

Harrison Township, New Jersey  
**PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION**

BLOCK 62 LOT 1

2/24/2011

Redevelopment Preliminary  
Investigation Report  
pursuant to Harrison Township Committee  
Resolution 067-2011.

Robert F. Melvin, PP, AICP  
N.J. Planner License No. 04018

GROUPmelvinDESIGN  
3 South Broad Street, Suite 3C  
Woodbury, NJ 08096  
p.856.251.9989 f.856.202.8007



# Acknowledgements

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Louis Manzo

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## 1.0 Introduction

The analysis presented within this document serves as the basis for our recommendation that certain lands located on East Avenue in Harrison Township, Gloucester County, New Jersey are in need of a redevelopment designation and warrant accompanying guidelines that will ensure that the site is developed in a manner that adheres to local and state plans, incorporates sound principals of urban planning and design, promotes the public welfare, and contributes to the sustainable economic development of the Township. The lands in question include 5.67 acres just off of Main Street.

The site falls under the Township's R-1 Residence Agricultural District ordinance, which permits single-family detached houses as well as other uses that include agricultural, recreation, and municipal services.

## 2.0 The Redevelopment Act

New Jersey's Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL), empowers municipalities and local governments with the ability to initiate a process that transforms underutilized or poorly designed properties into healthier, more vibrant, or economically productive land areas. The process has been used successfully across the state to creatively improve properties meeting statutory redevelopment criteria. Projects approved for redevelopment are often eligible for certain types of technical and financial assistance from the state.

Harrison Township has identified the parcel at Block 62 Lot 1 as an opportunity for redevelopment in accordance with the provisions of the LRHL. This investigation encompasses 5.67 acres located at 19 East Avenue in Mullica Hill, which is located one block east of Main Street.

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### 3.0 Redevelopment Procedure

The LRHL requires municipalities to perform a number of steps before it may exercise its Redevelopment powers. This process is meant, in part, to ensure that the Governing Body acts in concert with the goals and objectives of the Township's Master Plan. Recognizing the Planning Board's role as the steward of the Master Plan, these steps require the Planning Board to make recommendations to the Township Committee. The required steps are as follows:

- a. The Governing body must adopt a resolution directing the Planning Board to perform a preliminary investigation to determine whether a specified area is in need of redevelopment according to criteria set forth in the LRHL (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5).
- b. The Planning Board must prepare and make available a map delineating the boundaries of the proposed redevelopment area, specifying the parcels to be included in it. This map should be accompanied by a statement setting forth the basis of the investigation.
- c. The Planning Board must then conduct the investigation and produce a report presenting the findings. The Board must also hold a duly noticed hearing to present the results of the investigation and to allow interested parties to give testimony. The Planning Board then may adopt a resolution recommending a course of action to the Governing Body.
- d. The Governing Body may act on this recommendation by adopting a resolution designating the area an "Area in Need of Redevelopment". The Governing Body must make the final determination as to the Redevelopment Area boundaries, although these are typically accepted as recommended by the Planning Board.
- e. A Redevelopment Plan must be prepared establishing the goals, objectives, and specific actions to be taken with regard to the "Area in Need of Redevelopment."

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f. The Governing Body may then act on the Plan by passing an ordinance adopting the Plan as an amendment to Township's Zoning Ordinance.

#### **4.0 Current Progress**

The Harrison Township Committee adopted a resolution on February 7, 2011 (Resolution 067-2011) instructing the Planning Board to initiate an investigation in accordance with Part "a" above. Together with its accompanying maps, this report is meant to satisfy parts "b", and "c" above.

This analysis concerns a 5.67 acre parcel currently owned by CTL Associates. This analysis will determine if this site warrants redevelopment based upon the statutory criteria of the LRHL. This report will conclude by recommending if this parcel should be included in any redevelopment designation in order to produce an effective, comprehensive redevelopment plan for the area.

The site is located at 19 East Avenue, one block to the east of the Main Street business district at the intersection of East Avenue and Earlington Ave. It is bounded by East Ave. to the north, a single-family home and agricultural property to the east, and single family residences to the west and south. The site is comprised of a former lumberyard, a private road, a cell phone tower, and wooded areas.

The site is zoned R-1 Residence Agricultural District. The parcel was purchased on April 13, 2005 by CTL Associates and falls into tax class 4C Commercial. Figure 1 contains a zoning map of the site. Figure 2 contains an aerial photo of the site.

Analysis is being presented on the following parcels in accordance with the Township Committee's resolution:

Block 62, Lot 1 (including Qualifier T01).

Figure 1: Zoning Map

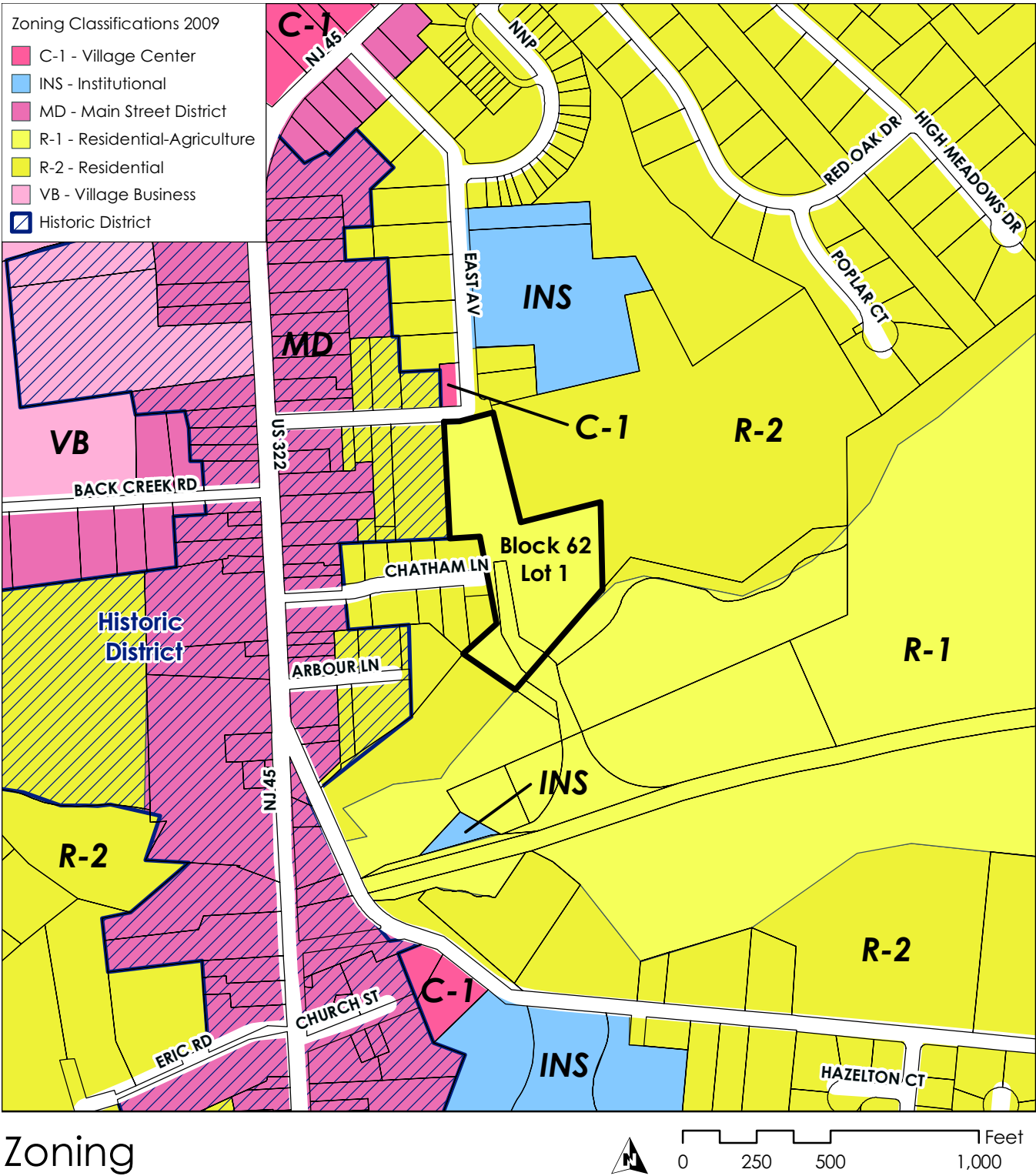
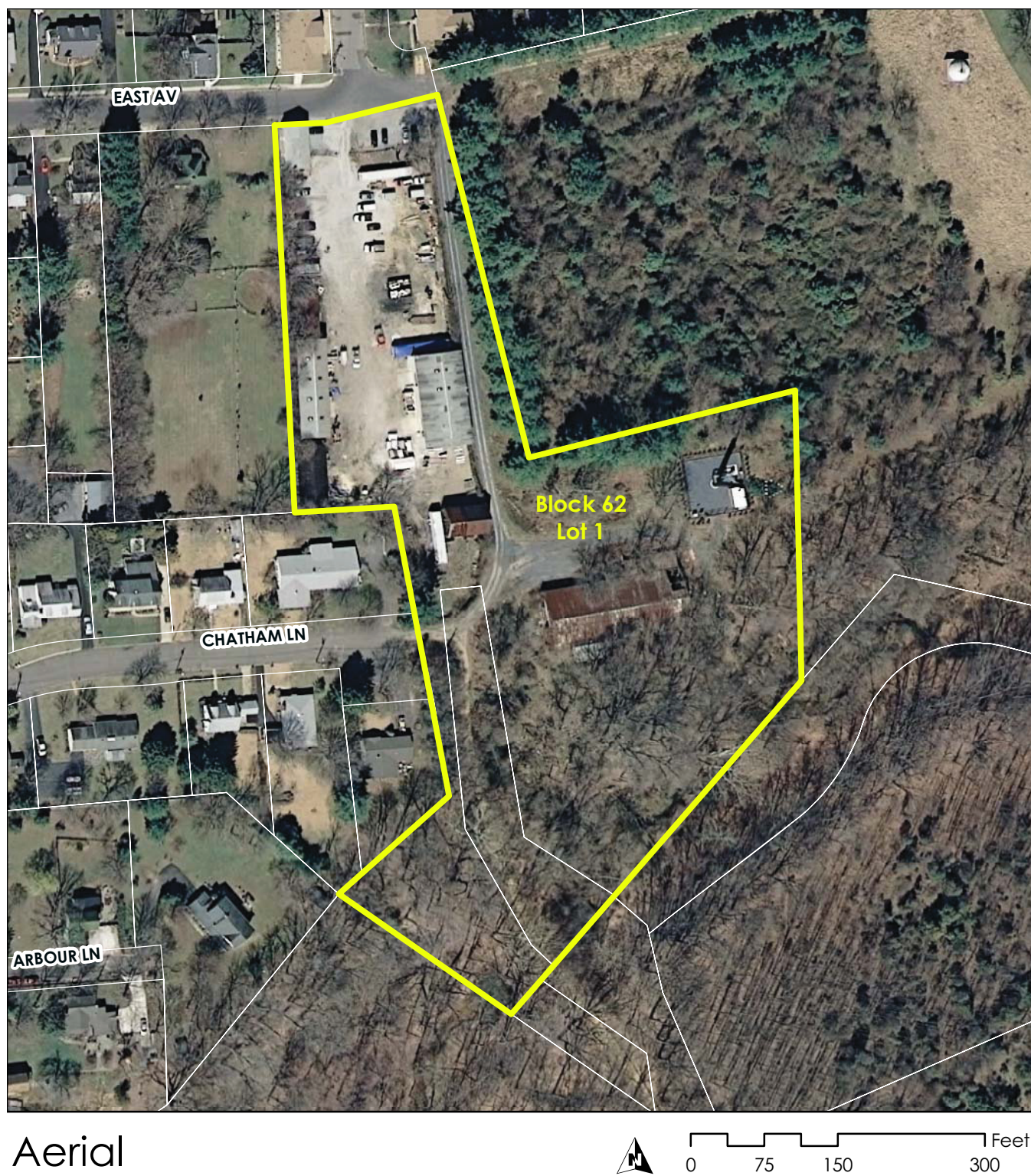




Figure 2: Aerial Map



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## 5.0 Statutory Criteria for Redevelopment

An area qualifies as being in need of redevelopment if it meets at least one of the eight statutory criteria listed in Section 5 of the Land Redevelopment and Housing Law. (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5) These criteria are as follows:

- A** The generality of buildings are substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent, or possess any of such characteristics, or are so lacking in light, air, or space, as to be conducive to unwholesome living or working conditions.
- B** The discontinuance of the use of buildings previously used for commercial, manufacturing, or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such buildings; or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be untenable.
- C** Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, redevelopment agency or redevelopment entity, or unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years prior to adoption of the resolution, and that by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of the municipality, or topography, or nature of the soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital.
- D** Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these or other factors, are detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community.
- E** A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real property therein or other conditions, resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare.



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- F** Areas, in excess of five contiguous acres, whereon buildings or improvements have been destroyed, consumed by fire, demolished or altered by the action of storm, fire, cyclone, tornado, earthquake or other casualty in such a way that the aggregate assessed value of the area has been materially depreciated.
- G** In any municipality in which an enterprise zone has been designated pursuant to the "New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zones Act," P.L.1983, c.303 (C.52:27H-60 et seq.) the execution of the actions prescribed in that act for the adoption by the municipality and approval by the New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zone Authority of the zone development plan for the area of the enterprise zone shall be considered sufficient for the determination that the area is in need of redevelopment pursuant to sections 5 and 6 of P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-5 and 40A:12A-6) for the purpose of granting tax exemptions within the enterprise zone district pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1991, c.431 (C.40A:20-1 et seq.) or the adoption of a tax abatement and exemption ordinance pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1991, c.441 (C.40A:21-1 et seq.). The municipality shall not utilize any other redevelopment powers within the urban enterprise zone unless the municipal governing body and planning board have also taken the actions and fulfilled the requirements prescribed in P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) for determining that the area is in need of redevelopment or an area in need of rehabilitation and the municipal governing body has adopted a redevelopment plan ordinance including the area of the enterprise zone.
- H** The designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.



Figure 3: Building on southern end of property meeting A & B Criterion.



Figure 4: Building on property meeting A & B Criterion.



Figure 5: Building on northern end of property meeting A & B Criterion.

## 6.0 Applicability of Statutory Criteria to the Redevelopment Area

Under the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, an area may be deemed in need of redevelopment if it meets any one of the statutory criteria. Block 62, Lot 1 meets criteria A, B, D, E, and H.

The "A" criterion, "Deterioration", defined as having buildings in the area that have deteriorated or fallen into such a state or disrepair that they constitute a threat to the people who live or work in them, applies to some of the structures located on the parcel based on a visual inspection. Several of the buildings are substandard and dilapidated. Figure 3 indicates that the building exterior is rusting and the garage doors are broken or missing, allowing the interior of the building to be exposed to the elements. Figure 4 shows visible rotting wood on the side of the building and rusted roof panels. Figure 5 shows openings in the wood siding, rotting wood, and missing doors.

The "B" criterion, "Abandoned Commercial and Industrial Buildings", applies to the site. The parcel contains several structures that are vacant, including one on the southern end of the property adjacent to the cell phone tower, and two in the northern portion of the site. These buildings were all part of industrial operations, most recently as a lumberyard. All of these buildings have fallen into a state of disrepair and are not suitable for use. The last tenant occupying a building on the site moved out within the past four months due to economic reasons. The buildings illustrated in Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 meet this Criterion.

Criteria "D", "Obsolete Layout and Design" is evident at this site by the configuration and condition of existing structures as well as onsite circulation. The parcel is a long and narrow shape with buildings scattered on the site. The northern part of the property is cut off from the southern part of the property by a building. The main entrance to the property is located on East Avenue. There is also a private road, Swamp Road, which runs through the southern end of the property and is accessible from Chatham Lane. There is no separation from the residential uses on Chatham Lane and this southern entrance into the property. This represents uncontrolled ingress and egress points.

In addition, the property is located in a residential area and residential zone. Under criteria "D", "land uses that may have an adverse impact on surrounding areas, including industrial uses, junkyards, truck terminals, and automobile repair and servicing facilities within predominately residential areas" constitute evidence of meeting this criterion. This is an older operation with no buffer to the residential area.

The "E" Criterion, "Underutilization", may be applied in circumstances where areas are not developed in a manner consistent with a municipality's zoning and master plan. The parcel is located in the R-1 Residential Agricultural District. According to the Harrison Township Master Plan Land Use Element (2000), the purpose of this district is to provide for adequate living space, sufficient land area, individual ownership, and residential safety by exclusion of uses that would generate non-residential traffic. The former industrial uses on this property do not fit into the confines of this zoning classification and therefore does not represent proper utilization of the site.



Figure 6: Building on northern end of property meeting B Criterion.



Figure 7: Southern entrance to site off Chatham Lane from residential area; Criterion D



Figure 8: Swamp Road, a private road on the property with access from Chatham Lane; Criterion D

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The "H" criterion, Smart Growth Consistency, applies to this parcel. The State Planning Act (N.J.S.A. 52:18A-196 et seq.), adopted in 1985, establishes the framework, for State policies and regulations related to smart growth principles. Among the stated objectives in the Act that serve as this framework are the following:

- A** Protect the natural resources and qualities of the state, including, but not limited to: agricultural development areas, fresh and saltwater wetlands, flood plains, stream corridors, aquifer recharge areas, steep slopes, areas of unique flora and fauna, and areas with scenic, historic, cultural and recreational values;
- B** Promote development and redevelopment in a manner consistent with sound planning and where infrastructure can be provided at private expense or with reasonable expenditures of public funds. This should not be construed to give preferential treatment to new construction;
- C** Identify areas for growth, limited growth, agriculture, open space conservation and other appropriate designations that the commission may deem necessary;
- D** Coordinate planning activities and establish statewide planning objectives in the following areas: land use, housing, economic development, transportation, natural resource conservation, agriculture and farmland retention, recreation, urban and suburban redevelopment, historic preservation, public facilities and services, and intergovernmental coordination.

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, adopted pursuant to the State Planning Act, contains a series of smart growth goals and policies and a map which reflects desired growth patterns. The parcel in question is located in Planning Area 3, Fringe Planning Area, where growth is directed at centers in these areas in order to preserve environmentally sensitive lands and open space. Figure 9 contains a map of State Planning Areas and Figure 10 illustrates environmental constraints on the property and surrounding parcels.

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The policy objectives of State Planning Area 3 include the following:

- Focus development and redevelopment in appropriately located and designed Centers to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the Environs.
- Provide for a full range of housing choices primarily in Centers at appropriate densities to accommodate projected growth.
- Encourage appropriate redevelopment in existing Centers and existing developed areas that have the potential to become Centers, or in ways that support Center-based development, to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the Environs.

(2001 State Plan, p. 202, 203)

Redevelopment at this site supports these planning objectives by directing redevelopment into an established village area and directing this housing development away from the Environs. With respect to good Smart Growth, Center based practices, and locating development near community amenities and walkable environments, the site is an extension of Mullica Hill with walkability into the historic downtown. The current use of the site does not support this walkable mixed-use downtown. Development in alignment with the residential zoning on the site aligns with the goals of the state plan by supporting a walkable community.



Figure 9: State Planning Areas

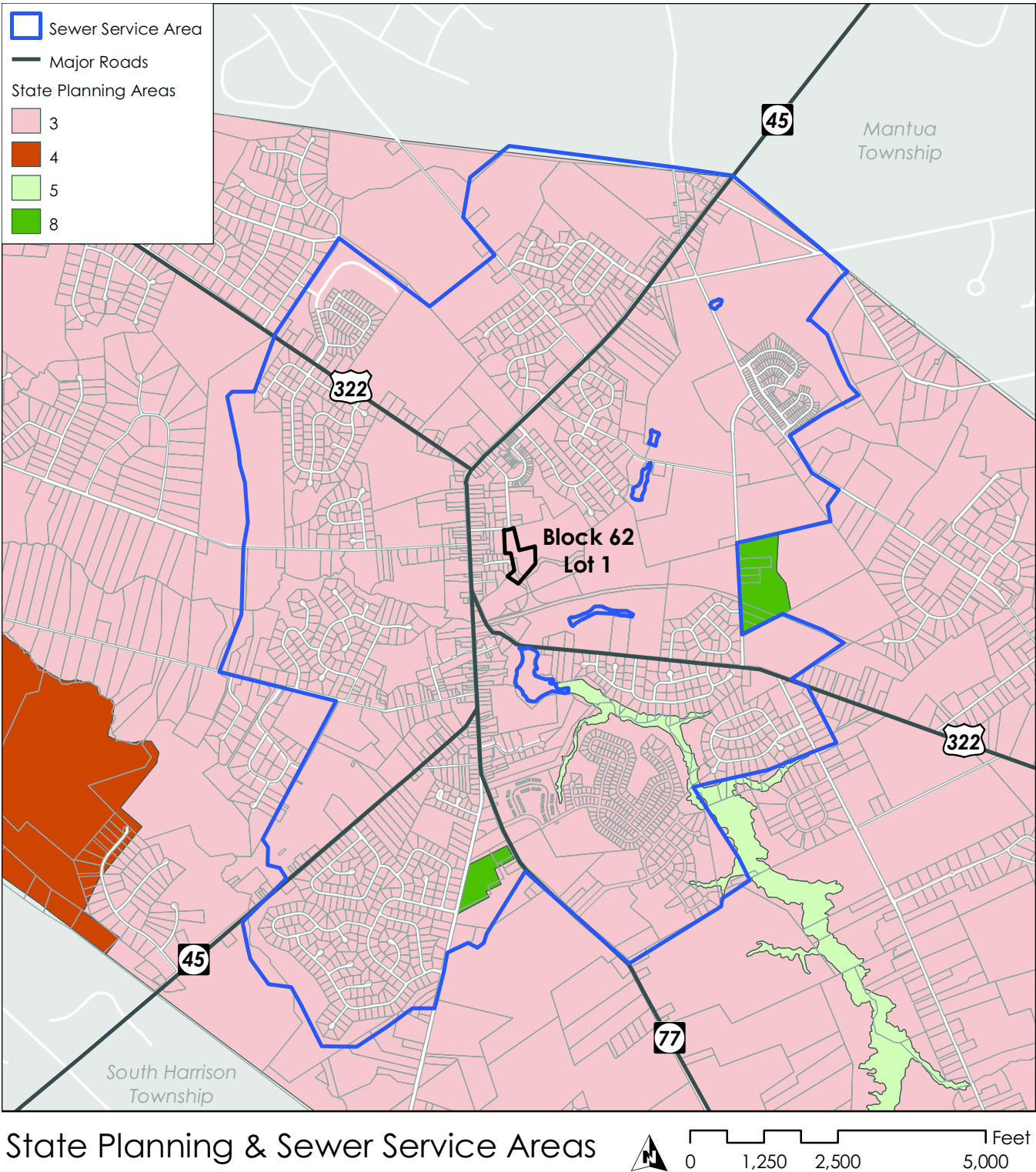
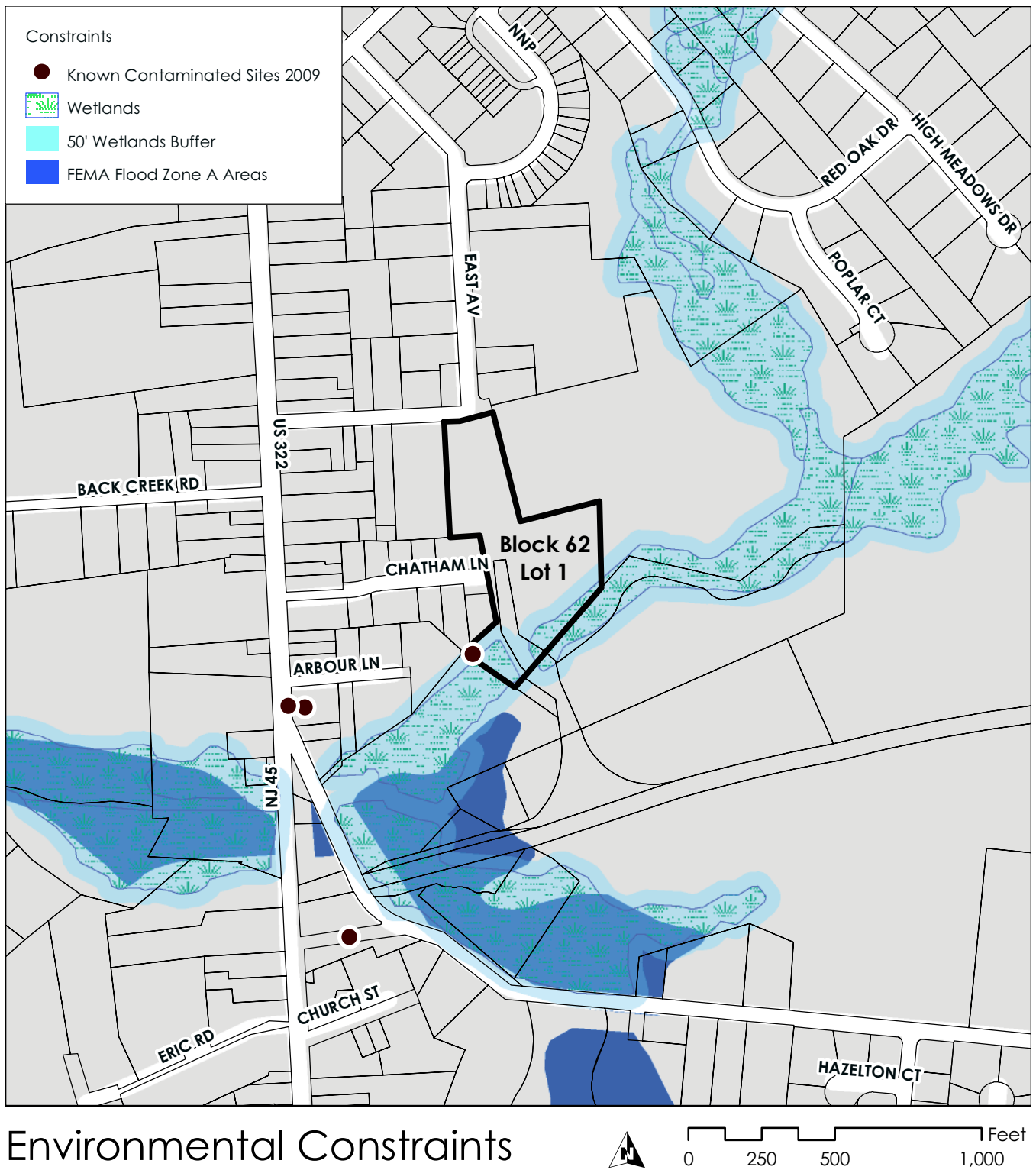


Figure 10: Environmental Constraints



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## 7.0 Conclusion

Based on the above analysis and findings, it is concluded that the conditions in the study area qualify as an “Area in Need of Redevelopment” as defined in N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5). As described above, the parcel in question meets several of the following statutory criteria listed in the Local Redevelopment Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1):

- A – Deterioration
- B - Abandoned Commercial and Industrial Buildings
- D - Obsolete Layout and Design
- E - Underutilization
- H - Smart Growth Consistency

The Planning Board, upon adoption of a resolution, hereby recommends to the Governing Body that the study area be found to be an “Area in Need of Redevelopment” in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5 pursuant to the findings of this report.



