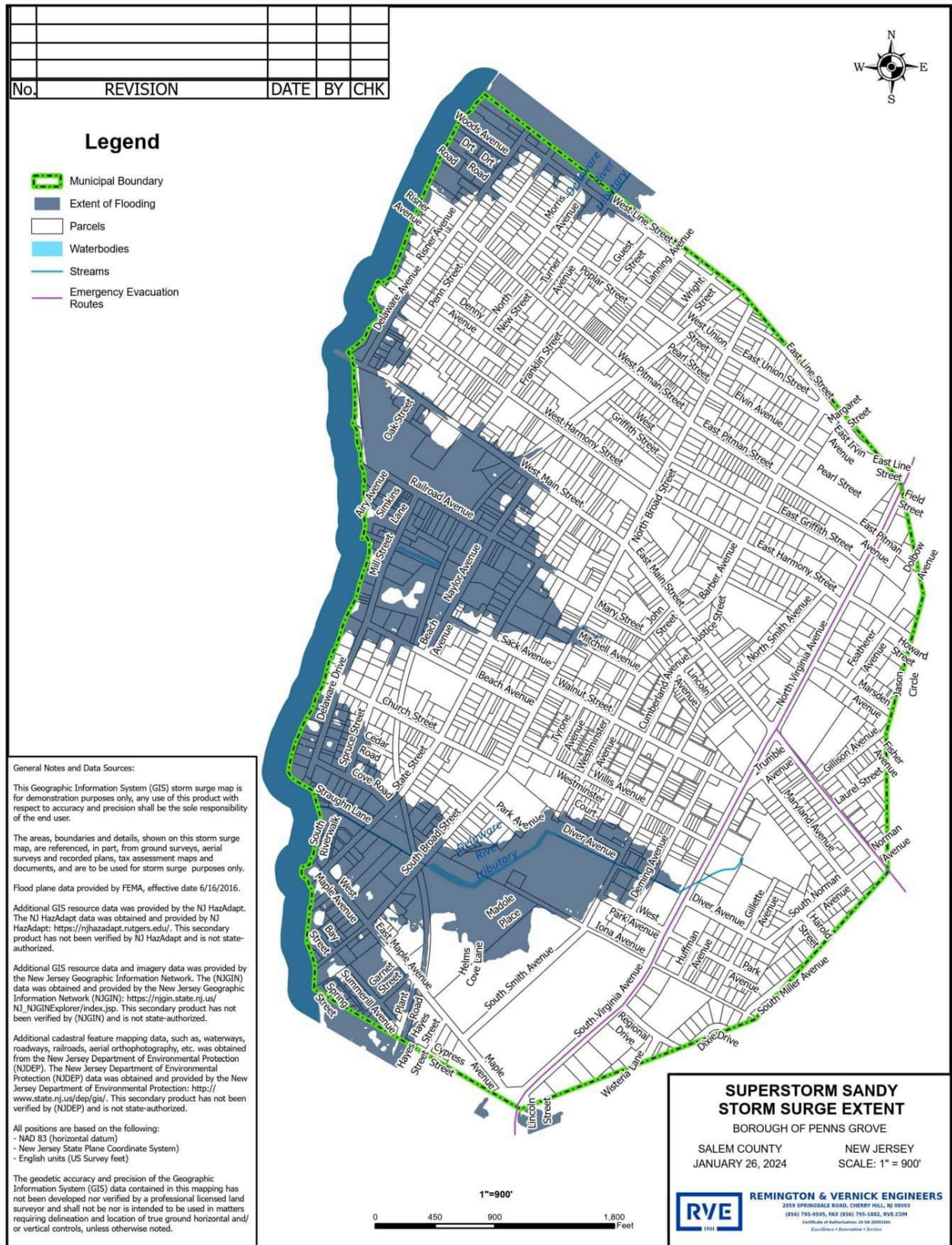


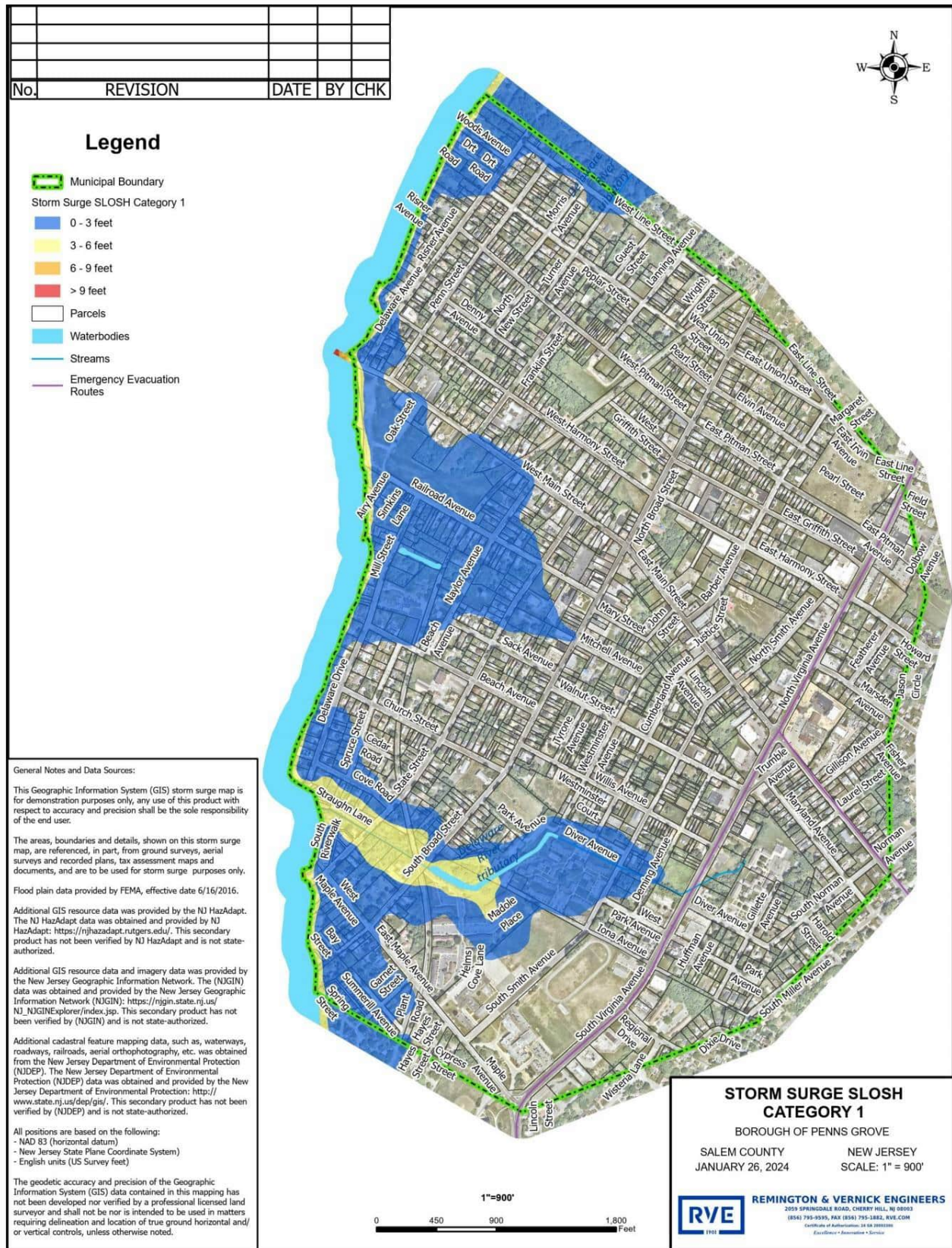
Hardship Index (CHI) measurement. The study found that Monmouth and Ocean Counties suffered the greatest impacts including power outages, residential damage, residents in shelters and gasoline shortages. Somerset, Middlesex, Union, Hunterdon and Morris Counties suffered significant residential damage. Hudson, Union, Essex, Middlesex, Bergen and Passaic Counties suffered significant commercial damage. Cape May and Atlantic Counties suffered municipal damage but did not have long power outages when compared to other counties nor was residential and commercial damage as widespread. No significant hardship was seen in most of Gloucester, Camden, Cumberland or Salem Counties, while minor impacts were only seen in Mercer, Burlington, Sussex and Warren Counties. The study states that the repair of aging infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Sandy is estimated at a cost of \$25 billion. Penns Grove had an index rank of 30 among the hardest hit towns.<sup>18</sup> While Salem County, or Penns Grove Borough for that matter, did not suffer a huge extent of damage from Hurricane Sandy, in the long term, the Borough remains vulnerable to such extreme natural events.

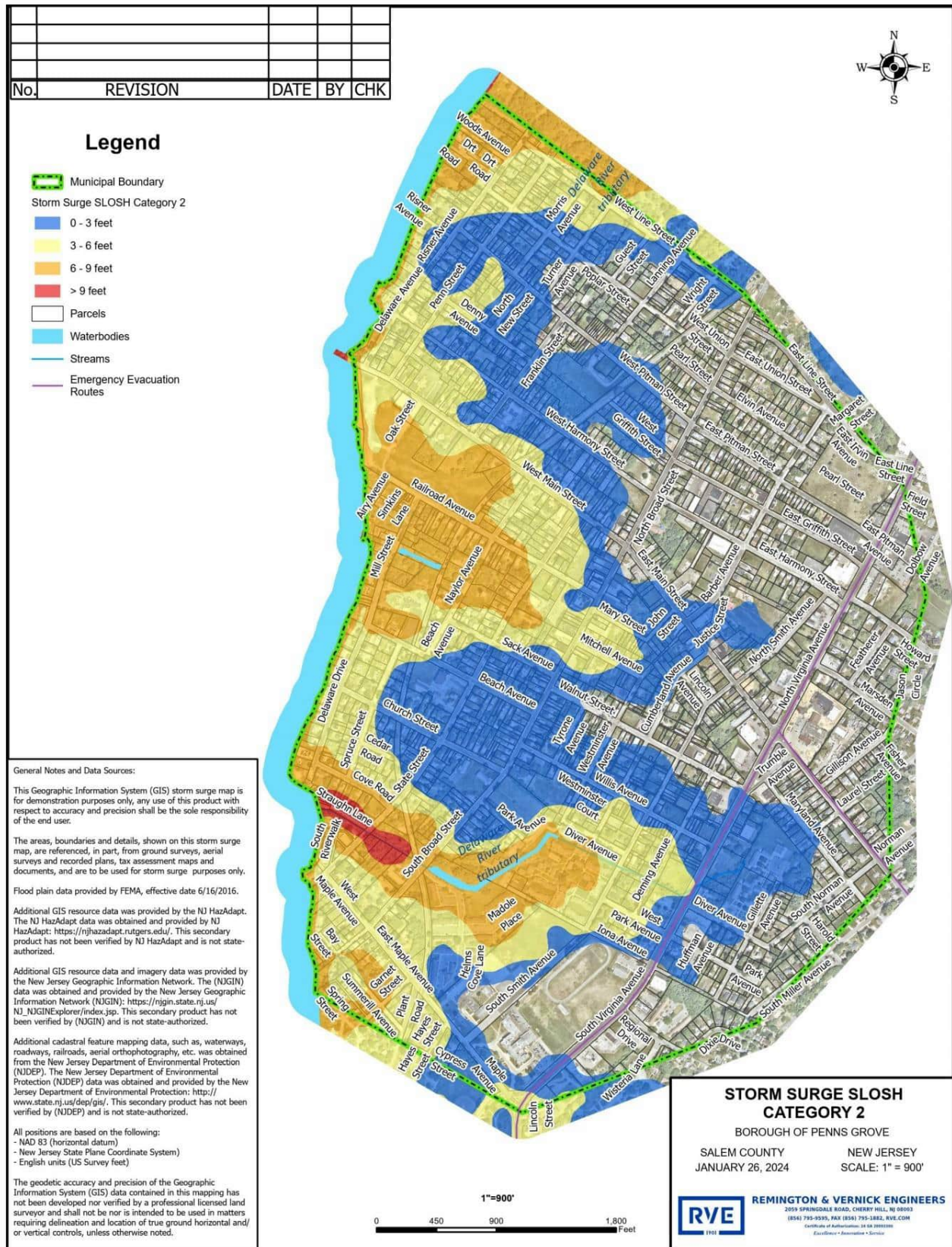
In 2014, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) launched the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC), which awarded nearly \$1 billion in HUD Disaster Recovery funds to 13 states and communities across the country. The program identified the extent of damage to impacted localities in the country, not only by Hurricane Sandy but also by other severe storms or events, such as Hurricane Irene and Isaac. Salem County was not identified in the list designated as the most impacted counties. The program identified that about 5.5% of the Borough's housing units were damaged. These homes are with a FEMA Individual Assistance inspection showing real property or personal property damage. Approximately 3.6% of these homes were identified with serious damage, which refers to the number of owner-occupied housing units with real property FEMA inspected damage of \$8,000 or greater and/or 4 or more feet of flooding on the first floor; plus, the number of renter-occupied housing units with personal property FEMA inspected damage of \$2,000 or greater and/or 4 or more feet of flooding on the first floor.

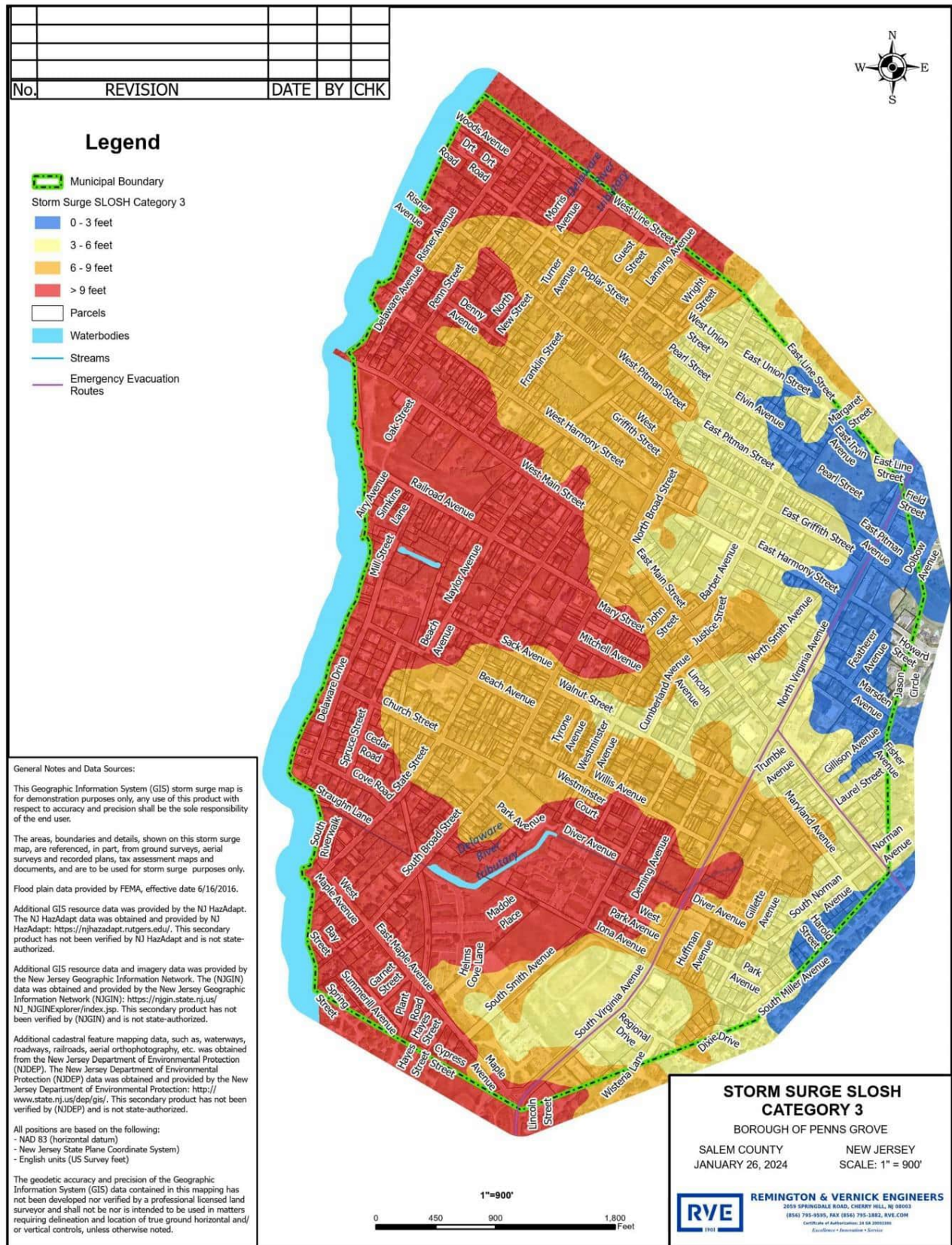
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<sup>18</sup> Rutgers-Newark, School of Public Affairs and Administration, *The Impact of Superstorm Sandy on New Jersey Towns and Households*, Stephanie Hoopes Halpin, PhD, 2013, <https://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/rutgers-lib/44886/PDF/1/play/>









## II. Build-Out Analysis

*Include a build-out analysis of future residential, commercial, industrial, and other development in the municipality, and an assessment of the threats and vulnerabilities identified in subsubparagraph (i) of this subparagraph related to that development.*

### **Areas Protected from Development**

A build-out analysis should begin with determining areas in the Borough that are unlikely to be developed in the future. As the Borough comprised predominantly of “urban” land, as classified by NJDEP land use cover data, future development can be anticipated to occur predominantly through in-fill development and redevelopment of existing properties. The Borough has very limited open space, and it is crucial that the Borough maintain these open spaces as best as possible from development. Other environmentally sensitive areas to be protected should also include the areas where wetlands are present.

Public facilities and infrastructure, including non-profit owned properties, used for schools, utilities, and emergency services are also areas that should be protected from development.

### **Developed Areas**

This section outlines the areas in the Borough that have been developed with existing buildings and other types of development to some degree, such as parking lots, driveways, and other impervious improvements. The presence of existing buildings within the parcel boundaries was used to confirm that each of these parcels had been developed to some degree. The building footprint was determined using an impervious coverage layer from the NJDEP 2015.

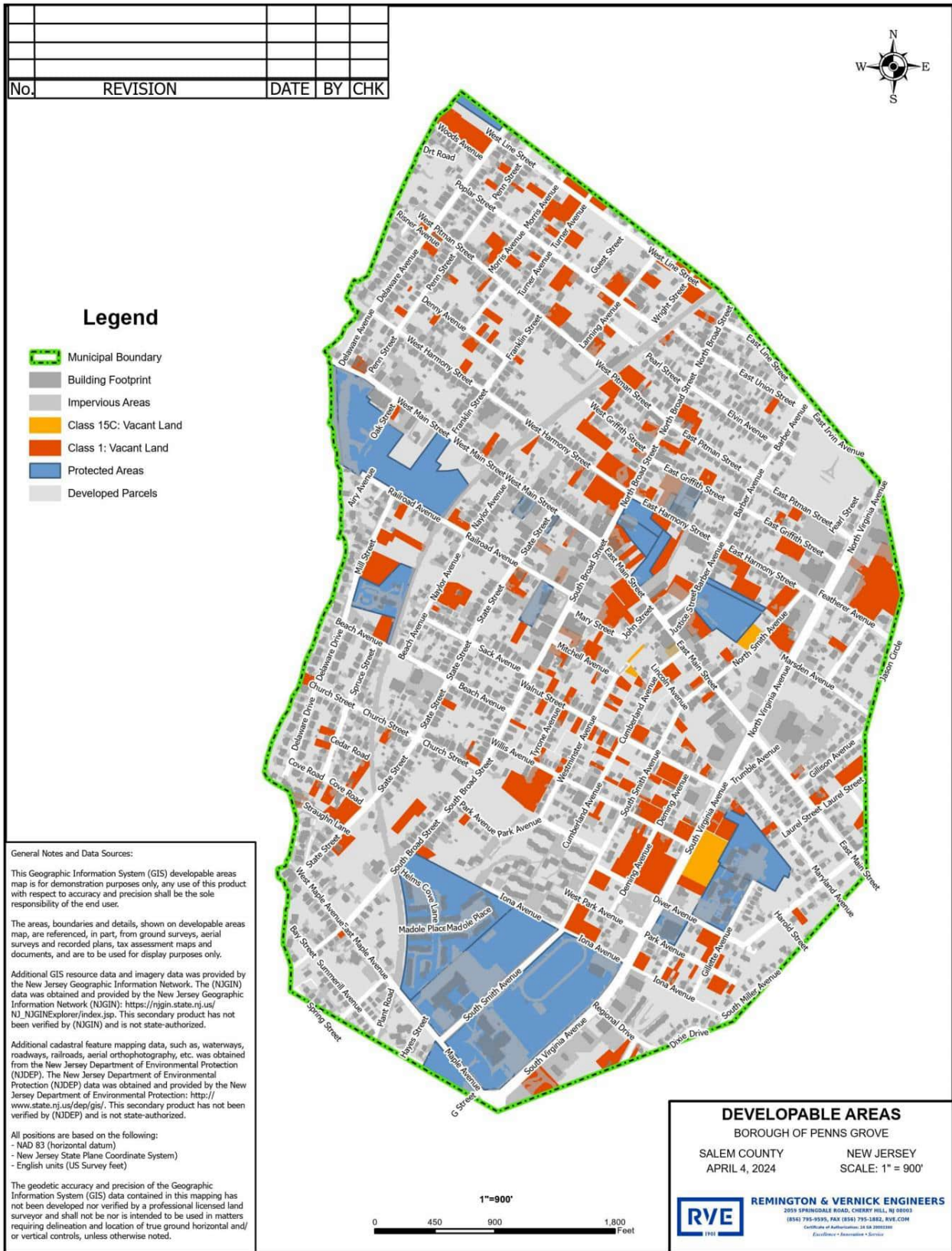
The table below illustrates the total acreages of each zoning district in the Borough and the makeup of said zoning districts relative to the overall area of the Borough. As shown below, approximately 87% of the Borough’s overall land area has been developed. Marina District 2 contains the largest amount of undeveloped land approximately 50% of the zones total area. This calculation accounts for the large parcel (Block 57, Lot 1) bounded by West Main Street, Railroad Avenue, and the Delaware River. Though this lot is undeveloped, the Borough is restricted in its development as it is listed in the Recreation and Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) of the NJDEP.

**Developed Areas by Zoning District**

<b>Zoning District</b>	<b>Total Area (acres)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total Developed Parcels (acres)</b>	<b>%</b>
R-1 Residential 1	±138	±24.2%	±128	±92%
R-2 Residential 2	±265	±46.4%	±220	±83%
R-3 Residential 3	±35	±6.2%	±35	±100%
COS Commercial, Office, Service	±42	±7.3%	±34	±80%
H-C/I Highway Commercial Industrial	±49	±8.5%	±44	±91%
MD-1 Marina District 1	±23	±4.1%	±22	±97%
MD-2 Marina District 2	±19	±3.3%	±12	±49%
<b>Total</b>	<b>±571 acres</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>±495</b>	<b>±87%</b>

***Developable Areas***

When the protected areas and developed areas are combined, it is evident that the Borough is almost fully developed. Thus, only small areas are available for new development. The developable areas are classified as private-owned and public-owned vacant lands. Vacant lands are approximately 56 acres or about 10% of the Borough. The vacant land parcels were dataset obtained from MOD-IV Tax List Search database dated November 2022.



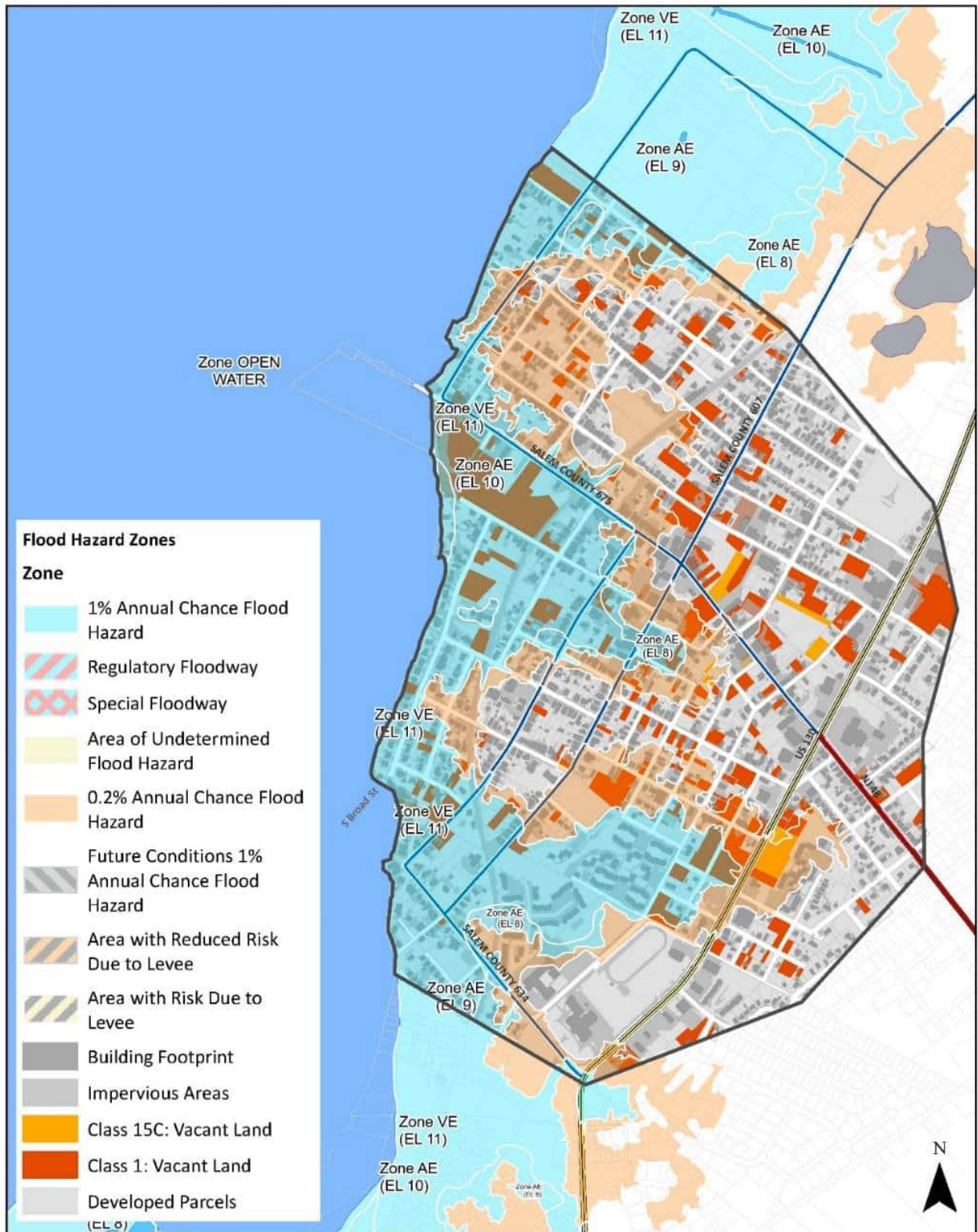


## **Developable Areas Vulnerable to Climate Change-Related Hazards**

The map below displays the vulnerability of the developable lands in the Borough from climate change-related hazards. In order to promote development away from sensitive areas, the Borough must recognize developable parcels that intersect a flood hazard area. While some developable properties intersect a floodplain, it is possible to develop a portion of the property located outside of the flood hazard area. These areas may be able to accommodate some development that can be designed to be protected from potential impacts of flooding.

Development within flood hazard areas requires careful planning adherence to strict design standards and mitigation strategies to minimize risks and damage. Some key considerations for Penns Grove should include the following:

- Buildings should be elevated above the base flood elevation to reduce the risk of flood damage. Design standards may specify minimum elevation requirements based on floodplain maps and ordinance.
- Use materials that are resistant to water damage, such as concrete, brick, and metal, for building construction. Avoid materials that can be easily damaged by flooding, such as wood and drywall.
- Incorporate floodproofing techniques into building design, such as waterproof seals, flood barriers, and sump pumps, to prevent water intrusion during flood events.
- Install anchoring systems to secure buildings to their foundations and prevent them from being displaced by floodwaters.
- Design openings and vents to allow for the free flow of water during floods while preventing debris from entering the building. Install flood vents to equalize water pressure and reduce structural damage.
- Elevate electrical, HVAC, and other utilities above flood levels or locate them in flood-resistant enclosures to prevent damage and ensure continued functionality during floods.
- Ensure that buildings have multiple means of emergency access and egress, including elevated evacuation routes, to facilitate safe evacuation during flood events.
- Ensure that buildings are accessible to people with disabilities, including during flood events, by incorporating features such as ramps and elevators that remain operational during floods.



BOROUGH OF PENNS GROVE

### III. Critical Facilities and Infrastructure

*Identify critical facilities, utilities, roadways, and other infrastructure that is necessary for evacuation purposes and for sustaining quality of life during a natural disaster, to be maintained at all times in an operational state.*

Municipal facilities and infrastructure are essential in supporting the wellbeing of Borough residents. During emergency events, such as natural hazard events, these facilities and infrastructure become more critical. They are critical in minimizing the extent of short and long-term adverse effects of natural hazard events to the community. The most immediate concern in the event of an emergency is mitigating the immediate dangers that threaten the physical wellbeing of the community. Following an emergency event, municipal services and facilities will continue to play an important role in ensuring that the community is able to access essential necessities, including food, water, medical supplies, and electricity.

Another important consideration in identifying and bolstering critical infrastructure to become more resilient is the need for emergency services of the Borough, County and State to be able to access locations which may be flooded, snowed over, etc. Post-flooding, or post-disaster scenarios are the moments when emergency services are needed the most and ensuring that there are functioning roadways to all parts of the Borough is a necessary consideration within the context of disaster planning.

It is important to consider critical facilities in community planning and development process in order to protect them from natural hazards. A lack of consideration for critical facilities and services can result in the loss of lives, injuries, property damage, delayed recovery and restoration of utilities and other services, and disruption of vital economic activity.

**Critical Facilities and Infrastructure**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Sub-Type</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Shelter (Y/N)</b>	<b>Generator (Y/N)</b>
Borough Hall	Municipal	Administrative Offices	1 State Street	N	N <sup>19</sup>
Police Station	Law Enforcement Facilities	Stations	1 State Street	N	N
Fire Station	Fire Station	Stations	39 East Harmony	N	N

<sup>19</sup> Penns Grove Borough has current plans to fund and install back-up emergency power generator for the Borough Hall / Police Station. (per 2016 Mitigation Plan)

Name	Type	Sub-Type	Address	Shelter (Y/N)	Generator (Y/N)
Emergency Medical Services Station	EMS	Stations	25 East Griffith	N	N
Straughen's Lane Stormwater Pump Station	Utilities – Stormwater	Pump Stations	10 Straughn Lane	N/A	N
Mill Street Stormwater Pump Station	Utilities – Stormwater	Pump Stations	71 Mill Street	N/A	N
Delaware Avenue Stormwater Pump Station	Utilities – Stormwater	Pump Stations	138 Delaware Avenue	N/A	N
Wastewater Treatment Plant	Utilities-Wastewater	Treatment Plans	81 Beach Avenue	N/A	Y
Penns Grove Middle School	School	Public School	351 Maple Avenue	N <sup>20</sup>	N
Paul W. Carleton Elementary School	School	Public School	251 Maple Avenue	N	N
Penn Towers	Vulnerable Populations Facilities	Age-Restricted Housing	40 South Broad Street	Y <sup>21</sup>	Y

Source: 2016 Salem County Hazard Mitigation Plan<sup>22</sup>

### **Infrastructure**

The Borough should continue to assess the sustainability of critical infrastructure and increase resiliency whenever possible, including transportation networks or corridors and utility infrastructures. US Route 130 passes through the Borough, in a north-south

<sup>20</sup> As of October 16, 2014, Penns Grove Borough Schools are being evaluated by the American Red Cross for use as shelters.

<sup>21</sup> Shelter-in-place.

<sup>22</sup> Mitigation Plan for Four New Jersey Counties, Salem County Appendices, September 16, 2016, <https://readysalem.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/mitigation-plan-web.pdf>

direction, providing connections to the greater area, as well as New Jersey State Route 48. Both US Route 130 and State Route 48 serve as evacuation routes.<sup>23</sup> Other major corridors in the Borough include East and West Main Street (County Route 675), Broad Street (County Route 607), and Maple Avenue (County Route 634). The Borough also has a wastewater treatment plant located on Mill Street and Beach Avenue.

While the major corridors identified above are state- and county-owned, Penns Grove can still play a significant role in advocating for and influencing sustainability and resiliency. Penns Grove can consider the following ways in getting involved to ensure that county and state infrastructure planning is sustainable and resilient:

- Advocate for sustainable infrastructure policies at the state and county levels, such as promoting renewable energy, green building standards, and transportation initiatives that reduce carbon emissions.
- Engage in collaborative planning efforts with county and state agencies to incorporate sustainability principles into infrastructure projects. This can involve participating in advisory committees, joint planning sessions, and intergovernmental partnerships.
- Share local data and insights with county and state agencies to inform infrastructure planning decisions. Penns Grove can provide valuable information on local environmental conditions, community needs, and sustainability priorities.
- Facilitate public engagement processes to gather input from residents and stakeholders on infrastructure projects. Penns Grove can host public forums, surveys, and workshops to solicit feedback on sustainability goals and priorities.

By actively engaging with county and state agencies, advocating for sustainable policies, and providing support and expertise, Penns Grove can help ensure that infrastructure planning and development are conducted in a manner that promotes environmental stewardship, resilience, and long-term sustainability.

Transportation networks provide critical evacuation routes during major hazard events and should be made a priority. This includes ensuring that the roadway will be elevated and designed to remain above water inundation levels from storm surges.

In 2021, the Penns Grove Sewerage Authority authorized Remington & Vernick Engineers, Inc. to evaluate the Borough's existing utilities. The report, Penns Grove Sewerage Authority Sanitary Utility System Asset Evaluation & Capital Improvement Plan, provides a summary of the Authority's major utility facilities, findings, and

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<sup>23</sup> New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (OEM), *Evacuation Routes*, <https://nj.gov/njoem/plan-prepare/evacuation-routes.shtml>

potential improvements regarding the physical condition, operation, and maintenance of these facilities.

An asset inventory of the sanitary system facilities summarizing the age, service life, remaining life, probability of failure, and consequence of failure score and analysis was provided in the report. 22 % of the identified assets are over 50 years old; 36% are between 30 and 49 years old; and 42% are less than 15 years old. While the Borough's utility infrastructure is old, the report notes that utility personnel have done well maintaining the infrastructure and that the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) facilities appear to be in good working condition. The report recommended that the Authority develop a long-term plan for sewer main replacement or lining.

### **Emergency Response Facilities**

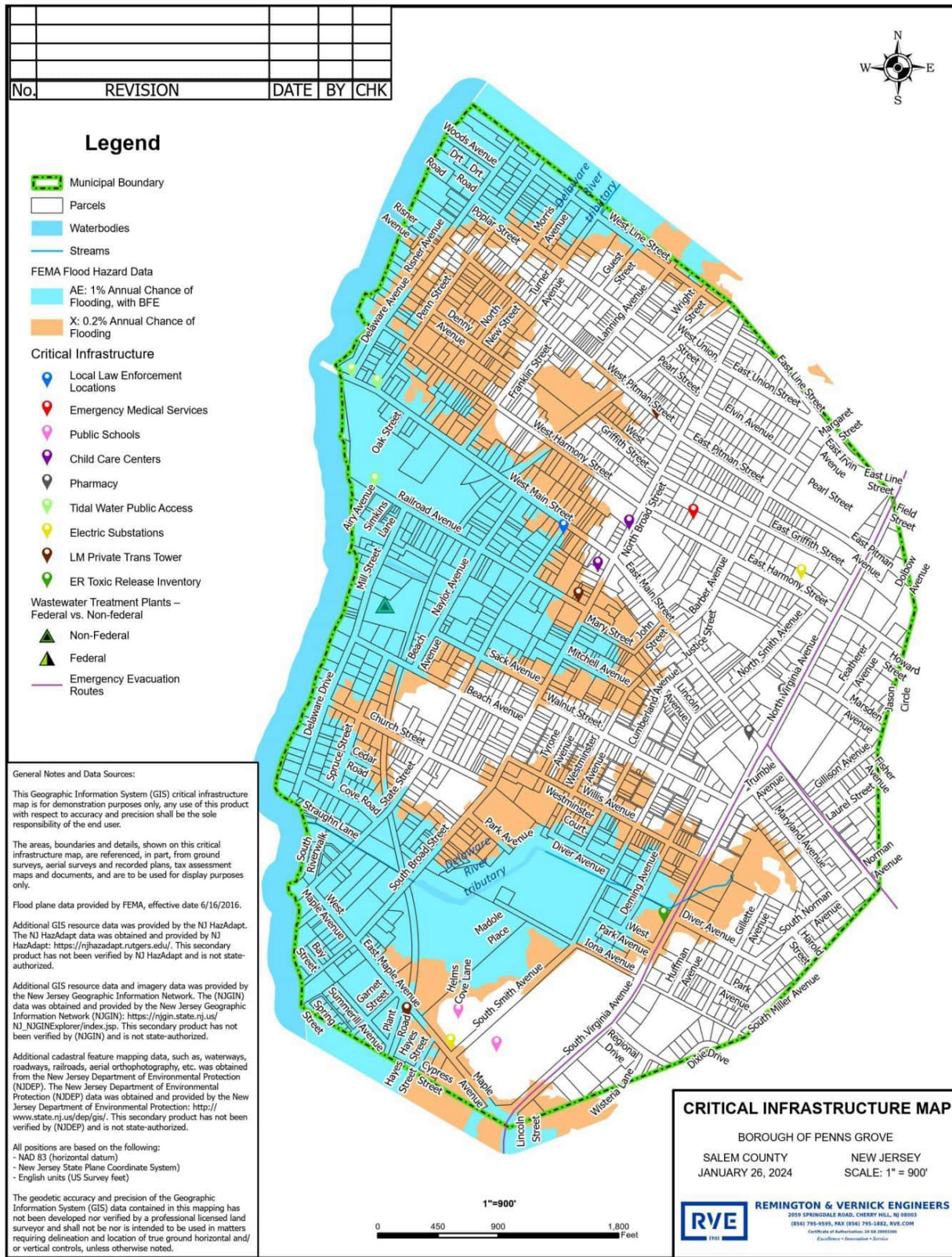
Shelters, hospitals, police stations, and fire stations support continuity of services and sustain key functions for the community during and after natural events or hazards. Emergency response facilities in the Borough include the following locations:

- Penns Grove Police Department
- Penns Grove EMS, also known as Squad 4, has two ambulances that serve Penns Grove and lend assistance to the surrounding communities of Salem County.

The Borough should continue to evaluate and establish emergency response procedures with Salem County on an ongoing basis. As of the drafting of this Master Plan, Salem County is currently updating the County Hazard Mitigation Plan.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Salem County, New Jersey, Salem County 2023 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, <https://cityofsalemnj.gov/salem-county-2023-multi-hazard-mitigation-plan-update/>



## **IV. Potential Impact on Master Plan and Elements**

*Analyze the potential impact of natural hazards on relevant components and elements of the master plan.*

Taking into consideration the specific climate change-related hazards affecting the Borough and the findings from the other sections, including the review of critical facilities and infrastructure, the following are the relevant master plan elements that the Borough Planning Board may wish to consider updating as part of a comprehensive climate change planning strategy.

### ***Economic Development Plan Element***

In conjunction with the preparation of the Land Use Plan Element and this CCRHVA, the Borough is also preparing an Economic Development Plan Element. The Economic Development Plan Element is prepared in consideration with the CCRHVA in the following manners:

- Revise or update the plan to support the economic viability of the Borough after a natural disaster.
- Assess the potential impacts on the local tax base from a natural disaster.
- Recognize the economic impact that natural disasters and climate change related hazards may have on the local economy and develop strategies to address these impacts.
- Analyze the uneven economic impacts that climate change-related hazards may have on the residents in the Borough.

## **V. Strategies and Design Standards Recommendations**

In the face of natural hazards and climate change Penns Grove Borough should employ sound planning practices through the promotion of land use policies that are resilient. The Borough should consider incorporating the following strategies and design standards to increase resiliency to storm surge events and other natural hazards which may impact the community:

1. Promote adaptive reuse and redevelopment of existing developments or structures.



2. Amend zoning ordinance to require that accessory buildings be properly anchored and secured to the ground to minimize the generation of potentially hazardous and dangerous flood debris.
3. Reexamine zoning ordinance to ensure that buildings can be constructed or retrofitted in a way that maximizes resilience to flooding and sea level rise.
4. Ensure development and redevelopment is informed by current and future coastal hazards and incorporates resiliency.
5. Ensure that existing building, property maintenance, and zoning codes are strictly and uniformly enforced to ensure the maximum safety and integrity of buildings and structures and minimize the vulnerability to damage from potential flood and storm events.
6. Consider preparation of a Green Building and Environmental Sustainability Element.
7. Identify and mitigate areas of localized nuisance flooding.
8. Promote water conservation programs, such as by sponsoring rain barrel workshops, as ways to manage residential stormwater while also reducing the need for irrigation.
9. Promote the use of drought-tolerant native vegetation in public and private landscaping.
10. Actively seek funding opportunities to elevate.
11. Actively seek and promote funding opportunities for property owners to raise buildings, driveways, bulkheads, yards, and wetlands to critical flood control elevations.
12. Actively seek grant funds to install or replace aging stormwater drainage system infrastructure.
13. Actively seek funds and technical assistance to advance Borough green infrastructure efforts.
14. Apply green infrastructure strategies, such as bioretention, blue roof<sup>25</sup>, permeable pavement, underground storage systems, stormwater tree trench, retention pond, extended detention wetlands.

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<sup>25</sup> *Massachusetts Clean Water, Rooftop Detention (Blue Roofs)*,  
<https://megamanual.geosyntec.com/npsmanual/rooftopdetentionbluroofs.aspx#:~:text=Rooftop%20detention%2C%20also%20known%20as,of%20stormwater%20detention%20are%20impractical.>

15. Promote natural infrastructures, such as swales and rain gardens.
16. Incorporate green infrastructure and Low Impact Development into existing plans.
17. Provide individual homeowners and businesses with information about how to correctly maintain green infrastructure design elements (i.e., rain gardens, vegetated swales, and other installations).
18. Seek opportunities to incorporate climate change adaptation measures into existing plans.
19. Building code requirements:
  - a. Adopting building codes and establishing a program of plan and building inspections.
  - b. Adding or increasing the community's local freeboard requirement for mechanical and electrical equipment and structures to one (1) foot or greater.
  - c. Require new residential development, walkways, driveways, and roadways be elevated and designed such that dryland access to evacuation routes out of the floodplain area is provided.
  - d. Adopting standards for fill compaction, slope, materials, and armoring.
  - e. Using check valves, sump pumps, and backflow prevention devices in homes and public facilities.
  - f. Implement a safe room program to disincentivize use of basements in the Special Flood Hazard Area
20. Prepare and adopt an emergency response or operations plan, which should address:
  - a. Development of communication protocols related to flood threats;
  - b. Development of consistent warning content, made publicly available on city, county, or state government websites;
  - c. Collaboration with existing city, county, or state emergency management communications;
  - d. Public education on sources of flood warning information
21. Using trees and vegetation to reduce heat islands and launched initiatives to reduce heat inequities.
  - a. Increase trees and ground cover on private property and cool heat islands in an equitable way.

## VI. Consistency and Coordination with Other Plans

*Include a specific policy statement on the consistency, coordination, and integration of the climate-change related hazard vulnerability assessment with any existing or proposed natural hazard mitigation plan, floodplain management plan, comprehensive emergency management plan, emergency response plan, post-disaster recovery plan, or capital improvement plan.*

The Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) requires that the CCRHVA include a specific policy statement on the consistency, coordination, and integration of the CCRHVA with any existing or proposed natural hazard mitigation plan, floodplain management plan, comprehensive emergency management plan, emergency response plan, post-disaster recovery plan, or capital improvement plan.

### **2016 Mitigation Plan for Four New Jersey Counties: Salem County Appendices**

The Mitigation Plan for Four New Jersey Counties (NJ4 HMP) incorporates input from approximately ninety (90) participating counties and municipalities in Camden, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem Counties. The NJ4 HMP is an update and expansion of the South Delaware Valley Region Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plans that were adopted by all four counties and approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in 2010 and 2011. At the time of the writing of this CCRHVA, Salem County and participating jurisdictions, including Penns Grove, is developing a multi-jurisdictional multi-hazard mitigation plan as an update to the 2016 mitigation plan.<sup>24</sup>

The CCRHVA builds on the data provided in the mitigation plan and is consistent with the mitigation strategies, goals, and measures presented in the mitigation plan. The Borough should continue to coordinate with the County on the implementation of the hazard mitigation strategies described in the mitigation plan and continue to participate in the subsequent updates of the plan.

### **Penns Grove Sewerage Authority Sanitary Utility System Asset Evaluation & Capital Improvement Plan**

In 2021, an assessment of the Borough's existing sanitary facilities was conducted, including an analysis of both above ground and below ground infrastructure. The

assessment includes an assessment of the facilities' operation and maintenance. Recommended improvements necessary for the long-term sustainability of the system are also explored in the study, including associated costs over a 5-Year Planning Period.

The assessment identified a small number of capital assets nearing or past their expected lifetime that will require replacement in the near future, including an emergency generator, pump motors, blower motors, and variable frequency drives (VFDs). Additionally, many of the improvements detailed in the report address maintenance and the necessary routine replacement to existing mechanical elements in the system. It was also found that much of the existing underground infrastructure is composed of asbestos cement pipe (ACP) that is over 60 years old. ACP has an expected lifetime of 100 years. Thus, the assessment recommended that a long-term plan be developed for sewer main replacement or lining to maintain the system as the sewer mains reach the end of their expected lifetime. Furthermore, during large storm events, the capacity of the system has at times been exceeded.

## VII. Flood Inundation Mapping

The flood inundation mapping provided in this section depicts the extent and depth of flooding in specific areas of the Borough during a flood event. These maps show the areas that are expected to be flooded based on various factors such as topography, hydrology, land use, and the intensity of the rainfall or river flow.

These maps are valuable tools for emergency management, urban planning, and risk assessment purposes. They can help the Borough understand their vulnerability to flooding, identify high-risk areas, and develop strategies for flood mitigation and response. These maps can also be used to communicate flood risk to residents, businesses, and policymakers, aiding in decision-making and preparedness efforts.

In consultation with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), the New Jersey Climate Change Resource Center at Rutgers University developed a tool, *The Climate Planning Tool*, for municipalities to use in developing this type of mapping. The resource center provides currently available data to assess the vulnerability of a location to climate change and natural hazards. The tool is intended

to provide helps support various efforts such as climate resilience planning, hazard mitigation planning, and master plan development.<sup>26</sup>

The flood inundation mapping below depicts several scenarios, including a 2-foot, 3-foot, 5-foot, and 7-foot inundation levels. These inundation levels are consistent with the flood hazard areas previously depicted in this plan. Across these maps, critical infrastructures in the Borough are depicted in order to visually understand the location of these infrastructures relative to areas impacted by flooding. At 5-foot inundation, a few critical facilities will become vulnerable. Several more infrastructures become vulnerable at 7-foot inundation.

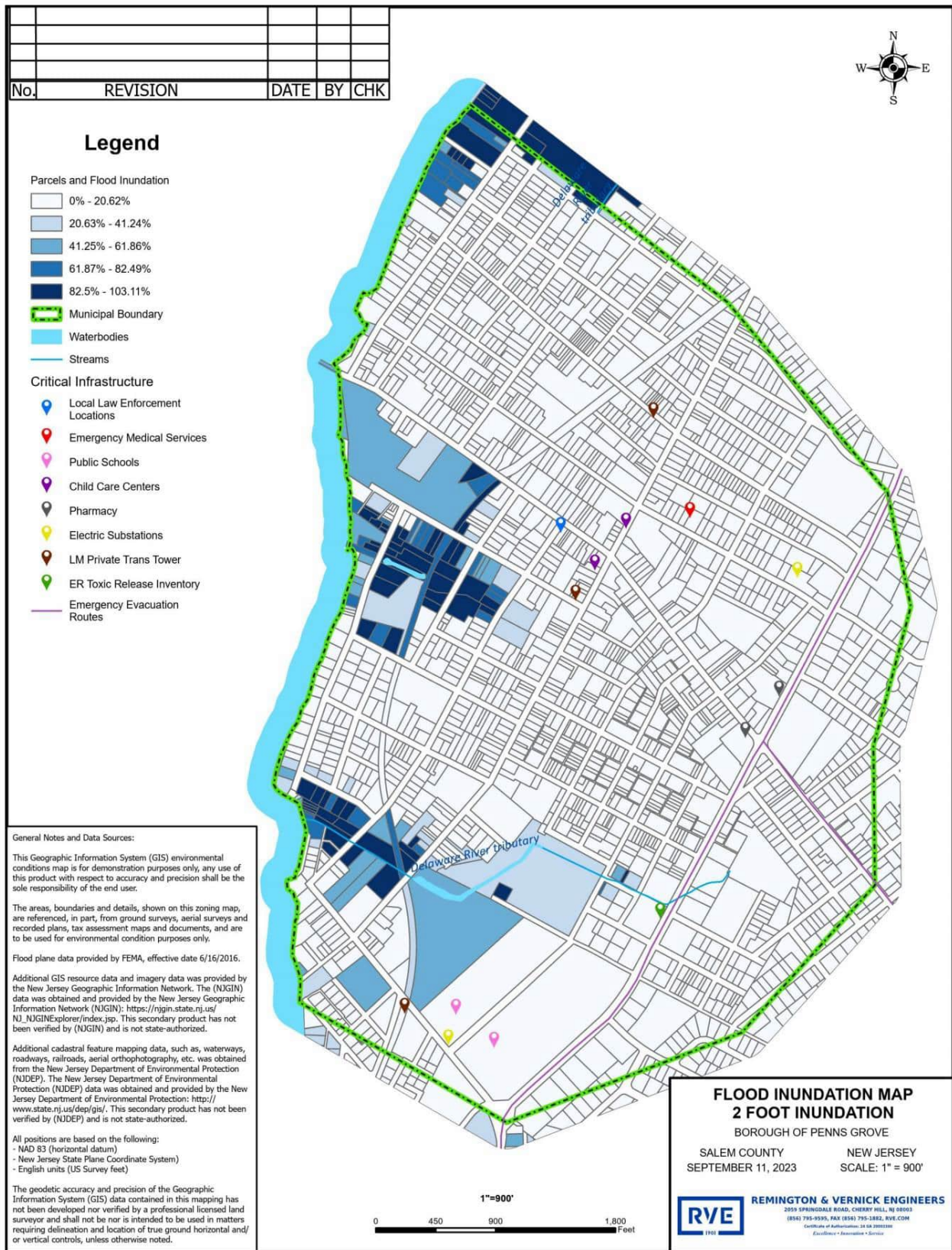
Protecting critical infrastructure from flooding is essential for several reasons:

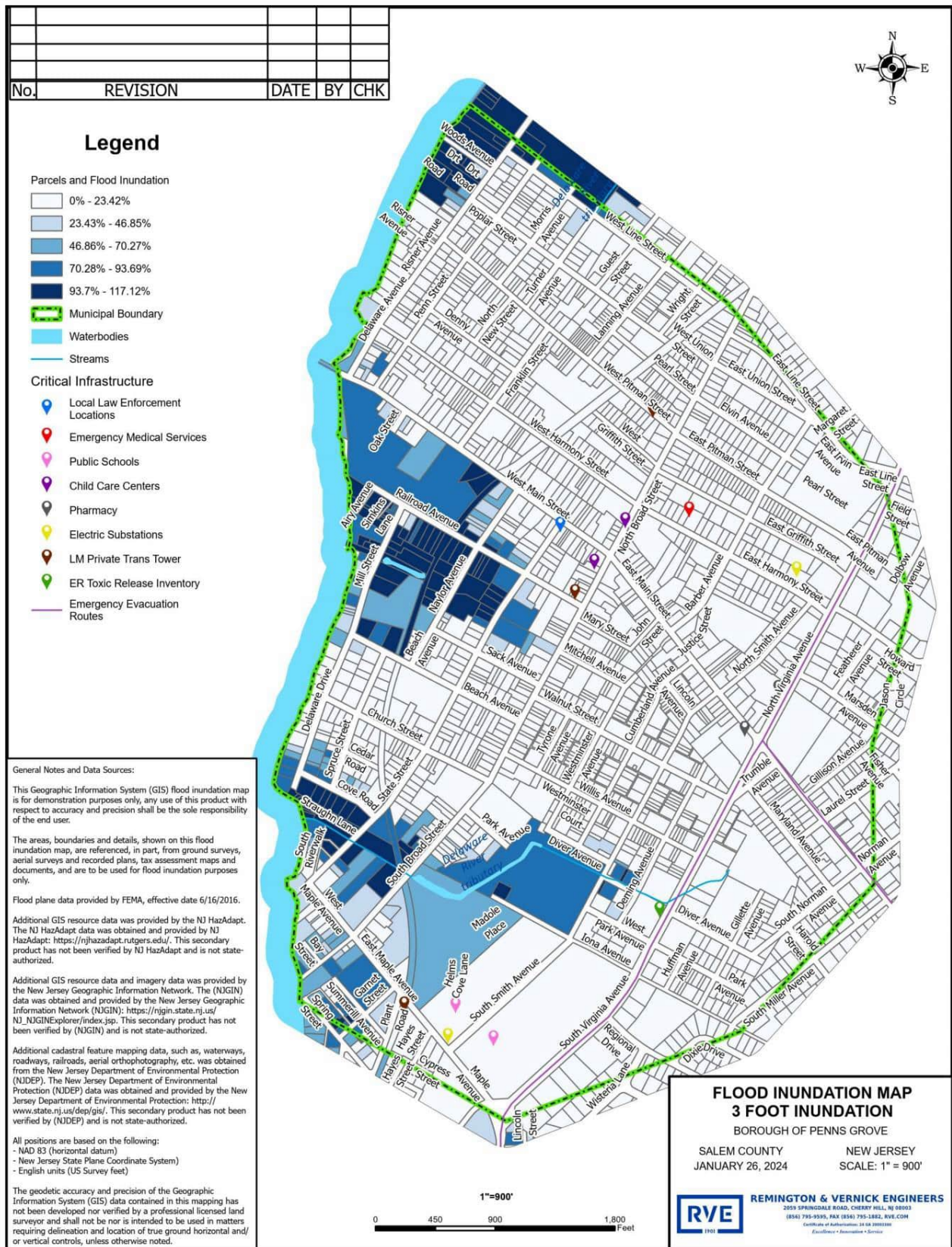
- Critical infrastructure, such as hospitals, emergency response facilities, and water treatment plants, play a vital role in public safety and well-being. Flooding can disrupt these services, jeopardizing public health and safety.
- Infrastructure such as transportation networks, power plants, and communication systems are essential for economic activity. Flooding can damage or disrupt these systems, leading to significant economic losses due to property damage, business interruption, and loss of productivity.
- Protecting critical infrastructure from flooding enhances community resilience by ensuring that essential services remain operational during and after a flood event. This enables communities to recover more quickly and maintain continuity of operations.
- Flooding can lead to contamination of water supplies, release of hazardous materials, and damage to environmental resources. Protecting critical infrastructure helps prevent or minimize these environmental and public health impacts.
- Vulnerable populations, such as low-income communities and people with disabilities, rely heavily on critical infrastructure for access to essential services. Protecting this infrastructure helps ensure equitable access to resources and services during and after a flood event.

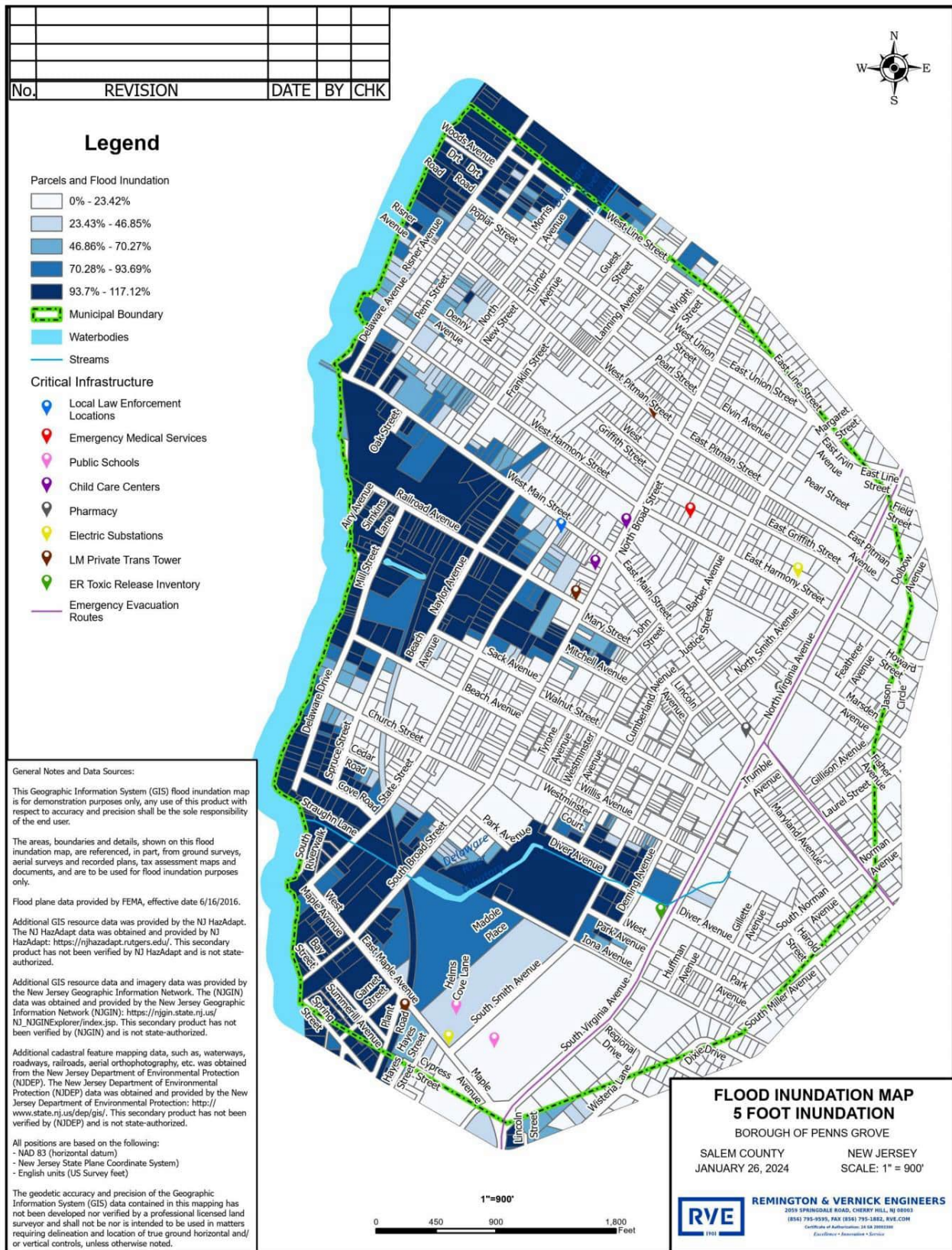
Overall, protecting critical infrastructure from flooding is crucial for safeguarding public safety, maintaining economic stability, promoting community resilience, and ensuring social equity and environmental protection.

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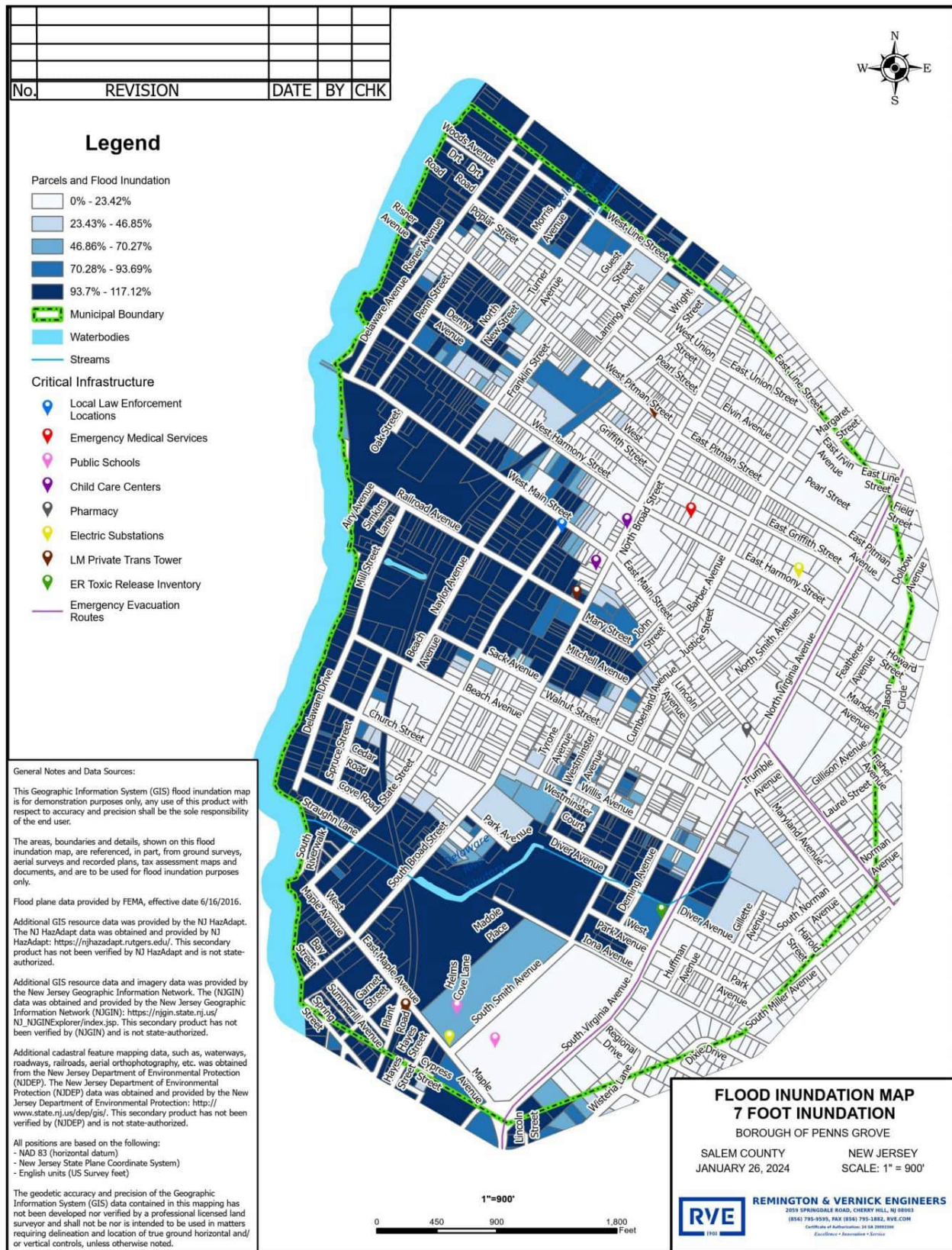
<sup>26</sup> Rutgers University, New Jersey Climate Change Resource Center, *The Climate Planning Tool - GIS Assessment Steps*, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/db081930c0844e38a0e257f49b088c91>











## CHAPTER 3

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN ELEMENT

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Over the past two decades, the Borough of Penns Grove has experienced limited housing and non-residential development. The Borough ranks fourth on New Jersey's 2020 Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI), signaling economic distress and worsening economic conditions. To address these challenges, Penns Grove developed a Fiscal Evaluation & Recommended Recovery Plan in November 2020. The plan identifies a recurring structural deficit, leading to a heavy reliance on State Transitional Aid (TA). Without TA, the Borough would require a significant tax rate increase. The budget condition reveals an annual structural deficit, contradicting the program's goal of transitioning municipalities towards self-sufficiency. The Borough also faces challenges with low property tax collection rates, a shrinking tax base, and persistent arrearage of property taxes. The Fiscal Evaluation & Recommended Recovery Plan aims to provide a roadmap for economic stability and success, addressing the Borough's structural deficit and dependence on state aid.

In August 2022, a Preliminary Investigation Report further highlighted the Borough's fiscal instability, showcasing persistent arrearage of property taxes due to foreclosures, deeded properties, and municipal liens. With only a limited number of ratable line items, the reported substantial uncollected or cancelled tax payments further underscore Penns Grove's economic struggles.

The Borough has witnessed a fluctuating population trend, experiencing a 9% decrease between 1980 and 1990, followed by a modest 5% increase between 2000 and 2010. Projections from the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO) anticipate slight growth, reaching 4,900 residents by 2040, representing a 1.3% increase from the 2020 US Census. Despite the increase in Penns Grove, Salem County's overall population is expected to decline by 11% from 2020 to 2040. Allow median income and high unemployment and poverty rates contribute to the MRI ranking the Borough at #4 in the State of New Jersey.

Analyzing the workforce composition, several industries in Penns Grove experienced a decline of at least 50% between 2010 and 2021, including manufacturing, retail trade,

transportation, warehousing and utilities, information, finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing, public administration, and other services. Conversely, education services, healthcare, and social assistance, as well as arts, entertainment, recreation, and food services, saw a doubling in workforce. The largest industry in the Borough, according to the 2021 US Census estimate, is education services, healthcare, and social assistance. However, the majority of people employed in Penns Grove live outside the municipality, emphasizing the Borough's commuter dynamics. Additionally, educational attainment reveals that approximately 40% of residents aged 25 and older hold a high school graduate degree or equivalent, with a median income of around \$51,000, while less than 7% possess a graduate or professional degree with a median earning of approximately \$58,000.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Demand Occupations List identifies occupations with the highest projected change from 2018 to 2028, primarily in health, education, and energy industries. Penns Grove's employment landscape is dominated by educational services, health care and social assistance, accommodation and food services, and retail trade. The municipality's workforce distribution aligns with the trade, transportation, and utility industry, emphasizing the importance of diversification and capacity-building across various sectors to expand the Borough's taxable base and align with future workforce demands outlined by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

To address the economic challenges, the Borough should consider implementing infill development strategies. Infill development offers several benefits, such as cost savings by utilizing existing infrastructure, raising property values, promoting sustainable transportation, and fostering community stability. The Office of Sustainable Communities of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends a multifaceted approach involving policy implementation, partnership development, and changing public perception to build a strong foundation for infill development, along with securing and implementing funding mechanisms. The recommended strategies encompass four key initiatives: priorities, policies, partnerships, and perception:

**Infill Development Strategies**

<b>PRIORITY AREAS</b>
Strategy 1: Identify Priority Infill Development Areas
<b>POLICIES</b>
Strategy 2: Expedite Development Review
Strategy 3: Set Impact Fees
Strategy 4: Ease Parking Requirements
Strategy 5: Adopt Flexible Codes
Strategy 6: Offer Density Bonuses
Strategy 7: Flood Mitigation

Strategy 8: Put Public Offices in Infill Locations
<b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>
Strategy 9: Seek State and Regional Partners
Strategy 10: Identify and Engage Key Anchor Institutions and Philanthropic Organizations
Strategy 11: Create a Public Sector-Developer Liaison
Strategy 12: Shared Services
<b>PERCEPTION</b>
Strategy 13: Strengthen Code Enforcement
Strategy 14: Build Complete Streets
Strategy 15: Create a Business or Special Improvement District
Strategy 16: Hold Public Events and Festivals in Infill Locations
Strategy 17: Initiate a Neighborhood Identity Campaign
Strategy 18: Smart Technology/Software Data Tracking System
<b>FUNDING</b>
Strategy 19: Enact a Property Tax Abatement Program
Strategy 20: Implement a Land Banking Program
Strategy 21: Encourage Crowdfunding for Projects and Businesses
Strategy 22: Generate Revenue through Naming Rights and Advertising

In the priorities initiative, identifying focus areas for infill development is crucial. With Penns Grove already pinpointing the waterfront area as a key focus, along with other areas marked by high vacancies, blight, and abandonment, primarily concentrated in commercial zones, the Borough has been evaluating appropriate areas for infill. These areas include major corridors, such as Main Street, Broad Street, and Route 130, and brownfield sites.

The policies initiative emphasizes the importance of establishing a comprehensive policy framework to guide decision-making, ensure compliance with regulations, and promote transparency. Specific policy strategies include expediting development review, setting impact fees, easing parking requirements, adopting flexible zoning codes, adopting an adaptive reuse ordinance, offering density bonuses, and implementing flood mitigation measures. These policies aim to streamline the development process, encourage economic growth, and address flooding concerns.

The critical role of partnership strategies is emphasized in this Economic Development Plan. These partnership strategies aim to capitalize on diverse strengths, foster inclusivity, and drive sustainable and resilient transformations. Collaborating with stakeholders, such as government entities, community groups, and private investors, ensures a holistic approach, incorporating various perspectives and expertise. This collective effort leads to more

effective and sustainable solutions aligned with community needs. Partnerships also facilitate resource-sharing, reducing the burden on individual entities, and promote a unified vision for the community. Notably, partnerships can enhance access to funding sources, garnering support from government entities, philanthropic organizations, and private investors impressed by collaborative community efforts.

Strategies for enhancing the perception of the Borough is a multifaceted approach. Strategies may include strengthening code enforcement, building complete streets, creating business improvement districts, holding public events in infill locations, initiating a neighborhood identity campaign, and implementing smart technology for data tracking.

Lastly, strategies on infill development and infrastructure funding strategies can be achieved through property tax abatement programs, land banking, community development corporations, crowdfunding support, tax increment financing districts, and revenue generation through naming rights and advertising. These initiatives collectively aim to foster community pride, economic vitality, and a positive environment conducive to growth and redevelopment.

While the strategies outlined in the policies, partnership, perception, and funding sections are particularly developed for the identified key focus areas, many of these strategies can be utilized throughout the Borough. A careful study before implementation enhances the strategy's overall effectiveness, adaptability, risk management, resource optimization, stakeholder/community vision alignment, and measurable outcomes.

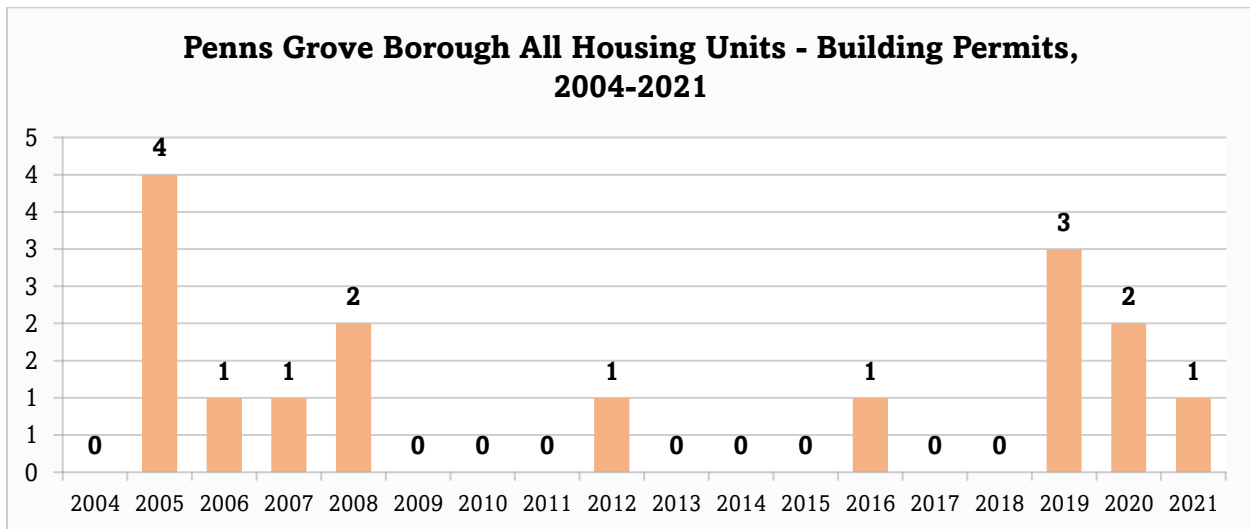
The 2021 General Reexamination of the Master Plan highlights key recommendations crucial for advancing the Borough's economic development objectives. Notable recommendations include updating ordinances for electric vehicle (EV) charging, encouraging EV infrastructure through grant programs, evaluating the need for new municipal buildings and community facilities, addressing brownfield sites for economic development, and implementing strategic rezoning initiatives. The identification of key focus areas for redevelopment aims to strategically allocate resources for impactful transformations and are recognized as redevelopment opportunities with multifaceted benefits, addressing economic, environmental, and social aspects. Overall, a holistic approach involving strategic priorities, effective policies, collaborative partnerships, community engagement, and public perception is essential for Penns Grove to overcome its economic challenges and achieve successful redevelopment.

## **I. Development Activities and Economic Status**

### ***Residential Development***

Over the last 20 years, there have not been a significant number of housing units constructed in the Borough. According to the New Jersey Department of Community

Affairs (NJDCA), since 2005, the Borough has seen the construction of 16 new housing units, which are all one- and two-family homes.<sup>27</sup>



The table indicates the number of dwelling units for which building permits were issued in Penns Grove and surrounding communities since 2000. While Penns Grove has experienced a total increase of 16 units over the last 20 years, the neighboring Carney’s Point issued 401 building permits, resembling a drastic difference in residential development over the past two decades.

Between 2010 and 2020, only 8 building permits were issued for housing units in Penns Grove, which is the exact same number of permits that were issued between 2000 and 2009. The small number of permits issued in Penns Grove is likely associated with the lack of vacant, developable land.

***Nonresidential Development***

In comparison to other municipalities with close geographic or demographic makeup, according to NJ DCA, Penns Grove has had very little non-residential development activity since 2000. Since 2000, the Borough has had approximately 29,700 square feet of office space construction, approximately 17,500 square feet of retail space, and approximately 17,500 square feet of other nonresidential space construction.

**Nonresidential Development Authorized by Building Permits by Square Feet** Error!  
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<sup>27</sup> New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJ DCA), Building Permit Issued for New Dwelling Construction, [https://www.nj.gov/dca/codes/reporter/building\\_permits.shtml](https://www.nj.gov/dca/codes/reporter/building_permits.shtml)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Office Space</b>	<b>Retail Space</b>	<b>Other Non-Residential</b>
2000	25,413	0	12,240 (Education)
2001	0	0	0
2002	0	0	1,280 (A-3, Assembly Use)
2003	3,404	0	0
2004	0	0	0
2005	0	0	0
2006	0	6,889	0
2007	0	0	0
2008	0	0	0
2009	0	0	0
2010	0	0	0
2011	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0
2013	0	3,034	0
2014	924	0	0
2015	0	0	196 (Storage)
2016	0	0	2,057 (Storage)
2017	0	0	0
2018	0	1,629	0
2019	0	0	0
2020	0	0	0
2021	0	6,001	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,741</b>	<b>17,553</b>	<b>15,773</b>

### **Economic Status**

Out of 564 New Jersey municipalities, Penns Grove is ranked #4 on the 2020 Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI), just behind Camden City, Salem City, and Atlantic City. In 2017, Penns Grove was ranked #7, indicating that the economic condition of the municipality has worsened.

The Borough is the second highest ranked municipality in Salem County that provides Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), with about 40% of its residents participating. The average percentage of population of a municipality in SNAP in the State is 6%. The Borough also has the second highest poverty rate (at 32%) in the County and ranks fifth highest in the State. The average poverty rate is 7.6% in the State. The Borough unemployment rate is

The MRI serves as the State’s official measure and ranking of municipal distress. It ranks New Jersey municipalities according to eight separate indicators that measure diverse aspects of social, economic, physical, and fiscal conditions in each locality. The MRI is used as a factor in distributing certain “need based” funds. The full list of the MRI ranking can be explored in the NJ DCA [webpage](#).

**2020 Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI) for Salem County Municipalities <sup>28</sup>**

<b>Municipalities</b>	<b>MRI Rank</b>	<b>Population Change (2009-2019)</b>	<b>% w/ SNAP Benefits</b>	<b>Poverty Rate</b>	<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>Avg. Property Tax Rate</b>
Alloway Township	249	-2.0%	1.7%	3.8%	4.1%	2.88
Carneys Point Township	37	-4.7%	16.5%	13.0%	5.4%	3.30
Elmer Borough	112	-6.4%	3.4%	5.4%	3.6%	3.32
Elsinboro Township	129	-7.5%	6.4%	7.8%	4.5%	3.05
Lower Alloways Creek Township	291	-6.2%	1.2%	3.6%	4.4%	1.23
Mannington Township	145	-4.2%	5.8%	12.8%	3.9%	2.93
Oldmans Township	151	0.4%	8.3%	13.2%	2.9%	2.69
<b>Penns Grove Borough</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-7.5%</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>5.17</b>
Pennsville Township	100	-7.6%	9.3%	8.8%	4.1%	4.22
Pilesgrove Township	310	-1.1%	2.2%	3.9%	3.4%	3.16
Pittsgrove Township	186	-6.3%	6.3%	3.8%	4.1%	3.19
Quinton Township	130	-8.8%	1.3%	7.3%	5.4%	3.13
Salem City	2	-9.8%	41.5%	42.2%	10.9%	6.31

<sup>28</sup> New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJ DCA), 2020 Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI), <https://www.nj.gov/dca/home/MuniRevitIndex.html>



Municipalities	MRI Rank	Population Change (2009-2019)	% w/ SNAP Benefits	Poverty Rate	Unemployment Rate	Avg. Property Tax Rate
Upper Pittsgrove Township	165	-4.5%	6.7%	11.3%	4.0%	2.71
Woodstown Borough	168	-1.6%	10.8%	8.4%	3.7%	3.62

In November 2020, the Borough prepared a Fiscal Evaluation & Recommended Recovery Plan that outlines structural changes that are needed to provide the Borough with a path forward economic stability and success. The Plan is a roadmap that addresses the fiscal challenges of the Borough, and the findings are summarized below:<sup>29</sup>

### *Economic Condition*

- Penns Grove has an annual recurring structural deficit. Structural revenue levels are too low to sustain basic municipal operations inducing a systematic reliance on State Transitional Aid.
- In 2019 the Borough received \$550,000 in State Transitional Aid. Without that “extra” State Aid the Borough would have to increase their tax rate by approximately 29 cents or a 13 percent increase in the local purpose property tax.
- Additionally, declining wealth has led to low tax collection rates resulting in more abandoned properties and foreclosures further exacerbating the fiscal instability.

### *Budget Condition*

The Borough has been increasingly reliant on State TA funds to close this structural deficit (see chart below). The design of the TA program is exactly the opposite, it is supposed to slowly “transition” municipalities off of TA and back to self-sufficiency. The TA program is designed so municipalities get 85% of what they received the previous year.

- In addition to State TA funds, the Borough is also heavily reliant on State Energy Receipts Tax and State CMPTRA (Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Act). In fact, all three of these state revenues comprise nearly 37 percent of the Penns Grove budget.

<sup>29</sup> Penns Grove Fiscal Evaluation & Recommended Recovery Plan, November 10, 2020 <https://pennsgrove-nj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/PG-Recovery-Plan-Final-min.pdf>

- Penns Grove, like most municipalities, is dependent on property taxes as the primary source of revenue. Collection of property taxes (delinquent, current and PILOTs) comprised 61 percent of the Borough's budget in 2019.
- Further complicating the fiscal challenges, the Borough's property tax collection rate is only 83.97 percent, well below the State average of 95 to 97 percent.
- In addition to a low collection percentage, the Borough's tax base has been decreasing.
- The Borough is collecting a lower percentage of taxes from a shrinking tax base. That is not sustainable and reversing these trends will be one of the prime tenants of this Recovery Plan.

The Borough prepared a Preliminary Investigation Report in August 2022 in order to determine if the Borough in its entirety may be deemed an area in need of rehabilitation. One of the findings of the report identifies that there is a persistent arrearage of property tax in the Borough. According to the Borough Tax Collector, a substantial number of properties have foreclosed, been deeded to Borough, or exist with open municipal liens, which resulted from substantial uncollected or cancelled tax payments. The Borough Tax Collector reported the following:

- With the foreclosures of 141 parcels that were recorded from 2015-2020, over \$1.2million in tax was reported as uncollected/cancelled;
- With the deeded back to the Borough for 52 parcels, an additional \$66,000 in added tax was cancelled; and
- With the open 65 municipal liens, an additional \$1.2 million is uncollected within the balances.

With Penns Grove Borough only having 1,615 ratable line items, the numbers referenced above are reported to be substantial and can classify the Borough as having persistent arrearage of property tax payments.

## **II. Economic and Demographic Profile**

This section outlines population trends, income levels, employment, and educational attainment.

### ***Population Trend***

Penns Grove Borough’s population has been steadily decreasing with notable change between 1980 and 1990, in which the population decreased about 9%. The Borough’s population increased slightly between 2000 and 2010 to about 5%. The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO) projected Penns Grove with a population count of 4,900 in 2040, which is a slight increase of 1.3% increase from the US Census 2020 count. Population for Salem County is also projected to decrease by 11% between 2020 and 2040.

#### **Census Population Count <sup>30</sup>**

Year	Penns Grove		Salem County		New Jersey	
	Total Population	% Change	Total Population	% Change	Total Population	% Change
1970	5,727	-	60,346	-	7,168,164	-
1980	5,760	0.6%	64,676	1.2%	7,365,011	2.7%
1990	5,228	↓9.2%	65,294	1.0%	7,730,188	4.8%
2000	4,886	↓6.5%	64,285	↓1.5%	8,414,350	8.8%
2010	5,147	5.3%	66,083	2.8%	8,791,894	4.5%
2020	4,837	↓6.0%	64,837	1.9%	9,288,994	5.6%
SJTPO Estimated Population Projection <sup>31</sup>						
2030	5,000	3.4%	60,064	↓7.4%	9,363,317	0.8%
2040	5,000	0%	57,724	↓3.9%	9,470,012	1.1%

### ***Income***

The US Census American Community Survey (2021, 5-year estimates), the household median income in Penns Grove is \$26,975, which is significantly less than Salem County’s household median income of \$67,898. Approximately 22% of Penns Grove households make less than \$10,000, and about 13% make between \$35,000 and \$49,999. Comparatively, about 17% of Salem County households make between \$100,000 and \$149,999, and another 17% make between \$50,000 and \$74,999.

Penns Grove is only behind Salem City in the Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI) ranking, as discussed in the earlier section of this chapter. Salem City has almost similar median household and family income as Penns Grove.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 2010, and 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171), Table P2; 2000 DEC, Table DP1

<sup>31</sup> Population Projection (SJTPO) <https://www.sjtpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RTP-2050-Appendix-C--Demographics-Forecast.pdf>

**Household and Family Income <sup>32</sup>**

	<b>Penns Grove</b>		<b>Salem County</b>	
	Households <sup>33</sup>	Families <sup>34</sup>	Households	Families
Total	1,613	938	24,753	15,958
Less than \$10,000	22.6%	17.0%	5.0%	3.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	14.7%	8.3%	4.8%	2.0%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	9.3%	8.1%	9.0%	5.6%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	9.4%	12.0%	8.0%	5.8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13.7%	20.0%	10.9%	10.0%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	10.0%	9.9%	16.9%	15.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.1%	6.6%	12.2%	13.1%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	6.4%	10.0%	17.3%	22.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4.2%	6.0%	8.8%	11.7%
\$200,000 or more	1.5%	2.0%	7.0%	10.0%
Median income	\$26,975	\$37,337	\$67,898	\$88,517
Mean income	\$44,547	\$54,875	\$87,640	\$105,846

**Employment**

Between 2010 and 2021, the Borough’s workforce declined by about 30%. Among the industries that declined in the number of employees by at least 50% includes manufacturing, retail trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities, information, finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing, public administration, and other services. Education services, healthcare, and social assistance and arts, entertainment, recreation, and food services experienced at least doubled in its workforce. The largest industry in Penns Grove, according to the 2021 US Census estimate, is the education services, healthcare, and social assistance industry.

**Employment by Industry <sup>35</sup>**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Population	5,118	4,836	-5.5%

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1901

<sup>33</sup> A household includes all the people who occupy a housing unit (such as a house or apartment) as their usual place of residence. (US Census)

<sup>34</sup> Refers to how the members of a family are related to one another. Families may be a "Married Couple Family," "Female householder, no spouse present" or "Male householder, no spouse present." (US Census)

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 and 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S2405, Table DP03, and Table DP05

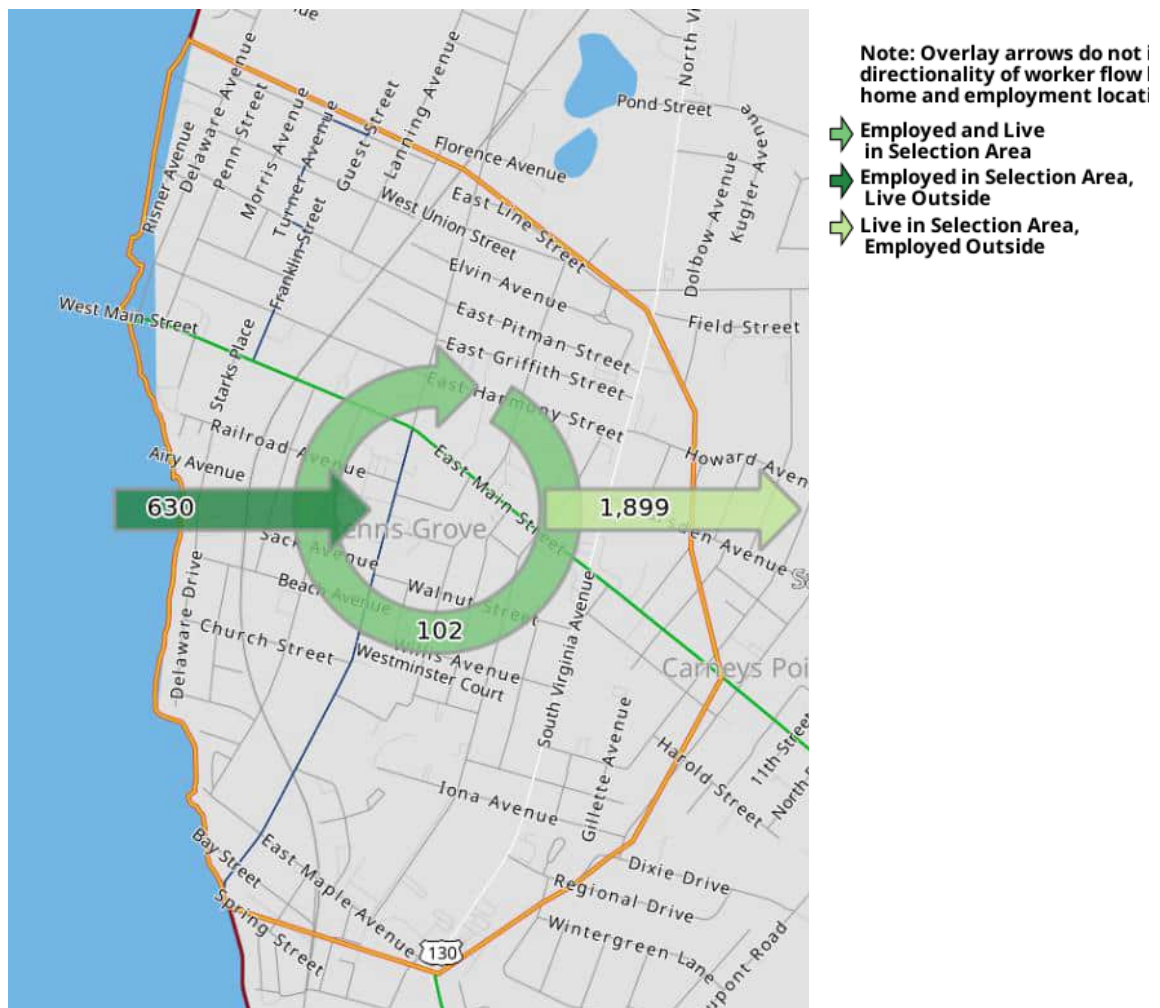
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Civilian Labor Force (16 years and over)	2,322	1,843	20.6%
Unemployed <sup>36</sup>	221	340	53.85%
Employed <sup>37</sup>	2,101	1,503	-28.5%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Construction	4.6%	6.4%	-1.0%
Manufacturing	18.2%	8.6%	-66.3%
Wholesale trade	5.0%	7.4%	5.7%
Retail trade	23.9%	12.7%	-62.0%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	9.8%	6.9%	-49.5%
Information	0.8%	0.4%	-64.7%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5.9%	0.8%	-90.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	7.8%	6.9%	-36.8%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	10.9%	32.4%	111.7%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	3.2%	13.8%	205.9%
Other services, except public administration	3.4%	1.9%	-61.1%
Public administration	6.3%	1.9%	-78.9%

<sup>36</sup> All civilians 16 years old and over are classified as unemployed if they (1) were neither "at work" nor "with a job but not at work" during the reference week, and (2) were actively looking for work during the last 4 weeks, and (3) were available to accept a job. Also included as unemployed are civilians who did not work at all during the reference week, were waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off and were available for work except for temporary illness. (US Census)

<sup>37</sup> Employed includes all civilians 16 years old and over who were either (1) "at work" -- those who did any work at all during the reference week as paid employees, worked in their own business or profession, worked on their own farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers on a family farm or in a family business; or (2) were "with a job but not at work" -- those who did not work during the reference week but had jobs or businesses from which they were temporarily absent due to illness, bad weather, industrial dispute, vacation, or other personal reasons. Excluded from the employed are people whose only activity consisted of work around the house or unpaid volunteer work for religious, charitable, and similar organizations; also excluded are people on active duty in the United States Armed Forces. The reference week is the calendar week preceding the date on which the respondents completed their questionnaires or were interviewed. This week may not be the same for all respondents. (US Census)

### Employment Inflow/Outflow Analysis

To better understand employment in the Borough, this section outlines the analysis provided by the OnTheMap, a web-based mapping and reporting application by the US Census Bureau that shows where workers are employed in relation to where they live. The analysis shows that of the total employed population in the Borough, 86.1% of people employed in the Borough are living outside the municipality, where 13.9% are both employed and living in the municipality. About 95% of the Borough's population are employed outside the municipality.<sup>38</sup>



**Inflow/Outflow Analysis Map**

<sup>38</sup> (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2021), <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>)

### Inflow/Outflow Analysis

<b>Worker Totals and Flows</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Share</b>
Employed in the Selection Area	732	100%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	630	86.1%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	102	13.9%
Living in the Selection Area	2,001	100%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	1,899	94.9%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	102	5.1%

Of the people employed and living in the Borough, about 41% work in the trade, transportation and utility industry. This industry includes the sector of Wholesale Trade (NAICS 42), Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45), Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48-49), and Utilities (NAICS 22).<sup>39</sup> About 59% are employed in All Other Services industry (NAICS industry sectors under this industry are noted below).

Of the population living outside but working in the Borough, about 37% work in the trade, transportation and utility industry, where 62% are employed All Other Services industry.

### Inflow/Outflow Job Characteristics<sup>40</sup>

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Share</b>
<b>Outflow Job</b>		
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	323	17.0%
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	530	27.9%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	1,046	55.1%
<b>Inflow Job</b>		
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	0	0.0%
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	238	37.8%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	392	62.2%
<b>Interior Flow</b>		
Workers in the "Goods Producing" Industry Class	0	0.0%

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Bureau Of Labor Statistics, *Industries at a Glance: Trade, Transportation, and Utilities*, <https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag40.htm>

<sup>40</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2021)*.

	<b>Count</b>	<b>Share</b>
Workers in the "Trade, Transportation, and Utilities" Industry Class	42	41.2%
Workers in the "All Other Services" Industry Class	60	58.8%

*Notes: The “goods-producing” industry supersector group consists of Natural Resources and Mining (Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (NAICS 11); Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (NAICS 21)), Construction (NAICS 23), and Manufacturing (NAICS 31-33).<sup>41</sup>*

*The “trade, transportation and utility” supersector group consists of Wholesale Trade (NAICS 42), Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45), Transportation and Warehousing (NAICS 48-49), and Utilities (NAICS 22).<sup>39</sup>*

*The “all other services” industry includes the remaining twelve 2-digit NAICS industry sectors, including Information (NAICS 51), Finance and Insurance (NAICS 52), Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (NAICS 53), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (NAICS 54), Management of Companies and Enterprises (NAICS 55), Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (NAICS 56), Educational Services (NAICS 61), Health Care and Social Assistance (NAICS 62), Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (NAICS 71), Accommodation and Food Services (NAICS 72), Other Services (except Public Administration) (NAICS 81), and Public Administration (NAICS 92).*

The Employment Density map below represents another data set from OnTheMap that shows the concentration of jobs within the Borough.<sup>42</sup> Concentration of jobs in the Borough can be found in the following areas:

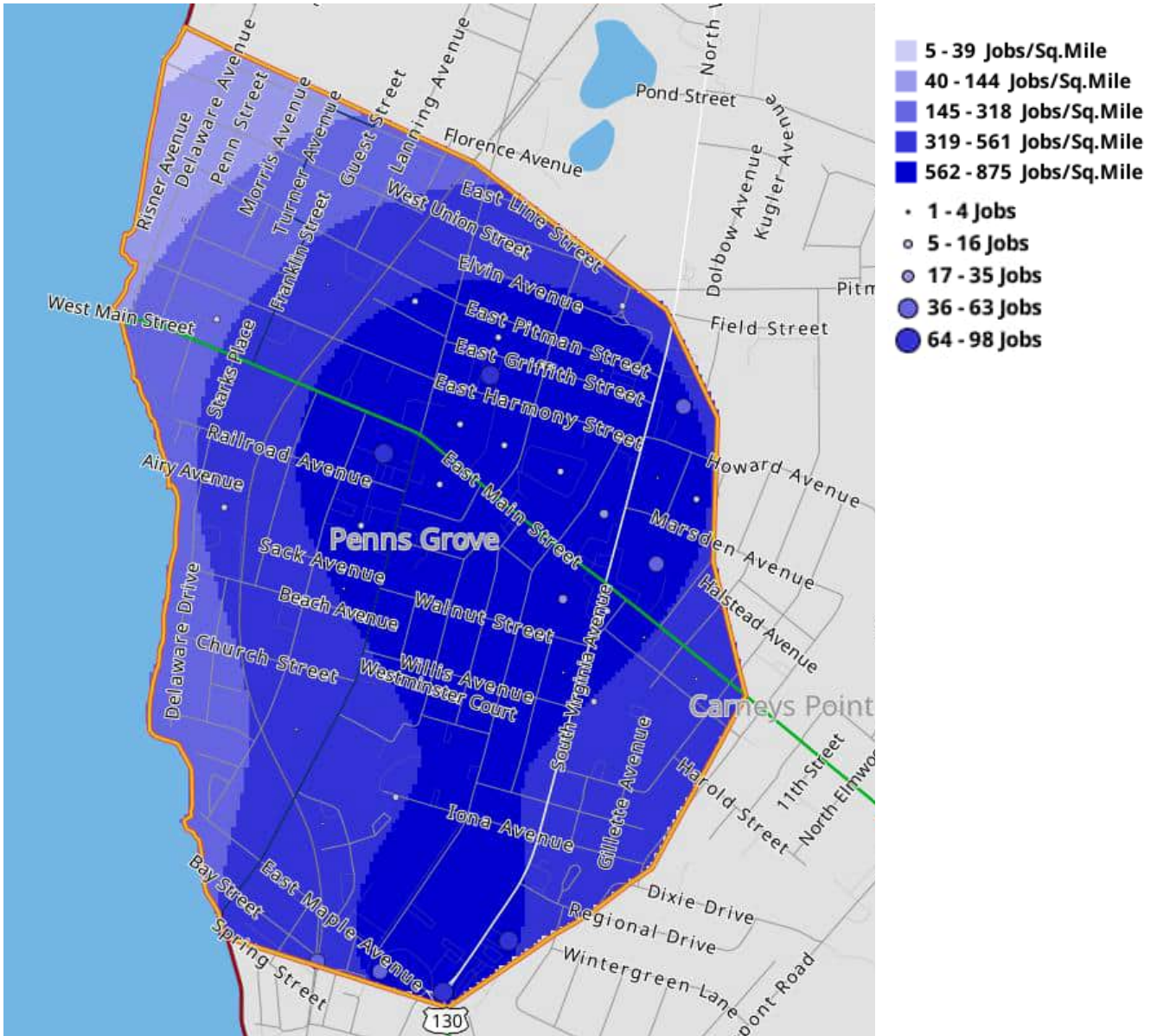
- West Main Street and South Broad Street intersection
- East Harmony Street
- Route 130 corridor (between Howard Street and Field Street)
- Route 130 and Main Street shopping center
- Southern area of Penns Grove

Many jobs in the Borough are concentrated along the commercial areas, such as along Main Street, Board Street, and Route 130.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Bureau Of Labor Statistics, *Industries at a Glance: Goods-Producing Industries*, <https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag06.htm>

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2021)*.





**Employment Density Map**

### **Educational Attainment**

About 40% of the Penns Grove population that are over 25 years old and over have a high school graduate degree or equivalent, and who are earning an estimated median of approximately \$51,000. Less than 7% of the population in the Borough has a graduate or professional degree with an estimated median earning of about \$58,000.

**Educational Attainment and Earnings<sup>43</sup>**

	<b>Penns Grove</b>		<b>Salem County</b>	
	% of Population w/ Education	Median Earnings	% of Population w/ Education	Median Earnings
Population 25 years and over				
Less than high school graduate	11.9%	\$24,432	10.3%	\$26,957
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	39.2%	\$51,023	37%	\$43,465
Some college or associate degree	26.7%	\$48,235	26.8%	\$47,193
Bachelor's degree	15.7%	\$53,393	16.8%	\$56,107
Graduate or professional degree	6.4%	\$58,750	9.0%	\$68,689

### III. New Jersey In-Demand Jobs

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development produces labor market information updates for the State. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development produced the New Jersey Key Growth Statistics report that highlights various aspects of New Jersey’s population and diversity, infrastructure and green energy, and employment and the economy. The report provided the following highlights, as it relates to Salem County and Penns Grove.

- The rise of e-commerce (50% increase in the number of warehouse facility between 2014 and 2022) has fueled demand for warehouse space.
- Broadband coverage in all 21 counties in New Jersey is at or above the national average of 87% household with broadband accessibility.
- Increased (about 685%) in electric vehicle (EV) stations since 2014 (from 140 to 1,100 EV stations).
- Solar energy is now produced in every county in New Jersey.
- Top industries include leisure and hospitality, healthcare, transportation, distribution, and logistics, retail, and finance. Salem County is a hub for retail industry.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501

- There are 75 hospitals in New Jersey providing health care for its 9 million residents.
- The number of urgent care facilities nearly doubled since 2014.
- Average life expectancy in New Jersey is 77.5, higher than the national average of 76.4.
- The life sciences industry in New Jersey is the 5th largest in the nation. This industry offers a median salary of \$185,000, higher than median wage of \$76,610.
- The food manufacturing industry has been the fastest growing segment of the manufacturing sector.
- The number of breweries in New Jersey has increased by about 600% since 2014 (from 15 to 106 breweries).

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development establishes the Labor Demand Occupations List, which highlights the occupations expected to have the most openings in the future. The list includes occupations that are expected to have a greater need for workers than there are qualified people to fill those jobs.<sup>44</sup> The Demand Occupation List table below provides a list of the top 20 list of occupations with the largest percentage of projected change from 2018 to 2028. Most notably, these occupations are commonly in the health, education, and energy industries. A comprehensive list of these in-demand occupations can be found in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development [webpage](#).

Based on the employment data from the US Census, the most common employment sectors in Penns Grove include Educational services, Health Care & Social Assistance (32.4%), Accommodation & Food Services (13.4%), and Retail Trade (12.7%).

This employment data is consistent with the information provided in the Inflow/Outflow analysis above. Of the people employed and living in the Borough, about 41% work in the trade, transportation and utility industry. This industry includes the sectors of wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and utilities. Of the population living outside but are working in the Borough, about 37% work in the trade, transportation and utility industry. This information indicates that the Borough has some employers in the wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and utilities and in all other services.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, *List of Demand Occupations, 2022*, <https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/tools-support/demand-occupations/>

<sup>45</sup> The All Other Services industry includes the remaining twelve 2-digit NAICS industry sectors, including Information (NAICS 51), Finance and Insurance (NAICS 52), Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (NAICS 53), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (NAICS 54), Management of Companies and Enterprises (NAICS 55),

While the Borough has major employers in these sectors, pursuing diversification and building more capacity in these sectors and in other industries for that matter is a logical and necessary approach to expand the ratable base of the Borough. Doing so would support the occupations expected to have the most openings in the future, as established by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

**Demand Occupations List**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2020 Employment</b>	<b>2020 Average Salary</b>	<b>2018-2028 Projected Change %</b>	<b>Annual Job Openings</b>	<b>Minimum Education</b>
Solar Photovoltaic Installers	1,370	\$49,730	47.4	160	High school diploma or equivalent
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	56,630	\$28,860	39.6	10,760	High school diploma or equivalent
Physician Assistants	2,350	\$131,210	32.2	290	Master's degree
Nurse Practitioners	5,800	\$130,890	28.2	560	Master's degree
Massage Therapists	2,440	\$46,280	27.7	670	Postsecondary non-degree award
Speech-Language Pathologists	5,020	\$100,330	23.6	560	Master's degree
Phlebotomists	5,630	\$39,220	22.6	710	Postsecondary non-degree award
Information Security Analysts	4,000	\$123,280	22.4	360	Bachelor's degree
Respiratory Therapists	4,120	\$74,710	21.9	270	Associate's degree

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*Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (NAICS 56), Educational Services (NAICS 61), Health Care and Social Assistance (NAICS 62), Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (NAICS 71), Accommodation and Food Services (NAICS 72), Other Services (except Public Administration) (NAICS 81), and Public Administration (NAICS 92). [https://lehd.ces.census.gov/applications/help/onthemap.html#!mapping\\_terms](https://lehd.ces.census.gov/applications/help/onthemap.html#!mapping_terms)*

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2020 Employment</b>	<b>2020 Average Salary</b>	<b>2018-2028 Projected Change %</b>	<b>Annual Job Openings</b>	<b>Minimum Education</b>
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	2,550	\$81,840	21.3	250	Associate's degree
Operations Research Analysts	2,700	\$114,410	21.1	280	Bachelor's degree
Nursing Instructors and Teachers, Postsecondary	2,080	\$91,400	21.0	240	Doctoral or professional degree
Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	2,660	\$130,750	20.7	560	Doctoral or professional degree
Medical Assistants	17,360	\$37,920	20.7	2,790	Postsecondary non-degree award
Physical Therapist Aides	3,390	\$28,800	20.5	530	High school diploma or equivalent
Physical Therapists	6,960	\$100,740	20.0	540	Doctoral or professional degree
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	19,830	\$91,290	19.1	2,660	Bachelor's degree
Substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors	9,780	\$61,320	18.3	1,300	Bachelor's degree
Manicurists and Pedicurists	3,050	\$25,980	17.8	1,450	Postsecondary non-degree award

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>2020 Employment</b>	<b>2020 Average Salary</b>	<b>2018-2028 Projected Change %</b>	<b>Annual Job Openings</b>	<b>Minimum Education</b>
Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	7,160	\$56,980	17.3	3,010	High school diploma or equivalent

## **IV. Recommendations: Economic Development Toolkit**

With the existing economic condition of the Borough, such as high vacancy rate and abandoned properties, annual structural deficit, reliance on State aid funds, low property tax collection rate, high poverty and unemployment rate, and decreasing tax base, the Borough needs to consider implementing infill development strategies. Infill development can provide for the following benefits to the community:<sup>46</sup>

- Save money by promoting development in areas that already have infrastructure connected to public services, as opposed to financing new infrastructure for greenfield development.
- Raise property values in the surrounding neighborhood.
- Bring residences and destinations closer together, making it easier for people to walk, bike, use transit, or drive shorter distances, which reduces pollution from vehicles.
- Help stabilize a community by attracting a greater diversity of household income levels, bringing new resources to a neighborhood, and reducing concentrated poverty.

It is important for the Borough to build a strong foundation or support to make infill development feasible. A strong foundation will need to include a combination of policy implementation, partnership development, and changing public perception. This strategy is suggested by the Office of Sustainable Communities of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address infill development particularly for distressed communities. Funding is another critical aspect in successful infill

<sup>46</sup> *United States Environmental Protection Agency, Attracting Infill Development in Distressed Communities: 30 Strategies, May 2015, [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-05/documents/fresno\\_final\\_report\\_042215\\_508\\_final.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-05/documents/fresno_final_report_042215_508_final.pdf)*

development. To effectively implement infill development projects, both categories of strategies, having a strong foundation and funding mechanisms, are necessary. 46

Twenty-five (25) strategies are explored in the subsequent sections providing a multifaceted approach to infill development. A multifaceted approach ensures a comprehensive and inclusive solution to tackling the economic, social, and environmental issues the Borough is currently facing. These strategies foster resilience, resource sharing, and cohesive vision. It enhances the potential for attracting funding from various sources and encourages active community engagement, empowering residents in decision-making.

These categories are categorized as follows:

- Priority Areas
- Policies
- Partnerships
- Perception
- Funding

While the strategies outlined below are particularly developed for the identified key focus areas (as further detailed in the [Program & Incentive Resources](#) of this Plan Element), many of these strategies can also be utilized in other areas in the Borough. Though, a thorough study of these strategies prior to implementation in other areas should be considered to ensure an effective application to that specific area and minimize potential risks.

In addition to the strategies, a collection of additional programs and incentive resources explored in the [Program & Incentive Resources](#) should be utilized simultaneously to foster economic growth, job creation, and overall prosperity within the Borough. Ultimately, these collections of policies, strategies, programs, and incentive resources can be referred to as the economic development toolkit aimed at attracting and retaining businesses, stimulating innovation, enhancing competitiveness, and economic growth in the Borough of Penns Grove.

### **Priority Areas**

This section explores a strategy in identifying focus areas where redevelopment and public investment can occur in the Borough.

### ***Strategy 1: Identify Focus Infill Development Areas***

This strategy outlines areas in the Borough where redevelopment should concentrate and where the highest return on investment is likely to occur. Identifying focus or key areas first, particularly smaller areas, can result in an aggregate effect, sending positive implications to public, private investors and developers. Accordingly, developing a vision for the selected areas is critical. The vision should include how the community will grow and the changes the community would like to see. Thus, engaging the public is important in this strategy.

Penns Grove held a community meeting in October 2023 to gather community input about their vision, concerns, and the changes they would like to see in their community. Many residents identified a community-wide need to address flooding, vacancies, abandoned properties, homeownership, and blight. Additionally, many residents also identified the opportunity for the redevelopment opportunity of the waterfront area and its potential to provide economic growth for the Borough. Thus, the waterfront area has been identified as one of the focus areas for infill development.

Section VI (Priority Areas – Key Corridors & Target Redevelopment Sites) of this Economic Development Plan Element further details the potential focus areas for infill development, which are categorized by *Key Corridors* and *Target Redevelopment Sites*, as follows:

#### Key Corridors:

- Main Street Corridor
- Broad Street Corridor
- Route 130 Corridor (Virginia Avenue)

#### Target Redevelopment Sites

- Waterfront Area
- Main Street-Main Street Intersection
- Brownfield Sites/Contaminated Sites

The successful redevelopment or development of these focus areas can serve as a model, inspiring confidence among investors, developers, and the community. This success can then encourage similar initiatives in other parts of the municipality.

### ***Policies***

This section explores strategies in policy development and implementation to help the Borough support redevelopment in the community. Implementing a combination of these strategies will enable the Borough to successfully redevelop the identified



focus areas. These strategies, however, can also be utilized in many areas in the community. It is important to first identify the problem persisting in the area and evaluation of which strategies outlined in this section are appropriate to implement.

Establishing a policy framework is critical in the redevelopment of the focus areas and of the Borough as a whole. Policies are important for many reasons, including but not limited to the following:

- Provide a structured framework that guides decision-making and planning processes during redevelopment.
- Create consistency and predictability for developers, investors, and residents. Help establish rules and standards, reducing uncertainty and promoting a stable environment for investment.
- Reflects the community's vision for the area, incorporating perspectives and aspirations of the residents.
- Ensure redevelopment activities' compliance with local and state regulations.
- Help plan and coordinate infrastructure development.
- Fosters transparency and accountability.
- Stimulate economic development and foster job creation.

Adopting policies, such as the policies outlined in this section, play a foundational role in shaping the redevelopment process, providing direction, consistency, and a mechanism for achieving desired community outcomes.

The impact of flooding on each relevant policy recommendation is also addressed in the subsequent sections. Addressing flooding while undergoing redevelopment is crucial for the well-being of residents, the protection of property investments, and the overall success of revitalization efforts. Proactive measures to mitigate flooding risks enhance public safety, protect economic activities, and ensure the longevity of infrastructure in these communities. The inclusion of flood-resilient policies not only attracts investment but also fosters social equity by considering the needs of vulnerable populations. By prioritizing environmental protection, economic stability, and community resilience, addressing flooding contributes to the creation of a sustainable and resilient environment that can withstand the challenges faced by distressed communities, ultimately promoting long-term sustainability and success in the redevelopment process.

### ***Strategy 2: Expedite Development Review***

The process of securing the necessary local and state permits and approvals can be lengthy and may contribute to project delays, sometimes contributing to increased costs and reduced profit margins. The Borough should evaluate its existing permitting procedure and identify points in the process that can be improved with respect to efficiency and fast-tracking qualifying developments, especially potential development projects within the identified focus areas in the Borough. The Borough may also consider establishing concept meetings or work sessions with developers and Borough staff to provide early assistance on proposed developments in order to identify any concerns and garner feedback from the Borough early on in the process.

Coordination with the Zoning/Planning Office, Boards & Committees, Construction Code Office, Elected Officials, Borough Professionals or other necessary Borough Staff is necessary to establish new procedures and/or review existing procedures. The primary cost for this strategy will consist of Borough staff time to undertake the review and streamlining the procedures. The Borough may also consider contracting planning and legal professionals to undertake the review and adoption of procedures.

### ***Strategy 3: Set Impact Fees***

Municipalities impose impact fees on new development projects to contribute funds for the necessary off-site infrastructure, such as sewers, stormwater, and road infrastructure, required to support the new development. When used together with well-thought-out land use planning and the principles of smart growth, impact fees can promote economic growth.<sup>47</sup>

Impact fees can help the Borough fund necessary projects without placing an undue burden on existing residents. Impact fees can promote responsible and sustainable development, leading to more efficient land use planning. Impact fee regulations in each state can vary. Therefore, it is important that Penns Grove fully understand the specific state provisions of implementing impact fee provisions in the municipality.

To begin, the Borough should consider the following steps:

- Conduct a needs assessment to identify the infrastructure needs generated by new development projects, such as roads, schools, parks, utilities, and emergency services.

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<sup>47</sup> *New Jersey Future, Impact Fees: Smart Growth Recommendations from New Jersey Future, Issue 4, January 2004, [https://www.impactfees.com/resource/state-local/NJ\\_smart2004.pdf](https://www.impactfees.com/resource/state-local/NJ_smart2004.pdf)*

- Ensure compliance with state laws and regulations governing impact fees in New Jersey. The Borough should consult with legal experts to understand the legal requirements and limitations.
- Engage with Borough Officials and Staff, Borough professionals, and relevant government agencies to gather input and build consensus on the need for impact fees and how they should be structured.
- Conduct a comprehensive impact fee study to quantify the costs associated with new development and determine the appropriate fee amounts for different types of development projects.
- Develop an ordinance that outlines the impact fee policy, including the types of development subject to impact fees, fee calculation methods, exemptions, collection procedures, and use of funds.
- Hold a public hearing to provide an opportunity for community members to review and comment on the proposed impact fee policy before it is adopted.
- Once adopted, the municipality should establish procedures for collecting impact fees, managing the funds, and periodically reviewing the policy to ensure its effectiveness and address any changing circumstances.

The primary cost for this strategy will consist of Borough staff time and professional staff time, which may include legal, planning, financial, and engineers professionals, to undertake the impact fee study and develop the ordinance.

#### ***Strategy 4: Reduce Parking Requirements***

Reducing parking requirements for infill development projects reduces the cost for developers by eliminating the need to build new parking and, thus, freeing up more land for the proposed use.

The Borough should assess its existing parking in the [identified focus areas](#) (see [Section VII](#)), including current and projected demand. If a surplus of parking is found, a reduction of parking requirements for new development should be considered. However, the Borough should keep in mind market and lender demand, which in some cases demands specific amounts or dedicated parking. The Borough may address these demands by employing the following strategies:

- Adopting shared parking provisions between adjacent or nearby properties with different peak demand times.
- Implementing a district approach where permit holders can park in on-street public spaces or lots.

- Establishing parking cash-out program, which allows employees to exchange the dedicated parking space offered by their employer for cash. The employee typically agrees to walk, bike, or use transit instead of driving.
- Expanding public transportation or car sharing options.
- Incentivizing developers to invest in alternative transportation options or contribute to community-based parking solutions.

While considering implementing changes to its parking requirements, it is recommended that the Borough incorporate measures to address flooding as well, which is essential not only for mitigating environmental impact, but promotes public safety, protects properties, and builds a more resilient environment capable of adapting to climate change and extreme weather events. To do so, the Borough should consider requiring certain measures within its parking regulations to help manage stormwater runoff, including using permeable surfaces, integrating rain garden and bioswales, elevated parking and green spaces. Furthermore, the Borough should also consider implementing incentives, such as density bonus, tax incentives, expedited permitting, etc., for developers to incorporate these sustainable mitigating measures and flood resilient design elements.

By adopting a combination of these measures, the Borough can balance the need for parking with the goal of generating higher economic returns through flexible and sustainable planning.

The primary cost to do this strategy will consist of staff time and administrative resources needed to coordinate the zoning review and amendment, prepare documentation, and hold public hearings. The Borough may consider hiring professionals to assess the existing parking regulations, develop alternative strategies or standards and draft the ordinance revisions, which will contribute to the overall cost.

#### ***Strategy 5: Adopt Flexible Codes***

Flexible zoning codes refer to land-use planning that offers a more adaptable and responsive approach to development. Unlike traditional, rigid zoning codes that strictly define land use categories and development standards, flexible zoning codes provide a range of options and allow for creative, context-sensitive solutions. Adopting flexible zoning codes provides the following benefits:

- Allow communities to adapt to changing needs, economic conditions, and evolving trends and preferences.
- Encourages innovation and creativity in development.

- Stimulate economic vitality by attracting a diverse range of businesses and industries.
- Enables more efficient land use, and allows the optimization of available space, promoting higher-density development and reducing urban sprawl.
- Allows community engagement and ensures that the redevelopment aligns with the community's vision and values.
- Facilitates the repurposing of vacant or underutilized properties, encouraging adaptive reuse.
- Attract investment in the community, resulting in job creation.
- Provides resiliency in changing economic conditions, including demographic and technological changes.
- Supports sustainable development practices by supporting green infrastructure, renewable energy projects and other environmental initiatives.
- Addresses housing affordability challenges by allowing a mix of housing types and densities.

Examples of flexible zoning codes include, but are not limited to, mixed-use zoning, form-based codes, variances and special exceptions, incentive zoning, overlay districts, performance standards, and adaptive reuse.

The Borough could consider developing an infill overlay zoning district that encompasses the [focus areas identified in Section VII of this Plan Element](#) to promote redevelopment and maximize the utilization of properties that have been abandoned and underutilized for many years.

The primary cost to do this strategy will consist of staff time and administrative resources needed to coordinate the zoning review and amendment, prepare documentation, and hold public hearings. The Borough may consider hiring professionals to assess the existing zoning ordinance, develop code standards and draft the ordinance(s), which will contribute to the overall cost.

### **Strategy 6: Offer Density Bonuses**

A density bonus is a zoning incentive offered by a municipality to encourage developers to include certain community benefits or amenities in their projects. In essence, it allows developers to build at a higher density than what is typically allowed under existing zoning regulations in exchange for providing specific public benefits, such as affordable housing or public open space.

The Borough has an existing density bonus provision within its zoning ordinance. The provision specifies that a bonus of up to 20% may be achieved by meeting specific criteria, as outlined in [Section 450-82.B](#). Particularly, a developer is permitted to increase density provided that the specific criteria for open space, moderate-income housing, recreational facilities, ownership, and road and transportation are met in exchange for the increased density. The Borough should, however, assess this existing density bonus provision and consider the following changes:

- Assess the established bonus density ratio to ensure that this existing provision relative to homeownership, affordable housing, recreation facilities, open space, and road/transportation facilities is still applicable. Borough's desire to increase
- It would appear that this density bonus is only applicable to R-1 and R-2 zoning districts. The Borough should consider also permitting this provision in the Marina Zoning Districts (MD-1 and MD-2). Single-family homes (attached and detached), cluster development, and dwelling with commercial use are currently permitted uses in the MD-1 and MD-2. Specifically permitting density bonus in this area could further achieve the Borough's desire to increase homeownership and affordable housing.
- Consider adding a criterion to address flooding by incentivizing developers higher density when measures to mitigate flood risk and enhance resilience are incorporated. These measures can be as follows:
  - Incorporate green infrastructure such as permeable pavements, green roofs, rain gardens, and other sustainable stormwater management practices.
  - Elevated structures or flood-resistant building materials.

The primary cost to do this strategy will consist of staff time and administrative resources needed to coordinate the zoning review and amendment, prepare documentation, and hold public hearings. The Borough may consider hiring professionals to review the existing density bonus provisions and draft the ordinance revisions, which will contribute to the overall cost of completing this objective.

### **Strategy 7: Flood Mitigation**

Adopting policies on flooding is crucial for the economic development of a community, as it safeguards critical infrastructure, preserves property values, and ensures business continuity. By addressing flood risks through proactive policies, a community becomes more attractive to investors and businesses seeking stability and resilience. The implementation of effective flood mitigation measures not only reduces the financial burden on residents and businesses by making insurance more

affordable but also contributes to job retention and creation. Additionally, these policies enhance community resilience, making the area more appealing for tourism and recreation. A commitment to environmental sustainability and access to financing opportunities further positions the community for long-term economic growth, fostering a secure and thriving environment for residents and businesses alike.

### ***Education and Outreach***

Educational and outreach efforts are integral to flood mitigation, as they raise awareness about flood risks, promote emergency preparedness planning, and inform communities about evacuation readiness. These initiatives contribute to effective communication between authorities and residents, encourage behavioral changes that reduce vulnerability, and empower communities to actively engage in flood mitigation. Through crisis response training and resource allocation, educational programs enhance community resilience, fostering a sense of collective preparedness and recovery. Additionally, these efforts support environmental stewardship, policy advocacy, and equitable preparedness, ensuring that flood mitigation information is accessible to all community members.

There are several training and educational programs available for New Jersey municipalities, such as the following:

- Green Infrastructure Champions Program – Resources such as the Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension Program provide training to New Jersey municipalities to support the implementation of green infrastructure, including training, design, implementation, and maintenance services. The Program established the [Green Infrastructure Champions Program](#) that offers training in green infrastructure planning, design, and implementation. The goals of the program are to enhance knowledge on green infrastructure, engage community leaders in adopting green infrastructure solutions, and provide technical assistance to municipalities in securing funding for green infrastructure projects.<sup>48</sup>
- Rain Garden Rebate Program – The Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Water Resources Program partnered with the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) Watershed Protection Program to offer rebates to homeowners that build rain gardens. Community and technical workshops are being offered as part of this program.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension Program, *Projects & Programs - Municipal/Community Training*,

<http://www.water.rutgers.edu/Projects/GreenInfrastructureChampions/GIC.html>

<sup>49</sup> Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, *Rain Garden Rebate Program*,

<http://water.rutgers.edu/Projects/RGRebate/RGRebate.html>

- Rain Barrel Program – Rutgers also offers rain barrel workshops available to municipalities and residents year-round. The program offers skills in how to build and install rain barrels and knowledge on best management practices. Installation of rain barrels is effective in capturing rainwater from rooftops and preventing immediate runoff. Harvesting rainwater is one of many ways homeowners can reduce stormwater runoff.<sup>50 51</sup>
- E-Learning Tools – Penns Grove can also take advantage of the available online training tools being offered by Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station about green infrastructure and stormwater.

Ultimately, educational and outreach initiatives build public trust, confidence, and cooperation, laying the groundwork for resilient and well-informed communities in the face of flooding challenges.

### ***Community Rating System (CRS)***

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), addresses the gap in standard insurance policies that do not cover flood losses by offering affordable flood insurance to participating communities. To join the NFIP, communities must adhere to its floodplain management standards and can earn discounts through the Community Rating System (CRS) for exceeding these standards. The CRS assigns credit points for various flood protection activities detailed in the CRS Coordinator’s Manual. If the Borough is in full compliance with the minimum floodplain management standards of the NFIP, the Borough is eligible to apply. There is no application fee to apply for the |CRS program.

As a requirement for participating in the program, the Borough would be required to appoint a CRS Coordinator to serve as the liaison between the Borough and FEMA. To begin the application process, the Borough is to submit a letter of interest to the FEMA Regional Office and documentation as to the implementation of floodplain management activities that warrant at least 500 CRS credit points.<sup>52</sup>

The CRS provides significant benefits to low-income communities facing frequent flooding. By participating in the CRS, the Borough can access discounted flood insurance premiums, reducing financial strain on residents. Moreover, CRS

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<sup>50</sup>Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, *Rain Barrel Program*, [http://water.rutgers.edu/Stormwater\\_Management/rainbarrels.html](http://water.rutgers.edu/Stormwater_Management/rainbarrels.html)

<sup>51</sup> Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, *Rain Barrel Train the Trainer Program*, <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/environment/rain-barrel-trainer-program.php>

<sup>52</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), *Community Rating System: A Local Official’s Guide to Saving Lives, Preventing Property Damage, and Reducing the Cost of Flood Insurance*, March 2023, [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema\\_crs-brochure\\_032023.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_crs-brochure_032023.pdf)



participation encourages the implementation of effective floodplain management practices, improving public safety and reducing property damage. Access to resources and support enables low-income communities to develop cost-effective strategies for mitigating flood risks and enhancing resilience. Through community engagement and education, residents become empowered to take proactive measures during flood events, fostering a culture of preparedness. Ultimately, CRS participation enhances the resilience and sustainability of low-income communities, reducing long-term recovery costs and socioeconomic impacts associated with flooding.

### ***Strategy 8: Put Public Offices in Infill Locations***

Location of public offices is important for the Borough to consider, as they can provide social and economic benefits.<sup>53 55</sup> The Borough has identified the need for a new Borough Hall and a new Police Headquarter.

Currently, the Borough Hall and Police Department are housed within the same building located at 1 State Street at the intersection of Main Street and State Street on a 0.14-acre lot. Provided the limited availability of vacant land in the Borough, rehabilitation of existing buildings or infill development in the focus areas should be considered to house the Borough's municipal building and police headquarters.

The Borough may also reach out to local, regional, state, and federal agencies, organizations, educational institutions, or non-profit entities to understand their current or future need with respect to new office space or facilities. Partnerships may be formed to assist them find a suitable location within the Borough, particularly within the focus areas.

### ***Partnership***

Partnership strategies are essential for the successful redevelopment of the Borough because they leverage diverse strengths, promote inclusivity, and enable a more sustainable and resilient transformation. Collaboration with stakeholders, such as regional or state government entities, community groups, and private investors, ensures a holistic approach, incorporating various perspectives and expertise. A collective effort can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions, aligning with community needs and goals. Partnership also facilitates resource-sharing, reducing the burden on individual entities and promoting a unified vision for the areas in need of redevelopment. Most importantly, partnership can improve access to funding sources.

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<sup>5353</sup> *University of Wisconsin Extension, The Importance of Government Facilities in Downtowns, Issue 111, November 2005, <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/downtowneconomics/files/2012/07/importance-of-gov-facilities.pdf>*

Government entities, philanthropic organizations and private investors may be willing to support redevelopment initiatives when they see collaborative and well-coordinated efforts from a community.

The strategies outlined below provide a framework for forging partnerships in a holistic approach that addresses economic, social, environmental, and infrastructure aspects simultaneously, leading to more comprehensive and lasting improvements.

***Strategy 9: Seek State and Regional Partners***

Partnership with regional and state government will be a crucial step for the Borough to initiate. These partnerships can provide resource allocation, including funding, expertise and technical assistance. State and regional government can also provide policy support and regulatory frameworks that align with the goals of the Borough. Additionally, having a collaborative partnership with these entities ensures that redevelopment efforts consider the broader impact on transportation, utilities, and other critical infrastructure. Forging these partnerships can support the Borough in identifying and attracting economic development opportunities.

In this strategy, appointing a staff member as a liaison to the state and regional partners would be a beneficial and strategic approach. Potential state and regional partners the Borough should consider forging a partnership with includes but not limited to the following:

- Salem County Improvement Authority
- Salem County Economic Development
- Cumberland County Improvement Authority
- South Jersey Metropolitan Planning Organization (SJTPO)
- New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)
- New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
- New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
- New Jersey Redevelopment Authority
- New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)
- Local Community Development Corporations (CDCs)

**Strategy 10: Identify and Engage Key Anchor Institutions and Philanthropic Organizations**

For this strategy, the Borough should identify anchor institutions with vested interest or stake in the Borough or in the [focus areas](#). These anchor institutions can include businesses or nonprofit organizations. These organizations are important partners for when community programs or projects occur in the Borough, as they can serve as connection to many residents in the Borough involved in their organizations, along with other groups or organizations in the region. There are various benefits in establishing partnerships with these organizations, including the following:

- Supplement public funding and support community initiatives.
- Access to valuable expertise and technical assistance.
- Collaboration contributes to capacity building, including training programs, skill development, knowledge transfer that empowers the community.
- Bring innovative and evidence-based solutions to address the unique challenges.
- Community engagement and empowerment.
- Advocates for the community.
- Access to networks, such as potential partners, donors, and other stakeholders.
- Access to valuable research findings and data that can inform evidence-based decision-making.

There are numerous institutions and philanthropic organizations that the Borough should consider reaching out to and establishing a partnership with:

- Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Salem County
- United Way of Delaware
- United Way of Greater Philadelphia and South New Jersey
- Salem County Arts Alliance Music Around the County
- Community Foundation of South Jersey
- Affordable Housing Alliance
- South Jersey Cultural Alliance
- Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
- Pascale Sykes Foundation
- OceansFirst Foundation
- Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- Council of New Jersey Grantmakers

Local organizations:

- Huddle of South Jersey
- Penns Grove Elks Lodge #1358
- Rotary Club of Penns Grove
- Puerto Rican Action Committee of Salem County
- Tri-Community Action Agency
- Penns Grove – Carneys Point Regional School District

***Strategy 11: Create a Public Sector-Developer and Partnership Liaison***

A liaison is a role that serves as a connection or intermediary between different groups and organizations. They play a crucial role in facilitating communication, coordination, and collaboration. A liaison designated between the municipality and private developers or organizations can offer several advantages and contribute to more effective and successful redevelopment efforts. A liaison can ensure information flows smoothly, provide information about the community's needs, priorities, and aspirations, coordinate meetings and facilitate discussion, engage the community, build trust, foster communication and transparency, facilitate negotiation and discussion, advocate for the community, provide project oversight and local knowledge, and many others. The liaison can also provide technical assistance to developers by providing assistance on available funding programs that could help facilitate the completion of a redevelopment project in the Borough.

***Strategy 12: Shared Services***

A shared services agreement (SSA) is a contractual arrangement between two or more organizations to jointly use and share certain services, resources or facilities. Advantages of SSAs includes the following:

- Cost savings for the participating organizations
- Increased efficiency due to consolidated functions or processes
- Access to expertise that may not be available in-house
- Improved quality of services
- Flexibility and scalability based on changing needs
- Shared risks
- Allowing more focus on other priorities
- Access to technology

- Provide opportunity for cross-training and skill development
- Optimize resource utilization
- Expedite implementation of initiatives or projects

A careful assessment of the community's needs, resources, and goals is a crucial first step for the Borough to take when initiating SSAs with other communities or organizations. The New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLM) published a [library of documents](#) containing copies of SSAs that have been initiated by municipalities in New Jersey. The Borough can utilize these documents to assist in preparing their own SSAs.<sup>54</sup>

Examples of SSAs the Borough should consider are services on abandoned properties, code enforcement, emergency services, housing, maintenance, parks & recreation, police and fire, infrastructure, waste management. The NJLM provides a comprehensive list of many more SSA examples that the Borough can utilize as a model.

The following steps should be considered:

1. **Identify Potential Partners:** Identify neighboring municipalities, county governments, school districts, or other public entities that have similar service needs and are interested in collaborating on shared services.
2. **Assessment of Service Needs:** Conduct an assessment to identify specific services or functions that could be shared effectively, such as public safety, public works, emergency management, administrative services, or recreational programs.
3. **Feasibility Study:** Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the potential benefits, costs, risks, and legal considerations associated with sharing the identified services. This may involve analyzing current service delivery models, estimating cost savings, and assessing the impact on service quality and responsiveness.
4. **Negotiation and Agreement:** Once potential partners have been identified and the feasibility of shared services has been established, negotiate the terms of the shared service agreement, including the scope of services, service levels, cost-sharing arrangements, governance structure, duration of the agreement, and dispute resolution mechanisms.
5. **Legal Review:** Have the proposed shared service agreement reviewed by legal counsel to ensure compliance with relevant state laws, regulations, and local

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<sup>54</sup> *New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJSLM), Ordinances & Shared Services Agreements, <https://www.njlm.org/461/Ordinances-Shared-Services-Agreements>*

- ordinances. This step is crucial to address any legal considerations and ensure that the agreement is enforceable.
6. **Approval Process:** Obtain approval for the shared service agreement from the governing bodies of the participating municipalities or public entities, such as city councils, township committees, or school boards. This may involve holding public hearings, presenting the agreement for discussion and feedback, and obtaining formal approval through resolutions or ordinances.
  7. **Implementation:** Implement the shared service agreement according to the terms outlined in the agreement. This may involve coordinating staff training, establishing communication channels, integrating systems and processes, and monitoring performance to ensure that the shared services are delivered effectively and efficiently.
  8. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Periodically review and evaluate the shared service arrangement to assess its effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and address any emerging issues or concerns. This ongoing monitoring process helps ensure that the shared services continue to meet the needs of the participating municipalities and achieve the intended goals.

By following these steps, the Borough can develop successful shared service agreements that enhance service delivery, promote efficiency, and maximize resources through collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions or public entities.

The costs of implementing this strategy can vary widely depending on the scope and complexity of the shared services, the number of participating entities, the level of existing infrastructure and resources, and the extent of legal and administrative support required. The Borough should expect administrative and staff time and hiring of consultants to the service needs and feasibility study and legal review.

### **Perception**

This section explores strategies that can improve the perceptions of the Borough. Positive perception attracts investors, developers, and businesses. Having a positive perception also enhances the quality of life in the community, as it can create a sense of pride and belonging, and making it more attractive to live, work, and raise families. It also enhances support to local businesses, contributing to the overall economic vitality of the community. Changing a community's negative perception requires focusing on the community's strengths and assets. Ultimately, changing one's perception of the Borough is a necessary initiative that will create a foundational element in effectuating the physical changes within Borough.

### ***Strategy 13: Strengthen Code Enforcement***

Code enforcement plays a crucial role in helping maintain community standards, ensure public safety, and foster overall wellbeing. It serves as a foundational aspect of community development and governance. It is important for the Borough to continue to enforce its code to handle the existing blight and deterioration of many vacant properties. Tangible actions through enforcement are a crucial aspect in code enforcement in order to prevent continuing deterioration and abandonment of properties. There are various key processes that the Borough can undertake to enhance its code enforcement, including but not limited to the following:

- Initiate an assessment, including effectiveness, of existing code and regulations and identify areas that need improvement.
- Initiate an educational campaign to inform residents about local codes, regulations, and the importance of compliance. Engaging the community and educating them about local codes and regulations foster a sense of responsibility.
- Providing training to code enforcement and zoning staff to enhance their skills and knowledge. The Borough should explore opportunities for collaboration with educational institutions and professional organizations to support ongoing training.
- Integrating technology, such as software solutions and databases, to streamline code enforcement processes. This includes implementing online platforms for residents to report code violations and track the status of enforcement.
- Conducting proactive inspections of properties to identify and address potential violations.
- Adopting a community policing approach and building positive relationships between enforcement officers and residents.

Reviewing the Borough's existing zoning and building code provisions involves collaboration among various departments and staff, including the planning/zoning department, building department, Borough solicitor, Board and Commission members, and elected officials. The primary costs of implementing this strategy involve administrative and staff time and hiring of consultants, if necessary, to draft the ordinance amendments.

Code enforcement is a service that can be shared with other communities. There are many other municipalities in the state that have initiated SSAs with other municipalities or with their own County to share the costs and technical support of

said services. The New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLM) SSA library provides many examples of executed SSAs among New Jersey municipalities that the Borough can use as a model for their own.

### **Strategy 14: Build Complete Streets**

According to New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), complete streets refer to a multimodal approach in mobility and accessibility that accommodates various types of users, such as pedestrians and bicyclists and not just for cars, and abilities and ages. Complete streets provide social, environmental, and economic benefits, including providing safe and efficient access to places where people eat, live, work, and play and promoting active lifestyles and improves the quality of life. The reduction in the use of vehicles reduces greenhouse gas emission and traffic congestion and improves air and water quality, public health and safety, greater social equity, and economic vitality.<sup>55</sup>

In 2009, NJDOT adopted a Complete Streets policy to which the National Complete Streets Coalition ranked as one of the strongest in the nation. However, NJDOT has jurisdiction over less than 10% of roadway lane-miles in New Jersey. In 2019, *Complete & Green Streets for All* was developed in collaboration with a wide range of government and nonprofit partners to provide guidance in adopting and implementing complete streets policies and practices for municipalities and counties.

Complete streets, designed to accommodate various modes of transportation, play a pivotal role in spurring economic growth. By prioritizing pedestrian-friendly features, bicycling infrastructure, and integrating public transit, complete streets encourage increased foot traffic, supporting local businesses, and enhancing accessibility. The creation of public spaces and the overall attractiveness of the community can attract real estate investment and tourism, contributing to increased property values and additional revenue through property taxes. Moreover, the emphasis on healthy and vibrant communities fosters job creation, particularly in construction and maintenance sectors, and supports local events, festivals, and businesses. The holistic and innovative design of complete streets contributes to the overall economic health of a community by creating an environment that is conducive to growth, engagement, and quality of life.

Penns Grove would benefit greatly from adopting a complete streets policy for the reasons stated above. Adopting a Model Complete Streets Resolution, would be the

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<sup>55</sup> New Jersey Department of Transportation, *Complete & Green Streets For All: Model Complete Streets Policy & Guide: Making New Jersey's Communities Healthy, Equitable, Green & Prosperous*, July 2019 (updated January 2020), [https://www.nj.gov/transportation/eng/completestreets/pdf/CS\\_Model\\_Policy\\_2020.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/transportation/eng/completestreets/pdf/CS_Model_Policy_2020.pdf)



first step, as outlined in the *Complete & Green Streets for All* by NJDOT. This Resolution includes the vision and objectives, benefits, scope, and applications. Once adopted, the resolution establishes the commitment of a municipality to implement and provides a process for moving toward implementation.

The implementation of this strategy may be viewed as a long-term vision for community development and planning. The long-term vision of complete streets should align with broader goals related to sustainability, public health, economic vitality, and quality of life. Transformation to complete streets will require significant investment, planning, and coordination among various stakeholders.

The adoption of the model ordinance will primarily require administrative and staff time to coordinate the adoption of the ordinance. The Borough may consider hiring a consultant to review and coordinate the model ordinance adoption. The implementation of the complete streets standards would be required during the site development review process of major applications. During the review process, consideration to the pedestrian, bicycle, transit, accessibility, streetscape, mobility, stormwater design, etc., will be addressed.

#### **Strategy 15: Create a Business or Special Improvement District**

Improvement Districts are enabled by New Jersey Law (the Pedestrian Mall and Special Improvement District Act, N.J.S.A. 40:56-65, et seq.) and are adopted by local ordinance. New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA) defines Improvement District (business, special, downtown, or other names) as "...a mechanism for the businesses and property owners of a community to organize as a single entity, to raise funds for activities that enhance or expand upon municipal services, and through a District Management Corporation, to manage themselves to become a more effective destination for commerce."<sup>56</sup>

In New Jersey, municipalities looking to create these districts are required to establish a District Management Corporation (DMC) to oversee the operation of the Improvement District. In addition to the benefit of commercial revitalization, municipalities with Improvement Districts would be eligible for State economic development-related grant funds. The State is more favorable to applicants with a Business Improvement District (BID) and will give grant award priority to a BID applicant over an applicant without a BID. The NJDCA established an interest-free

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<sup>56</sup> New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA), *Improvement District (ID) Programs*, <https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/lps/idp.html>

loan program, the Downtown Business Improvement Zone Loan Fund (DBIZ) with awards up to \$600,000 that is offered only to BIDs.<sup>57 58</sup>

Improvement districts, such as business improvement districts (BIDs) or special improvement districts (SIDs), offer a range of benefits to communities and businesses within their designated areas. These districts focus on enhancing the overall environment by investing in beautification, safety measures, and marketing efforts. They stimulate economic development, attract new businesses, and contribute to increased property values. Improvement districts foster collaboration and networking among businesses, provide support services, and engage with the local community through events and outreach programs. By investing in infrastructure improvements, cleanliness, and sustainability initiatives, improvement districts create a more attractive and vibrant environment, leading to increased foot traffic and community pride. Overall, improvement districts play a crucial role in fostering the economic, social, and physical well-being of their designated areas.

According to NJDCA, there are currently an estimated 67 municipalities over 19 counties with known active Improvement Districts in the State. Penns Grove could look to these municipalities for guidance and as a model for when considering establishing a BID or SID. The [focus areas](#) explored in this Section VII of this Plan Element are good starting point for where the Borough could establish a BID or SID. Further evaluation of additional areas, particularly commercial areas in the Borough, should be considered as part of the improvement district. Consultation of the [DCA's Frequently Asked Questions](#) can provide more information about establishing BIDs or SIDs.<sup>57</sup>

### **Strategy 16: Hold Public Events and Festivals in Infill Locations**

Hosting community events in areas undergoing redevelopment is crucial for fostering community engagement, building trust, and gathering valuable input from residents. These events serve as platforms to raise awareness about redevelopment plans, showcase the area's potential, and celebrate milestones in the revitalization process. By actively involving the community in decision-making, events contribute to a sense of belonging and civic pride. They attract external support, potential investors, and partnerships, while also generating local economic activity. Community events play a pivotal role in addressing social equity concerns, promoting cultural preservation, and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Moreover, these events inspire civic pride,

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<sup>57</sup> New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA), *Frequently Asked Questions about Improvement District (ID) Programs*, [https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/idp\\_faq.html#10](https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/idp_faq.html#10)

<sup>58</sup> New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA), *Downtown Business Improvement Zone Loan Fund*, <https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/lps/grantsloans.html>

volunteerism, and strengthen social connections, laying the foundation for a vibrant and inclusive community during the redevelopment journey.

To help bring in foot traffic and customers to businesses in the focus areas with commercial businesses, the Borough should consider holding public events in these areas. Events may include farmer's market, craft and food fairs, festivals, parades, or other community events and annual events held by the Borough. The implementation of this strategy will primarily consist of administrative and staff time to coordinate Borough events.

### **Strategy 17: Initiate a Neighborhood Identity Campaign**

A branding or neighborhood identity strategy plays an important role in helping to spur economic development in a community. A well-executed branding strategy can attract investment by showcasing a community's competitive advantages. A strong community identity creates a positive perception for potential businesses, developers, employees, and residents.

To begin the work in identifying the community's identity, the Borough should begin with reaching out to community groups, business owners, and residents. The community identity should be focused on unique attributes of the Borough, such as the historic character of the community, the waterfront, and the river walkway.

According to [NeighborWorks America](#), the following questions are important to consider when preparing for community identity campaigns:<sup>59</sup>

- How do current residents describe living in the neighborhood?
- How do outsiders perceive the same neighborhood?
- What does the real estate market look like?
- What social indicators are important for branding and promoting a neighborhood?
- Are your neighborhood revitalization goals S.M.A.R.T. (S.M.A.R.T. goals are specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused and time-bound.)?
- How will you encourage resident engagement?
- What previous marketing strategies have succeeded or failed?

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<sup>59</sup> *NeighborWorks America, Ten questions to consider before launching a neighborhood marketing campaign, by Angela Carlberg, Community Stabilization, April 25, 2016, <https://www.neighborworks.org/Blog/Ten-questions-to-consider-before-launching-neighborhood-marketing-campaign-1>*

- What social media outlets are available? How have they been used and by whom? Are there additional vehicles that can be leveraged for communication and engagement?
- What is your short-term agenda?
- What is your long-term vision?

### **Strategy 18: Smart Technology/Software Data Tracking System**

Having code enforcement software in a community offers numerous benefits, enhancing efficiency, transparency, and compliance with local regulations. Penns Grove is recommended to implement a code enforcement software application for the following reasons:

- **Efficiency and Automation:** Code enforcement software automates various tasks, reducing the manual workload of enforcement officers, and thus leading to faster response times, quicker resolution of issues, and overall streamlined operations.
- **Centralized Information:** A centralized database allows for the efficient management of information related to code violations, permits, and inspections. This ensures that data is easily accessible, reducing delays in decision-making processes.
- **Improved Compliance:** Enables proactive monitoring and enforcement of code violations, resulting in higher compliance rates as property owners are more likely to address issues promptly, avoiding potential fines.
- **Enhanced Communication:** Facilitates communication between enforcement officers, government officials, and community members. Clear and timely communication helps in resolving issues collaboratively and addressing concerns promptly.
- **Data Analysis and Reporting:** Allows data analysis and reporting, providing insights into trends, patterns, and areas with high violation rates. Informed decision-making based on data contributes to more effective and targeted enforcement efforts.
- **Increased Revenue from Fines:** Efficient enforcement through software can lead to increased revenue from fines. With streamlined processes, violations are identified and addressed more quickly, resulting in a higher likelihood of fines being issued and collected.
- **Reduction in Administrative Costs:** Automation and streamlined processes reduce administrative costs associated with code enforcement, including

savings in time spent on manual paperwork, data entry, and coordination among different departments.

- Optimized Resource Allocation: Optimizes resource allocation by prioritizing high-priority violations and areas with persistent issues. This ensures that enforcement efforts are directed where they are needed most, maximizing impact.
- Prevention of Blight: Timely enforcement prevents blight and deterioration of neighborhoods. This contributes to maintaining property values and preventing the negative economic impact associated with blighted areas.
- Positive Impact on Property Values: Efficient code enforcement contributes to maintaining and improving property values. Well-maintained neighborhoods attract residents and businesses, positively impacting the local real estate market.
- Attractiveness to Investors and Businesses: Communities with effective code enforcement are more attractive to investors and businesses. The perception of a well-maintained and regulated community enhances its appeal for economic development.
- Community Safety and Livability: Code enforcement software contributes to community safety and livability by addressing issues related to building safety, health hazards, and other concerns. A safe and livable community is more likely to attract residents and businesses.
- Avoidance of Legal Issues: The software helps in documenting and tracking enforcement actions, reducing the risk of legal challenges. Proper documentation ensures that enforcement decisions are defensible in case of disputes.
- Long-Term Cost Savings: While there may be an initial investment in implementing code enforcement software, the long-term cost savings from increased efficiency, reduced administrative overhead, and optimized resource allocation contribute to economic benefits for the community.
- Enhanced Community Image: Efficient code enforcement contributes to an enhanced community image. A well-maintained and regulated environment fosters community pride and attracts positive attention, potentially leading to increased investment and economic activity.

Thus, implementation of code enforcement software offers economic benefits to the Borough by improving efficiency, increasing compliance, generating revenue, and contributing to a positive and well-regulated community environment. The long-term

impact includes cost savings, enhanced property values, and an attractive environment for residents and businesses alike.

There are several things to consider when implementing such technology that will be important for the Borough, including user training and support and cost and budget. Comprehensive training for the employees who will use the system and offering ongoing support to address any issues will be important. As to the cost and budget, it is critical to consider licensing fees, hardware requirements, and ongoing support costs. Paying for a new software tracking system for code enforcement in a municipality can be approached in several ways:

- Allocating funds from annual budget, which may be specifically for technology upgrades or improvements.
- Researching and applying for grants or funding programs that support technology upgrades or improvements in municipal operations, particularly those related to code enforcement or public safety.
- Implementing user fees or charges for specific services related to code enforcement, with a portion of the revenue dedicated to funding the new software system.
- Issuing municipal bonds to finance the upfront costs of implementing the software system is another option, wherein the repayment is funded through future tax revenues or other sources of municipal income.
- Exploring leasing or financing options with software vendors or financial institutions to spread out the cost of implementation over time, making it more manageable for the municipality's budget.

Collaborating with other municipal agencies or neighboring jurisdictions to share the cost of implementing a shared software tracking system for code enforcement, leveraging economies of scale and reducing individual financial burdens.

### ***Funding***

Adopting policies and strategies to support infill developments are important in guiding a municipality to successfully rehabilitate or redevelop the community. However, these policies do not guarantee success. Gaps in financing developments can occur. Municipalities must be willing to provide support, either through financial support or technical support, to realize the completion of a project and help achieve the community's vision. This section explores financial strategies that Penns Grove can support to promote infill development projects in the community.

### **Strategy 19: Enact a Property Tax Abatement Program**

Tax abatement programs allow municipalities to waive property taxes on improvements. While the Borough can target the identified focus areas for the tax abatement program, the Borough should also consider a program applicable community wide. In focus areas, reducing or eliminating property taxes on new investment can attract more investment, as lower tax obligation can allow developers or owners to make more improvements on the property. One of the recommendations of the Fiscal Evaluation & Recommended Recovery Plan of the Borough recommends adoption of abatement programs to encourage residents to improve their properties. Establishing a property tax abatement program would support this recommendation.

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) established the Municipal Tax Abatement Handbook to guide municipalities in New Jersey in establishing tax abatement programs. The handbook includes municipal ordinance and financial agreement templates and sample language for municipalities to implement.<sup>60</sup>

- Furthermore, the New Jersey Treasury, Division of Taxation, offers several property tax abatement and exemption programs that municipalities can use as tools to meet specific community goals, from economic development and job creation, urban renewable, affordable housing, and sustainability initiatives, which are as follows:<sup>61</sup>
- Automatic Fire Suppression System Property Tax Exemption
- Environmental Opportunity Zone Property Tax Exemption
- Five Year Exemption and Abatement
- Historic Site Property Tax Exemption
- Non-Profit Organization's Property Tax Exemption
- Non-Residential Development Fee Certification/Exemption
- Renewable Energy System Property Tax Exemption
- Urban Enterprise Zone Property Tax Abatement

Tax abatement programs offer a range of benefits, making them powerful tools for community development. These programs stimulate economic growth by attracting businesses and encouraging investment, leading to job creation, and increased local spending. Incentivizing real estate development and redevelopment projects can

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<sup>60</sup> Department of Community Affairs (DCA), *Municipal Tax Abatement Handbook*, November 13, 2020, [https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/misc\\_docs/Municipal%20Tax%20Abatement%20Handbook%20-%20For%20municipal%20use%20-%20\(FINAL%2011.13.2020\).pdf](https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/misc_docs/Municipal%20Tax%20Abatement%20Handbook%20-%20For%20municipal%20use%20-%20(FINAL%2011.13.2020).pdf)

<sup>61</sup> New Jersey Treasury, Division of Taxation, *Abatements and Exemptions*, <https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/lpt/lpt-abatements.shtml>

enhance property values, revitalize blighted areas, and boost the overall real estate market. Tax abatements designed to support affordable housing initiatives address the housing needs of low-income communities, fostering inclusivity. Additionally, these programs can encourage small business growth, promote sustainability, and contribute to community revitalization efforts. For distressed and low-income communities, tax abatement programs become particularly beneficial as they provide a means to attract investments, create jobs, and address housing affordability, ultimately fostering economic resilience, and improving overall quality of life.

The Township of Winslow in Camden County enacted a 5 Year Tax Abatement-Exemption Programs in 1997 to attract and encourage new commercial and industrial development and increase the commercial ratable base in the Township. This program was amended in 2016 to allow for home improvement tax abatements for single-family and multi-family dwellings that are 15 years or older in the Township.<sup>62</sup> This program is adopted as part of the Township Code under [Chapter 66](#). Penns Grove should look into and study other New Jersey municipalities', such as Winslow Township, tax abatement programs to understand how to implement such programs, get ideas, and best practices.

The Borough should consider the following key steps when preparing to implement a tax abatement program:

- Research and Planning: The Borough should research existing tax abatement programs in other municipalities to understand their structures, benefits, and potential challenges. This helps in determining the most suitable approach for the Borough.
- Legal Review: Ensure compliance with New Jersey state laws governing tax abatement programs. Seek legal counsel to review and advise on the legal framework, including any specific requirements or limitations.
- Policy Development: Develop a clear policy outlining the objectives, eligibility criteria, duration, and terms of the tax abatement program. This policy should be transparent and align with the Borough's goals and priorities.
- Public Input and Approval: Engage stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and community organizations, to gather feedback and support for the proposed tax abatement program. Present the program to the governing body for approval.

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<sup>62</sup> *Winslow Township, New Jersey, 5 Year Tax Abatement-Exemption Programs*  
<https://www.winslowtownship.com/content/3298/3522/3649.aspx#:~:text=Property%20owners%20will%20have%2030,fee%20required%20for%20this%20program>



- Program Administration: Establish procedures and guidelines for administering the tax abatement program, including application processes, evaluation criteria, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with program requirements.
- Outreach and Education: Educate property owners, developers, and other stakeholders about the benefits and requirements of the tax abatement program. Provide resources and assistance to facilitate participation and understanding.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Regularly monitor the implementation of the tax abatement program to assess its effectiveness in achieving stated objectives. Evaluate the impact on municipal revenues, economic development, and community outcomes.
- Adjustment and Adaptation: Periodically review and update the tax abatement program as needed to address changing circumstances, feedback, or emerging issues. Flexibility and responsiveness are essential to maintaining the program's relevance and effectiveness over time.

### **Strategy 20: Implement a Land Banking Program**

In 2019, New Jersey enacted the “New Jersey Land Bank Law” that allows New Jersey municipalities to form land banks by entering into an agreement with a nonprofit entity or redevelopment entity to serve as the municipality’s land bank entity.<sup>63</sup> The Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey defines land banks as “...governmental entities, typically authorized pursuant to state law, that acquire, hold, and steward vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties to support equitable community development outcomes.”<sup>64</sup>

Shortly after the enactment of the New Jersey Land Bank Law, the Newark Land Bank (NLB) was established as the first land bank in New Jersey. NLB acquires, maintains, and repurposes vacant, abandoned, and foreclosed properties in the municipality and efficiently returns them to productive uses. The program aims to increase homeownership, reduce blight, create affordable and market-rate housing, increase business opportunities, increase property values, and improve the quality of life of the residents. The program utilizes a variety of sales programs to make homeownership

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<sup>63</sup> Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey, Chapter 159  
[https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2018/PL19/159\\_.htm](https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2018/PL19/159_.htm)

<sup>64</sup> Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey,  
<https://www.hcdnnj.org/landbanks#:~:text=Land%20banks%20are%20governmental%20entities.support%20equitable%20community%20development%20outcomes.>

and land purchases accessible to all Newark residents.<sup>65</sup> To date, Newark's Land Bank program is the only active land bank in the state.

The Center for Community Progress (CPP) and the Housing Community Development Network of New Jersey (HCDNNJ) established the [New Jersey Land Bank Launch Scholarship](#) program to support the establishment of land banks in selected communities. Municipalities, municipal redevelopment agencies, county improvement entities, and non-profit organizations or coalition of nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for the scholarship. The scholarship will include technical assistance, two-day site visit, and written report outlining findings and recommendations.<sup>66</sup>

The CPP established the [National Land Bank Map](#) that depicts the location of existing land bank programs or organizations in the country. The map is an interactive map that identifies these land bank programs by municipality, county, and regional level.<sup>67</sup> While there may be only be one land bank program, the Newark Land Bank, in the state of New Jersey, the Borough should study municipalities in the country to understand their structures, benefits, and potential challenges in order to determine the most suitable approach for the Borough. Specifically, the Borough should study towns or municipalities of similar geographic size and, possibly, of socioeconomic makeup.

Establishing a land bank program presents an opportunity for Penns Grove to return vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties in the Borough to productive use, which, in turn will enable said properties' value to grow, generate tax revenue, and increase homeownership. Therefore, the Borough should consider submitting an application for the New Jersey Land Bank Launch Scholarship to potentially receive no-cost technical assistance to explore and ultimately implement a land bank program in the community.

The Borough should consider the following key steps when preparing to implement a land banking program:

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<sup>65</sup> Newark Land Bank 2021 Annual Report, <https://landbank.investnewark.org/pdf/data-analytics/1683634798GVI2O.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> Center for Community Progress, New Jersey Land Bank Launch Initiative <https://communityprogress.org/services/technical-assistance/nj-land-bank-launch-initiative/>

<sup>67</sup> Center for Community Progress, National Land Bank Map, <https://communityprogress.org/resources/land-banks/national-land-bank-map/>

- Feasibility Study: Conduct a feasibility study to assess the need for a land bank in the Borough. Identify blighted, vacant, tax-delinquent, or underutilized properties that could be targeted for acquisition and redevelopment.
- Legal Framework: Understand the legal framework for land banking in New Jersey, including state statutes, regulations, and local ordinances governing land acquisition, property management, and redevelopment. Seek legal counsel to ensure compliance and navigate any legal complexities.
- Establishment of a Land Bank Entity: Determine the structure and governance of the land bank entity, whether it will be a public agency, nonprofit organization, or a partnership between public and private stakeholders. Establish bylaws, policies, and procedures for the operation of the land bank.
- Funding and Resources: Identify funding sources to support the establishment and operation of the land bank, such as grants, loans, municipal appropriations, or revenue generated from property transactions. Secure necessary resources, including staff, expertise, and technical assistance.
- Community Engagement: Engage with residents, property owners, community organizations, and other stakeholders to gather input, build support, and foster collaboration in the development of the land bank program. Address concerns, communicate benefits, and ensure transparency throughout the process.
- Property Inventory and Acquisition: Develop a comprehensive inventory of target properties suitable for acquisition by the land bank. Prioritize properties based on strategic goals, development priorities, and community needs. Negotiate acquisition agreements with property owners, using voluntary sales, tax foreclosure, or other legal mechanisms.
- Property Management and Disposition: Implement property management strategies to secure, maintain, and stabilize acquired properties. Develop plans for property disposition, whether through sale, lease, redevelopment, or transfer to other public or nonprofit entities. Ensure that property transactions align with the land bank's mission and goals.
- Partnerships and Collaboration: Forge partnerships with local governments, community development organizations, housing agencies, developers, financial institutions, and other stakeholders to leverage resources, expertise, and support for land bank initiatives. Collaborate on redevelopment projects, financing opportunities, and community revitalization efforts.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish mechanisms to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the land bank program, including tracking property acquisitions, dispositions, redevelopment outcomes, and community benefits.

Evaluate the program's success in achieving its goals and objectives and make adjustments as needed.

The Center for Community Progress (CCP) established Community Involvement Program Guidelines for Land Banks for land bank programs or entities. This guideline provides community outreach strategies and framework for land banks to prepare a community engagement plan.<sup>68</sup> Community engagement is a crucial process in implementing a land bank program, as identified as a key step above. The Borough is encouraged to utilize the guidelines developed by the CCP to engage the residents, property owners, community organizations, and other stakeholders vested in the community.

**Strategy 21: Encourage Crowdfunding for Projects and Businesses in Focus Infill Development Areas**

Crowdfunding refers to an approach in raising investment for a project. The US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Sustainable Communities of the Smart Growth Program identifies, within the *Attracting Infill Development in Distressed Communities: 30 Strategies* report, crowdfunding as an infill development strategy in distressed communities.

Businesses and investors, including developers, are likely to use crowdfunding. In New Jersey, the Crowd Funding NJ, Inc. (CFNJ) is the first authorized and registered New Jersey Crowd Funding Internet Site Operator (ISO) that provides a funding platform that complies with New Jersey Crowd Funding Laws and Regulations. In distressed areas like Penns Grove, providing support and encouraging the use of crowdfunding to developers for the rehabilitation and infill projects becomes important.

One way for Penns Grove to provide support to developers or small businesses is having the information of CFNJ, for example, and other resources available on the Penns Grove website. The Borough may designate a specific staff to serve as a liaison between the Borough and CFNJ or similar platforms or organizations to better facilitate the process. This liaison may be the same liaison position recommended under Strategies 11 to streamline the process and communication and centralize all information necessary in partnership and funding.

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<sup>68</sup> Center for Community Progress, *Community Involvement Program Guidelines for Land Banks*, <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CommunityInvolveLBProgramGuidelines.pdf>

**Strategy 22: Generate Revenue through Naming Rights and Advertising**

Establishing naming rights and advertising programs in a municipality brings forth a myriad of benefits, primarily centered around revenue generation, community development, and increased visibility. Naming rights for local governments typically involve agreements where corporations or individuals pay for the privilege of having their name associated with a public facility, such as a stadium, park, or public building. In exchange for a fee, the entity or individual gains the right to have their name prominently displayed on the facility. These agreements can vary widely in terms of duration, cost, and restrictions, and they often generate revenue for the local government, which can be used to fund projects or services.

Moorestown Township adopted a field sponsorship program in 2013 under Chapter 74 of its Township code to encourage continued improvements to their recreational fields and parks, reduce related financial burden on its residents and identify community partnerships. The program allows permit sponsors to advertise on the Township's recreational fields and parks. The program also regulates the placement of banners or signs, such as quantities, size and shape, design, and naming specifications. All revenue generated from this program is deposited in the Township's fund and is spent to fund the construction, maintenance, and improvement of recreational facilities and parks.<sup>69</sup>

Voorhees Township created a sponsorship policy under Chapter 102 of its Township code that regulates the sale of naming rights to Township-owned properties to raise additional revenue to fund programs and services. The policy outlines the review and approval process of sponsorship applications or agreements, in which all sponsorships are to be approved by the Township Solicitor and Township Administrator. The policy also outlines criteria for proposal review that details the forms of support being offered by the sponsor and factors to consider by the Township. Permissible and prohibited message contents are also covered under this policy.<sup>70</sup>

The additional revenue from sponsorships or naming rights can lead to the enhancement of community facilities and job creation. Moreover, the positive image cultivated through successful naming rights programs can attract businesses and new residents, further boosting the local economy and encouraging public-private partnerships. To adopt a similar policy or program, Penns Grove should prepare to adopt it by ordinance, similar to Moorestown and Voorhees Townships. The ordinance

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<sup>69</sup> Moorestown Township, Burlington County, New Jersey, Chapter 74: Field Sponsorship Program, <https://ecode360.com/28150525>

<sup>70</sup> Voorhees Township, Camden County, New Jersey, Chapter 102, Sponsorship Policy, [https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/voorheestwp/latest/voorheestwp\\_nj/0-0-0-33719](https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/voorheestwp/latest/voorheestwp_nj/0-0-0-33719)

should outline the terms and conditions of the naming rights or advertising agreement, establish the framework for implementation, and program rules or regulations.

## V. Key Recommendations from the 2021 Master Plan General Reexamination

The following recommendations from the 2021 General Reexamination of the Master Plan remain relevant and important to furthering the Borough's economic development goals. To avoid repetition, recommendations from the reexamination report that have been addressed in Section V Recommendations above will not be addressed in this section.

### **Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging**

Reexamination Report Recommendation: Consideration should be given to updating ordinances related to electric car charging and exploring provisions in conjunction with gas stations.

To supplement this provision, the Borough should consider submitting an application to the Community Energy Plan Grant (CEPG) Program to develop a Community Energy Plan (CEP). The CEPG program provides support to municipalities to develop climate action plans at the local level based on their assessment of the State's Energy Master Plan (EMP) strategies that are most applicable in their community. All municipalities are eligible to receive a \$10,000 grant. Additional grant funding (\$25,000 total) is provided to municipalities identified as being Overburdened Municipalities (OBMs) based on NJDCA's Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI) ranking. Penns Grove is identified as an overburdened community based on MRI ranking.<sup>71</sup>

The grant would allow the Borough to identify initiatives and strategies to transition the community towards sustainability and help achieve the State's goal of 100% clean energy by 2050. The CEP requires tangible steps and actions that the Borough wants to implement in the short and long term. Adoption of a CEP would open opportunities for the Borough to apply for grant funding for capital projects identified in the CEP. For example, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) just opened the

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<sup>71</sup> New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU), *Community Energy Plans*, <https://njcleanenergy.com/commercial-industrial/programs/community-energy-plans>

Community Energy Plan Implementation (CEPI) Grant Program that will award eligible municipalities with funding up to \$250,000 to implement clean energy projects in their respective communities, particularly projects identified in the adopted CEP.

Installation of public and private EV charging stations would be an example of initiative that can be identified in the CEP. EV charging stations offer several economic benefits, such as generating revenue to businesses and the municipality. Onsite charging stations at businesses may charge customers for using their charging services. Municipalities may also collect taxes on the electricity used to charge the EVs. This additional revenue can help finance large-scale projects such as renewable energy installation and infrastructure improvements in the Borough.

### **Municipal Building and Facilities**

Reexamination Report Recommendation: The Borough should evaluate the need for a new Municipal Building, as well as other community facilities to serve the residents of the community.

Community facilities, such as community centers, sports centers, recreation centers, and parks and open space, can boost the local economy. Owning and operating these facilities requires staff, thus creating new jobs in the community. Having these facilities would allow the community to host sporting or community events and regional or state events, allowing the Borough to capitalize on leisure and hospitality industry.

Other public buildings, such as municipal buildings, a public library, post office, public works, or police stations, are important to the community, both socially and economically. In addition to employment, these facilities also draw residents and visitors to use the public services offered by the community. Additionally, it has been reported that if these public buildings are located within walking distance from retail businesses and restaurants, the chances that residents and visitors are going to spend money on these businesses are higher.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, as the Borough is provided the opportunity to plan and design a new public facility or building, the selected location will be critical in helping bringing in businesses to the Borough.

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<sup>72</sup> University of Wisconsin Extension, *The Importance of Government Facilities in Downtowns*, Issue 111, November 2005, <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/downtowneconomics/files/2012/07/importance-of-gov-facilities.pdf>

### **Identify Brownfields located within the Borough**

Reexamination Report Recommendation: The Borough contains many sites which contain developed land which is no longer in use and may contain potential contaminants. Prior to developing these sites, contamination should be addressed through environmental cleanup.

According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), there are 13 sites having one or more active cases or remedial action permits where contamination has been confirmed.<sup>73</sup>

Redeveloping brownfield sites, such as the sites serves as a powerful catalyst for economic development through various interconnected channels. This transformation not only increases the value of underutilized or contaminated land but also attracts businesses and residents, fostering job creation and urban revitalization. The repurposing of brownfield sites leads to increased property values, resulting in increased tax revenue for the municipality, which can be reinvested in public services and infrastructure.

Beyond economic benefits, brownfield redevelopment promotes environmental stewardship by reclaiming contaminated sites and upgrading infrastructure. The mixed-use development often associated with these projects creates dynamic, vibrant communities, further enhancing the appeal for investment and contributing to cultural heritage preservation. Additionally, governments provide incentives and funding opportunities, making brownfield redevelopment financially viable for developers and businesses. Ultimately, the revitalization of brownfield sites is a multifaceted strategy that not only transforms neglected areas but also generates sustained economic growth and community well-being.

### **Rezoning**

Reexamination Report Recommendation: This report recommends that consideration be given to the following changes to the zoning ordinance *and map*:

- Establish a centralized designated business area in the form of an overlay or rezoning along portions of Virginia Avenue, Broad Street, and Main Street to support economic development.

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<sup>73</sup> New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), *Site Remediation Program: Known Contaminated Sites in New Jersey Reports*, <https://www.nj.gov/dep/srp/kcsnj/>



- Establish a riverfront zoning overlay or rezoning which will support a mixed-use, attractive waterfront destination including entertainment and marina uses.
- Evaluate existing structures and land use within the community and set forth a historic district with specified ordinances which preserve and maintain the historic nature of buildings.

These recommendations support the recommended focus areas explored in Sections V and VI, wherein redevelopment in Penns Grove should concentrate and where highest return on investment can occur. However, establishment of these areas need not to be established altogether at once. Focusing on one care at a time can result in an aggregate effect, sending positive effects to public, private investors and developers. The successful redevelopment of one particular area can serve as a model, inspiring confidence among investors and developers that could further promote similar initiatives in other parts of the municipality.

## **VI. Priority Areas: Key Corridors & Target Redevelopment Sites**

This section explores the focus areas previously introduced in Section V. These areas are identified for their redevelopment potential and where public investment and potential highest return on investment can occur in the Borough. At a glance, these areas are areas with high vacancies, blight, and are mainly concentrated in commercial areas of the Borough. These areas include key corridors and target redevelopment sites that will implement the infill development strategies outlined in Section V. Through public and stakeholder engagement, these focus areas were identified to provide key strategic investments and efforts to create a more desirable, walkable, safe, and economically vibrant place to live, work, and play.

At a public community meeting in October 2023, residents voiced their concerns about ongoing problems in the Borough, including flooding, vacancies, abandoned properties, homeownership, and blight. Many residents, however, were also optimistic about the potential of the Borough and specific areas in the Borough for potential redevelopment and investment to benefit the community as a whole and provide economic growth. Opportunities, encompassing the needs and wants of the community, identified by the residents includes more commercial uses, such as restaurants and retail, public amenities, such as parks and community center, and recreational or entertainment uses.

### Potential Priority Areas for Infill Redevelopment

<b>KEY CORRIDORS</b>
Main Street Corridor
Broad Street Corridor
Route 130 Corridor (Virginia Avenue)
<b>TARGET REDEVELOPMENT SITES</b>
Waterfront Area
Main Street-Main Street Intersection
Brownfield Sites/Contaminated Sites

#### Key Corridors

Key corridors are thoroughfares that provide vital local and regional connectivity, including facilitating the movement of cars, transit, and people and contributing to the livability and vitality of the neighborhoods and businesses. The corridors identified in this section as a focus area contain the majority of the Borough's existing commercial development. These corridors should become a focal point of attracting non-residential and mixed-use development.

All three major corridors (Main Street, Broad Street, and Route 130 corridors) exemplify similar conditions, which are as follows. It is important to note that these conditions were predominantly observed along the nonresidential areas of the corridors:

- Vacant and abandoned buildings
- Vacant and unkept lots
- Lack of street trees
- Sidewalks in poor condition
- Non-ADA compliant sidewalks and curb ramps
- Overgrown vegetation on sidewalks and vacant properties
- Retail storefronts in poor condition
- Utility poles on sidewalks

### *Main Street Corridor*

Main Street (County Road 675) is a major corridor about 1 mile long that stretches from west to east in the Borough, approximately dividing the top half and bottom half of the Borough. The corridor connects the waterfront area to the rest of the Borough and surrounding areas. The Main Street corridor is characterized by diverse uses, including commercial, residential (multifamily and single-family dwellings), public-owned properties (Municipal Building, Police Station, Post Office, BPOE Elks, churches, and other public properties), historic sites (Historical Society-Penns Grove), and several vacant lands.

This corridor has the potential to promote various uses that can support the economic vitality of the Borough, including art galleries, multi-family residential, museums, boutique retail, restaurants, cafes, and public parking. Other modes of transportation can also be supported here, such as integrated facilities for walking and biking. It is evident that this corridor, like the rest of the Borough, is almost fully built with few vacant lots. Thus, adaptive reuse and infill development are the most appropriate methods of development strategy on this corridor.



Vacant commercial buildings near the West Main St. & Broad St. intersection.



Vacant commercial buildings at West Main St. & Oak St. intersection.



Vacant storefront on 64 E Main St.



Existing storefront on W Main St.

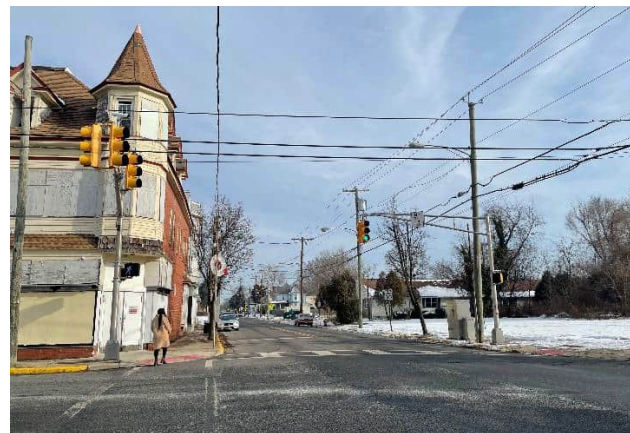
### *Broad Street Corridor*

Broad Street (County Road 607) is another main corridor about 1.1 mile long extending in the north-south direction, dividing the western and eastern portion of the Borough. The corridor comprises of commercial uses, residential uses, public-owned properties, and some vacant lands.

This corridor has the potential to promote various uses that can support the economic vitality of the Borough, and due to its location more internal to the residential areas of the Borough, appropriate uses would include smaller scale, neighborhood type businesses that can serve the immediate needs of residents. Other modes of transportation can also be supported here, such as integrated facilities for walking and biking and trolley shuttles. It is evident that this corridor, like the rest of the Borough, is almost fully built with only a few vacant lots. Thus, adaptive reuse and infill development are the most appropriate methods of development on this corridor.



Broad St. corridor.



Broad St.-Main St. intersection.



Vacant commercial buildings on Broad St. corridor.

### *Route 130 Corridor*

County Route 130 (Virginia Avenue) travels in the north-south direction, stretching approximately from Field Street and Maple Avenue. Larger scale commercial uses can be found in this corridor along with some existing residential uses and vacant lands.

This corridor has the potential to promote uses that are larger in scale and have a more regional focus, while still supporting the economic vitality of the Borough. Characteristics such as multimodal transportation and mixed-use development can still be supported here. Thus, redevelopment or infill development are the most appropriate methods of development or redevelopment on this corridor.



Route 130 corridor.



Shopping center area on Route 130 corridor.



Intersection of Main St. and Route 130.

### **Target Redevelopment Sites**

To better allocate resources and create a positive, lasting impact on the economy of Penns Grove, targeting sites for redevelopment should be considered. Designating and concentrating efforts on specific sites can bring positive transformations. Redevelopment of these sites will need to involve public-private partnership to maximize impact and sustainability. A multifaceted approach to infill redevelopment of these sites will be required. A combination of the strategies explored in Section V is necessary in order to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive solution, addressing economic, social, and environmental social aspects and providing a positive and lasting impact to the community.

Key focus areas include the waterfront area by the riverfront walkway, Main Street & Broad Street intersection, and brownfield sites.

### **Waterfront Area**

The waterfront area by the Delaware River Walkway serves as a key destination node in the Borough. This is a notable area in the Borough that can provide amenities to the residents, as well as attract and serve visitors. This area has the potential to serve as a mixed-use destination and create a unique sense of place for the Borough. Development of this riverfront asset should be carefully planned and designed.

Many properties in the waterfront area have been vacant and abandoned for many years. These properties are zoned MD-1 Marina District 1. Currently permitted uses include single-family detached and attached dwelling; dwelling in combination with commercial; school; recreational facility, governmental and nongovernmental; professional service; trade, professional, music or dancing school; retail shop; eating place, sit-down and drive-in/take-out; public entertainment facility; motel, hotel or tourist home, supply utility, sanitary utility & fire station. Provided the clustering formation of these vacant and abandoned properties, creating a redevelopment plan for this area may be an appropriate strategy.

Existing conditions:



Vacant commercial buildings near the waterfront at the intersection of Delaware Ave. & W Main St.



Large vacant land (Block 57, Lot1) at the waterfront area, looking southeast.



W Main St corridor approaching the waterfront area looking west. Vacant commercial building to the right.



Vacant commercial storefronts fronting W Main St by the waterfront area.

### **Penns Grove Waterfront Area Conceptual Plan**

The development of the waterfront area aims to create a vibrant mixed-use community that seamlessly blends commercial and residential spaces while maximizing water access, recreation, and open space opportunities. The conceptualized community envisions a dynamic waterfront where residents can live, work, and play in close proximity, fostering a sense of community and connectivity. With carefully planned amenities such as promenades, parks, and waterfront dining, the development seeks to attract visitors and residents alike, stimulating economic growth and supporting local businesses. Through thoughtful design and sustainable practices, the waterfront area emerges as a thriving hub, offering a harmonious balance between urban living and natural beauty.





Waterfront Area Development: Mixed-Use Concept Plan

### *Main Street – Broad Street Intersection*

The intersection of Main Street and Broad Street has been identified as a focus area that can serve as a strategic neighborhood scale area for mixed-use commercial and residential uses. This key node can offer goods and services to nearby residents and visitors.

This focus area mainly contains commercial uses zoned under Commercial, Office, Service (COS) district. The area is characterized by several mixed-use vacant and dilapidated buildings, a few vacant lots, some multifamily use, commercial storefronts, child learning centers, and surface parking lots.



Vacant mixed-use storefront at the corner of Main St.-Broad St. intersection.



Vacant commercial storefront at the corner of Main St.-Broad St. intersection.



Existing surface parking lot.

Similarly to the conceptual plan developed for the waterfront area, it would benefit the Borough to develop a concept plan for the Main St.-Broad St. intersection with target improvements.

### *Brownfield Sites or Contaminated Sites*

As outlined in Section VI, there are 13 Known Active Contaminated sites in the Borough. The majority of these contaminated sites are either currently vacant properties or properties with abandoned and dilapidated buildings. Redeveloping brownfield sites yields comprehensive benefits encompassing economic, environmental, and social. By stimulating economic growth, increasing property values, and creating job opportunities, these projects contribute to vibrant local economies. The improvement of infrastructure and urban revitalization transforms blighted areas into attractive spaces, fostering community development.

Brownfield redevelopment addresses environmental concerns through remediation efforts, promoting sustainable practices and mitigating risks. Preservation of cultural heritage, mixed-use development, and access to incentives further enhance the overall appeal and inclusivity of revitalized communities. Additionally, these projects reduce urban sprawl, offer improved quality of life for residents, and exemplify sustainable land use practices, maximizing the potential of existing infrastructure. In essence, brownfield redevelopment plays a pivotal role in creating resilient, thriving, and sustainable communities.

Redeveloping a contaminated site requires careful planning, coordination, and adherence to environmental regulations. The Borough should consider the following key steps:

- Site Assessment: Conduct a thorough environmental assessment to identify the extent and nature of contamination. This may involve soil and groundwater testing, as well as assessing potential risks to human health and the environment.
- Regulatory Compliance: Ensure compliance with federal, state, and local environmental regulations governing contaminated sites, such as the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other state cleanup programs. Obtain necessary permits and approvals for site investigation and remediation activities.
- Remediation Plan: Develop a remediation plan outlining the steps and technologies needed to clean up the site and mitigate environmental risks. Consider factors such as the type and extent of contamination, site conditions, potential exposure pathways, and future land use.
- Funding and Financing: Identify funding sources to support remediation activities, such as government grants, loans, tax incentives, public-private

partnerships, or contributions from responsible parties. Explore creative financing mechanisms to cover cleanup costs while minimizing financial burdens on the municipality.

- Stakeholder Engagement: Engage with stakeholders, including residents, property owners, businesses, environmental groups, regulatory agencies, and community organizations, to solicit input, address concerns, and build support for the redevelopment project. Foster collaboration and transparency throughout the process.
- Cleanup Activities: Implement remediation activities in accordance with the approved cleanup plan, which may include soil excavation, groundwater treatment, containment measures, soil stabilization, or other remedial actions. Monitor progress and compliance with environmental standards.
- Reuse Planning: Develop a reuse plan for the site that considers its remediated condition, market demand, community needs, and economic viability. Explore potential land uses, such as commercial, residential, industrial, recreational, or mixed-use development, that maximize the site's redevelopment potential.
- Infrastructure and Site Preparation: Invest in necessary infrastructure improvements, such as utilities, roads, drainage systems, and landscaping, to prepare the site for redevelopment. Address any remaining environmental concerns and ensure that the site meets applicable zoning and land use requirements.
- Marketing and Development: Market the redeveloped site to potential developers, investors, and tenants interested in participating in the project. Facilitate the development process by providing incentives, expedited permitting, or other assistance to attract private investment and catalyze redevelopment efforts.
- Monitoring and Maintenance: Implement a monitoring and maintenance program to ensure the long-term effectiveness of remediation measures and protect public health and the environment. Monitor groundwater quality, soil conditions, and land use activities to detect any potential issues and take corrective action as needed.

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) has established the [Brownfield Redevelopment Incentive program](#) to aid municipalities in the costs associated with brownfield sites remediation and redevelopment.<sup>74</sup> The Borough is

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<sup>74</sup> *New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), Brownfield Redevelopment Incentive Program, <https://www.njeda.gov/brownfield-redevelopment-incentive/>*

encouraged to apply for this incentive program to help with the costs of remediating and redeveloping these sites in the municipality.

**NJDEP Known Contaminated Sites in Penns Grove<sup>75</sup>**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>Lot</b>	<b>Current Use</b>
13 Mitchell Ave	13 Mitchell Ave	67	51, 52	Abandoned, dilapidated building
13 State St	13 State St	64	20, 20.01	Abandoned, dilapidated building
15 Mitchell Ave	15 Mitchell Ave	67	51, 52	Abandoned, dilapidated building
Akzo Nobel Coatings Inc	76 S Virginia Ave	95	14	Vacant lot
Blue Diamond Meat Co	18 N Virginia Ave	41	8	Warehouse/manufacturing building
C&W Auto Repair Mobil Station	6 E Main St	66	10	Abandoned, dilapidated building
Dipietro Tank Farm	71 W Harmony St	48	1	Vacant lot
Muffler Mart Corp	77 E Main St	40	1, 2	Commercial, auto service
Penns Grove Coal Gas (SJG)	Pitman St	21	12	Vacant lot
Penns Grove Head Start	11 N Broad St	43	3	Childhood center
Penns Grove Redevelopment Agency	W Main St & N Broad St			
Precious Time Day Care Center	12 S Broad St	64	10	Childhood center
Robert T Moore Jr	214 S Broad St	128	24	Vacant lot

<sup>75</sup> New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), *Known Contaminated Sites in New Jersey Reports*, <https://www.nj.gov/dep/srp/kcsnj/>



6 E Main St.



13 & 15 Mitchell Ave.



77 E Main St.



18 N Virginia Ave.



12 S Broad St.



11 N Broad St.

## VII. Program & Incentive Resources

This section explores a collection of programs and incentive resources that can be utilized simultaneously with the policies and strategies outlined in the previous sections of this Plan to foster economic growth, job creation, and overall prosperity within the Borough. The subsequent section includes a range of tools such as tax incentives, workforce development programs, infrastructure investments, business support services, and entrepreneurship initiatives, aimed at attracting and retaining businesses, stimulating innovation, and enhancing competitiveness. The Borough should carefully assess each of these resources before implementation, as specific needs and goals can vary.

### New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJ EDA)

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) offers a large portfolio of varied programs and services designed to assist businesses of all sizes. These programs provide access to capital in a variety of forms including tax-exempt and taxable bond financing, loans, loan guarantees, and business and tax incentives. <https://www.njeda.gov/financing-and-incentives/>

Among the list of available incentives and programs offered by the NJEDA, Penns Grove should consider the following planning grant programs:

- [Local Property Acquisition Grant Program](#)
- [New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant](#)
- [Brownfields Redevelopment Incentive](#)
- [Urban Investment Fund Grant Program](#)

### Neighborhood Preservation Program

The Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP) plays a key role in implementing New Jersey's neighborhood revitalization efforts by strengthening the ability of municipalities to plan and implement strategies to help declining neighborhoods become thriving neighborhoods; building partnerships between state and local governments, private businesses, and residents; and encouraging private investment to drive increased economic opportunities and quality of life in the state's vulnerable communities. Penns Grove is an eligible municipality for this Neighborhood Preservation Program. <https://www.nj.gov/dca/dhcr/offices/nppapp.shtml>

### [Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit](#)

The Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) was designed by the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, authorized by the New Jersey Legislature in 2002, and is administered by the state Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The program offers business entities who invest in the revitalization of eligible low- and moderate-income neighborhoods an 80 percent tax credit against various state taxes. Program-wide, a total of \$15 million per year is available in tax credits, with a maximum of \$1 million available per neighborhood, so that \$18.5 million is available for community-driven plans overall. <https://www.hcdnj.org/neighborhood-revitalization-tax-credit>

### [Low Income Housing Tax Credit \(LIHTC\)](#)

The Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program enjoys the reputation of being the most successful federal housing program in history. The credit, a dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal tax liability, acts as a catalyst to attract private investment into the historically underserved affordable housing market. The additional capital mitigates the debt burden incurred in the construction and rehabilitation development process. Consequently, less rental income is necessary for operations. <https://nj.gov/njhrc/dca/hmfa/developers/lihtc/>

### [Angel Investor Tax Credit Program](#)

Great for redevelopment, the tax credit program provides up to \$25 million of Angel Investor Tax Credit that can be approved per calendar year. For more information, visit [https://www.njeda.gov/technology\\_lifescience%20s/angel\\_investor\\_tax\\_credit\\_program](https://www.njeda.gov/technology_lifescience%20s/angel_investor_tax_credit_program)

### [Economic Redevelopment and Growth \(ERG\) Program](#)

Administered by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), the program provides financing gaps to the developers for eligible development projects in residential, commercial and mixed-use parking projects. The program supports residential projects, commercial projects, and mixed-use parking projects.

Incentive grant program for reimbursement of up to 20% of total project cost for commercial projects with additional grant funding possible based on project type and/or location. Residential projects can receive a tax credit for up to 20% of total project cost with 10% bonus possible if the project constructs and reserves at least 10% of residential units for moderate income housing. For more information, visit



<https://www.njeda.gov/erg/#:~:text=The%20Economic%20Redevelopment%20and%20Growth,margin%20or%20rate%20of%20return>

#### Green Infrastructure Champions Program

Program offered by the Rutgers University New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension Program providing training in green infrastructure planning, design, and implementation. The goals of the program are to enhance knowledge on green infrastructure, engage community leaders in adopting green infrastructure solutions, and provide technical assistance to municipalities in securing funding for green infrastructure projects

<http://www.water.rutgers.edu/Projects/GreenInfrastructureChampions/GIC.html>

#### New Jersey Land Bank Launch Scholarship

Established by the Center for Community Progress and the Housing Community Development Network of New Jersey (HCDNNJ) to support the establishment of land banks in selected communities. [https://communityprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/NJ-Field-Building-TA-Application\\_FINAL.pdf](https://communityprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/NJ-Field-Building-TA-Application_FINAL.pdf)

#### New Jersey the Crowd Funding NJ, Inc. (CFNJ)

The first authorized and registered New Jersey Crowd Funding Internet Site Operator (ISO) provides a funding platform that complies with New Jersey Crowd Funding Laws and Regulations and provides support to businesses and investors.

<https://www.crowdfundingnj.com/>

#### Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Era-Update

Administered by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), the program provides financing gaps to the developers for eligible development projects in residential, commercial and mixed-use parking projects.

<https://www.njeda.gov/erg/>

#### Community Energy Plan Grant (CEPG) Program

Administered by Board of Public Utilities and New Jersey Clean Energy Program, CEPG program provides support to municipalities to develop climate action plans at the local level. <https://njcleanenergy.com/commercial-industrial/programs/community-energy-plans>

#### Emerging Developers Grant Program

Offered by NJEDA, this program provides up to 50% of eligible predevelopment soft costs and costs unrelated to any construction activity. A link to this program should be provided in the Penns Grove website to inform developers or businesses this opportunity. <https://www.njeda.gov/emerging-developers/>

#### Small Business Improvement Grant

Offered by NJEDA, this program offers reimbursement to small businesses and nonprofit organizations for costs associated with making building improvements or purchasing new furniture, fixtures and equipment. A link to this program should be provided in the Penns Grove website to inform developers or businesses this opportunity. <https://www.njeda.gov/small-business-improvement-grant/>