

September 5, 2024

#29209 00

Urban Enterprise Zone 5-Year Development Plan



Prepared For:

Mount Holly Township
Urban Enterprise Zone
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Mount Holly, NJ 08060

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Mount Holly Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) 5-Year Plan: Executive Summary

The following executive summary has been prepared in advance of public review of the Township’s Drafted UEZ 5-Year Plan, which has been underway since June of 2024. In the fall of 2023, the UEZ Authority (UEZA) issued new guidelines when adopting new UEZ Plans. Requirements for the UEZA’s new guidelines include:

- Issuing a Letter to the Urban Enterprise Zone Authority indicating if a UEZ Plan will be self-funded;
- Documentation of the Request for Proposals (RFP) to prepare an Updated Plan if using an outside consultant;
- Submission of a letter requesting the review and approval of the Updated UEZ Plan;
- Documentation of the consultant’s and local organization’s staffing and qualifications to prepare the plan;
- A copy of the Updated UEZ Plan; and
- Evidence that the consultation with representatives of diverse Statewide or regional business organizations that represent the interests of minority businesses as defined in section 2 of P.L. 1986, c. 195 (N.J.S.A. 52:27H-21.18) was included in the Updated Plan, and demonstrating those organizations had no less than 30 days to review the preliminary zone development plan and submit comments to the Township’s UEZ.

To accomplish this, the Township, in coordination with our firm, drafted a UEZ Plan Update, which discussed the history of the Township’s UEZ, the characteristics of the businesses and employers within the UEZ, analyzed market value within the Zone (with the analysis provided by the Otteau Group), explored changes to the boundaries of the UEZ, and provided recommendations to address potential Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats within the Zone. Additionally, the Township conducted a public survey obtaining opinions, recommendations, and statistics regarding feelings of safety for people visiting the Township’s Downtown. Some of the issues identified as part of this planning process are as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Existing Business Concentration Access to Highways <u>Existing Historic Character</u> Consistency of Parks throughout Township County Seat & Associated Hub of Activity Presence of Rowan College at Burlington County <u>Only True “Downtown” in the Sub-Region</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Built-Out Nature of Township Land</u> <u>Potentially Over-Aged Infrastructure</u> Lack of Public Transit Facilities and Infrastructure Smaller Population Size More Develop-able Land in Surrounding Municipalities <u>Lack of General Feeling of Safety</u> Antiquated and Outdated Zoning Ordinance</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Diversity of Industries – Medical, Light Industrial, Downtown Retail</u> Rancocas North Branch & Waterway Viewsheds County Employment Center <u>Aging Infrastructure</u> Higher Relative Income of <i>Surrounding Municipalities</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>High-Flooding Risks</u> No Presence of “High-Tech” Industries and Sectors <u>“Brick and Mortar” transition to “Click and Order”</u> Dependency on Small Business Success <u>Lack of Diversity of Individual Business Types</u> Continued Development in Surrounding Towns</p>

The Otteau Group’s market analysis concluded several land uses that may or may not be appropriate within the UEZ from a market value perspective. Some of the land uses which were identified as not bearing market value in the UEZ include Office, Hospitality, Industrial/Warehouse and Distribution, and

self-storage. Some of the uses that are identified as bearing market value in the UEZ include For-Sale Housing, For-Rent Housing, Retail, and Medical Office (only with a partnership).

During this planning process, establishing a "Vision for Mount Holly's UEZ" was accomplished through the public survey responses, incorporating prior visions for the Township in various plans, and through feedback and a public visioning session on July 31st. The survey, which was active from June 12 through August 22nd, gained 190 "resident" responses (comprised of both Township residents and residents of surrounding municipalities) and 26 "business" responses. For comparison, the only other plan submitted to the State, that our office is aware of, garnered 40 responses total.

To address some of the concerns outlined in the SWOT analysis above, as well as the concerns expressed through the survey and meetings, the following recommendations are incorporated into the report:

Specific Projects and Initiatives

1. Increase Downtown Security Through Video Surveillance and Increased Lighting
2. Increase Recreational Access to Rancocas Creek through more Docks
3. Construct a Bicycle and Pedestrian Path along Segments of the Rancocas Creek
4. Explore Opportunities Throughout the Township for Relocation of the Municipal Building/Complex
5. Consider a Payment in Lieu of Parking Ordinance
6. Coordinate with Burlington County on Revised Parking Strategies (Parking Deck, Shared Parking, Etc.)
7. Incorporate Grant Programs for Business Infrastructure (Safety, Building Expansion, etc.)

Broad Policies and Recommendations

Accomplish Elements for the various "Visions for Mount Holly"	Beautify Streetscapes through Landscaping and Architectural Elements
Utilize Multiple Sources of Funding for Improvements/Programs within the UEZ's Scope	Explore the Conversion of Underutilized Municipally-Owned Parking Lots into Parks and/or Plazas
Program More Frequent Events, Festivals, Bazaars, Etc. to Establish Placemaking	Enforce Uniform Historic Business Signage and Promote More Vehicular & Pedestrian Wayfinding
Leverage the Rancocas Creek for its Recreational and Scenic Benefits	Facilitate Small Business Loans, Low-Interest Loans
Coordinate with NJDEP/FEMA for Maintenance and Access to the Township's Waterways	Focus on Local Arts and Artists
Incorporate more Opportunities for Discounts within the UEZ, i.e. Military Personnel	Increase Transparency\Utilization of Social Media and Public Channels
	Implement UEZ Performance Measures

All of these recommendations were formed considering projects which fall under the purview of the Township's UEZ, as well as projects which State aid will be possible. These recommendations are the final section of the report, with the prior sections and analyses setting the basis for the "findings of fact" justifying the need for change in the UEZ. This Plan aims to prioritize the following 4 elements, in addition to those broad and specific recommendations:

Land Use Element / Zoning Ordinance Amendment	Placemaking in Downtown Mount Holly	New Business Recruitment in the UEZ / Diminishing Oversaturation	Pedestrian / Recreational Infrastructure and Walkability
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After this meeting, copies of the Draft Report will be sent to sub-regional minority-representative groups for their review and comment. After 30 days of their review, the revised Plan will be submitted to the State and UEZA for review and subsequent approval.

A *Draft* of the report will be available following the UEZ's regularly scheduled September 4th meeting on the UEZ's web page. Comments on the *Draft* report can be emailed to **MHUEZPlan@erinj.com**.

Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

01 Introduction	4
Purpose of the Plan	4
UEZ Guidelines	5
A Vision for Mount Holly's Downtown and UEZ	6
Plan Goals and Objectives	7
02 CHARACTERISTICS OF MOUNT HOLLY AND THE UEZ	11
A Brief History of Mount Holly.....	11
Characteristics of the UEZ	12
Demographic and Other Characteristics of Mount Holly Township.....	18
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis	23
Market Value and Market Study	32
03 A VISION FOR THE UEZ AND PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS	36
Developing a Vision Statement.....	36
Stakeholder Interviews and Outreach.....	36
Minority Outreach	36
The Community Survey and Results	37
Past Accomplishments, Current Programs, and Projects	50
The Revised UEZ Map	51
04 Mount Holly UEZ Implementation and Action Agenda	55
Categorical Project Sorting by Type	55
Specific Projects and Initiatives	56
Broad Policies and Recommendations	60
Priority I: Land Use Element / Zoning Ordinance Amendment	68
Priority II: Placemaking in Downtown Mount Holly	68
Priority III: New Business Recruitment in the UEZ / Diminishing Oversaturation	69
Priority IV: Pedestrian/Recreational Infrastructure and Walkability	69
Project Map and Key Investment Locations.....	70
Summary and Next Steps	74
Appendix A – Otteau Group Market Study Report	A-2
Appendix B – Resident & Non-Resident Survey Responses	A-3
Appendix C – Business Survey Responses	A-4
Appendix D – UEZ Performance Indicators	A-5

01 Introduction

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is multi-faceted - to provide recommendations for updates and improvements to Mount Holly's Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ). Among those recommendations, the following can be accomplished:

- Revision of UEZ Boundaries
- Specific Improvements at Strategic Locations
- Broad Goals and Objectives to Further UEZ Efforts
- RECOMMENDED Amendments to Governing Documents - Land Use Element and Zoning Ordinance

In the mid-1990s, when Mount Holly's UEZ was established, development, zoning, and planned redevelopment looked drastically different than today. The Township recognized the Downtown's built-out nature at the time and prioritized looking elsewhere for new economic development. For example, the following goal was set forth in the 2000 Master Plan Update, which recognized the value of the UEZ:

The Central Business District is nearly completely built out and is historic in character...The real potential areas for redevelopment with new non-residential users are those properties located on the periphery of the business district. Particularly, these include the areas south of downtown, including the Millrace area and the western industrial areas of Mount Holly.

-Mount Holly Master Plan (2000)

While this goal has seen progress, it has not addressed any of the issues now seen in the Downtown, which is in need of revitalization and improvement. Additionally, utilizing the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law's criteria for Redevelopment, the western area of the Township has now been designated for dense residential growth.

As a means to update and improve on existing UEZ Plans, the State's Urban Enterprise Zone Authority (UEZA) has reauthorized the existing UEZ's to make changes and account for the new economy and demographic landscape of today. With this reauthorization, UEZ Plans are required to demonstrate a vision, accomplished through the programming, characteristics, development and redevelopment goals, broad focuses, and specific improvements.

Mount Holly's economic landscape, along with the national and international landscape, has shifted over recent years. The advancement of e-commerce and new business focuses has required local planning efforts to be proactive in their approach. Economy no longer focuses solely on the business conducted in a municipality, but also what else visitors come to the area to do - parks, recreation,

events, concerts, cultural displays - all play a critical role in bringing potential customers to the storefront, and the goals of a UEZ can ensure they stay and support local business.

UEZ Guidelines

In the fall of 2023, the UEZA issued new guidelines when adopting new UEZ Plans. Specifically, there are three options for preparing the UEZ Plan, some of which include financing via the Enterprise Zone Assistance Fund. Those options are:

- Option 1: Enterprise Zone Assistance Fund (EZAF) - Request to fund the RFP Preliminary Zone Development Plan process using an outside consultant.
- Option 2: Enterprise Zone Assistance Fund (EZAF) - Request to fund the Preliminary Zone Development Plan process using municipal employees and/or employees of the UEZ Entity.
- Option 3: Request to Proceed with Developing a Preliminary Zone Development Plan without Zone Assistance Funds.

Mount Holly opted for Option 1 and partnered with Environmental Resolutions, Inc. to formulate a UEZ Plan, as well as administer key plan elements such as interviewing minority stakeholders and gathering public opinion via survey(s).

Some other requirements for the UEZA's new guidelines include:

Issuing a Letter to the Urban Enterprise Zone Authority indicating if a UEZ Plan will be self-funded;

Documentation of the Request for Proposals (RFP) to prepare an Updated Plan if using an outside consultant;

Submission of a letter requesting the review and approval of the Updated UEZ Plan;

Documentation of the consultant's and local organization's staffing and qualifications to prepare the plan;

A copy of the Updated UEZ Plan; and

Evidence that the consultation with representatives of diverse Statewide or regional business organizations that represent the interests of minority businesses as defined in section 2 of P.L. 1986, c. 195 (N.J.S.A. 52:27H-21.18) was included in the Updated Plan, and demonstrating those organizations had no less than 30 days to review the preliminary zone development plan and submit comments to the Township's UEZ.

As part of this planning process, several phases of analyses were conducted to aid in forming the vision for the Township and the Township's UEZ. One phase is a Market Analysis conducted by the Otteau Group to determine viable land uses within the UEZ and to provide an updated demographic profile for the Zone specifically. This Analysis can be found in *Appendix A*. Additionally, a public survey was thoughtfully developed and made available online for members of the community and the areas surrounding the Township to provide feedback and perspective on the Township and the UEZ. A similar survey targeting businesses and business owners was conducted to determine the opinions

from an operational standpoint, and how any improved business-to-business commerce could affect local business owners.

A Vision for Mount Holly's Downtown and UEZ

We envision the redevelopment of Mount Holly's downtown and UEZ into a vibrant "home away from home," where local residents and visitors can come together to enjoy the Township's many attractions, including the recreational and scenic experience of the Rancocas Creek. Mount Holly will transform into a hub of community activity, where people can experience the charm of its historic and cultural institutions, dine at unique eateries, shop at locally-owned businesses, and participate in special events and holiday festivities with effective event marketing and communication to ensure transparency and engagement. This vision includes creating spaces that are inviting to a broad cross-section of people to experience all four seasons, making downtown Mount Holly a welcoming destination for both land and water activities.

This revitalized area will inspire and accommodate a variety of informal and casual activities, such as:

- Enjoying a shaded lunchtime break or a sunny family picnic
- Sparking an interest in Mount Holly's rich history
- Connecting parking areas, parks, and plazas within downtown seamlessly
- Hosting outdoor farmers markets and craft fairs with effective marketing to attract visitors
- Finding relaxation in nature among the flora and fauna of the Rancocas Creek
- Launching and landing canoes and kayaks along the Creek
- Dancing under the moonlight
- Watching dramatic and comedic acts or sit-in movies
- Hearing local poets and musicians perform

Mount Holly's walkable downtown, with modernized infrastructure, charming historic character, and variety of shops and restaurants, will be further enhanced by these improvements. New street fairs and family-friendly activities, effectively marketed and communicated, will attract visitors, while the updated sidewalks and storefronts will bring new businesses and an overall welcoming view. The addition of more cultural and recreational activities, such as music, comedy, and theater performances, will cater to diverse interests and enhance the town's appeal.



We believe that this area can become a comfortable place where people looking for home-grown entertainment or local businesses can meet up on any given day and discover something new to explore and enjoy. Visitors can stroll down Trinity Lane to Washington Street, cross the Pedestrian Bridge—a tribute to Mount Holly's ironworks legacy—or visit Mill Race Village and the business district. This new vision for Mount Holly's downtown will not only make it a destination on its own but also create a

- "The restaurants/breweries."

2. What is the WORST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "Parking can be a nightmare and not enough of a security presence at night."
- "Parking is bad. Empty, unpaved lots look ugly. Washington Street near Turbine Lofts looks industrial."

3. Please use this space to offer any suggestions for the Township to incorporate into its Downtown:

- "Please always consider enhancing pedestrian access to places."
- "We should close between Rancocas and Mill Street during summer to offer a more under the lights open air experience."

Foster Competitive Businesses and Healthy Economic Development

1. What is the BEST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "The variety of shops and many of the events held here. Especially the Fire and Ice Festival."
- "Variety of locally owned businesses."
- "The local successful businesses like the Local, Vincents, Downtown Pizza and Phil's are all places I frequent and would recommend to anyone."

2. What is the WORST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "Empty buildings are off-putting. [Signage] doesn't fit our historic town."
- "Not enough variety of entertainment and businesses close too early."
- "Wish there was a bigger focus on developing High Street as a safe, unique, and walkable focal point of our town."

3. Please use this space to offer any suggestions for the Township to incorporate into its Downtown:

- "UEZ loans for small businesses. [Encourage] owners of run-down buildings to fix/paint them."
- "My Holly has the potential to be a Haddonfield or Moorestown. I really hope things improve!"

Improve Safety and Strengthen Community

1. What is the BEST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "I feel much safer living here than I did in 2018 when I first moved to town."

2. What is the WORST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "The overall safety of the town-the type of residents/homeless lingering are off-putting to those trying to enjoy the town."
- "Safety, crime, and lack of police presence on main streets. Parking is not monitored."

3. Please use this space to offer any suggestions for the Township to incorporate into its Downtown:

- "Safety is not a concern in the daytime, nighttime is different."
- "No loitering mandates, more police presence, more street lighting, parking garage."

Promote Cultural and Recreational Activities

1. What is the BEST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "Township events."
- "Downtown Mount Holly events."

2. What is the WORST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "There is no entertainment besides Union. Something to do besides eat and shop would be nice."
- "Not allowing the Witches Ball."



3. Please use this space to offer any suggestions for the Township to incorporate into its Downtown:

- "I would love to see a community theater, movie theater, rec center, arcade- something to give people something to do."
- "We need a new Halloween event. One for town children like we used to and then another to replace the Witches Ball that attracted tons of people."

Elevate Aesthetics, Beautification, and Community Appeal

1. What is the BEST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "I love the crepe myrtle trees!! Beautiful addition!"
- "The update of the sidewalks and storefronts bringing new businesses and for overall view."

2. What is the WORST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "Overgrowth of weeds & overgrowth along the creek banks throughout the town."
- "Neglect of town: Homeless people and dilapidated houses."

3. Please use this space to offer any suggestions for the Township to incorporate into its Downtown:

- "Weekly or bi-weekly street cleaning would encourage & attract businesses and visitors when the Township looks like they care about our town."
- "Please clean the streets up."

Develop Robust Transportation Infrastructure

1. What is the BEST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "Walkability (being able to walk around town and see shops, restaurants, etc. Without needing to drive to each one)."

2. What is the WORST feature of Downtown Mount Holly:

- "No bike lane, if there is one [car] parked on the sides of the main part of downtown make it a deadly proposition."
- "Parking/small streets."

3. Please use this space to offer any suggestions for the Township to incorporate into its Downtown:

- "Please make downtown Mount Holly bike-able so it is commutable via bike & you are able to go decent distances & have scenic routes if whenever possible."
- "If new buildings are being contemplated then mixed-use is a great way to go, however, parking must be a consideration."
- "Improved parking [especially] for older people who can't walk far."



02 CHARACTERISTICS OF MOUNT HOLLY AND THE UEZ

A Brief History of Mount Holly

Mount Holly's modern history began in the 17th century, the area originally inhabited by the Lenni Lenape Native Americans before European settlers arrived in the late 1600s. These settlers, primarily of English and Welsh descent, established roots in the area, with Walter Reeves and his family officially founding the town in 1677. Initially named Bridgetown due to the numerous bridges crossing the Rancocas Creek, the settlement was a hub of early colonial activity.



In 1931, the town's name was changed to Mount Holly, inspired by the holly trees that adorned a hill near its center. This change marked a new chapter in the town's history. Mount Holly's significance grew when it became the county seat of Burlington County in 1793, a designation that solidified the Township as a center for activity in New Jersey's largest county.

The 19th century brought industrial growth to Mount Holly, especially with the establishment of mills along the Rancocas Creek. The creek, an essential waterway, powered numerous mills that produced textiles, paper, and other goods, making Mount Holly an industrial hub in the region. The Mill Race, built in the early 1800s, played a crucial role in the town's economy, providing hydropower to the mills and fostering a thriving industrial community. This period marked a time of prosperity as businesses flourished, and the settlement expanded.

As Mount Holly moved into the 20th century, its industrial base continued to evolve. The town saw the growth of diverse industries, including manufacturing and services, which contributed to its economic growth and stability. The presence of the Rancocas Creek remained a central feature, supporting industrial and recreational activities. Business districts developed, featuring a variety of shops, markets, and professional services, which helped shape Mount Holly into a bustling community. The town's infrastructure improved, with better transportation links and public amenities, making it an attractive place for businesses and residents.



Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, Mount Holly has managed to preserve its historical charm while embracing modern developments. The town has maintained many historic buildings and districts, enhancing its unique character and appeal. The legacy of its industrial past is still evident in the preserved mill buildings and the continued importance of the Rancocas Creek. Today, Mount Holly is celebrated for its historical sites, quaint downtown area, and community events that honor its rich heritage, making it a vibrant place with a storied past and a bright future.

Characteristics of the UEZ

Mount Holly's Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) was established in 2001 to stimulate economic growth and development in the community. As part of the program, businesses within the UEZ benefit from several tax incentives and assistance programs aimed at fostering job creation and business expansion, including the following:

- **Sales Tax Exemptions:** Qualified businesses can purchase materials and tangible personal property tax-free for the first \$100,000 and charge only 50% of the state sales tax on certain in-person sales.
- **Financial Assistance:** The program offers loans and grants to support various business needs, such as capital purchases, leasehold improvements, and inventory expansion.

The Township's strategic location, close to major roadways and metropolitan areas like Philadelphia, enhances its appeal for businesses looking to take advantage of these incentives. Mount Holly has seen a significant revitalization over the years, attracting new businesses and residents, which bolstered local economic growth. The UEZ program plays a crucial role in this revitalization by providing businesses with the financial incentives needed to thrive in the area.



Within the Township's UEZ, there are a total of 233 properties that are classified as Commercial or Industrial using Tax Data (MOD IV). These properties, with land use classifications of either 4A (Commercial) or 4B (Industrial), are further distributed into mostly commercial properties, with 215 properties that are noted as "Commercial - 4A" and the remaining 8 being classified as "Industrial - 4B". It should also be noted that more properties within the UEZ do not carry a Commercial or Industrial tax designation, but

are employers based on the institution. For example, the Burlington County offices in Mount Holly, Virtua Hospital, and Rowan College at Burlington County have hundreds of employees. These institutions, while not typically considered "businesses" in the usual sense, since they don't operate as for-profit enterprises. Nevertheless, these enterprises attract many people to Mount Holly regularly for either work or services. In total, the Township's UEZ is 692.74 acres in land area, or 38% of Mount Holly's total land area.

These employers and businesses, however, are fractional compared to the total number of individual properties within the UEZ, which totaled 2,231. This discrepancy can serve as the basis for the Township to potentially make changes to the boundaries of the UEZ, which is further discussed below in Section 3.

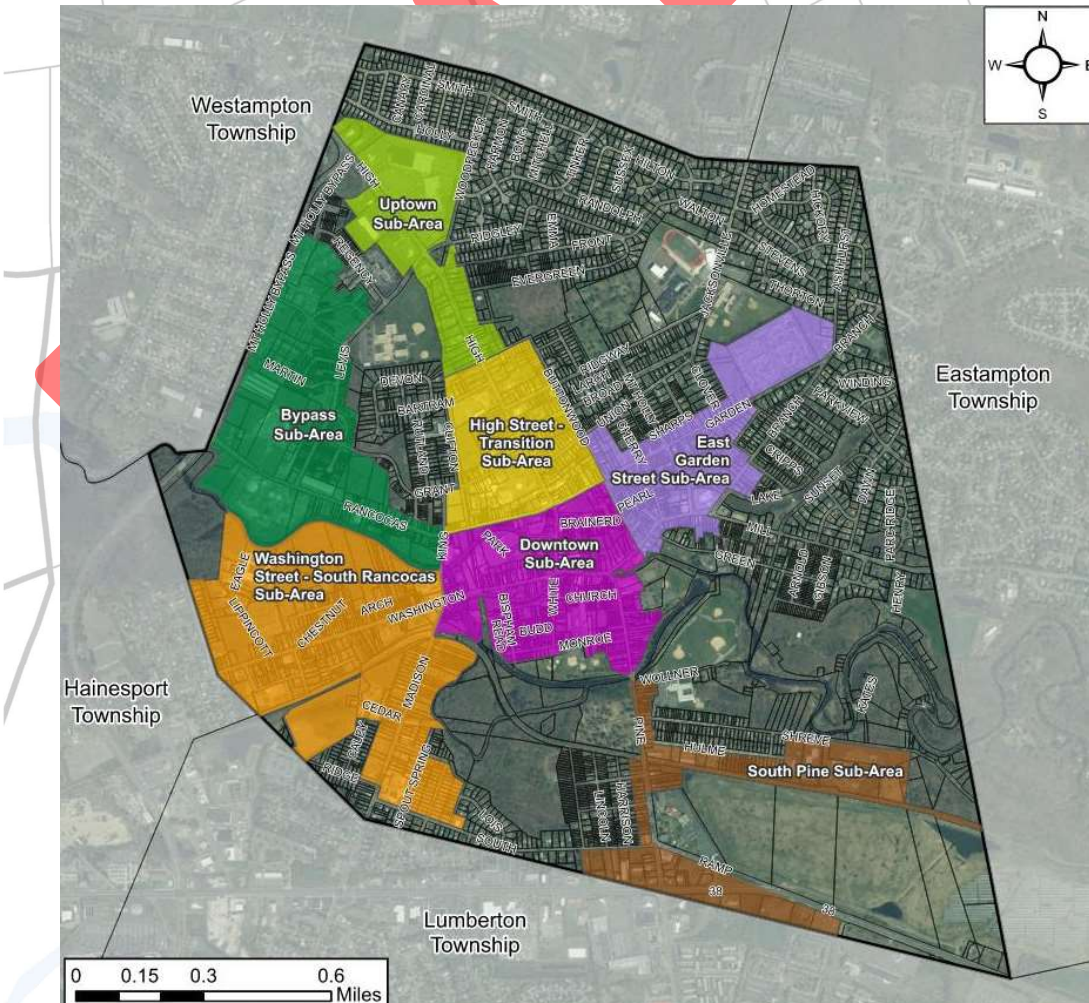
Sub-Areas of the UEZ

Bypass

The Bypass sub-area, which falls along the Township’s western border and is situated north of the Rancocas Creek and west of King Street, generally does not include many businesses within the UEZ Boundaries. A large portion of this sub-area is “The Gardens” residential redevelopment area, the Township’s MUA facility, and businesses along Rancocas Road. Some of the businesses within this sub-area are:

- Dunkin’
- Lamon Auto Body
- Millerie Market

Of consideration for this sub-area is the number of parcels that are either used or zoned for residential uses, in addition to the Township’s MUA. While the redevelopment plan for “The Gardens” includes a commercial component, most of the redevelopment area is planned for residential development, which does not obtain any benefits from being within the UEZ. In total, 421 individual properties lie within the Bypass sub-area, with only 9 properties being a “business” with a land use classification of either Commercial or Industrial (2.14%).



Downtown

The Downtown sub-area, which generally falls in the middle of the Township's boundaries, has a relatively even distribution of businesses throughout. Generally, bound by King Street, Buttonwood Street, Rancocas Creek, and Rancocas Road/Garden Street, the Downtown sub-area also carries many important elements of the Township's employer inventory. There are approximately 100 individual properties within the Downtown sub-area which are either commercial or industrial land uses. The "businesses", in Mill Race Village lie within the Downtown sub-area, as well as many Township-Government facilities, including the City Hall along Washington Street. Some of the prominent businesses within the Downtown are as follows:

- Vincent's Ice Cream Shop
- Robins Nest
- Center Stage Antiques
- Colonial Café
- Donkey's Place
- Village Idiot Brewing Company
- Marle Originals Boutique
- Train Wreck Distillery
- Tulip Nails Salon
- Downtown Pizza and Grill
- Stratosphere Brewing Company
- Blue Moon Olive Oils
- Kitchen87
- Teddies of Mount Holly Gift Shop
- Love in Flower Florist
- High Street Pharmacy
- The Smoking Dog Cigar Shop
- Woolbearers Fabric



In addition to those conventional businesses, the institutional uses that lie within the Downtown sub-area, which serve as additional employers and potential destinations for visitors, include the following:

- Township of Mount Holly Municipal Government Offices
- Mount Holly Municipal Utilities Authority Offices
- Burlington County Clerk's Office
- Rowan College at Burlington County - Mount Holly Campus
- The Culinary Arts Center at Rowan College at Burlington County
- United States Postal Service
- Beacon of Hope

There are 617 individual properties within the Downtown sub-area, with approximately 100 properties considered conventional businesses that function commercially (or 16.21%). When considering the institutional employees in this sub-area, it is apparent that the Downtown functions as a hub for the Township, where many of the benefits of the UEZ program can have positive impacts over time.

East Garden Street

This portion of the UEZ, which falls northeasterly within the Township, is generally considered the area east of Garden Street approaching both Eastampton Township and two of the Township's schools, the Rancocas Valley Regional High School and the Gertrude C. Folwell Elementary School. This sub-area has an extremely low density of conventional businesses and employers. There are only 5 individual properties, that are considered commercial in use. The businesses which fall in this sub-area include:

- Roto-Rooter Plumbing & Water Cleanup
- Miller Truck Shop
- A & V's Auto Repair

In total, 303 individual properties are within this sub-area, resulting in one of the lowest percentages of businesses-to-properties in the Township (1.65%). Similarly, as mentioned in the above analysis for the "Bypass" sub-area, this lowered percentage of businesses within this sub-area may serve as the basis for potential changes to the UEZ, which will be further discussed in Section 3.

High Street – Transition

This sub-area, which follows High Street and is bound to the south by Rancocas Road and to the north by Hillside Road, can be considered a "transition" area between two (2) of the larger commercial centers in the Township - the Downtown and the Uptown. The lot geometry in this sub-area reinforces the transitional nature of this area of High Street, as the lots generally increase in size further north of Downtown approaching the Uptown. Furthermore, one of the largest employers in the Township falls within this sub-area, as the County Court and associated offices can be found here.

There are 273 properties within this sub-area, with 44 of those properties carrying a land use classification of 4A, indicative of commercial uses. These commercial uses are generally located on High Street, with some also along Grant Street. However, several properties comprise this sub-area that function as part of the County Courthouse and Government Offices. There are 97 of the properties in this sub-area are either commercial operations or functions of the county, which results in a high concentration of *employers* in this transition area. Some of the more prominent employers in this sub-area include the following:

- Burlington County Courthouse and Associated Offices
- Richard A. Alaimo Associates Consulting Engineers
- South Jersey Legal Services
- Various Independent-Practice Law Offices
- The Cobbler Shop
- Clarke Insurance Agency Inc.
- Burlington County Lyceum of History and Natural Sciences
- Lee Funeral Home

South Pine

The South Pine sub-area can be considered one of the least-uniformly-shaped sub-areas within the UEZ, as this sub-area was delineated by the dated "spider leg" method for determining UEZ boundaries. The "spider leg" method, which now is discouraged by the State's UEZ Authority,

incorporates spokes along rights-of-way to include businesses along corridors. This has resulted in this sub-area following along Pine Street, Route 38, an access ramp for Route 38, and a former Railroad right-of-way. However, this has resulted in one of the higher percentages of businesses-to-properties among the Township's sub-areas. Based on the tax card land use classification, there are 32 businesses within this sub-area and 109 individual properties. This results in 29.36% of the properties in this sub-area being commercial or industrial in use. Some of these businesses in this area include the following:

- Dempster's Sports Pub & Restaurant
- Gaetano's Pizzeria of Mount Holly
- GDB International Plastic Recycling Facility #7
- South Star Diner
- Trevdan Building Supply Inc.
- Big Catch Seafood
- Colbie's Southern Kissed Chicken
- Fairway Lawns and Landscaping
- Clydesdale Welding Supply
- Spark Car Wash
- Shell Fuel of Mount Holly
- BP Fuel of Mount Holly
- Mount Holly Bicycles

As this portion of the Township moves closer to the large solar array and landfill along Route 38, the properties generally become larger in area and more industrial and light-industrial in use. This aligns with the current zoning of this area of the UEZ, which is predominantly the Limited Industrial (I) and General Business (B-2) Zoning Districts.

Uptown

This sub-area, which lies north of the High Street Transition sub-area (and is the area in which the transition is being made) falls along High Street north of the intersection of Hillside Street and High Street. This sub-area is the smallest within the Township compared to the overall land area, as less than 65 acres total (including rights-of-way) comprise this sub-area. With such a small number of properties overall within this sub-area. There are approximately 54 individual properties within the UEZ boundaries in this subarea. With such a small number of properties in this sub-area, there are only 7 traditional "business" properties according to tax data. However, this portion of the Township is home to one of the largest commercial hubs in Mount Holly, the Fair Ground Plaza. As this plaza is only registered as 1 individual property, it is home to many of the businesses within this portion of the township, and those businesses vary in overall size. Some of the businesses in this plaza include the following:

- ACME Markets
- Staples Office Supply Store
- Advance Auto Parts
- Virtua Urgent Care
- Dollar Tree
- Cork 'N Bottle

Mount Holly Township Urban Enterprise Zone Plan

- LL Flooring
- Hunan Wok Chinese Restaurant
- Jackson Hewitt Tax Services
- Santander Bank
- WSFS Bank

This sub-area is also home to a second shopping plaza, the Mount Holly Square. While smaller in land area to the Fair Ground Plaza across High Street, this plaza is home to smaller storefronts which may see changes in tenants over time. Some of the businesses in Mount Holly Square include some of the following:

- Dollar General
- Boston Market
- Monro Auto Service
- Papa John's Pizza
- Christophers Deli & Caterers
- Supercuts
- Edible Arrangements
- Zen Beauty Aesthetics & Day Spa
- The Max Challenge Gym
- OneMain Financial
- Olive Nails

In addition to that high concentration of individual businesses in both Fair Ground Plaza and Mount Holly Square, the businesses and employers *outside* of these shopping centers include some of the following:

- Taco Bell
- CVS Pharmacy
- TD Bank
- Burlington Comprehensive Counseling (not commercial in tax classification, but an employer)

As shown, while this area is generally devoid of individual *properties* which are businesses, this sub-area has an extremely high concentration of businesses to land area due to the shopping centers in this portion of the Township. It should also be noted that this sub-area is adjacent to the Township's R-1 Residence District, the largest residential district in the Township, and very likely it contributes to the high number of visitors to the businesses in this sub-area.

Washington Street – South Rancocas

This sub-area of the Township's UEZ is the largest land area, comprising over 175 acres. This sub-area falls in the southwestern portion of the Township and is generally bound to the north by the Rancocas Creek and the shared municipal borders between Mount Holly, Hainesport, and Lumberton Townships. This area also generally follows Madison Avenue as it approaches Route 38 and ends at the southern terminus of South Street, and Washington Street as it approaches the Mount Holly Bypass. As the largest sub-area in the Township's UEZ, a significant number of properties fall within the sub-area and 458 individual properties are within the UEZ here. While a high number of properties are

within this portion of the UEZ, there is a sparse distribution of conventional “business” properties within this area of the Township, there are 27 individual tax-classified businesses within this area. These properties include several light industrial parcels, which contribute to having multiple businesses on one lot, like the plazas in the Uptown sub-area. Some of the businesses within this sub-area include the following:

- Big Belly Deli
- Spartan Strength & Conditioning LLC
- Spellbound Brewing Company
- Innovative Metal Solutions LLC
- Back In Time Auto Upholstery
- Mt. Holly Powder Coating
- Charlie's Wine & Liquor
- 120 Madison Avenue - Various Medical Offices
- NAPA Auto Parts - Auto Parts

However, the largest private employer in the Township, and one of the highest trip-generators in the Township, lies within this sub-area in the form of Virtua Mount Holly Hospital and its associated offices. Virtua lies near the southern terminus of the sub-area and has remained a major contributor to the Township’s economic landscape for over a century. This major employment driver has been considered in future development patterns for decades. The Township has worked with the hospital to provide significant land use considerations for the hospital employees, patients, and visitors. This coordination is highlighted in the Township’s most recent Master Plan Reexamination Report, where it was recommended that the Township examine the development patterns of the hospital and potentially incorporate overlay zones and zoning changes to facilitate effective and organic growth of the uses as the area focuses more on health sciences.

Demographic and Other Characteristics of Mount Holly Township

Population Trends

In the 2020 decennial census, Mount Holly had a resident population of 9,981, reflecting an increase of nearly 5% compared to the 2010 census, which recorded the lowest population count since the mid-1960s. According to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the population of Mount Holly is projected to remain relatively stable, with estimates ranging between 9,600 and 9,800 people from 2030 to 2050.

Year	Population	Density (pop/square mile)	% Change
1940	6,892	2,400.79	
1950	8,206	2,858.52	19.07%
1960	13,271	4,622.88	61.72%
1970	12,713	4,428.50	-4.20%
1980	10,818	3,768.39	-14.91%
1990	10,639	3,706.04	-1.65%
2000	10,728	3,737.04	0.84%
2010	9,536	3,321.81	-11.11%
2020	9,981	3,476.83	4.67%
2030*	9,663	3,366.05	-3.19%
2040*	9,734	3,390.79	0.73%
2050*	9,743	3,393.92	0.09%

Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census Redistricting Data,
* DVRPC Population Projections

Education and Employment Trends

Over the past 12 years, Mount Holly has shown significant progress in education and employment indicators, reflecting the influence of education on the population. As of 2022, more than 93% of residents aged 25+ had attained a high school diploma or higher, a notable increase from approximately 87% in 2010 for the same age group. Additionally, the percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher rose from about 24% in 2010 to over 30% in 2022. This upward trend in educational attainment highlights the growing emphasis on higher education within the community, which can impact which industries and markets can grow organically through local and sub-local populations.

In terms of occupational fields, the most common occupation for Mount Holly residents in both 2010 and 2022 was within the management, business, science, and arts sectors. By 2022, nearly 39% of residents were employed in these fields, up from 34% in 2010. The least common occupational fields were natural resources, construction, and maintenance, with less than 9% of residents employed in these areas in both years.

Education	2010		2022	
	#	%	#	%
Population 25 years and over	6,239	100%	6,938	100%
Less than 9th grade	225	3.60%	206	2.97%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	593	9.50%	270	3.89%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	2,259	36.20%	2,442	35.20%
Some college, no degree	1,154	18.50%	1,307	18.84%
Associate's degree	505	8.10%	615	8.86%
Bachelor's degree	998	16.00%	1,372	19.78%

Education Data (2010-2022)				
Education	2010		2022	
	#	%	#	%
Graduate or professional degree	505	8.10%	726	10.46%
High school graduate or higher	5,422	86.90%	6,462	93.14%
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,504	24.10%	2,098	30.24%
Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 & 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (S1501 & S2401)				

Employment Data (2010-2022)				
Occupation	2010		2022	
	#	%	#	%
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	4,275	100%	4,536	100%
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	1,455	34.04%	1,763	38.87%
Service occupations	670	15.67%	674	14.86%
Sales and office occupations	1,289	30.15%	1,192	26.28%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	367	8.58%	370	8.16%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	494	11.56%	537	11.84%
Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 & 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (S1501 & S2401)				

Industry Employment Trends

Mount Holly's employment distribution across various industries has also evolved. By 2022, the most common employment sectors included educational services, health care, and social assistance, employing about 25.08% of residents. Public administration was another significant sector, that employed 12.17% of the workforce, followed by transportation, warehousing, and utilities at 9.50%.

In contrast, the least common industries in 2010 and 2022 were agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining, with no residents employed in these sectors. Some industries, like professional, scientific, and management, saw a decline, from 11.42% in 2010 to 7.35% in 2022, while others like construction saw an increase from 3.30% in 2010 to 8.44% in 2022.

Employment by Industry				
	2010		2022	
	#	%	#	%
Full-time, year-round civilian employed population 16 years and over	3,004	100%	3,401	100%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Construction	99	3.30%	287	8.44%
Manufacturing	218	7.26%	275	8.09%
Wholesale trade	135	4.49%	238	7.00%

Employment by Industry				
	2010		2022	
	#	%	#	%
Retail trade	299	9.95%	218	6.41%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	192	6.39%	323	9.50%
Information	88	2.93%	110	3.23%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	175	5.83%	189	5.56%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative, and waste management services	343	11.42%	250	7.35%
Educational services, health care, and social assistance	814	27.10%	853	25.08%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	134	4.46%	110	3.23%
Other services, except public administration	166	5.53%	134	3.94%
Public administration	341	11.35%	414	12.17%

Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 & 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (S2404)

Household Economic Characteristics

Economic conditions in Mount Holly have improved over the years, with significant changes in household income distribution. In 2010, the \$50,000 to \$74,999 income range was most common, but by 2022, the \$100,000 to \$149,999 bracket became the most prevalent, followed by \$75,000 to \$99,999. The higher income brackets saw substantial growth, with the percentage of households earning \$150,000 or more increasing from 5.70% in 2010 to 18.33% in 2022.

The median household income rose from \$53,841 in 2010 to \$81,605 in 2022, reflecting improved economic well-being. The median value of owner-occupied units increased slightly from \$207,400 to \$217,600, and median gross rent grew from \$1,098 to \$1,371. The poverty rate declined from 13.30% to 10.70%, indicating enhanced economic stability for residents of Mount Holly.

Household Economic Characteristics				
Household Income	2010		2022	
	#	%	#	%
Occupied housing units	3,668	100%	3,596	100%
Less than \$5,000	187	5.10%	114	3.17%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	106	2.90%	60	1.67%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	176	4.80%	19	0.53%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	165	4.50%	111	3.09%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	147	4.00%	118	3.28%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	341	9.30%	290	8.06%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	514	14.00%	365	10.15%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	866	23.60%	543	15.10%

Household Economic Characteristics				
Household Income	2010		2022	
	#	%	#	%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	462	12.60%	620	17.24%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	492	13.40%	697	19.38%
\$150,000 or more	209	5.70%	659	18.33%
Median Household Income	\$53,841		\$81,605	
Median Value of Owner-Occupied Units	\$207,400		\$217,600	
Median Gross Rent	\$1,098		\$1,371	
Poverty Rate	13.30%		10.70%	
<i>Source(s): U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 & 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates (S2503, DP04, B25064, & S1701)</i>				

Business Uses and Valuation

The non-residential construction sector has experienced mixed outcomes over recent years. From 2017 to 2022, the total non-residential building area decreased significantly by 34.27%, indicating a reduction in new or expanded commercial and industrial spaces. However, despite this reduction, the valuation of non-residential construction projects saw a substantial increase of 25.31%, which may reflect a rise in the quality or value of construction projects. The number of business establishments in the private sector also grew by 12.63%, from 372 in 2017 to 419 in 2022, suggesting an overall expansion in business activities and entrepreneurial ventures within the Township.

Non-Residential Construction			
	2017	2022	% Change
Nonresidential Square Footage	1,812	1,191	-34.27%
Nonresidential Valuation of Construction	\$2,446,237	\$3,065,439	+25.31%
Number of Business Establishments (Private Sector)	372	419	+12.63%
Nonresidential Permits Issued (2022)	58		
<i>Source(s): NJDCA - Division of Codes & Standards Yearly Summary Data, NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development - Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (2017 & 2022 Municipal Report by Sector (NAICS based))</i>			

Conversely to the table above, the valuations, vacancies, and revenues present a more nuanced picture of business success and challenges in Mount Holly. The commercial and industrial assessed valuation saw a slight decline of 2.40% from 2017 to 2022, suggesting a small reduction in the overall value of commercial properties. However, the business vacancy rate showed a dramatic improvement, dropping from 7.5% in the third quarter of 2018 to just 0.3% in the third quarter of 2023, reflecting a significant decrease in vacant business spaces. On the downside, the sales, value of shipments, or revenue of employer firms plummeted by 67.71%, indicating a severe contraction in business revenue. This decline could be attributed to various factors, including economic shifts, market dynamics, or operational challenges faced by local businesses.

Valuations, Vacancies, and Revenues			
	2017	2022	% Change
Commercial and Industrial Assessed Valuation	\$102,621,100	\$100,156,000	-2.40%
Business Vacancy Rate	7.5% (2018 Q3)	0.3% (2023 Q3)	-96.00%
Sales, Value of Shipments, or Revenue of Employer Firms	\$3,267,107,000	\$1,054,848,000	-67.71%
<i>Source(s): NJDCA Property Value Classification Tables (2017 & 2022), US HUD Aggregated USPS Administrative Data On Address Vacancies (2010 & 2020), US Census Bureau, 2017 Annual Business Survey Characteristics of Business Owners - Table AB1700CSCBO (2017), 2012 Survey of Business Owners - Table SB1200CSA05 (2012)</i>			

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Background & Methodology

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to identify and evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to a project, municipality, or initiative. By design, they can be very general and cover a wide variety of issues, they can also be very detailed. Additionally, each of the SWOT elements should be examined individually and as they relate to the other components. A breakdown of each of the components and how they interact is as follows:

- **Strengths:** Internal attributes and resources that support a successful outcome.
- **Weaknesses:** Internal attributes and resources that work against a successful outcome.
- **Opportunities:** External factors that a municipality can capitalize on.
- **Threats:** External factors that could hamper the implementation of a municipal plan or project.

A SWOT analysis plays a crucial role in the planning process by helping to formulate strategies that leverage strengths, mitigate weaknesses, capitalize on opportunities, and guard against threats. Traditionally, the process begins with analyzing the different perspectives for insight and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the internal and external environment. This was done by the UEZ Plan Steering Committee, through a series of meetings discussing how different elements can be considered in the diverse categories.

During the analysis phase, identified factors were categorized into a specific section. This thorough examination sets the stage for strategic planning, where various strategies can be developed. Commonly, each element of the SWOT can be associated with another, highlighting the interactive nature between elements. These interactive relationships are as follows:

- **Strengths and Opportunities (SO):** Strengths can be leveraged to seize opportunities, potentially leading to growth.
- **Weaknesses and Opportunities (WO):** Identifying weaknesses helps to find opportunities to improve and address gaps.
- **Strengths and Threats (ST):** Strengths can help mitigate or neutralize threats, ensuring stability and resilience.
- **Weaknesses and Threats (WT):** Understanding these can help to develop contingency plans and risk management strategies to protect from adverse effects.

Through this interactive approach, a SWOT analysis provides an understanding of complexities and uncertainties, ultimately leading to more informed and strategic decision-making. By interconnecting the different elements—leveraging strengths, addressing weaknesses, seizing opportunities, and mitigating threats—plans can be robust, and solutions can be adaptive to a dynamic environment, like Mount Holly’s economic and business landscape as described above in the “Sub-Areas of the UEZ” subsection.

Additionally, the practical application of a SWOT analysis extends beyond merely identifying and categorizing factors; it also involves prioritizing and aligning strategic initiatives to the Township’s overall goals. By systematically assessing the relative importance and impact of each element, resources can be allocated more efficiently, ensuring that critical strengths are fully utilized and pressing weaknesses are promptly addressed. The SWOT analysis is a systematic approach that enhances strategic clarity and fosters a proactive mindset. This proactive mindset can allow groups and businesses within the Township to anticipate and prepare for potential changes.

This Plan’s SWOT

The first step as described above establishes the individual strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Some components, if not clear by title in the table below, are discussed later.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Existing Business Concentration Access to Highways</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Existing Historic Character</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Consistency of Parks throughout Township County Seat & Associated Hub of Activity Presence of Rowan College at Burlington County</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Only True “Downtown” in the Sub-Region</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Built-Out Nature of Township Land Potentially Over-Aged Infrastructure</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lack of Public Transit Facilities and Infrastructure Smaller Population Size More Develop-able Land in Surrounding Municipalities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lack of General Feeling of Safety Antiquated and Outdated Zoning Ordinance</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Diversity of Industries - Medical, Light Industrial, Downtown Retail</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Rancocas North Branch & Waterway Viewsheds County Employment Center</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aging Infrastructure</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Higher Relative Income of <i>Surrounding Municipalities</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">High-Flooding Risks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No Presence of “High-Tech” Industries and Sectors “Brick and Mortar” transition to “Click and Order”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dependency on Small Business Success Lack of Diversity of Individual Business Types Continued Development in Surrounding Towns</p>

Strength – Existing Historic Character

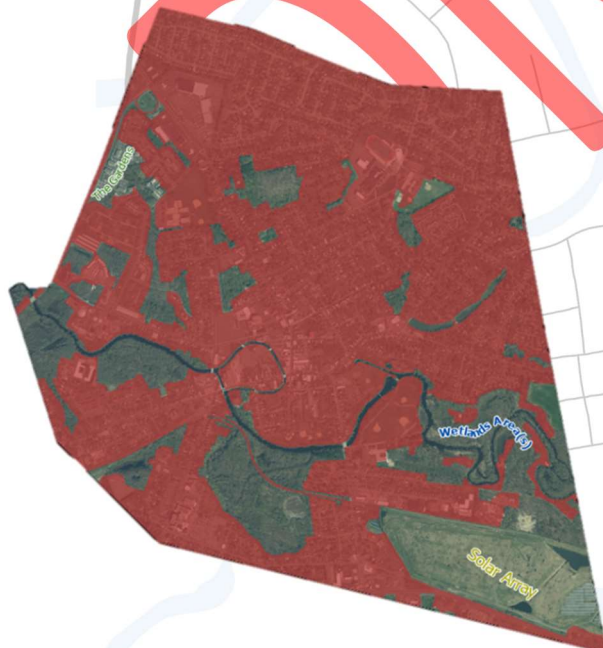
Mount Holly is known for its historic charm, evidenced by the Township’s well-preserved 18th and 19th-century architecture and quaint streets. Maintaining this historical appeal attracts tourists and history enthusiasts and leads to increased foot traffic and potential customers for local businesses. The unique character of Mount Holly fosters a vibrant community atmosphere, encouraging visitors to explore and patronize local shops, cafes, and restaurants. This environment benefits businesses by creating a distinctive, attractive setting that enhances customer engagement.

Strength – Only True “Downtown” in the Sub-Region

Mount Holly has the only true commercial "downtown" in relation to surrounding towns such as Lumberton, Eastampton, and Westampton, this is a significant advantage for local businesses. This unique position predisposes Mount Holly as the central hub for shopping, dining, and entertainment in the area, with a large pool of residents and visitors from these nearby municipalities. The concentration of diverse businesses in a walkable downtown area enhances convenience and encourages longer visits, boosting sales opportunities. Additionally, the central downtown location fosters a sense of community and local identity, making Mount Holly an attractive destination for events and activities that can further drive economic activity and business growth compared to its neighbors.

Weakness – Built-Out Nature of Township Land

A lack of available land in a township can have detrimental long-term effects on businesses. The limited space constrains opportunities for new developments and business expansions, leading to a stagnant commercial environment. Additionally, this scarcity of developable land can increase property prices and rents, posing challenges for small businesses to secure prime locations. It can also deter new companies from establishing themselves in the area, reducing the diversity and vibrancy of the local economy. In Mount Holly, a large amount of the land can be considered “urbanized” and has been developed already. The available and vacant land is largely environmentally constrained along the Rancocas Creek or is zoned and planned for future development.



As shown in the adjacent map, the red areas are those that the NJ Conservation Blueprint has identified as either urbanized or preserved and are unlikely to be developed traditionally as available land. Those areas that comprise the “holes” in the urbanized and preserved areas have environmental conditions, such as being encumbered by wetlands and floodplains along the Rancocas Creek. Additionally, the “holes” in the western portion (left) of the Township comprise “The Gardens” redevelopment area, which is zoned for future development already. Finally, the area in the southeastern portion of the Township (lower right) is a former landfill property and has been the site of a photovoltaic (solar) array, this is a common development pattern for former landfills in the state.

Weakness – Potentially Over-Aged Infrastructure

As highlighted above as a strength, the historic charm of Mount Holly also carries some challenges and weaknesses based on the age of structures that embody that very charm. Aging infrastructure can be a significant weakness for businesses and business districts. Because it often leads to frequent maintenance issues, higher operational costs, and decreased reliability of essential services like transportation, water, and electricity. Furthermore, many of the secondary elements to business connectivity, such as the surfaces of parking areas or the condition of sidewalks can lead to a decrease in visitors and business patrons over time. The combination of challenges for business/building owners and patrons can result in reduced customer foot traffic, disrupted local supply chains for retail, reduction of effective business-to-business transactions, and a less attractive environment for new investments, restricting economic growth over time.

Weakness – Lack of Feeling of General Safety

This planning process, in addition to prior planning processes undertaken by the Township, highlighted a general concern for the lack of feeling of safety in Downtown Mount Holly and commercial hubs. This was highlighted as part of Mount Holly's 2012 Draft Master Plan Update efforts, where specific recommendations were made to increase the overall feeling of safety for residents, visitors, and business owners. In general, a feeling of unsafety may be directly related to a lack of returning visitors. From a business perspective, this can create stagnation and a lack of new and returning customers. Additionally, if unsafe activities occur, such as property destruction or vandalism, a lack of safety reduces interest and investment in *new* businesses and business types.

Downtown public spaces have the best chance to be desirable when visitors and customers feel safe and comfortable during their time in an area. Additionally, maintaining a feeling of safety at *all times* can be a challenge, specifically in poorly lit areas at night. As this planning process highlights the weakness of visitors and customers potentially confronted with fear and chaos in their surroundings, the Township should look to several methods of improvement.

Opportunity – Diversity of Industries – Medical, Light Industrial, Downtown Retail

Focusing on specific industries for an overall economic landscape can present significant long-term opportunities for improvement. By concentrating on economic sectors, such as the “Eds and Meds” sector in Mount Holly, the Township can develop specialized expertise and infrastructure, making it an attractive hub for businesses within those industries. This focus can increase innovation and productivity, as companies benefit from a collaborative environment and shared resources. Additionally, opportunities become more feasible to create a robust support network, including specialized training programs and research institutions, which further enhance the focus of these industries.

For Mount Holly, specialization in the medical and downtown retail sectors, presents further opportunities for growth. By nurturing a vibrant healthcare industry, the Township can attract medical professionals and patients, which can spill over into the local spending downtown. Concurrently, the emphasis on revitalizing the downtown retail sector helps to create a lively and attractive urban environment, drawing visitors and encouraging local entrepreneurship. This dual focus diversifies the Township's economic base and promotes synergies between the healthcare and retail sectors, enhancing sustainable long-term growth in Mount Holly.

Opportunity – Aging Infrastructure

Addressing the potentially aged infrastructure in Mount Holly presents a significant opportunity for improvements that can benefit the overall business environment, especially regarding the less visible aspects like utilities. Modernizing the underground infrastructure such as water and sewage systems, electrical grids, and telecommunications networks—can lead to substantial improvements in reliability and efficiency. Upgrading water and sewage systems can prevent leaks and failures, ensuring everyone has consistent access to clean water and effective waste management. Enhancing the electrical grid can reduce outages and provide the necessary power for modern businesses, including those in the medical and retail sectors. Additionally, improving telecommunications networks, particularly broadband internet, can support the growing need for digital connectivity. These upgrades work to make Mount Holly a more attractive location for new businesses while reducing operational disruptions.

Threat – High-Flooding Risks

As Mount Holly contains spans of the Rancocas Creek and the creek's Flood Hazard Areas, businesses in the Township face significant threats from flooding and severe rain events, which can have long-term detrimental effects on growth. Frequent flooding can damage property, disrupt operations, and lead to costly repairs, creating financial strain on businesses. These events can also deter potential investors and customers who are concerned about the reliability and safety of the area. Persistent water damage and high insurance costs can reduce the marketability of commercial properties and hinder development over time. These challenges can stifle business expansion, limit new investment, and slow economic growth, as both existing and prospective businesses grapple with the risk of environmental hazards. Addressing these issues through flood management requirements and infrastructure upgrades can ensure the resilience and long-term prosperity of Mount Holly's business community.

Threat – “Brick and Mortar” transition to “Click and Order”

As mentioned above, one of Mount Holly's opportunities is its specialization in Downtown Retail through various physical shops, encouraging visitors to browse and explore the several smaller storefronts when visiting the downtown. However, recent economic shifts worldwide have reduced the need for traditional storefronts as consumers are more likely to purchase their desired goods online and have those items shipped directly to them. While convenient, this “Click and Order” business model has significantly reduced municipalities' economic strength. Throughout the country, cities and towns of varying sizes have implemented several intervention strategies to address the “Click and Order” shift.

Encouraging local businesses to offer unique products or experiences that can't be replicated online and revising zoning laws to promote mixed-use developments have been common strategies to try to recreate the commerce strategies of the past. Hosting regular local events like street fairs and farmers markets can attract visitors to downtowns, while incentive programs such as discounts for local purchases can boost engagement. Supporting small businesses in developing their online sales platforms and providing them with digital marketing resources can help them compete with larger e-commerce giants. Emphasizing the community and economic benefits of spending locally can foster

a supportive culture, while introducing services that can't be easily obtained online, like healthcare, can diversify revenue sources and drive foot traffic to local areas.

Threat – Lack of Diversity of Individual Business Types

A lack of diversity among individual business types in a municipality, such as an overabundance of barber shops, poses a significant threat to local business and economic development. This homogeneity limits the variety of services and products available to residents and clients, potentially stifling consumer choice and reducing the Township's attractiveness to new businesses and investors. With a disproportionate concentration of similar enterprises, the local market may become oversaturated, leading to increased competition among businesses and diminished revenue. Furthermore, a lack of diversity can hinder the development of a resilient local economy by failing to address a broad range of consumer needs and preferences. Economic growth is often driven by diverse industries that cater to various market segments and stimulate cross-sector collaborations. Fostering a more balanced and varied business landscape can help ensure sustainable economic development and enhance the overall vitality of all Township businesses.

Interactive Method of SWOT Elements

As described above in the "Background and Methodology", the interactive nature between elements can gain a complete understanding of the next steps. The following are some interactive comparisons between SWOT Elements, incorporating those that have been identified as part of this plan.

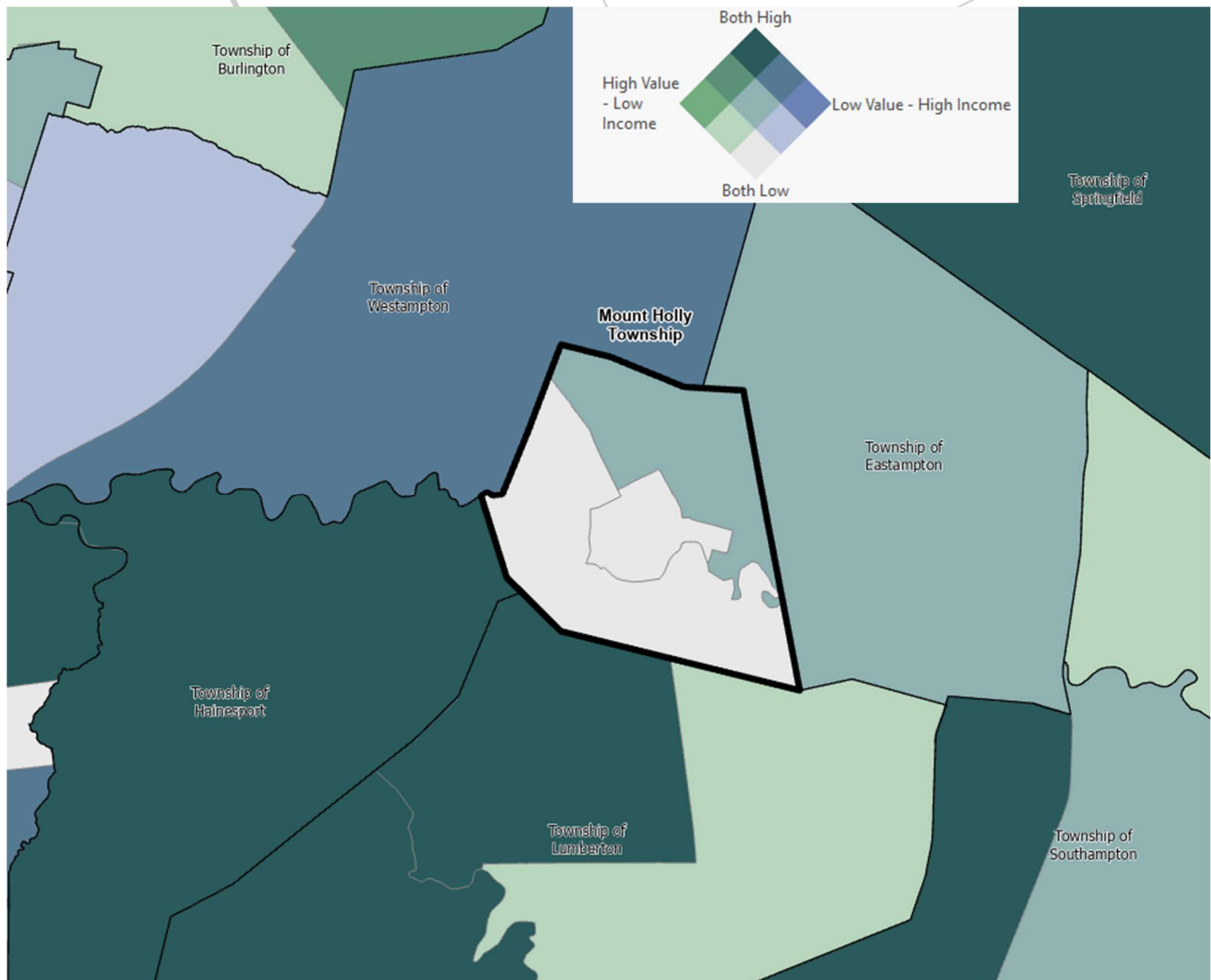
Strengths and Opportunities (SO)

The relationship between the strength of Mount Holly being the **only true "downtown" in the sub-region** and the opportunity of **higher relative income of surrounding municipalities** presents the Township with an opportunity to continue to thrive and to seize opportunities, potentially leading to growth and advantage over other surrounding destinations.

Mount Holly's unique status as the only authentic downtown area in the sub-region can attract businesses and consumers from neighboring municipalities, especially those with higher relative incomes, seeking a centralized location for shopping, dining, and entertainment. Concentrating diverse and high-quality amenities within Mount Holly can foster a vibrant urban atmosphere, drawing in visitors and potentially stimulating local spending. Additionally, the economic interdependence between Mount Holly and its neighboring municipalities can enhance regional cooperation and investment. By positioning itself as a hub for high-value services and cultural experiences, Mount Holly can attract partnerships and funding for infrastructure improvements and community development projects. This collaborative approach can increase the Township's appeal and functionality, ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience. It also creates opportunities for employment and skill development, benefiting residents and reinforcing the local economy.

As shown in the following map, which examines the relationship between median household income and median home value in census tracts, Mount Holly's combination of those factors positions itself to utilize the surrounding population in growth. As the color ramp shifts towards a blue or green, either the median household income or median home value increases, with dark green being a combination of both high median income and high home values (relative to all of Burlington County). As shown, the surrounding communities of Hainesport and Lumberton both have high relative median income

and median home values. Furthermore, Westampton Township carries a high relative median income within Burlington County.



As shown above, economic and demographic indicators highlight Mount Holly's strategic position and set the stage for the Township's role as a central "downtown" for the sub-region. By fostering regional cooperation, the Township can continue to attract businesses, enhance infrastructure, and improve the quality of life for residents both within and outside of the Township. This approach not only strengthens Mount Holly's economic foundation but, also promotes a more integrated and prosperous sub-region.

Weaknesses and Opportunities (WO)

The weakness of Mount Holly's **smaller population size** is largely due to the Township's smaller land area compared to surrounding municipalities. However, the opportunity of the **Rancocas North Branch and Waterway Viewsheds** helps to diminish the potential impacts of this weakness, and this opportunity can be used to improve this weakness by potential specific improvements. Mount Holly is

uniquely positioned along the Rancocas Creek and several smaller branches and tributaries of the main North Branch of the Creek in this area. The Rancocas Creek waterway offers numerous benefits to the local population, specifically from a recreational perspective. Like many communities along the Rancocas Creek, watercraft recreation is popular in Mount Holly, as residents aren't required to transport equipment long distances and can remain local.

The International Water Association (IWA) has produced a series of principles for "Water Wise Cities". These principles encompass actions that cities can take based on the belief that all residents of the city/municipality should have access to clean water and sanitation services. One of these principles revolves around recreation and overall livability along blue corridors:

“

Enhance liveability with visible water from road-side green infrastructure to major blue-green corridors as opportunities for recreation, inclusive public space, economic development, and transportation, creating multi-purpose spaces and infrastructures. Urban water services are essential for ensuring sustainable irrigation of parks and gardens, providing adequate shade, mitigation of heat islands (Cesaneck et. al., Planners and Water (PAS Report 588), p. 22).

”

Thus, the improvements of waterway-related recreation areas generally are considered some of the best practices for waterways and can contribute to being productive with water resources. While Mount Holly's population is small, the residents of the Township have historically considered its waterways as vital and worthy of preservation, both from an active recreation standpoint (i.e. kayaking) and a passive recreation standpoint (i.e. pedestrian access and walkways along viewsheds). By prioritizing the local needs of the community, the Township can enhance the quality of life of its residents, albeit a relatively small population. This prioritization will provide Mount Holly with the opportunity to create a "sense of place" and become more of a destination for waterway recreation and enjoyment.

Strengths and Threats (ST)

As analyzed in the above sub-area analysis, one of the strengths of Mount Holly is the **concentration of businesses in a relatively small area**. While some of the sub-areas of the Township are relatively lower in terms of business density, some parts are incredibly high in density, such as the Mill Race Village and Downtown area which carries both historic charm and one-of-a-kind shopping that generally does not contain chains or franchises. Also of consideration is the Fair Grounds Plaza and Mount Holly Square area, where development over time has resulted in storefronts for both long- and short-term business tenants. These areas highlight how Mount Holly's dedicated development efforts have led to pockets of commercial activity throughout the Township. However, one of the threats, that may affect Mount Holly uniquely, is the economic shift from "**Brick and Mortar**" to "**Click and Order**". The effects of the move to e-commerce have been felt throughout local economies around the world and enterprises have been struggling to adapt to this shift whenever feasible.

A high concentration of businesses in any municipality can mitigate some negative effects of the shift from 'brick and mortar' to 'click and order' economies, especially when local businesses are not

currently suited for e-commerce. A vibrant local business economy should feature an attractive and engaging environment that encourages residents and visitors to shop locally. Unique product offerings and experiences that can't be replicated online become a draw, providing a compelling reason to visit physical stores that e-commerce cannot necessarily compete with.

Some zoning interventions that can assist in mitigating the negative effects of an e-commerce shift include mixed-use zoning that blends retail with residential and recreational spaces to create lively, multi-purpose areas that draw more foot traffic. Local events like street fairs, farmers markets, and festivals further enhance the community's appeal, making shopping a social and enjoyable activity. Incentive programs, such as raffles or discounts for local purchases, can also boost local shopping. Improving infrastructure, such as adding wayfinding signage, makes it easier for people to access local businesses. Supporting small businesses in developing their online presence and digital marketing strategies can help them reach a wider audience and compete more effectively.

Emphasizing the economic and social benefits of spending locally can foster a culture of community support, while also diminishing some of the negative effects of e-commerce. Introducing services that aren't as easily obtainable online, such as healthcare or unique one-of-a-kind retail, can bolster the Township's economic footing while driving additional foot traffic to local areas. By leveraging these strategies, a high concentration of local businesses, which Mount Holly has shown it possesses, can create a resilient and dynamic local economy that adapts to the changing retail landscape

Weaknesses and Threats (WT)

While the historic charm and nature of Mount Holly provide many benefits, the **aging infrastructure** upon which that charm is built can be considered a weakness for the long-term health of the Township. As new technologies evolve and new challenges are presented, the engineering standards of the past may not be suitable for today's capacity and overall development. While this weakness is visible and real, the threat of **high-flooding risks** also has the potential to worsen the effects of infrastructure aging and the effects of more frequent flooding have the potential to accelerate the deterioration of critical infrastructure. **Utilities such as water and sewage, are dependent on water behaving in an expected way to become a hazard, and could critically fail.** Additionally, more visible infrastructure like roadways and sidewalks can deteriorate rapidly from increased flooding frequency. As drainage systems reach capacity more frequently, street flooding can last longer than rain events, such as the elongated flooding that the region saw following Tropical Storm Ida in 2021.

That tropical storm can serve as an example of weather events for this region that can intensify with climate change intensifying. As climate change intensifies, the occurrence of extreme weather events is becoming more and more frequent and is exposing the weaknesses of our outdated infrastructure. Older infrastructure and the engineering and design on which it was based, were not anticipated to handle the severe weather patterns we are now experiencing leading to equipment failures and insufficient capacity to manage large volumes of water effectively. Challenges to addressing aging infrastructure are multifaceted, as upgrading or replacing old infrastructure isn't a simple or quick fix. Existing drainage systems can't be reconfigured overnight, and making pipes larger everywhere is not necessarily effective or cost-efficient. A more strategic, localized approach is required that focuses on specific areas and neighborhoods that are prone to flooding.

Moreover, investing in modernizing infrastructure to cope with future challenges should be focal for municipalities that see flooding frequently, like Mount Holly. Since Mount Holly is positioned along a tidal creek, flooding events are obvious in the Township. Furthermore, many vital businesses and facilities are in flood-prone areas, since branches of the Rancocas Creek surround the downtown sub-area. Without proactive measures, aging infrastructure will fail, leading to more frequent and severe flooding. This poses immediate risks to public safety and property but has long-term economic impacts as resources are diverted to emergency responses and recovery efforts rather than sustainable development.

Market Value and Market Study

The following is a synopsis of a Market Study Analysis performed by the Otteau Group in preparation for this report. The entire report, which expands on the findings outlined below, can be found in *Appendix A: Otteau Group Market Study Report*.

UEZ Synopsis

The subject of this market study consists of the UEZ Urban Enterprise Zone within Mt. Holly Township. The zone includes 233 properties zoned as Commercial, Industrial, or Land. Of the 233 properties, 224 are specifically zoned commercial or industrial. The Mount Holly UEZ contains a range of land uses including single-family and attached two-family homes, offices, and scattered retail in the downtown and historic districts. There are a variety of parks and other public municipal uses including municipal authorities and schools. Larger scale retail centers, retail pads, and newer multifamily are located closer to the Mount Holly Bypass and State Route 38. Also, within the UEZ and Township are major employers such as the Burlington County Superior Court, Burlington County Jail & Correctional Facility, and Virtua Mount Holly Hospital.

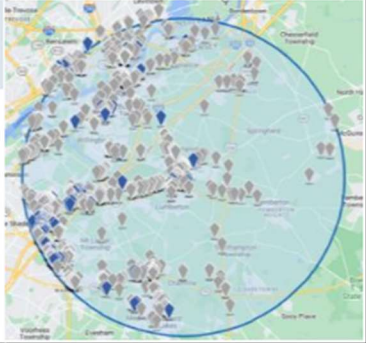
Economic Trends

Although the pace of inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has slowed significantly from 9.0% in June 2022 to the May 2024 reading of 3.3%, it remains well above the Federal Reserve Banks benchmark of 2.0% for lowering interest rates. Furthermore, US job creation in May 2024, came in at 272,000 jobs, which adds to a total of 1.24 Million jobs YTD, which is down 17% year over year, but still too high for interest rates to fall. While the Federal Reserve reported on June 12th that interest rate cuts would not occur yet, we expect that to happen in the latter half of this year as inflation continues to cool down. Average hourly earnings are now outpacing inflation in contrast to data in 2021 through 2024, which is a positive sign of recovering economic conditions. That personal income is rising faster than inflation indicates disposable income is expanding in the state and the US overall.

Locally, the Philadelphia Division has seen higher unemployment as of May 2024 3.6%, an increase from the 3.4% rate of the prior year. Within the Camden Division (Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester Counties) there was a higher unemployment rate of 4.4%, an increase from the reported 4.2% last year. However, unemployment grew by 2.6% from the prior year, primarily in mining, logging, construction (5.5%), and education and health services (7.0%). Wage & salaries for the area remained above the US average over the past year. From a local-level employment perspective, the local professional office market contains approximately 1.5 Million Ft² of occupied office building space within 5-Miles and 13.2 Million Ft² within 10-Miles. The 10-Mile concentration of locally occupied office space is close to

the statewide average of 43,000 Ft² per Mile², which indicates that employment opportunities exist within the local area to support additional residential development.

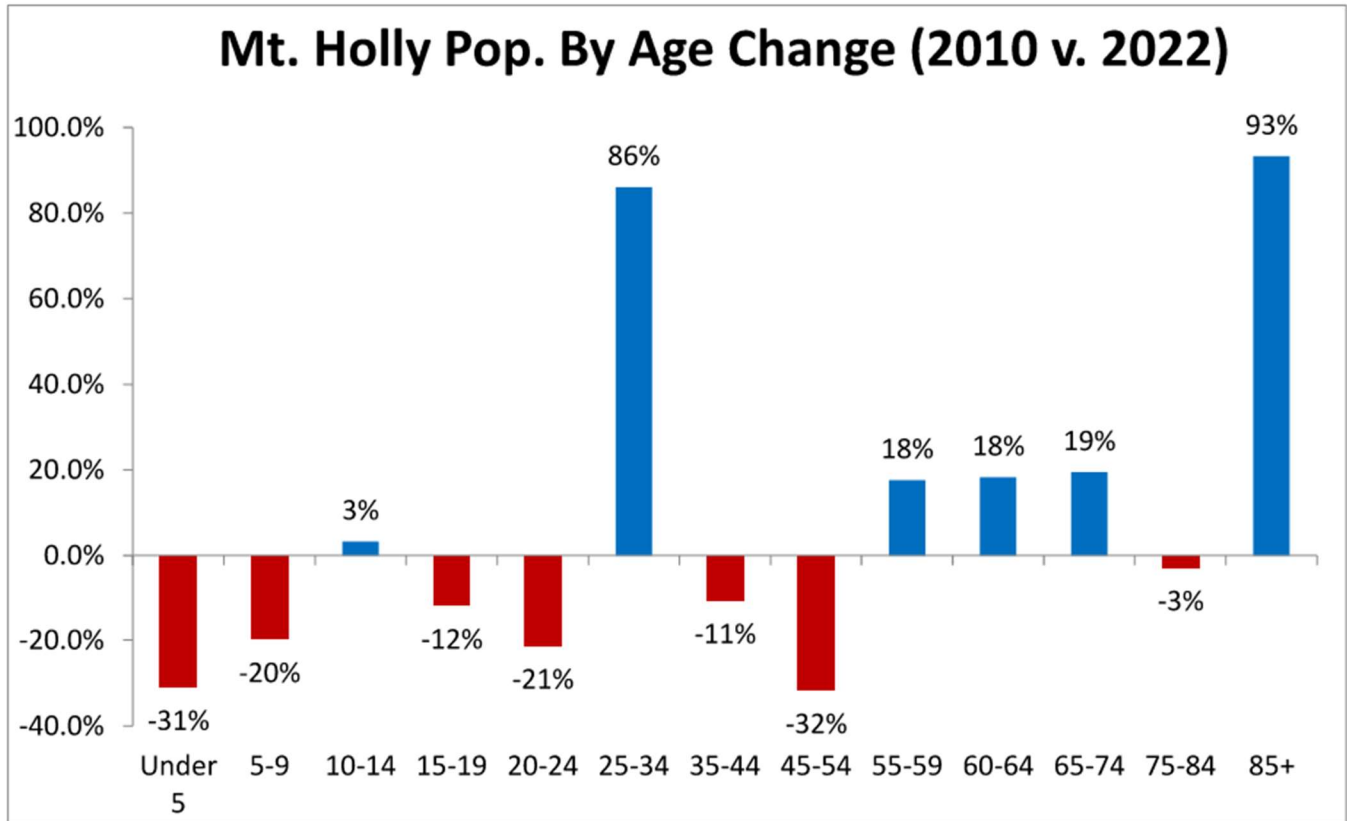
OFFICE SPACE				
	5-Miles	10-Miles	Burlington County	New Jersey
Existing Buildings	167	857	1,085	23,206
Avg. Rent/SF	\$14.32	\$18.49	\$16.53	\$22.04
Occupied SF	1,492,706	13,264,635	16,494,497	374,740,518
Total # HH's	27,884	135,455	174,560	3,426,102
Office Space per HH	54	98	94	109
Mile ²	79	314	820	8,723
Occupied Office Space per Mile ²	19,000	42,000	20,000	43,000



Source: US Census Bureau, Environics Analytics, Costar, Otteau Group, Inc.

Demographic Trends

As of the latest U.S. census estimates, the Township's 2024 population was 10,069, an increase of 88 from the 2020 census county of 9,981, which reflects an increase of 407 from the 9,574 counted in the 2010 census. There has also been an increase in household formation to 2.9% and 2.2% in households in both the UEZ and Mt. Holly Township respectively. It is of particular note, that since the passage of the UEZ legislation in New Jersey (1983), there has been a decline in the overall population in Mount Holly. The statewide generational trends have positively affected the Township of Mt. Holly, as the population between the ages of 25-34 has increased by 86% since the last decennial census. Furthermore, significant population increases are also occurring in the 55+-year-old age cohorts. These age cohorts have broad implications for local economies, real estate demand, and the sustainability of the municipal tax base. Furthermore, the Gen Z and Millennial younger age households now account for a majority of the workforce, retail spending, and housing demand. Lastly, as more Boomers age in place, housing options, along with retail and entertainment uses nearby are vital for aging populations in downtowns and suburbs.



Source: US Census Bureau, Envirionics Analytics, Otteau Group, Inc.

Demographic trends within the UEZ illustrate that smaller-sized and ‘childless’ households are present. This, coupled with strong household formation is increasing demand for multi-family housing. In the 2019 statewide UEZ assessment, the Mount Holly UEZ outperformed the county averages on all economic measures, poverty, median household income, and unemployment figures between 2007 and 2015. According to the 2024 data provided by Envirionics Analytics and the 2022 American Community Survey by the US Census Bureau, approximately 13% of the housing stock within the Mount Holly UEZ consists of multi-family rental apartments constructed in buildings with 20 or more dwelling units. This however compares to 25% of the UEZ’s population being between the ages of 18-34, 11% of the population being ages 65 and older, 64% of households being either 1-person or 2-persons in size, and 79% of households having no children living at home. These facts support the construction of larger-scale multi-family rental and for-sale housing within the UEZ.

Study Conclusions

We have employed a combination of market study and analysis to determine the viability of a variety of land uses. Based upon investigation and analysis we conclude that the following ARE NOT viable based on current market conditions:

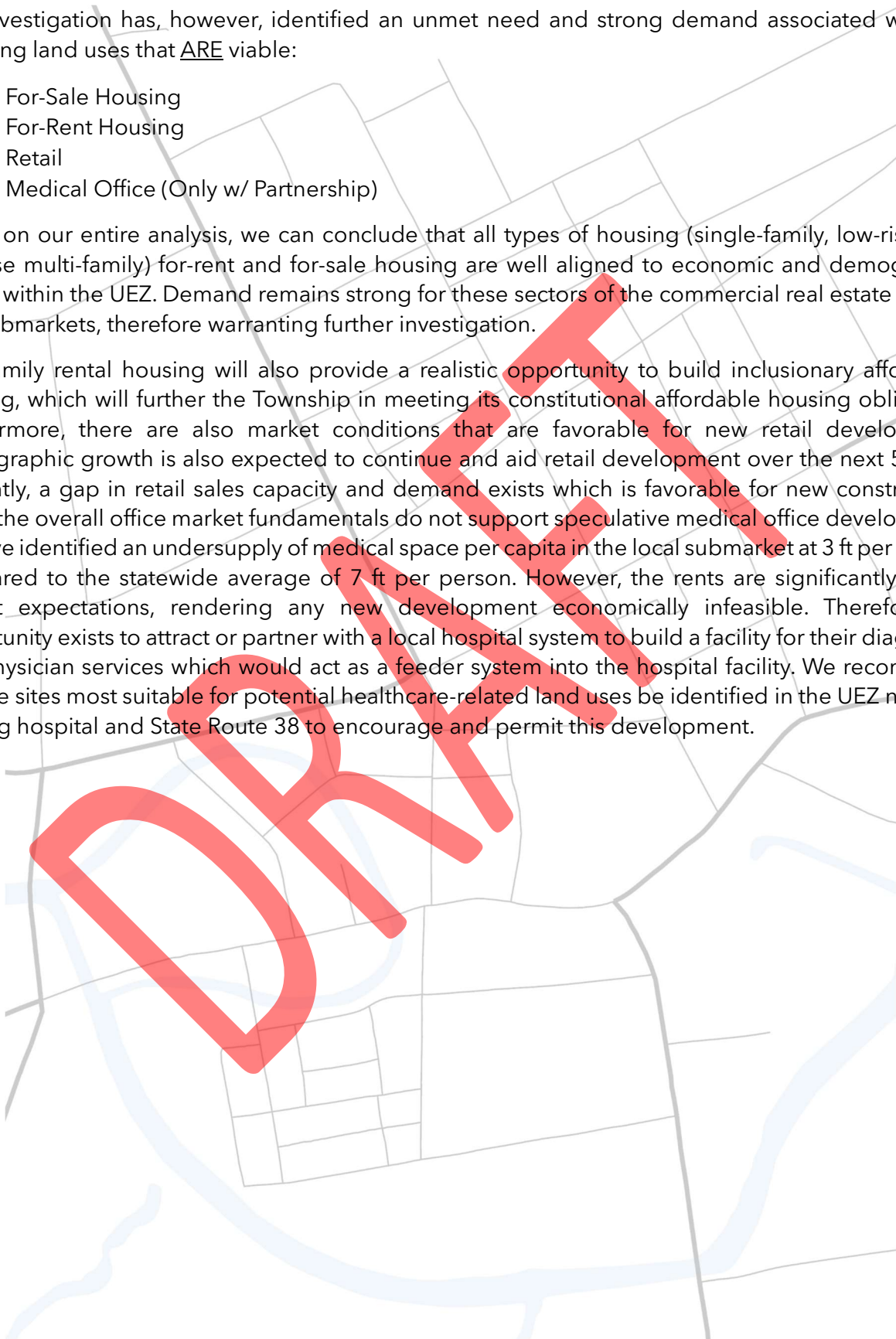
- Office
- Hospitality
- Industrial Warehouse and Distribution
- Self-Storage

Our investigation has, however, identified an unmet need and strong demand associated with the following land uses that ARE viable:

- For-Sale Housing
- For-Rent Housing
- Retail
- Medical Office (Only w/ Partnership)

Based on our entire analysis, we can conclude that all types of housing (single-family, low-rise, and mid-rise multi-family) for-rent and for-sale housing are well aligned to economic and demographic trends within the UEZ. Demand remains strong for these sectors of the commercial real estate market and submarkets, therefore warranting further investigation.

Multifamily rental housing will also provide a realistic opportunity to build inclusionary affordable housing, which will further the Township in meeting its constitutional affordable housing obligation. Furthermore, there are also market conditions that are favorable for new retail development. Demographic growth is also expected to continue and aid retail development over the next 5 years. Currently, a gap in retail sales capacity and demand exists which is favorable for new construction. While the overall office market fundamentals do not support speculative medical office development, we have identified an undersupply of medical space per capita in the local submarket at 3 ft per person compared to the statewide average of 7 ft per person. However, the rents are significantly below market expectations, rendering any new development economically infeasible. Therefore, an opportunity exists to attract or partner with a local hospital system to build a facility for their diagnostic and physician services which would act as a feeder system into the hospital facility. We recommend that the sites most suitable for potential healthcare-related land uses be identified in the UEZ near the existing hospital and State Route 38 to encourage and permit this development.



03 A VISION FOR THE UEZ AND PAST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Developing a Vision Statement

Stakeholder Interviews and Outreach

On Thursday, August 15, 2024, several in-person interviews were conducted in the Mill Race Village, Mill Street, and High Street subareas of the downtown.

Minority Outreach

Latin American Economic Development Association (LAEDA), 433 Market Street, Suite 202 - 2nd Floor, Camden, NJ 08102, Phone: 856.338.1177, Fax: 856.963.1835, Email: info@laeda.com

The Latin American Economic Development Association, Inc. (LAEDA) was incorporated in 1987 by Camden City Hispanic community and business leaders. For the past 37 years, LAEDA has been a leader and innovator in the development of economic development strategies to facilitate the revitalization of low-asset and underserved communities in the City of Camden and across South Jersey.

The Latin American Economic Development Association, Inc. (LAEDA) is a community economic development organization dedicated to the creation of small business ownership opportunities, the advancement of underserved entrepreneurs

- The Women's Business Academy (WBA) is a free, nine-week business skills training course each year in Camden, NJ in the Spring and Fall. Qualified entrepreneurs receive 72+ hours of training from industry professionals, business planning, and continued technical assistance. Apply online at www.LAEDA.com.
- The Entrepreneurial Development Training Program (EDTP) is a free, nine-week business skills training course each year in Camden, NJ in the Spring and Fall. Qualified entrepreneurs receive 72+ hours of training from industry professionals, business planning, and continued technical assistance. Apply online at www.LAEDA.com.
- Due to the poor condition of commercial real estate in commercial districts, what would be a simple transaction of placing a security deposit on a lease and setting up a showroom or business operation becomes a major capital-intensive undertaking. This undertaking would include purchasing a building, redeveloping that building, and then setting up a business. This capital-intensive path creates a high-risk proposition for budding entrepreneurs and business investors thus forcing them to look elsewhere to make their investments.

Latino Action Network, P.O. Box 943, Freehold, NJ 07728, Email: latinoactionnetwork@gmail.com

Southern Burlington County Chapter of the NAACP, PO Box 3211, Cinnaminson, NJ 08077, Phone: 609-738-0103, Email: sbcnaacpvoice@gmail.com, Tyrus Ballard, President, President.sbcnaacp@gmail.com

Mount Holly Township Urban Enterprise Zone Plan

Enterprise Center, 4548 Market St, Philadelphia, PA 19139, Phone: 215-895-4000, info@theenterprisecenter.com

The Enterprise Center, 330 Market Street, Camden, NJ 08102, Victoria Hosendorf, Project Director, Phone: 856-533-0489, Email: vhosendorf@theenterprisecenter.com

The Enterprise Center offers a variety of services that could be beneficial for Mount Holly Businesses, including:

1. **Business Counseling and Mentorship:** We provide personalized business advice and mentorship to help entrepreneurs and business owners navigate challenges and grow their enterprises.
2. **Access to Capital:** We assist businesses in securing loans and other forms of financing to support their operations and expansion.
3. **Training Programs:** Our training programs cover various topics, including financial management, marketing, and business planning, to equip business owners with the skills they need to succeed.
4. **Networking Opportunities:** We organize events and conferences that provide opportunities for businesses to connect with potential partners, clients, and industry experts.
5. **Business Advisory Services:** We support small, diverse businesses in areas such as back-office support, e-commerce, and technology adoption to help businesses enhance their online presence and operations.
6. **Procurement Assistance:** Our team helps businesses identify and secure procurement opportunities with government agencies and large corporations.

African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey (AACCNJ), 379 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08618, Phone: (609) 571-1620, Email: info@aaccnj.com Dr. John E. Harmon, Sr. IOM, Founder, President & CEO

Equitable Small Business Initiative by New Jersey Community Capital and the African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, 100 Albany Street, Suite 250, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, Phone: 732.640.2061, Email: commsnjcc@newjerseycommunitycapital.org

The Community Survey and Results

As part of this planning process, a public survey was conducted to gain feedback and understanding of efforts to revitalize and enhance the quality of life in Mount Holly. The survey, which accepted responses from July 12 through August 22, yielded valuable input from 190 "Resident" respondents, which comprised both people residing within Mount Holly as well as people living in surrounding communities. An additional survey was conducted specifically aiming at business owners within the Township, to gain the unique perspective of businesses and how they see the economic health of Mount Holly. Running during the same timeframe, 26 responses were recorded. The feedback

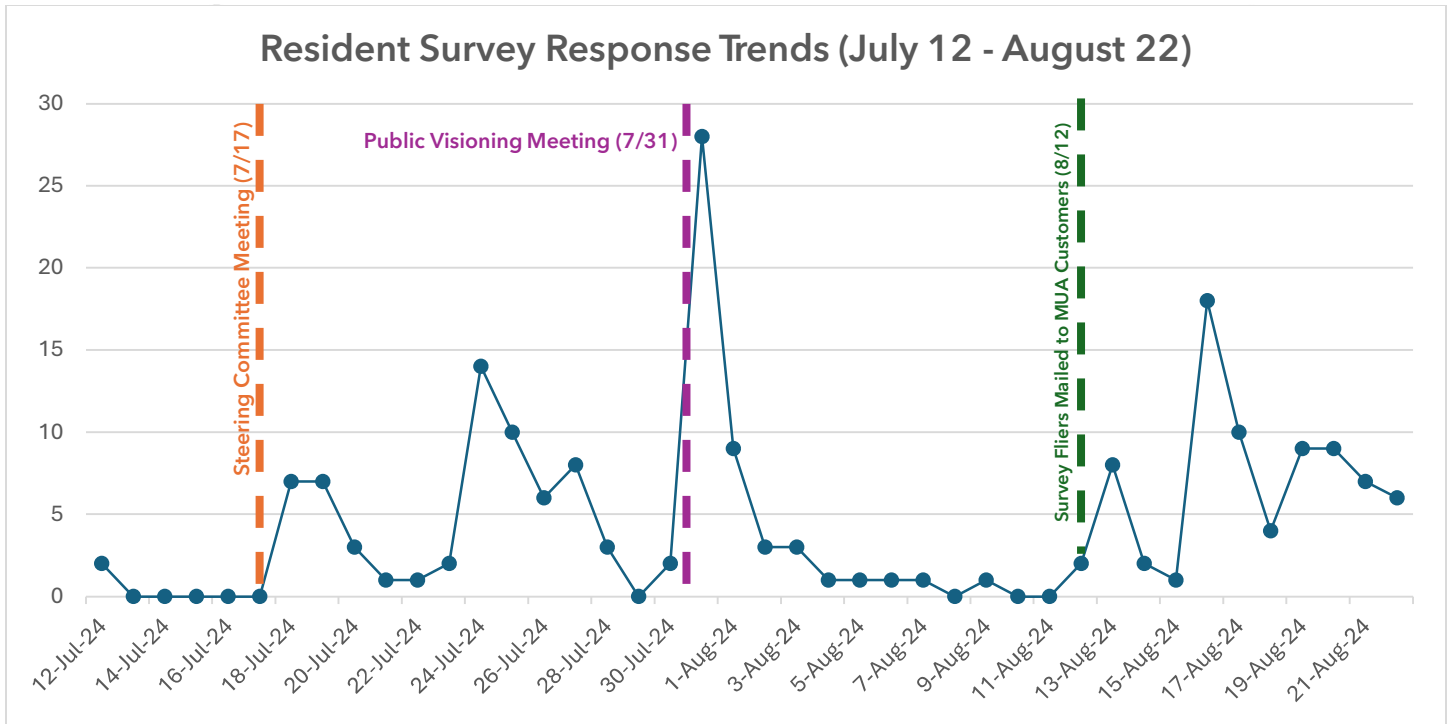
gathered will play a crucial role in guiding the Township's Urban Enterprise Zone Planning initiatives, helping to shape future programs and improvements for the area.

Resident and Non-Resident Survey Responses

Generally, survey responses for the "resident" survey saw spikes following meetings throughout this planning process. The resident survey, which included 12 questions, asked the following of respondents:

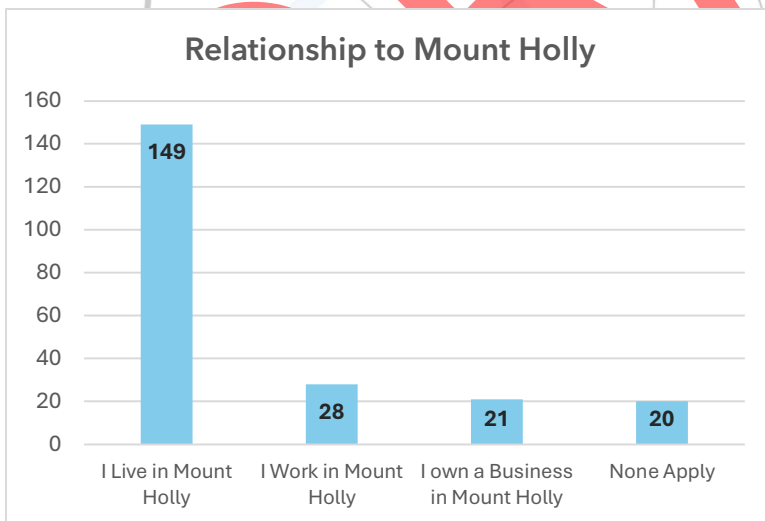
1. Do you currently live in Mount Holly?
2. Do you live, work, or own a business in Mount Holly?
3. What's the **best** feature of Mount Holly's Downtown?
4. What's the **worst** feature of Mount Holly's Downtown?
5. What events do you attend in Mount Holly?
6. When considering new commercial and residential development, how important are the following in Downtown areas:
 - a. Creating job opportunities
 - b. Revitalization of storefronts
 - c. Attracting new businesses and restaurants
 - d. Retain existing businesses
 - e. Improve streetscapes, pedestrian safety, and access to the Creek
 - f. Provide recreational activities and events
 - g. Improve historic building experience
 - h. Improve County Court attendance
7. Rate sense of safety in the following areas:
 - a. Around the Courthouse
 - b. High Street
 - c. Washington Street
 - d. Mill Race Village
 - e. Madison Avenue/King Street
 - f. Fairgrounds Plaza
8. What specific events would residents come to Mount Holly for?
9. What "type" of Downtown district, with examples of specific types, would be appealing in Mount Holly?
10. How long have you lived in or around Mount Holly?
11. Which of the following represents your age group?
12. Open-ended area for suggestions.

Once open, the response trends for the resident survey were as follows:



Demographic Background

Of the 190 responses, 149, or 78.42% resided in Mount Holly, while the remaining 41, or 21.58% were residents from surrounding communities. While respondents outside Mount Holly were allowed to indicate where they generally resided, no respondents did. There were 14.74% of respondents who worked in Mount Holly, 11.05% owned a business in Mount Holly, and 10.53% did not live, work, or own a business in the Township.



The majority of responses were from people who are long-term residents in and around Mount Holly, with 59.47% of people having lived in the area for more than 10 years. The next most common resident longevity was new residents (22.63%), who have lived in the area for 0-5 years. The least common response was 5-10 years of residency in the area, as 17.89% of respondents fell into that category.

In terms of the ages of respondents, it was relatively evenly spread between the 4 selected age tranches. The responses and the respective age tranches are as follows:

Age Group	Count	%
18-29	24	12.63%
30-44	60	31.58%

45-64	76	40.00%
65 or older	30	15.79%

It should also be noted that the largest age group represented by the survey responses also has the largest range within the age tranche.

Events and Safety

Of the specified events in the survey, the most commonly attended one among respondents was the Fire & Ice Festival, with 155 respondents indicating they do or have attended the festival. The next most popular events by response rate were the Saint Patrick’s Parade/International Festivals (65.79%), Fourth of July/Fireworks (62.11%), Car Show (59.47%), and Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony and Parade (59.47%). The events that were not as popular were the Concerts in the Park with 26.84% of respondents attending and General Recreation Programs with 16.32% attending.

When asked about the importance of making specific improvements to the Township’s Downtown, the following were viewed as Very Important, with emphasis placed on the number of “Very Important” responses:

Improvements	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Actively pursue improvement / revitalization of storefronts / facades	149	39	2
Attract new eating and drinking establishments	141	40	9
Attract new retail businesses	139	43	8
Focus efforts on the retention of existing businesses	133	54	3
Improve Streetscapes	131	52	7
Improve experience of historic buildings and places	118	61	11
Improve pedestrian safety and crosswalks	115	65	10
Provide more recreational activities and community events	111	71	8
Create Local Job Opportunities	109	73	8
Provide more pedestrian access to and along Rancocas Creek	98	73	19
Improve my downtown Mount Holly experience Going to the Courthouse	32	88	70
Make no changes. Downtown Mount Holly is fine the way it is	9	33	148

As shown, some of the more important issues and necessary improvements within the UEZ are revitalizing storefronts and facades, attracting new eating and drinking establishments, attracting new retail businesses, and focusing efforts on retaining existing businesses.

In addition, to prioritizing improvements, the survey asked generally about the feelings of safety in different areas of the Downtown, Specifically Around the Courthouse, on High Street, on Washington Street, in Mill Race Village, on Madison Avenue/King Street, and at the Fairgrounds Plaza. The following are how safe people felt in those locations utilized where the general public feels unsafe and implement other improvements to reduce those feelings. Also of note are the areas in which “Somewhat safe” was more popular feeling than “Safe”, those being: Washington Street (45.79% Somewhat Safe versus 40.53% Safe), Mill Race Village (47.89% Somewhat Safe versus 40.53% Safe), and Madison Avenue/King Street (56.32% Somewhat Safe versus 27.89% Safe). These areas, which were also some of the most frequently answered “Not safe” locations, may need to be prioritized in any safety/security programs implemented.

Respondents were asked which uses/events they would be more likely to visit Mount Holly more often. This was included so that the Township could better understand what is currently effective in the Township to draw people into Mount Holly. Including these uses/events and their potential expansion should be considered as people in the community and surrounding communities see value in them. The most popular uses and events as indicated by this question were as follows:

Use / Event	Would you visit Mount Holly more often?		
	Yes	Maybe	No
Eating / Drinking Establishments	154	31	5
Retail, Sales, & Services	125	55	8
Community Theatre / Performing Arts	112	55	20
Passive Enjoyment / Third Space / People-Watching-Places	111	63	15
Touring Historic Places & Buildings	105	63	21
Bicycling / Walking / Jogging Paths	101	56	32
Water Sports Activities	64	72	52
Professional Services	60	94	33
Financial Institutions	37	79	71

Visioning for Downtown

Finally, several general questions were asked to help build a “vision” for Mount Holly, which helped form the Vision outlined in Section 1 of this Plan. The questions aimed to work towards this included:

- What is the **best** feature of Downtown Mount Holly?
- What is the **worst** feature of Downtown Mount Holly?

As for the best features of the Downtown, some of the common answers included mentions of restaurants, a downtown feel, walkability, shops, businesses, breweries, history, and events. Conversely, some of the worst features in the Township included mentions of vacant/unoccupied

Finally, respondents were allowed to suggest additional feedback and responses in an open-ended format. While these responses, at times, echoed the prior choices, they provided valuable assessment as to the impressions of the public towards both the Township, and the surveying of the public for their opinion. Full individual response reports are included in *Appendices B and C*. Some of the feedback that may contribute to a vision and improvements to the Township's downtown are as follows:

Keep Mount Holly historic but let's modernize and get business back in town!! Mount Holly has so much to offer!

One major complaint I've heard from many is the new neon signage. Main thoughts are that it doesn't fit the rest of town. There's so much good happening, would love to see continuing energy put into all of downtown including mill race. Would also like to see more put into the great resource we have with the creek. There is huge paddling community in NJ, it would be great to give them access to our town and businesses.

Love going to school at RCBC and anything that would get us students more involved in the community would be fantastic.

Need more nice restaurants and bars. The Local, Robin's Nest and Village Idiot are great but are not enough. Some type of sports bar like O'Connors but downtown where people could watch the Phillies or Eagles and get beer and wings. Or like in Collingswood where people travel from all around for the Italian restaurants.

More shaded seating areas like the gazebo across from Vincent's Ice Cream or picnic areas.

Provide a variety of eateries and things to do.

Please always consider enhancing pedestrian access to places. Downtown Mount Holly is doing pretty well with it; please don't add a bunch of new parking lots if adding more stores to town. Also love the artistic/pastel look to downtown and would love to see that explored further.

Thrift store/consignment;
Different cultural events
Youth areas/programs;
Attract diverse business;
Incorporating more black history

“

Weekly or bi-weekly street cleaning would encourage & attract businesses and visitors when the Township looks like they care about our town. We don't get a second chance to make a first impression.

“

I think Mount Holly has so much potential. As a young professional who recently purchased a home here, I would love to see the township further developed. There are some great restaurants and drinking establishments in town. I'd love to see some higher end stores, and an effort to attract more young professionals into the area. I also believe that the aesthetic of the town needs work. There is a historic charm about Mount Holly.

“

Focus on attracting businesses that bring people into town, whether they are retail or not. Dance schools, art classes, theater, bring in the foot traffic that collaterally benefits retail. Support the businesses that already exist. Work more closely with Main Street to leverage grants and share volunteers. Be clear about rules and policies and apply them universally. Update zoning and codes to help more varieties of businesses move in and to get rid of nuisance properties.

“

As I said above, I feel that there are enough restaurants, but not enough activities surrounding the restaurants besides shopping. It would be nice to have something such as an arcade to do.

Business Survey Responses

Concurrently during the response collection among residents, a survey was also conducted targeted specifically to businesses and business owners to gain a deeper understanding of doing business in Mount Holly and elicit any suggestions and feedback from them. The business survey was shorter, to not bog down respondents who may be both residents and business owners (as 21 responses indicated in the resident survey). Running simultaneously from July 12 through August 22, 2024, the "business" survey yielded 26 responses, with the majority of responses being collected before August 1. This survey also was interactive in that if the respondents answered in a certain way, they would be prompted with a different question for the next one. Specifically starting at question "4" below, if a respondent were to select "yes", a different next question would automatically generate instead of if they selected "no".

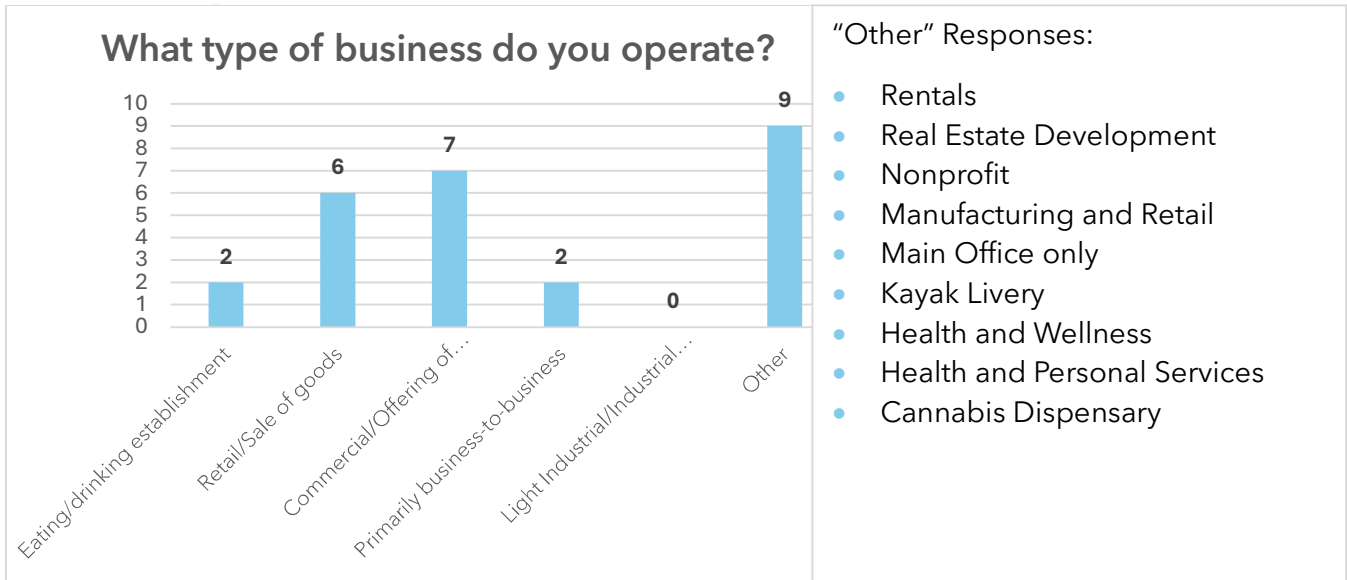
The questions on this survey were as follows:

Mount Holly Township Urban Enterprise Zone Plan

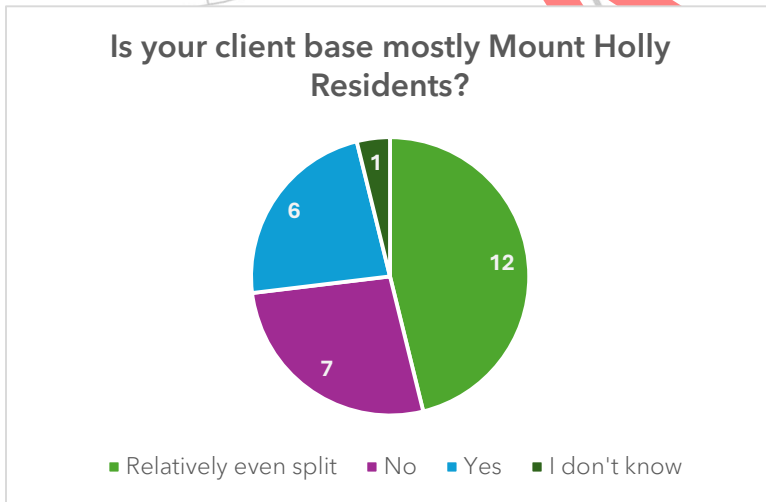
1. What type of business do you operate in Mount Holly?
 - a. Eating/Drinking establishment
 - b. Retail/Sale of goods
 - c. Commercial/Offering of services
 - d. Primarily business-to-business
 - e. Light Industrial/Industrial use (and not commercial)
 - f. Other (Please Specify)
2. How Long have you operated your business in Mount Holly?
3. Are your clients/patrons mostly Mount Holly residents?
4. Are you familiar with the Mount Holly Urban Enterprise Zone?
5. [If #4 is "Yes"] Are you a registered UEZ-Certified Business?
- 6a. [If #5 is "Yes"] What are some of the challenges Mount Holly's UEZ program currently faces?
 - a. Lack of financing
 - b. Too much business competition (locally and regionally)
 - c. Poor infrastructure in the Zone
 - d. Parking and access to businesses in the Zone is a problem
 - e. Traffic congestion is a problem
 - f. Language/Cultural Barriers make doing business difficult
 - g. There are too many regulations
 - h. There is no space to expand businesses or services
 - i. Noise is a problem
 - j. Marketing and visibility of the Zone needs to expand
 - k. Accessing transportation for business patrons and employees is challenging
- 6b. [If #5 is "No"] Why not? (as you have indicated you are NOT a UEZ-Certified Business)
 - a. I'm not familiar with it
 - b. Too much paperwork / I don't have time
 - c. It wouldn't benefit me or my business
 - d. I'm a newly-started business
 - e. Don't know / Haven't thought about it
 - f. Other (Please specify)
7. Generally, where is your business located in Mount Holly? [Interactive map question]
8. Regardless of whether you are or you are not a businessperson, are there any businesses, if located in Mount Holly, that might complement or enhance your own business through more business-to-business actions?
9. Open-ended question asking for suggestions for the Township to incorporate into its Downtown and Urban Enterprise Zone

Demographic and Informational

The majority of responses were considered "other" businesses that did not fit into the pre-selected business categories in the survey. The most common pre-selected business category among responses was "Commercial / Offering of services" with 7, followed by "Retail / Sale of goods" with 6. The response rates were as follows:

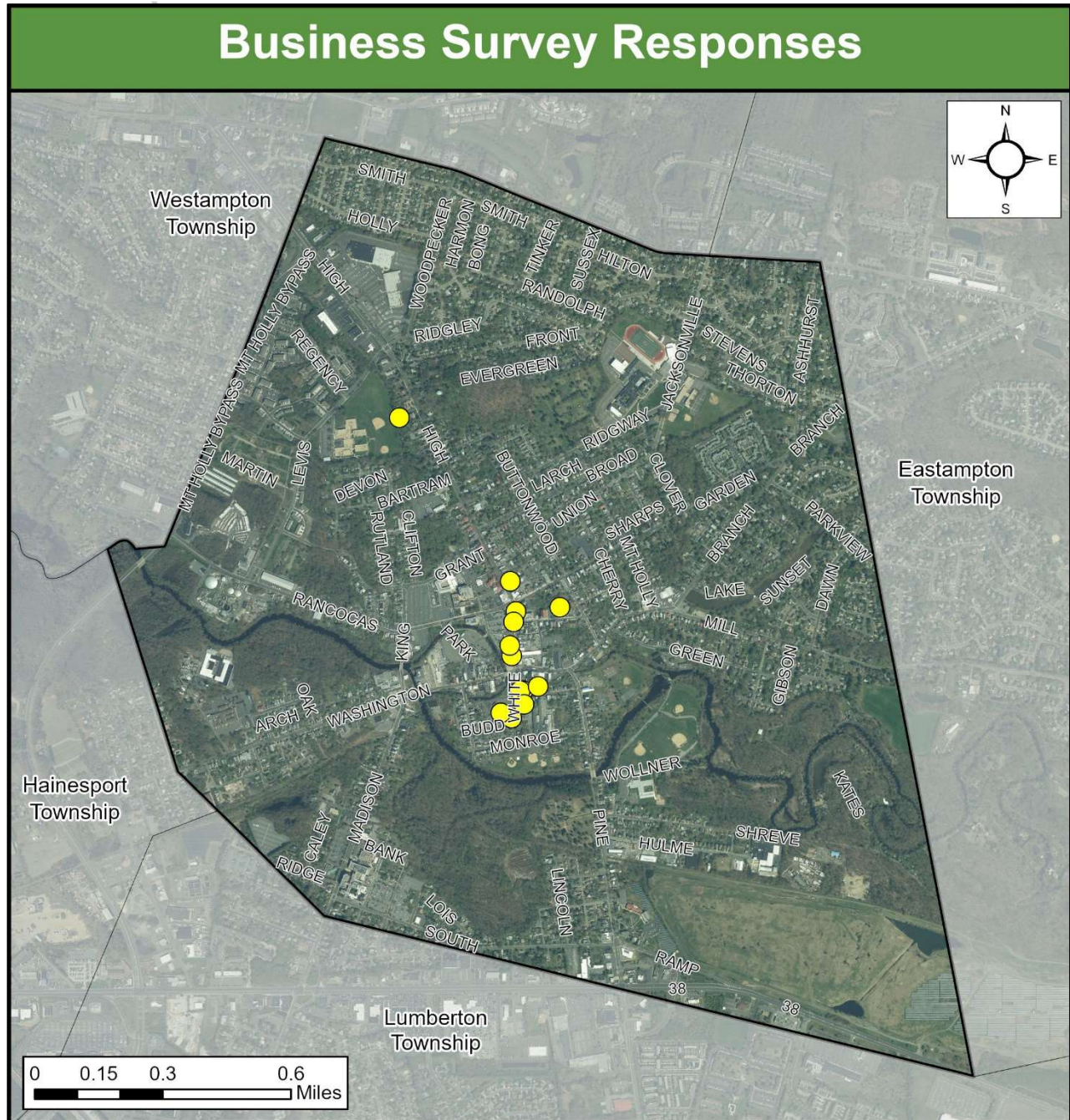


Many of the businesses that responded were long-standing businesses in the Township, with 46.15% of respondents having operated their business longer than 10 years in the Township. However, 30.77% of responses were from business owners who have been in operation in the Township for 0 to 5 years, indicating a mix of longstanding businesses and new business development in the Township.



As for patronage, many businesses indicated that their client bases were relatively evenly split between Mount Holly residents and residents of the surrounding communities. Also of note, an almost equal number of responses indicated that their clients were either specifically based in Mount Holly or based outside of Mount Holly, indicating that generally, the Township offers a mix of local business services aimed at residents and a destination for clients outside of the Township.

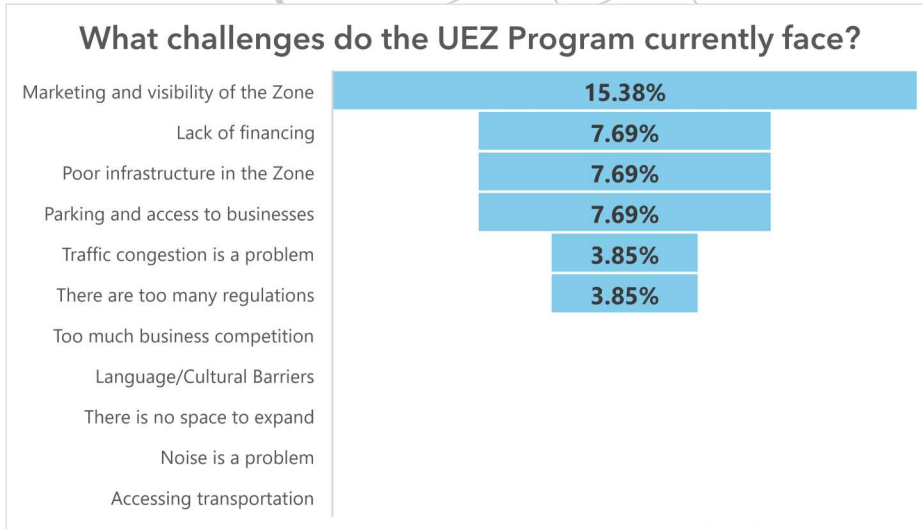
Most of the business responses were located in the Downtown sub-area, surrounding the intersection of Washington Street and High Street. This area is also the most densely populated area for businesses and employers, as is discussed above in Section 2. The specific location of the business responses is as follows:



UEZ Certification and Feedback

The majority of responses (84.62%) were familiar with the Township’s UEZ. However, a majority of responses were *also* not UEZ-Certified businesses, as 65.38% (17 responses) were NOT UEZ-certified, and only 19.23% (5 responses, 4 respondents skipped) indicated that their business participated in the UEZ program.

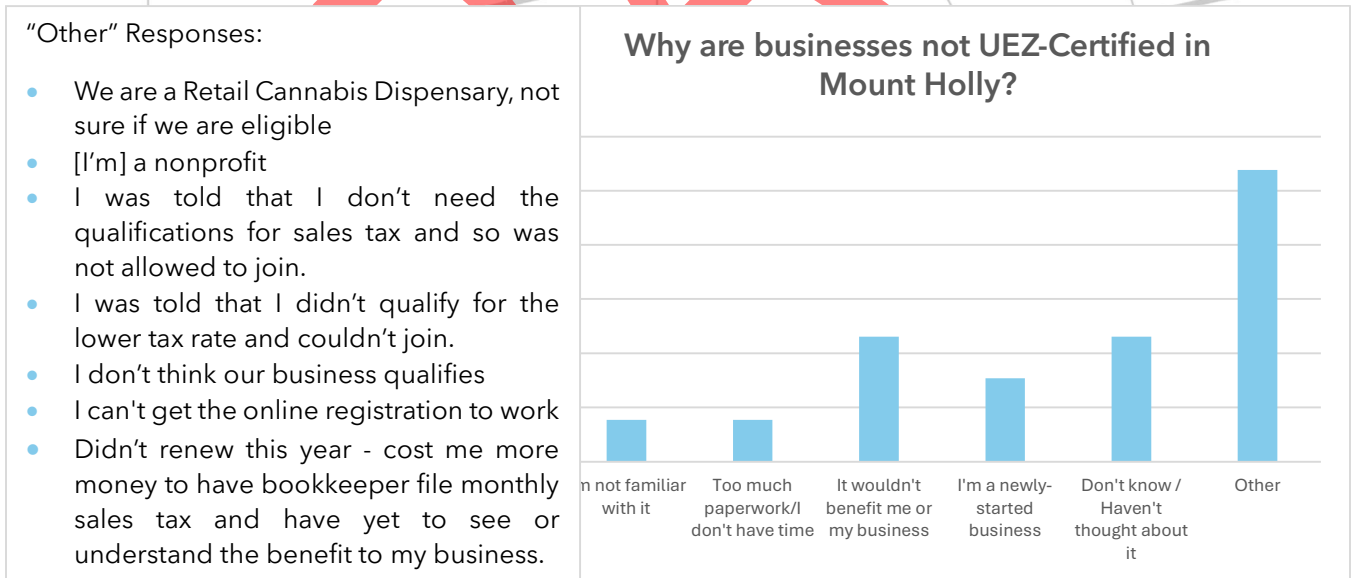
While the number of UEZ-Certified businesses that responded may have been small, the issues identified with the UEZ program by those participants still provide valuable insight into what may be hindering progress by the UEZ:



As shown, one of the most challenging issues for the UEZ is the visibility of the Zone and overall marketing of the benefits. Outside of this, financing and infrastructure, which are dependent on one another, were also identified as a challenge for businesses in the Zone. It should also be noted that this question was dependent on respondents answering "Yes" when asked

if they were a UEZ-certified business, which resulted in a high number of skipped responses.

While many of the responses were from Non-UEZ-Certified businesses, those responses still provided great value to understand the barriers that may hinder business recruitment into the program. While regulatory barriers may be inevitable due to the State-run nature of the program, opinions, and feedback still can guide the Township to explore any internally regulated barriers that may be present.



The last 2 questions of the survey were designed to be open-ended. The intention was to encourage transparency by allowing business owners an opportunity to freely express their opinions and share their experiences with the UEZ program. In addition, they were free to elaborate on any businesses

that, if located in Mount Holly, may have a positive impact on the business environment in Mount Holly. These open-ended responses are as follows:

“ A uniform branding message (logo, tagline, etc.) for Mount Holly with a strong program marketing the town as a place to dine, visit, shop, reside, locate a business would be important. MSMH and MRV are currently working on a branding/marketing project and coordinating with that effort plus coordinating and connecting all of the websites would make all components stronger. ”

“ I have the pleasure of working with the township during the 4th of July and other holiday and special programs enrichments to the community. ”

“ My business would greatly benefit from other RETAIL establishments. Downtown Mount Holly is not a shopping destination. It's not enough to have food, liquor, and dispensaries. My shop is a destination to my customers and I do get the occasional customer that is browsing and exploring the town or killing time but that is few and far between. ”

“ It would be nice to promote and enhance access to the Rancocas Creek, as a year-round resource, including at least one public access point, like to see a more collaborative approach. Like to see a recreation conservation partnership w the joint base. That's a huge market untapped for Mt Holly. ”

“ The more walkable and browsable a downtown, the more draw there is to that town. Family friendly stores, restaurants and events make a town a desirable place to visit and live. ”

“ Folks who go kayaking on Sundays [are] always disappointed that not many stores are open in town. ”

“ Provide transparency into the plans for the UEZ. ”

“ Allow for more variety of businesses to operate in the township. Focus on retail and services in the front of buildings and other businesses in the rear and above. Allow dance studios, other businesses that bring in foot traffic. ”

“ Our clients love tattoos, food and shopping. A tattoo shop. Different types of restaurants (they throw the word sushi around a lot) and a wider range of shopping. ”

“ Enhanced collaboration among business and government focused on breaking down [barriers] and community engagement. ”

General public outreach:

- Mill Race Village Arts & Preservation, Susan Thomas, President, Heidi Winzinger, Secretary
Email: audrey@winzinger.com
- Burlington County St. Patrick's Day Parade, Jim Logue, President Email:
jlogue@mounthollyparade.com
- Main Street Mount Holly, Kim Burkus, President Email: kim@mainstreetmountholly.com
- Paddle Safe Mt. Holly Adopt A-Creek, John Anderson (610) 642-7719 (W)
- Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce, 520 Fellowship Road, E502, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054, 856-439-2520, Kristi M. Howell, President & CEO, Email: Khowell@bcrcc.com
 - Members benefit from one-on-one strategy sessions with our CEO, Ambassadors, and Board Members. Grow your business through direct introductions to people you want to meet. Our expert team will help you design a chamber engagement, sponsorship, and marketing program tailored just for your business. Expand your business with government contracts, using our step-by-step process.
 - One-on-One Strategy Sessions
 - Direct Introductions and Referrals
 - Tailored Marketing Programs
 - Doing business with state and federal government guidance

Past Accomplishments, Current Programs, and Projects

Past UEZ Programs:

- Sign Grant (Program Description)
- Advertising & Marketing
- Matching Façade Grant Program (Program Description)
- Good Neighbor Loan Program (Program Description)
- Commercial Infrastructure Revitalization Grant (Program Description)
- Operation Clean Sweep
- Equipment Purchases
 - Street sweeper
 - Public Safety Equipment
- Preliminary Investment Investigation Project (Project Description)

Potential Future UEZ Projects

- Public Improvements
- Environmental studies
- UEZ Marketing Efforts

The Revised UEZ Map

In total, it has been determined that 76.77 acres should be removed from the Township’s UEZ. The majority of the land area that is proposed to be removed is located in the western portion of the Township, where the properties function as either the Township’s MUA or as “The Gardens” Redevelopment Area. Additionally, a small residential portion of the UEZ is proposed to be removed as well which totals nearly 1 acre of land area, along Branch Street from Elm Street to Lake Drive. This area, as part of the East Garden Street sub-area, is noted in Section 2 to have a very small concentration of businesses within the boundaries of the UEZ. The justification for this potential removal from the UEZ is due to these areas’ lack of benefit from being within the UEZ. As a function of the Township from a utility perspective, the MUA is not considered an employer as the majority of the land for the MUA is utility space. Furthermore, the establishment of the UEZ boundaries predates the designation of “The Gardens” Redevelopment Area and the adoption of the governing Redevelopment Plan. Section 2 above, in the discussion of the sub-areas of the UEZ, highlights the lack of employers within this (Bypass) sub-area compared to the total number of properties. As the Redevelopment Plan has been adopted since the establishment of the UEZ boundaries, this removal would more closely align with the current and anticipated development patterns for the area.

With the above removal of nearly 77 acres, this Plan recommends the incorporation of over 76 new acres of land to be included in the UEZ, resulting in an overall change in UEZ land area of -0.3%. These new acres account for both the land area of properties and the rights-of-way required to ensure the UEZ remains contiguous. Those new areas proposed to be added to the UEZ, as well as the use and zoning, include the following:

ROW/Property Count	ROW Name(s)	Acres	Use (as of 2024)	Zoning
1	Branch/Mill Intersection	0.53	N/A	B2
2	Monroe Street/Park Driveway	0.55	N/A	R2
3	High Street/Wollner Drive/School Driveway	0.49	N/A	R1
4	Wall Street	0.15	N/A	R3/R1
5	Bank Avenue	0.42	N/A	HL
6	Pine St/Route 38 Ramp	2.58	N/A	R2/B2
7	Portions of B69, L5 & B17, L1.05	0.30	N/A	HL
8	Ridge Street/Madison Avenue	0.33	N/A	HL
	Block	Lot		

Mount Holly Township Urban Enterprise Zone Plan

ROW/Property Count	ROW Name(s)	Acres	Use (as of 2024)	Zoning	
9	115	1	2.09	Iron Works Park	R1
10	115	1.01	20.85	Iron Works Park	R1
11	115	1.02	2.30	Iron Works Park	R1
12	115	11	0.08	Brainerd School	R1
13	115	100	10.74	Brainerd School	R1
14	118	9	10.70	Day Care - Legacy Treatment Children's Home Campus	PAS
15	125.11	1	0.46	Convenience Store (7-11)	B2
16	69	2	2.05	Vacant	I/HL
17	69	4.02	0.22	Vacant	HL
18	69	4.01	0.12	Vacant	HL
19	69	4	0.16	Vacant	HL
20	76	9	1.17	Vacant - B1 Zone	B1
21	83	26	6.12	Monroe Park	R2
22	83	26.01	0.07	Monroe Park	R2
23	83	45	0.01	Monroe Park	R2
24	83	44	0.97	Monroe Park	R2
25	83	43	1.08	Monroe Park	R2
26	86	23	2.06	Mill Dam Park	R1
27	86	3	1.84	Mill Dam Park	R2
28	86	2	1.99	Mill Dam Park	R3
29	86	1	3.45	Mill Dam Park	R4

Mount Holly Township Urban Enterprise Zone Plan

ROW/Property Count	ROW Name(s)	Acres	Use (as of 2024)	Zoning	
30	96	1	0.13	Medical (Smile Center of Mt. Holly)	HL
31	96	2	0.19	Medical (Smile Center of Mt. Holly)	HL
32	101	27	0.34	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
33	98	19	0.09	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
34	98	30	0.06	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
35	98	29	0.35	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
36	98	20	0.12	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
37	98	23	0.10	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
38	98	17	0.15	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
39	98	18	0.09	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
40	98	21	0.16	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
41	98	15	0.09	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
42	98	16	0.08	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
43	98	25	0.13	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
44	98	14	0.13	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
45	98	26	0.10	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
46	98	24	0.15	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
47	98	22	0.11	Medical - Future Hospital Development	HL
Total to Add		76.45 Acres			
Total to Remove		76.77 Acres			
PRIOR TOTAL AREA		692.74 ACRES			
NEW TOTAL AREA		692.42 ACRES			
CHANGE (%)		-0.32 ACRES (-0.04%)			

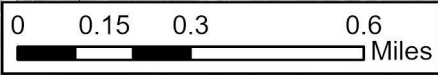
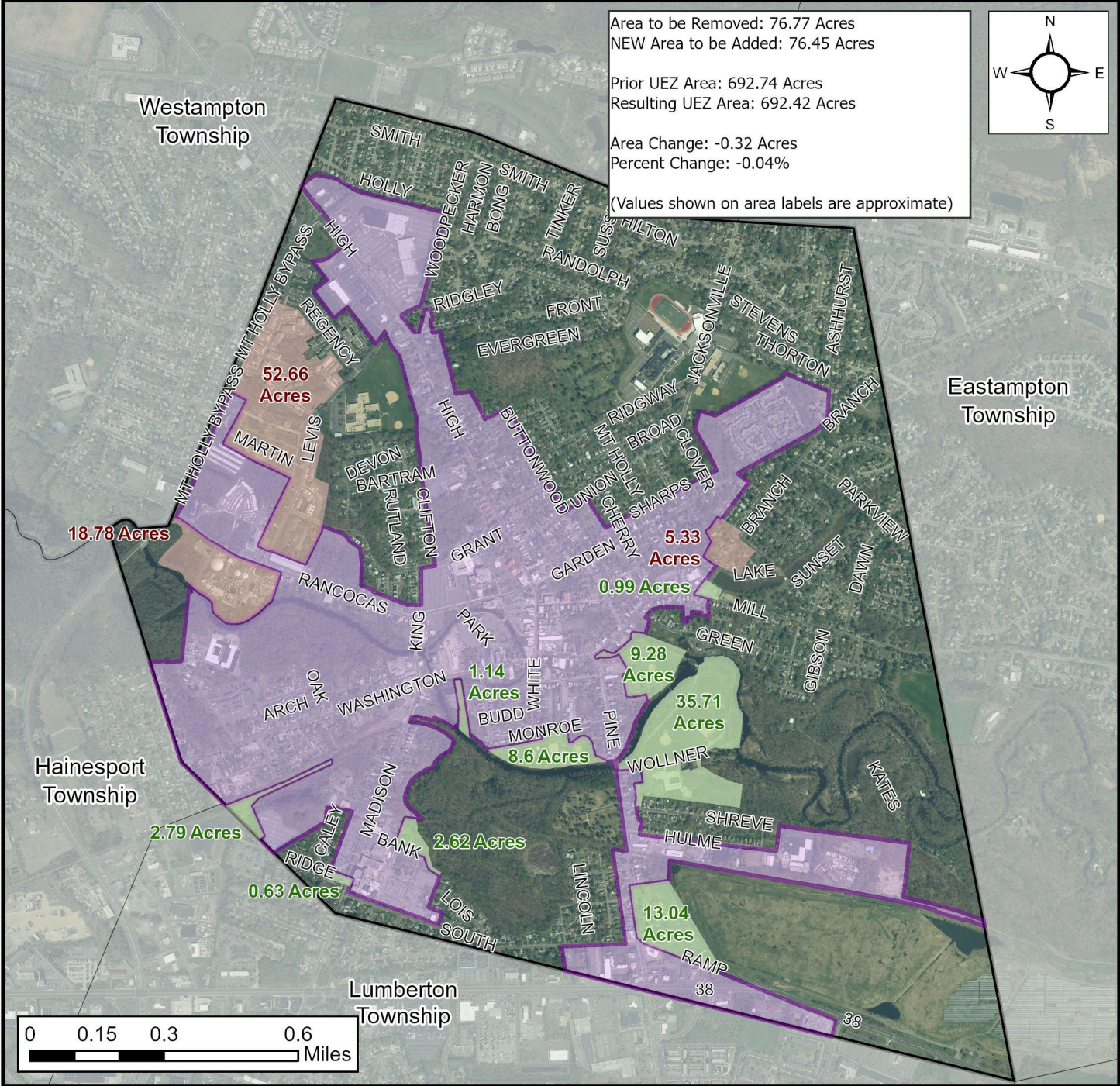
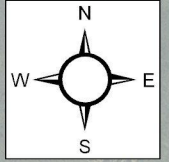
UEZ Boundary Changes

Area to be Removed: 76.77 Acres
 NEW Area to be Added: 76.45 Acres

Prior UEZ Area: 692.74 Acres
 Resulting UEZ Area: 692.42 Acres

Area Change: -0.32 Acres
 Percent Change: -0.04%

(Values shown on area labels are approximate)



Legend

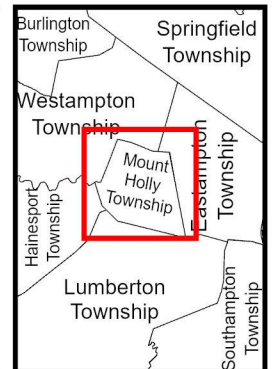
- Area(s) to Add
- Area(s) to Remove
- Urban Enterprise Zone Boundaries

Date: 9/3/2024 Drafted By: PVB



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOLUTIONS, INC.

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 815 EAST GATE DR. SUITE 103
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04 Mount Holly UEZ Implementation and Action Agenda

Categorical Project Sorting by Type

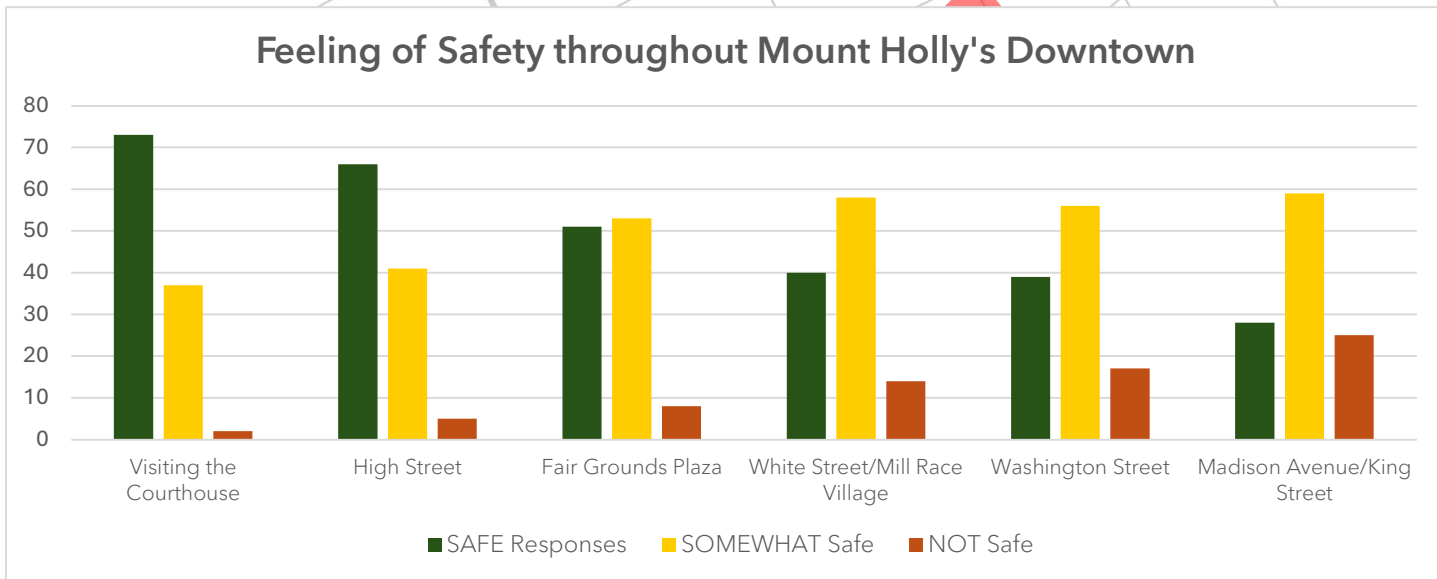
The following shall be used to categorize each of the specific and broad improvements to the UEZ as recommended by this plan, which may be more likely to draw UEZ Authority support should the Township pursue a given recommendation.

Category	Description
1. Construction Project	A construction project that improves, alters, or repairs the real property of a qualified business located in an enterprise zone.
2. Economic Development	Full or part-time economic and community development positions in the municipality, other governmental, or not-for-profit organization, or marketing.
3. Financial Support	Loans, grants, and guarantees to businesses in the UEZ.
4. Public Safety	Payroll expenses, personnel, services, and equipment purchases primarily for the provision of law enforcement, fire protection, or emergency medical services within commercial and transportation corridors located exclusively in an enterprise zone.
5. Professional Services	Planning and other professional services related to economic and community development.
6. Maintenance	Cleaning and maintenance of commercial and transportation corridors.
7. Corridor Infrastructure	The improvement of public infrastructure in a commercial or transportation corridor.
8. Public Infrastructure	Public infrastructure improvements related to commercial, industrial, mixed-use, or multi-family residential property.
9. Training Programs	Employment and training programs.
10. Community Events	Events meant to support and draw activity into the enterprise zone, including fairs, festivals, and concerts.

Specific Projects and Initiatives

Increase Downtown Security Through Video Surveillance and Increased Lighting

Throughout this planning process, residents, people employed in the Township, and visitors expressed concern that they did not always feel safe in areas of the Downtown and commercial hubs of activity. The public survey for this plan asked respondents to indicate feelings of safety in areas, namely if they felt 'very safe', 'somewhat safe', or 'NOT safe'. The areas in question, as well as the responses associated with the general feeling of safety, are as follows:



To increase safety in the public areas of Downtown and the commercial hubs of activity, it is recommended that the municipality seek funding from the UEZ to install cameras in, at minimum, municipal parking lots. This will increase real safety in the area and also help to instill the impression that these lots are safe places to walk and park.

Currently, many of the pedestrian and public parking areas in the Township are lit using floodlights 20 feet in height and shorter lights approximately 12 feet in height. These floodlights may provide good lighting for motorists and their maneuvers, but the twelve-foot pedestrian lights are inconsistently placed, leaving dark spaces and blind spots. In many cases, the visual perception of blind spots leaves visitors feeling uneasy, and the unknown leads them to believe the area is unsafe. Well-lit sidewalks and pedestrian areas may help users feel more comfortable walking at night. Well-lit areas also open opportunities to highlight key gateways, providing visitors with a focal point and visual destination to walk to at night. For reference, the following are the funds provided by the UEZ Authority for other UEZs around the State that have implemented security cameras for improved safety:

- City of Elizabeth - \$16,500
- Lakewood Township - \$18,000
- Gloucester City - \$100,000
- North Bergen Township - \$175,000

- Town of West New York - \$269,000

Finally, it is recommended that, as a next step, the Township seek funding to employ multiple Class II police officers to patrol the downtown area regularly. Public survey responses highlighted the need to incorporate a safer identity for the Township's downtown, and an increased police presence will work to meet this need. This could be in tandem with the proposed technological improvements above or can slowly be incorporated to contribute towards an overall safer business district. By creating an environment that both *is* safer and *feels* safer, businesses are likely to remain in the Township longer, and visitors are likely to be drawn back and return to the Township for business and community events.

Increase Recreational Access to Rancocas Creek through more Docks

In 2017, the Township, in coordination with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, produced a DRAFT Municipal Public Access Plan (MPAP). This plan included a series of recommendations to provide more public access to waterways in the Township, specifically access to the Rancocas Creek. Among the recommendations in the report, the following are noted:

Goal V: Provide amenities for visitor safety and comfort at public access locations

Recommendations:

- Encourage concessions or other dining opportunities near access points;*
- Secure funding and/or partnerships to install non-motorized boating ramps and/or docks at key put-in and take-out locations;*

Goal VII: Maintain safe and adequate access locations for fishing in those areas where fishing is safe and appropriate

Recommendations:

- Survey local fishermen to determine preferred fishing locations along the Rancocas Creek;*
- Develop a priority list and map of fishing locations;*
- Secure funding and/or partnerships to install docks, fishing line disposal units, and signage at priority fishing locations;*

To increase recreational usage of the Creek, the Draft MPAP identified several *unofficial* boat launch locations throughout the Township that are located generally within the Municipal parks. Those unofficial boat launch locations are as follows:

- Iron Works Park - 1 official boat launch
- [In Progress] Parking-lot-to-park conversion at Park Drive and Commerce Street - 1 official boat launch [likely to be completed in 2025]

- Monroe Park - 2 unofficial launching and resting points for paddlers;
- Mill Dam Park - 1 opening in the Park's riparian buffer area that paddlers use as an unofficial boat launching point;
- Iron Works Park - 3-4 unofficial launch sites (see below)
 - 1 under the footbridge to Mill Dam Park.
 - Several at the north and west ends of the park.
- Mount Holly Bypass/Route 541 Area - 1 at the north bank of undeveloped, township-owned woodland.

All of these unofficial launch sites, especially due to their location on public lands, pose public risks to those accessing the waterway and the lack of improved launching areas may put residents and visitors in danger. This plan recommends continuing to increase docks and boat launches throughout the Township, as identified and studied as part of the Township's draft MPAP efforts.

Construct a Bicycle and Pedestrian Path along Segments of the Rancocas Creek

In the early 2010s, the Township converted a rail right-of-way between Madison Avenue and Pine Street into a Rail Trail. This stretch of Trail is part of a larger proposed regional system planned by DVRPC known as the Rancocas Creek Greenway Trail, which is labeled as ongoing or "pipeline" by the regional planning commission. DVRPC's Rancocas Main Branches Greenway Plan from 2002 highlights a Mount Holly to Birmingham Rail Trail, a Mount Holly to Medford Rail Trail, and a Hainesport Proposed Bikeway that would all make use and connect to the existing Rail Trail in Mount Holly. Additionally, a Rancocas Greenway Trail has been proposed, which would serve to connect the Township to the Delaware River Heritage Trail. For the past several years, the County has begun to acquire property along the Rancocas Creek in Mount Holly to form the Greenway.

This Plan supports this effort by the County and recommends that the Township coordinate with the county and state on the construction of a riverwalk/multi-use trail along the creek and the oxbow. This path could serve as a new public right-of-way for non-motorized transportation and recreation along the creek, while also allowing users to have an uninterrupted view of the waterway. The path and pathway amenities should provide capacity for moderate to heavy pedestrian activity, using high-quality materials and design, adequate lighting, and accessible facilities.

Explore Opportunities Throughout the Township for Relocation of the Municipal Building/Complex

The existing Municipal Building and offices are housed at 23 Washington Street in the Township's Downtown. This area is also notorious for flooding during rain events, evident by FEMA designating much of the property within the 100-Year Floodplain. Over the years as flooding events have compiled and affected the building, it is likely that, as flooding events will continue to increase in frequency, the structural integrity of the building will come into question. Furthermore, the Township's continued financial efforts to maintain and stay in the current location may outweigh the cost of outright relocating.

This is not an unheard-of recommendation for the Township, as previous attempts to relocate have been made but were unsuccessful. This plan continues to recommend relocation for the coming years

and, as government services are vital for successful business administration, the Township should coordinate with the UEZ Authority to coordinate and pool funds to realize this goal.

Consider a Payment in Lieu of Parking Ordinance

A parking solution that has been demonstrated to be effective is a payment in lieu of parking (PILOP), which allows developers to pay a fee rather than build parking spaces. Municipalities can use PILOP revenues to construct public parking facilities, which can be used more efficiently for Township-wide uses and businesses rather than a private parking area or garage. This method has been successfully implemented in various municipalities such as the Township of Hanover, Township of Montclair, Township of Robbinsville, Town of Morristown, and Borough of Metuchen.

Some municipalities have used PILOP programs to fund downtown parking as they pursue downtown and transit-oriented development (TOD) redevelopment. For example, one municipality's desire to use in lieu fees for parking was identified in its Downtown Parking Study and was eventually adopted by ordinance. Should the goal of implementing a PILOP program not been identified in that study, it may have never been implemented. In Mount Holly, where the municipality already provides numerous public parking areas, a PILOP system offers several benefits for the Township and developers. For developers, a reduction in the amount of required parking spaces allows them to maximize buildable area and potentially reduce construction costs due to removing the high cost of individual parking spaces, depending on the fee amount. For the Township, the funds generated from these fees can be used to make improvements suggested in this report to be used in conjunction with any funding from the UEZ Authority, or the collected fees can be reserved to finance larger projects, such as a parking deck or garage, or establishing a Township Parking Authority to enforce parking regulations.

Coordinate with Burlington County on Revised Parking Strategies (Parking Deck, Shared Parking, Etc.)

In decades prior, Burlington County considered building a parking structure for the influx of trips to the county offices and courthouse. While those plans have not been realized at this time, the Township should continue coordinating with the County on new parking strategies that could be used to aid both the trips generated to the County's facilities and to Mount Holly's downtown. Nighttime utilization of any parking structure or shared parking alternative could be beneficial to the Township as County employees do not typically park at night. Furthermore, a parking deck could provide an opportunity for a new center and mixed-use development, with mixed-use components lining the exterior of any parking structure.

Incorporating electric vehicle (EV) charging spaces into these public parking areas would further enhance these efforts, offering an additional layer of utility and forward-thinking infrastructure. As EVs continue to increase in numbers, highlighted by the State's goal to register over 300,000 EVs in New Jersey by 2025, the need for accessible and up-to-date charging stations has become progressively more important. Public parking structures and parking areas can serve as strategic locations for these stations, ensuring that residents and visitors alike have convenient access to charging options. This not only supports the growth of EVs but also positions Mount Holly as a progressive community embracing sustainable technologies. Moreover, integrating charging stations within parking areas could provide

long-term benefits by attracting EV owners to the downtown area, potentially increasing foot traffic to local businesses and contributing to the area's economic vitality.

Incorporate Grant Programs for Business Infrastructure (Safety, Building Expansion, etc.)

Addressing the challenges of doing business downtown at times involves feedback and case-by-case improvements to specific businesses. As this report outlined the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats on a general level, this Plan also recognizes that each business faces unique challenges. Some of the major issues for downtown businesses often involve:

- The need for marketing to get the word out about their existence and the services they provide;
- Finding space for expansion in the downtown;
- Obtaining support with financing;
- Keeping up with technology; and,
- Finding good, reliable workers.

Assisting businesses in lessening the impacts of these impediments forms the basis of downtown revitalization and business retention. It is recommended that the Township utilize UEZ funding, when appropriate, to assist businesses in specific improvements to business infrastructure. For example, for a business owner to expand the physical footprint of their building, the cost(s) of contracting services and permitting services may be reduced through specific funding projects through the UEZ.

Broad Policies and Recommendations

Accomplish Elements for the various “Visions for Mount Holly”

This vision was formed using survey responses collected, the “Vision for Mount Holly” should serve as the voice of the people and the residents and visitors. While specific recommendations and suggestions were provided, the UEZ’s role in accomplishing this vision should be to aid in funding projects and to be the catalyst for improvements to the economy and marketability of the Township.

Additionally, a constant goal for the Township should be to accomplish the Vision Statement established through the Township’s Master Planning efforts. As an updated Reexamination Report is likely to be adopted this year (2024), the following are the vision statements recommended to be adopted:

Existing Town Centers throughout the country are experiencing a renaissance. More young professionals, single householders, empty nesters, and young families are looking to invest in compact, mixed-use communities. High gas prices and a focus on “carbon footprint” reduction have motivated people to seek more efficient, sustainable lifestyles. Historic places, like Mount Holly, offer an authentic sense of place that cannot be found in new towns and developments.

To capitalize on this revitalization trend, Mount Holly strives to grow and sustain a thriving local economy, good quality of life, and a safe and secure community while remaining socially and environmentally sustainable. Mount Holly is the civic, education, recreation, and entertainment hub of the Rancocas Valley region. The Downtown and Mill Race Village districts’ distinctive stores and shops and its flourishing arts, cultural, and dining scene make Mount Holly a unique

destination and a great place to live. All these elements are knit together by Mount Holly's exceptional neighborhood parks and natural areas along Rancocas Creek, which is a key Downtown recreational feature. The Township-elected officials and appointed committees are committed to preserving the historic character of Mount Holly while encouraging economic growth and development.

Utilize Multiple Sources of Funding for Improvements/Programs within the UEZ's Scope

This Plan, and many of the plans before it, include goals and recommendations that may require funding that is not readily available at the time of adoption. To combat this lack of funding at any given time, it's recommended that the Township, and the entities within it such as the UEZ, utilize multiple funding sources whenever possible to maximize dedicated funds for projects. For example, a project involving beautifying and improving a park with recreational amenities can potentially utilize funds from either the NJDEP Green Acres Program funding as an active recreation area or from Burlington County Open Space funds and combined with UEZ funds as the park brings visitors into the Township. Following this Plan, the UEZ should not solely rely on funding made available by the UEZ Authority and should actively seek additional funding, matching opportunities, and potential grants to further the goals of this Plan.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- NJDEP Green Acres Funds
- Small Cities CDBG Funds
- Burlington County Open Space Funds
- FEMA
- Others as they are available

Program More Frequent Events, Festivals, Bazaars, Etc. to Establish Placemaking

Downtown areas have long served as hubs for civic, cultural, and entertainment activities, embodying community heritage and cultural pride. Successful downtowns thrive by attracting and retaining key amenities like museums, sports stadiums, theaters, and performing arts centers. They leverage civic buildings to enhance the community fabric. Events such as art walks, outdoor performances, concerts, and film festivals have emerged as cost-effective strategies to highlight heritage resources, reintroduce people to the downtown area, and boost foot traffic for local businesses. The orchestration of these events demands collaboration between city staff, downtown development organizations, and event planners. Additionally, partnerships with the private sector are crucial for fundraising, advertising, and organizing these downtown events. New Jersey has three agencies that provide funds to advance tourism, arts, culture, and heritage events: The New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism (NJTT) (<https://visitnj.org/new-jersey-tourism-grant-opportunities>), The New Jersey Historic Trust has Heritage Tourism Grants every year (<https://www.nj.gov/dca/njht/programs/preservenj/heritage-tourism/>), and the Department of State provides dozens of grants to nurture and strengthen New Jersey's rich cultural and arts heritage (<https://nj.gov/state/dos-grant-information.shtml>). An in-depth review of these resources should be undertaken to more fully understand the activities that are eligible for funding and who is eligible for funding.

Mount Holly can greatly benefit by incorporating principles from existing organizations such as Better Block and PlacemakingUS into planning programs and events. These organizations focus on community-driven design and enable municipalities to engage residents in the planning process, ensuring that public spaces are tailored to local needs and foster a strong sense of ownership. By utilizing tactical urbanism—temporary, low-cost interventions—Mount Holly could test and refine ideas for public spaces before committing to permanent changes. This approach not only reduces risk but also generates community feedback and excitement around potential projects.

Prioritizing the creation and enhancement of vibrant public spaces—such as parks, plazas, and streets—can significantly improve the quality of life for residents while also attracting visitors and boosting local businesses. These spaces can become the heart of the community, fostering social interaction and civic pride. Additionally, implementing ongoing programming—including events like farmers markets, outdoor concerts, and community workshops—ensures that these spaces remain lively and well-used, making them integral parts of daily life.

Should the Township incorporate into the PlacemakingUS network, Mount Holly could tap into an inventory of resources, best practices, and support from other communities engaged in similar efforts. This collaboration can drive innovation and help ensure the success of placemaking initiatives.

Leverage the Rancocas Creek for its Recreational and Scenic Benefits

The vision for the Township includes incorporating more opportunities for waterway recreation, the Township should explore all options to capitalize on the “natural gem” that is the Creek. Recreational tourism can serve as one part of a coordinated effort to draw more residents and visitors to the Township, and therefore more potential customers and clients to the Township’s businesses.

Additionally, businesses that have waterfront access can utilize the creek as an alternative entrance for those traversing the waterway. For example, a person kayaking on the Creek could have the opportunity to pull off of the water, dock, or store their boat, and stop for a quick bite to eat. While the Township has planned for new and improved public access points through its Municipal Public Access Plan, this plan recommends focusing on private and semi-public access points specifically for businesses, to create a unique experience for customers.

Coordinate with NJDEP/FEMA for Maintenance and Access to the Township’s Waterways

The Rancocas Creek is designated as an Artificial Path by the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD), which may contribute to limited availability for maintenance and improvements. Artificial paths are used by the US Geological Survey’s NHDFlowline feature class to indicate the flow direction through waterbodies. These paths do not inherently classify as streams, canals, or other water features, and therefore should be considered for reclassification to ensure accurate representation. This classification can impact the prioritization and resources allocated for maintenance and improvements, potentially limiting the options available for managing the Creek effectively.

It is recommended that the Township coordinate with the appropriate environmental groups such as NJDEP and/or FEMA which may aid in advising the reclassification of the Rancocas to allow for a more robust breadth of maintenance funding to improve a vital piece of Mount Holly’s Downtown.

Adopt an Improvement District (SID/BID)

To foster business growth and enhance economic vitality, it is recommended that the Township consider adopting legislation to establish a Special or Business Improvement District (SID/BID) in the Downtown. Improvement districts have proven effective in numerous municipalities throughout New Jersey and across the country, where they have helped concentrate resources on critical downtown areas such as cleaning, maintenance, safety, and marketing. These districts, while imposing an additional levy on property owners within the district, directly benefit from the added expense because the funds are designated to the SID/BID area resulting in a more direct cause-and-effect for property owners. By creating such a district, Mount Holly can leverage these additional resources to supplement standard city services, elevating the level of service in key commercial areas and creating a more attractive environment for businesses.

In addition to establishing an improvement district, maintaining a detailed registry of businesses within the Township is essential. This registry would serve as a valuable tool for tracking business trends, identifying areas for support, and ensuring that the needs of local businesses are met effectively. The registry could also help to coordinate efforts within the improvement district, ensuring that all stakeholders are accounted for the district's goals are aligned with the members, and resources are allocated to achieve the established goals.

To further support these initiatives, it is suggested that the UEZ actively engage with local business owners and community stakeholders through regular meetings and feedback sessions, which can take place during regularly scheduled UEZ Meetings. This ongoing dialogue will ensure that a future improvement district and the UEZ are tailored to the unique needs of Mount Holly, fostering a collaborative approach to economic development. This Improvement District can also work to further the goals of the former Historic District in the Township, which currently (as of 2024) is no longer active.

Incorporate more Opportunities for Discounts within the UEZ, i.e. Military Personnel

Start a dialogue with the UEZ Authority to determine possible funding resources for providing discounted prices (similar to the reduced sales tax for UEZ Businesses) to specific qualifying groups. For example, the Township has, in the past, provided discounts to military personnel to capitalize on the presence of the nearby Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst. Furthermore, some municipalities have implemented programs to attract retail trade by providing customers the ability to exchange money for a municipal-specific currency at a higher rate. For example, a resident could exchange \$100 U.S. Dollars for \$120 "Mount Holly" Dollars that can only be used at a UEZ or a participating business.

Beautify Streetscapes through Landscaping and Architectural Elements

As the primary arteries of Mount Holly's Downtown core and Mill Race Village, streets with effective walkability serve as the "first step" for visitors. An improved public space that visitors find attractive creates a first impression that cannot be replicated or replaced. As such, streetscapes and sidewalks must provide for a high volume of pedestrian activity. This necessity, along with the grand scale of the street, warrants wide sidewalks with high-quality materials and design and updated landscaping and architectural elements. By focusing improvements on business zones and the UEZ, the Township can build an effective first impression for visitors, and provide an aesthetic surrounding visual for visitors. An improved streetscape can also help dampen the effects of temporarily vacant storefronts, which tend to be eyesores.

Explore the Conversion of Underutilized Municipally-Owned Parking Lots into Parks and/or Plazas

In December of 2023, a Plan and Concept Design was presented to the Township which involved the conversion of a municipally-owned parking lot into a public park which was designed to also be used for event spaces by the Township. The successful conversion should serve as an example for future parking-lot-to-park projects to increase the Township's inventory of parks and open space available for events.

In addition to the permanent conversion of paved parking areas to green parks, the Township should utilize its public parking areas more frequently to temporarily house events. This adds the benefit of an event being in a confined space, which may be needed depending on the nature of the event.

One common temporary method of converting paved surfaces and parking areas is the incorporation of Parklets, which have become more common across the country. Parklets capitalize on excess paved surfaces like parking spaces and convert the space into a new public realm for pedestrians and not vehicles. This can be accomplished using a variety of features, including benches, tables, umbrellas, and potted landscaping, among others. The American Planning Association recommends the following guiding principles for municipalities to incorporate parklets:

- **Identify residual spaces in priority areas.** Not all sites or neighborhoods are appropriate for parklets. Parklets work well in areas where there is a high level of foot traffic, where the automobile traffic is low-speed, and where there are surrounding establishments that can provide a level of natural surveillance. City planners can develop an inventory of residual spaces in priority areas (with low amounts of open space) that fit these criteria and encourage their conversion into parklets.
- **Encourage variety in parklet design.** Parklets can be functional and aesthetic assets for cities, especially if they demonstrate unique and innovative architectural and landscape designs. Planners should encourage innovation and experimentation in design. While no two parklets should look alike, providing a "kit" of parklet parts to interested community groups and allowing them to creatively mix them up may provide necessary guidance to groups not familiar with design. Design competitions or charrettes may produce a rich inventory of parklet design ideas.
- **Tailor design to community needs.** Depending on community needs and the character of the surrounding area, parklets may facilitate passive or active recreation, offer age-specific activities (young children, senior citizens, etc.), and incorporate neighborhood-specific cultural and landscape elements in their design.
- **Provide urban design guidelines.** Design guidelines should not stifle parklet design and experimentation but must ensure that appropriate safety standards are met.
- **Streamline the permitting process.** Part of the appeal of parklets is that they are relatively easy to plan and install. Planning agencies should ensure that the permitting process is simple and low-cost. At the same time, permits should be renewed annually, allowing cities to monitor operation and maintenance.

- **Designate a lead staff person and public agency.** While various public departments have jurisdiction over city streets, a particular city agency (and ideally a particular staff person) must take the lead in coordinating and streamlining the parklet planning and installation process.
- **Streamline maintenance requirements.** Cities should make the expected levels of maintenance very clear to parklet sponsors and keep a watchful eye to guarantee that all maintenance requirements are met.

Enforce Uniform Historic Business Signage and Promote More Vehicular & Pedestrian Wayfinding



In the past, businesses within the Township's Historic District were required to apply to the Historic Preservation Commission and obtain development approval to ensure that the historic design and character of the Township's Downtown was maintained. This included approval of signage, which has been identified as a priority through this planning process. Currently, the standards for signage no longer require review and approval to ensure that Downtown signage is harmonious with the surrounding character and aesthetic. It

is recommended that the Township enact an approval process again for new signage proposed in the Downtown. Additionally, a program focused on improving business signage within the boundaries of the UEZ is recommended, which has been done in the past.

Adding pedestrian wayfinding signage in parking lots that directs pedestrians toward various destinations in town should also be included in signage improvements. Complaints from residents included the lack of signage that directed people to their destination. Additionally, adding more wayfinding for vehicles will aid new visitors to the Township in reaching parking areas, which have proven to be somewhat hidden leading to a perception that "There is no parking in Mount Holly", when in fact Mount Holly's parking areas are merely not highly visible. Wayfinding efforts in Mill Race Village should serve as an example for improving access in other densely developed areas of the Township

Facilitate Small Business Loans. Low-Interest Loans

Many small businesses need technical or financial support to grow, which can be challenging to secure independently. Sole proprietors and unique businesses often require guidance through licensing and permitting processes at both municipal and state levels. New businesses may need training and help to secure capital investment while existing businesses looking to expand often require specialized market research, peer networking opportunities, and access to funding information. The UEZ should address these challenges, as the survival of businesses within the zone is crucial to the zone's viability. Effective support begins by identifying key sectors for assistance and developing economic development programs, which can be funded through UEZ project funds. These projects should

provide opportunities for small business loans or low-interest loans to ensure the continued success of smaller, unique businesses.

Focus on Local Arts and Artists

This can be combined with other recommendations, such as programming more frequent events and festivals, but can also include promoting the existing arts within the Township. For example, the RCBC facility Downtown houses a student-produced art gallery where works can be purchased.

In addition to enhancing the Township's cultural offerings, incorporating more performing arts into community events can be a strategic focus. By introducing theater, music, dance, and culinary arts into existing and new events, Township can create vibrant experiences that showcase local talent and attract diverse audiences. Specifically, RCBC in Mount Holly has already begun to incorporate culinary arts into events, offering dinners cooked by students, with seating inside the kitchen facilities available to witness culinary arts as well as a demonstration area with stadium seating. Outdoor performances, pop-up theater productions, live music sessions, and dance showcases can help position the Township as a regional hub for the arts, increasing its appeal to residents and visitors. Successful implementation will require collaboration between local arts organizations, schools, and businesses to bring these creative initiatives to life.

The Township should continue to pursue public, semi-permanent art displays such as murals, which provide "photo-op" locations in the Downtown. With these, the Township could increase digital traffic through more of a crowd-sourced method. Funding for these projects can incorporate scholarships or grants through the UEZ, where local artists could be selected through an application process, and the Township can utilize UEZ funding to provide financial support for the artists. Funding these activities improves the identity of the arts in Mount Holly while having a specific project-based funding source in the UEZ.

Promoting artistic activities such as these will establish a unique and creative identity for the Township.

Increase Transparency \ Utilization of Social Media and Public Channels

During public meetings, concerns were raised regarding communications to the public for UEZ-sponsored programs and civic events. In this day and age, maintaining transparent and efficient communication can be challenging for governmental entities. Balancing transparency with efficiency cost-effectively can be a challenge. The Township and the UEZ should establish procedures to ensure that information is available to the public, especially if it relates to business development and events in the UEZ. The following objectives are recommended for the transparency of communications:

Improve communication with the public

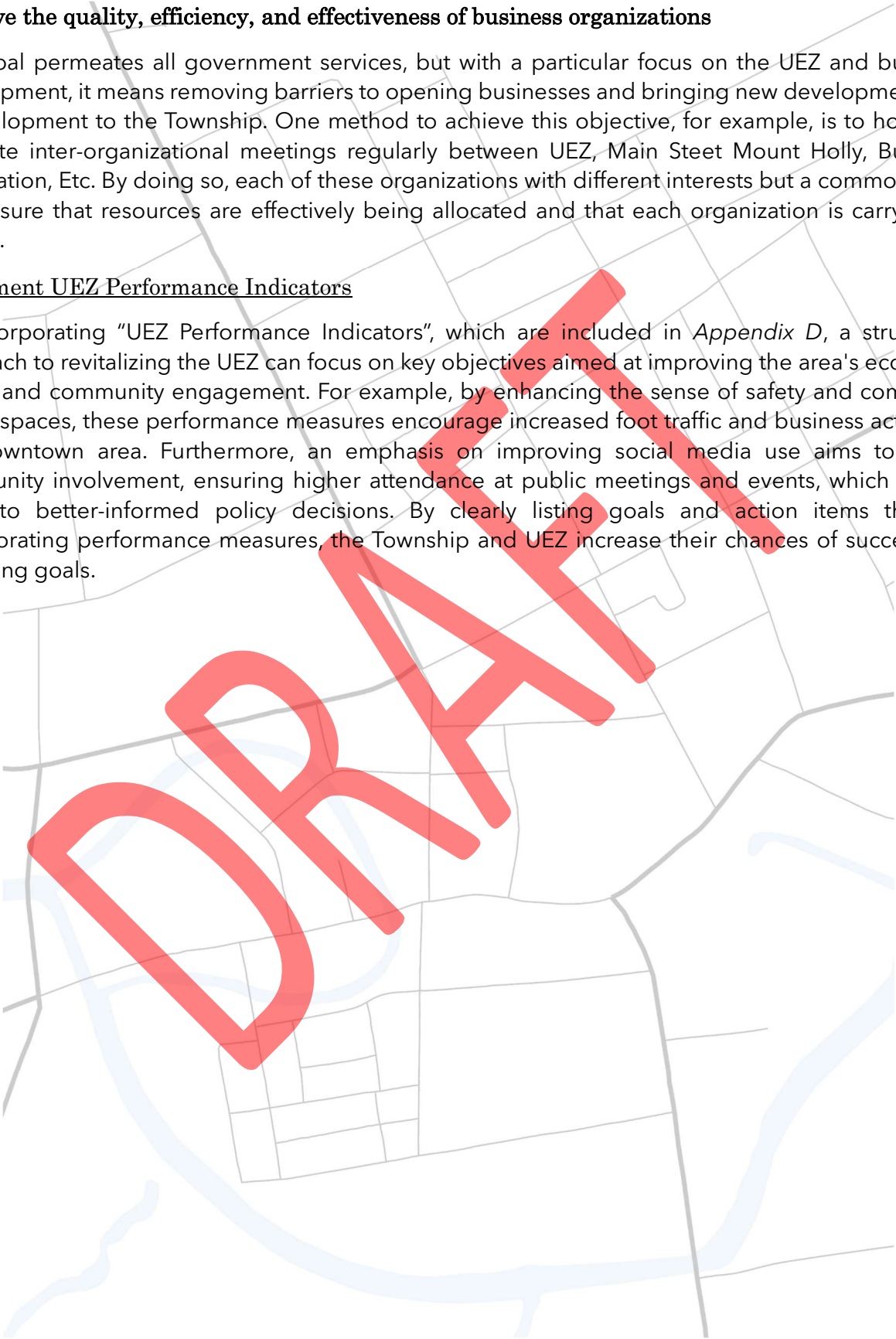
Active public engagement is essential for the success of municipal initiatives, particularly in fostering business development. Whether in large cities or small towns, collaboration between the government, the business community, and residents is vital for driving positive change. For the business community to play an effective role, they must have the opportunity to participate in advisory, advocacy, and leadership capacities. Strengthening the Township's communication strategies with the public is crucial to enhancing civic engagement and ensuring that businesses and residents are empowered to contribute meaningfully to the development process.

Improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of business organizations

This goal permeates all government services, but with a particular focus on the UEZ and business development, it means removing barriers to opening businesses and bringing new development and redevelopment to the Township. One method to achieve this objective, for example, is to hold and promote inter-organizational meetings regularly between UEZ, Main Steet Mount Holly, Business Association, Etc. By doing so, each of these organizations with different interests but a common goal, can ensure that resources are effectively being allocated and that each organization is carrying its weight.

Implement UEZ Performance Indicators

By incorporating “UEZ Performance Indicators”, which are included in *Appendix D*, a structured approach to revitalizing the UEZ can focus on key objectives aimed at improving the area's economic vitality and community engagement. For example, by enhancing the sense of safety and comfort in public spaces, these performance measures encourage increased foot traffic and business activity in the downtown area. Furthermore, an emphasis on improving social media use aims to boost community involvement, ensuring higher attendance at public meetings and events, which in turn leads to better-informed policy decisions. By clearly listing goals and action items through incorporating performance measures, the Township and UEZ increase their chances of successfully achieving goals.



Priority I: Land Use Element / Zoning Ordinance Amendment

As it has been identified throughout this plan, recent Master Planning efforts, and historic draft Master Plans it has been recognized that the Township's zoning ordinance needs examination, amending, and updating to account for current trends and desires for compatible land uses. As a priority of this UEZ Plan, it is recommended that the Township examine its zoning ordinance and update it accordingly to account for both the improvements under the purview of this plan as well as correct any imbalances and zoning conflicts surrounding the UEZ. Furthermore, the Otteau Group's Market Analysis, performed in preparation for this plan, included recommendations for compatible land uses within the UEZ that may not necessarily fall under the purview of the UEZ program - namely residential uses. While the UEZ program does not focus on improving housing throughout the state, revision, and examination of the Township's zoning ordinance will ensure that the balancing of land uses in the UEZ, both residential and non-residential in use, will be compatible and the transition areas from businesses to residences follow the best planning practices.

Priority II: Placemaking in Downtown Mount Holly

Placemaking in townships like Mount Holly plays a pivotal role in revitalizing public spaces and fostering a sense of community. Mount Holly, with its rich historical heritage and charming downtown, is an ideal candidate for this approach. Placemaking emphasizes community-driven development, transforming underutilized or neglected areas into vibrant hubs that reflect the local culture and meet the needs of residents. By creating "third spaces"—or social environments outside of home and work—Mount Holly can enhance its public realm, making it a more attractive and dynamic place to live, work, and visit.

The concept of a "Third Place" was first formed in the 1980s by urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg, where he characterized the space as such:

"Most needed are those 'third places' which lend a public balance to the increased privatization of home life. Third places are nothing more than informal public gathering places. The phrase 'third places' derives from considering our homes to be the 'first' places in our lives, and our workplaces the 'second.'"

"The character of a third place is determined most of all by its regular clientele and is marked by a playful mood, which contrasts with people's more serious involvement in other spheres. Though a radically different kind of setting for a home, the third place is remarkably similar to a good home in the psychological comfort and support that it extends...They are the heart of a community's social vitality, the grassroots of democracy, but sadly, they constitute a diminishing aspect of the American social landscape."

The critical relationship between fostering informal gathering places – parks, arcades, malls, libraries – is emphasized with the establishing and maintaining an effective third space, where people can spark conversation, cultivate culture, and share everyday experiences with those around them.

The introduction or expansion of third spaces such as cafes, parks, libraries, and community centers in Mount Holly can have a profound impact on long-term business sustainability. Spaces of these types provide residents and visitors with opportunities to interact, connect, engage in cultural activities, and foster a stronger sense of community. By integrating modern amenities within its historical context,

Mount Holly can attract new businesses and visitors, stimulating economic growth while preserving its unique character. The vibrancy of third spaces encourages foot traffic to support local businesses and is a catalyst for broader community revitalization efforts, contributing to the economic resilience of the township.

In the long term, investing in placemaking and third spaces will significantly benefit Mount Holly's community well-being. These spaces promote social interaction, physical activity, and mental health, contributing to a higher quality of life for residents. Additionally, by incorporating sustainable design principles, such as green infrastructure and energy-efficient buildings, these spaces can enhance Mount Holly's environmental resilience. The success of such initiatives relies on active community involvement, ensuring that the development aligns with residents' needs and values. As Mount Holly continues to evolve, the thoughtful creation and nurturing of third spaces will be instrumental in building a thriving, connected, and resilient community for generations to come.

Priority III: New Business Recruitment in the UEZ / Diminishing Oversaturation

As mentioned above in the recommendation for adopting an Improvement District in the Township, maintenance, and examination of the existing business base in Mount Holly should be a priority for the municipality and the UEZ. This can first be done by establishing a business registry which can be helpful for visitors to sort businesses based on business type. However, this may also highlight the oversaturation of the same business types in the Township, which has been identified as detrimental in the long run. While amending the zoning ordinance will alleviate this issue over time, it is recommended that the UEZ take a more active stance in recruiting a variety of *new* businesses to the UEZ and the Township as a whole. This should be a priority, as this will ensure the long-term success of the UEZ and the economic identity of the Township.

Furthermore, many of the responses gathered as part of the public survey included criticism of business oversaturation, both from the perspective of residents and businesses, where *too many* businesses of the same type are undesirable throughout the Township. This was also highlighted during the In-Person Visioning Session in July of 2024, as the issue is seen as permeating through several factors of the Township and potential stagnated growth.

Oversaturation of one or two business types is not sustainable in the long term, as it restricts consumer options and heightens competition among similar businesses, ultimately leading to decreased profitability and potential closures. Closures seem to be occurring more rapidly than businesses can fill the vacancies resulting in a surplus of vacant storefronts.

Priority IV: Pedestrian/Recreational Infrastructure and Walkability

In Mount Holly, prioritizing pedestrian connectivity does not end in improving walkability - it is essential for the overall health of local businesses and the community. Pedestrian-oriented design fosters a vibrant economic environment by making commercial areas more accessible and inviting to residents and visitors alike. By ensuring that sidewalks conveniently connect to destinations such as commercial developments housing, and parks, the Township can create an ecosystem where foot traffic and business traffic naturally increase.

The continued maintenance of the pedestrian realm is equally crucial. Sidewalks, building facades, and public spaces must be well-maintained to ensure they remain attractive and accessible.

Streetscape features like street trees, awnings that provide shelter from the elements, and accessible building entrances from sidewalks are not just conveniences—they are vital components of a thriving pedestrian network. These elements make the pedestrian experience more comfortable and enjoyable, encouraging repeated visits and longer stays in downtown business areas.

Moreover, prioritizing pedestrian-oriented design in the Township's broader planning efforts can have long-term benefits. The Township can foster a more vibrant downtown by conveniently connecting commercial activities to the existing parking lots with a safe and effective pedestrian network. Throughout the planning process for this report, some public survey feedback highlighted the general misconception about parking in Mount Holly, leading visitors to believe there was a lack of parking or "no good parking" in the Township's downtown. By prioritizing pedestrian connectivity and design principles, the Township will support the economic vitality of its main street businesses and promote sustainable development patterns of public spaces.

These improvements create a more inviting environment for shoppers, improve accessibility, and support the overall economic and social vitality of the community. The ongoing upkeep of the pedestrian realm preserves these benefits, ensuring they contribute to a more prosperous downtown.

Project Map and Key Investment Locations

Throughout this Planning Process, several key investment areas were identified and highlighted for their potential to improve the Township's UEZ. While these areas may not have a specific plan or intended future use, they are highlighted here to illustrate where improvements *could* be in the Township. Those areas, and a description of their value/utilization, are as follows:

Rancocas Walk: A

To further the goal of providing more access, both physically and visually, to the Rancocas Creek and Oxbow, an identified project area is the area along the Rancocas Creek and Oxbow north of Washington Street, for the development of a multi-use path/walk. Down the line, this area could extend south of Washington Street into and around Mill Race Village, but this plan recommends this project area only north of Washington Street.

Washington & High Street Parking Plaza: B

As it has been identified throughout this planning process, the property at the northwesterly corner of High and Washington Streets is positioned incredibly well at the "Center" of the downtown. This property was formerly occupied by a building that has since burned down and is now an unpaved parking area commonly used by visitors to Washington Street and High Street. Due to deed restrictions, its development potential is limited. Therefore, it is recommended that the Township explore opportunities for improvement or redevelopment that also honor these restrictions. This could be through installing more public facilities, such as a fountain, seating, game tables, landscaping, improving the parking area, or some combination.

RCBC Annex: C

As identified as a broad goal above, incorporation of the arts in the Township is recommended to increase the unique and artistic identity of the Township. As the Rowan College at Burlington County (RCBC) annex along High Street has grown over time, artwork by students has grown in popularity at

this specific location. This is evident in the gallery on the ground floor, the culinary arts viewing classes and dining experiences, and digital design labs. It is recommended that the Township utilize this annex building, given its prime location downtown, to coordinate with RCBC on specific events such as art exhibitions, student showcases, and community workshops, fostering artistic growth and identity.

Church-White-Pine Affordable/Mixed-Use Development: D

This key investment area was identified as part of the Township’s Housing Element and Fair Share Plan in March of 2023, where the property was incorporated into an Affordable Housing Overlay, with the following development requirements:

- At least 50% of the units shall be affordable to very-low-income and low-income households with the remainder affordable to moderate-income households.
- All affordable units created in the district shall be family units, and at least 25% shall be family rental units.
- At least 13% of all units referenced in the Agreement shall be very low-income family units at 30% or less of median income.

Also of note is that the 2023 Housing Plan and Fair Share Element maintained that the site’s underlying zoning, which allowed for mixed-use residential and non-residential development, was preserved when the property was incorporated into the Overlay. This is a key property because of the required coordination between the developer and the Township, as well as the potential for increased mixed-use development in the UEZ. As part of the Township’s Mill Race Village district, this site may also be developed for mixed-use development, consisting of multi-family housing on the floors above the following ground floor uses:

- Eating and drinking establishments,
- Retail sales and service uses,
- Professional, technical, and administrative / business support service uses,
- Exercise, fitness, and health and wellness centers,
- Educational and licensed day-care service uses, and
- Arts and cultural uses, including:
 - Art and craft galleries, including art and craft sales,
 - Art and craft maker studios,
 - Theatre, music, and dance studios, excluding public performance venues, and
 - Museums, libraries, and other similar cultural facilities.

White Street Pedestrian Walk: E

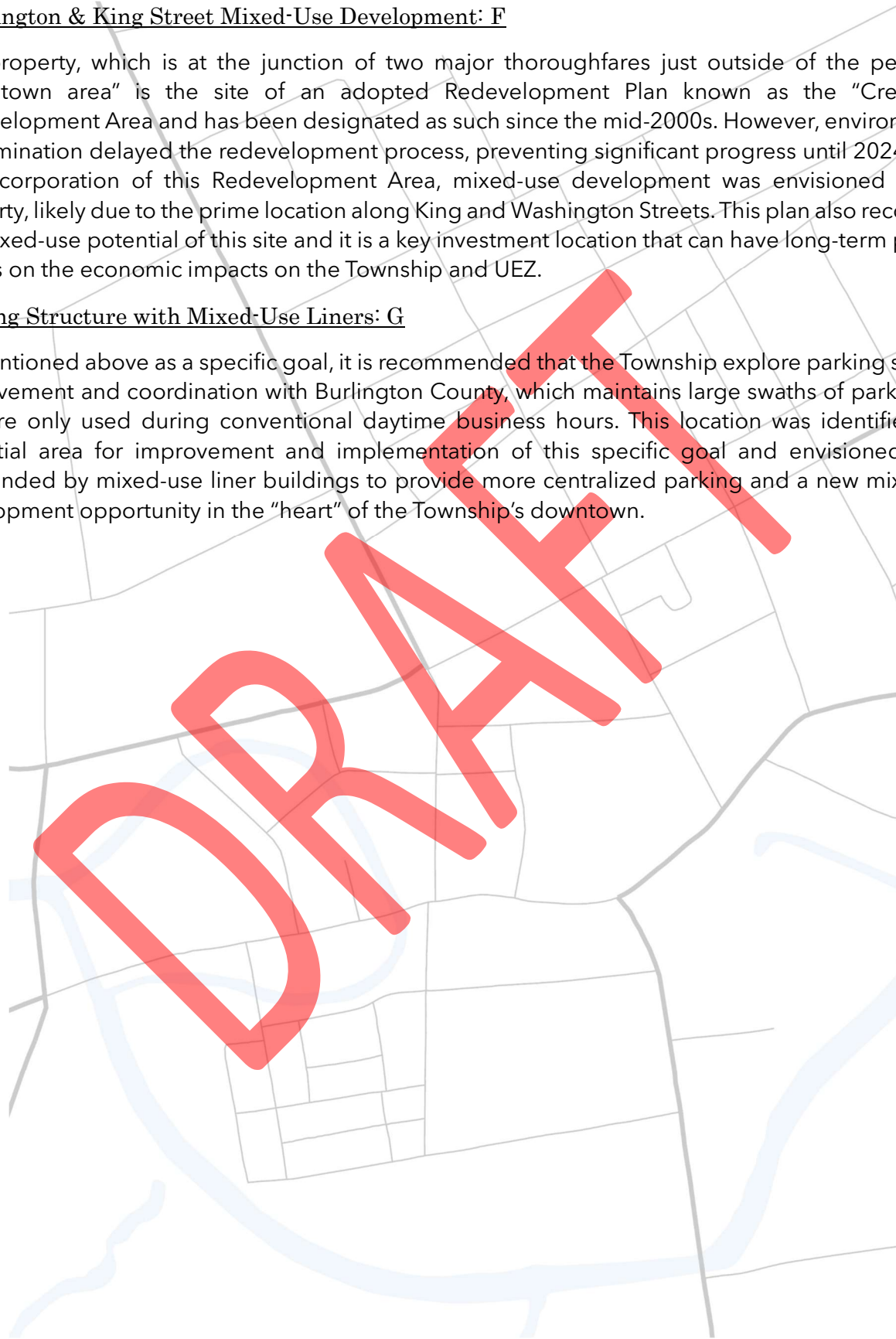
This plan has several recommendations to increase placemaking in the Township through regular events and scheduled efforts. The effort to identify an area for these events to take place, led to a portion of White Street in Mill Race Village being identified for its potential to house on-street events such as craft fairs and arts festivals while seemingly having minimal negative impacts on adjacent property owners during such events. This area, which has 4 potential street and parking area closure locations, would give the Township another opportunity for outdoor events, on a right-of-way which is under Township jurisdiction and would not require a substantial amount of county- or state-coordination.

Washington & King Street Mixed-Use Development: F

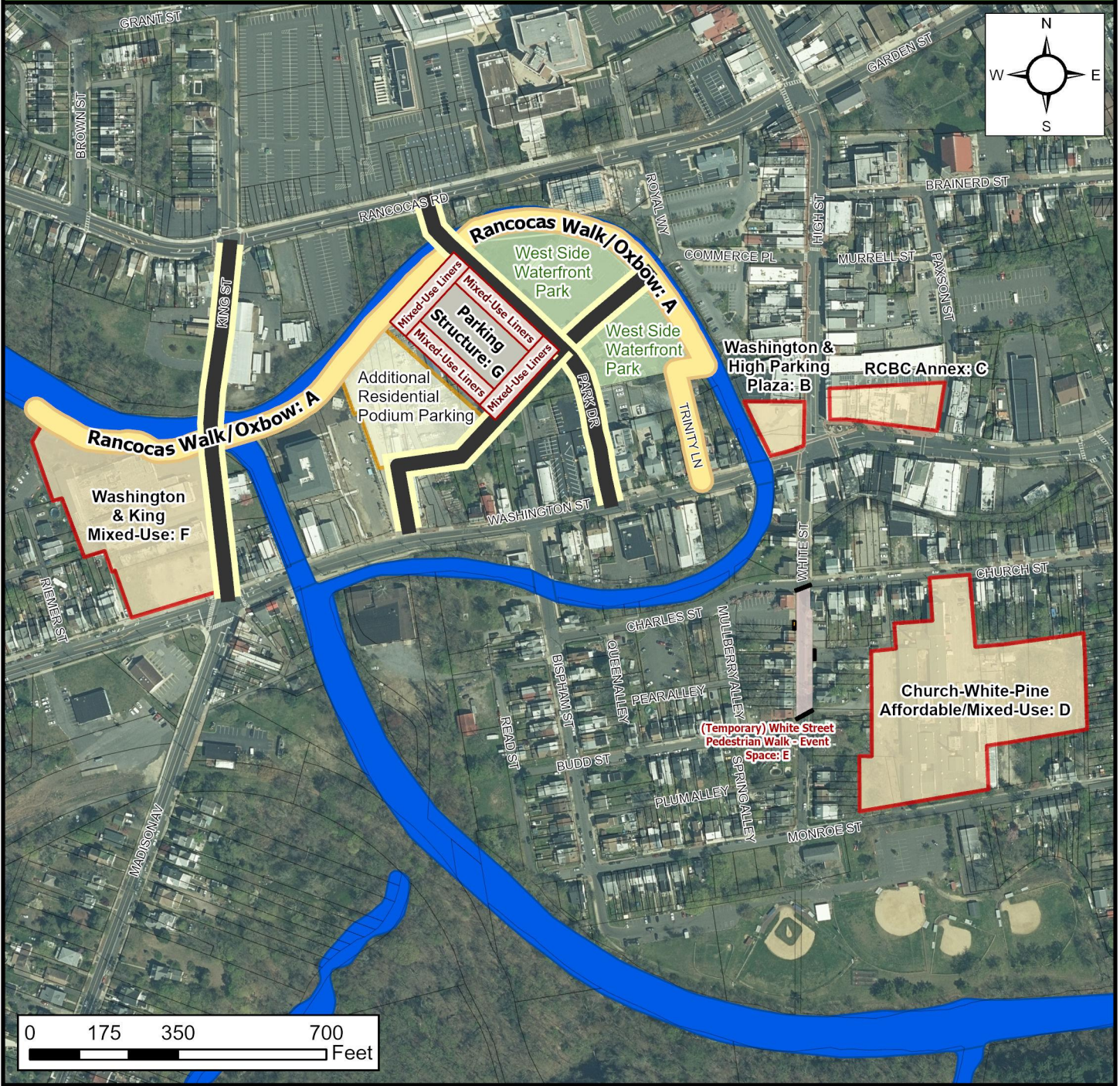
This property, which is at the junction of two major thoroughfares just outside of the perceived “downtown area” is the site of an adopted Redevelopment Plan known as the “Creekside” Redevelopment Area and has been designated as such since the mid-2000s. However, environmental contamination delayed the redevelopment process, preventing significant progress until 2024. Since the incorporation of this Redevelopment Area, mixed-use development was envisioned for this property, likely due to the prime location along King and Washington Streets. This plan also recognizes the mixed-use potential of this site and it is a key investment location that can have long-term positive effects on the economic impacts on the Township and UEZ.

Parking Structure with Mixed-Use Liners: G

As mentioned above as a specific goal, it is recommended that the Township explore parking strategy improvement and coordination with Burlington County, which maintains large swaths of parking lots that are only used during conventional daytime business hours. This location was identified as a potential area for improvement and implementation of this specific goal and envisioned to be surrounded by mixed-use liner buildings to provide more centralized parking and a new mixed-use development opportunity in the “heart” of the Township’s downtown.



Key Investment Locations



Legend

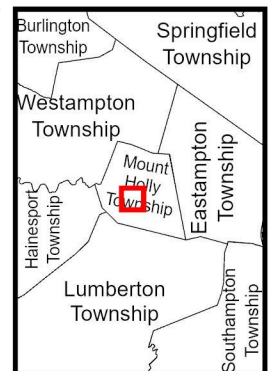
-  White Street Pedestrian Walk
-  Church-White-Pine Affordable Housing
-  Rancocas Oxbow Walk
-  Focal Areas
-  Parks
-  Parcels

Date: 9/3/2024 Drafted By: PVB



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Summary and Next Steps

The recommendations outlined in this Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) plan aim to address the pressing needs of Mount Holly while fostering growth, sustainability, and community engagement. By revising UEZ boundaries, focusing on specific improvements at strategic locations, and establishing broad goals, this plan provides a roadmap for revitalizing the Township. We also recognize that potential amendments to governing documents may be necessary to ensure that land use and zoning align with the community's vision for economic development.

Reflecting on Historical Context and Progress

Since the mid-1990s, when Mount Holly's UEZ was first established, the Township has experienced significant changes in development, zoning, and economic priorities. While previous plans focused on areas outside the central business district, today's landscape requires a renewed focus on Downtown Mount Holly. The revitalization of this area, which is both historic and in need of attention, will be pivotal to the Township's future success. As such, this plan builds upon the progress made while addressing the current challenges and opportunities within the Downtown area.

Adapting to the New Economy

The reauthorization of the UEZ by the State's Urban Enterprise Zone Authority (UEZA) provides Mount Holly with the tools and guidelines necessary to adapt to today's evolving economic landscape. The partnership with Environmental Resolutions, Inc., and the decision to utilize Enterprise Zone Assistance Fund (EZAF) financing has allowed for a comprehensive approach to planning. This includes incorporating public feedback, conducting a market analysis, and engaging with minority stakeholders to ensure that the plan reflects the diverse needs of the community.

A Vision for Downtown Revitalization

Our vision for Mount Holly's Downtown and UEZ is clear: to create a vibrant, welcoming destination where residents and visitors can enjoy the Township's rich history, scenic beauty, and cultural offerings. This vision includes enhancing walkability, connecting key areas within Downtown, and providing spaces for a wide range of activities. From outdoor markets to water recreation on the Rancocas Creek, this plan envisions a Downtown that is both a community hub and a draw for visitors.

Addressing Key Challenges

While the vision for Mount Holly is promising, we must also address several key challenges to realize this potential. The over-saturation of similar businesses, vacant shops, and safety concerns are critical issues that must be tackled head-on. By implementing enhanced safety measures, improving cleanliness, and providing varied entertainment options, we can create a Downtown that is not only safe but also vibrant and inviting.

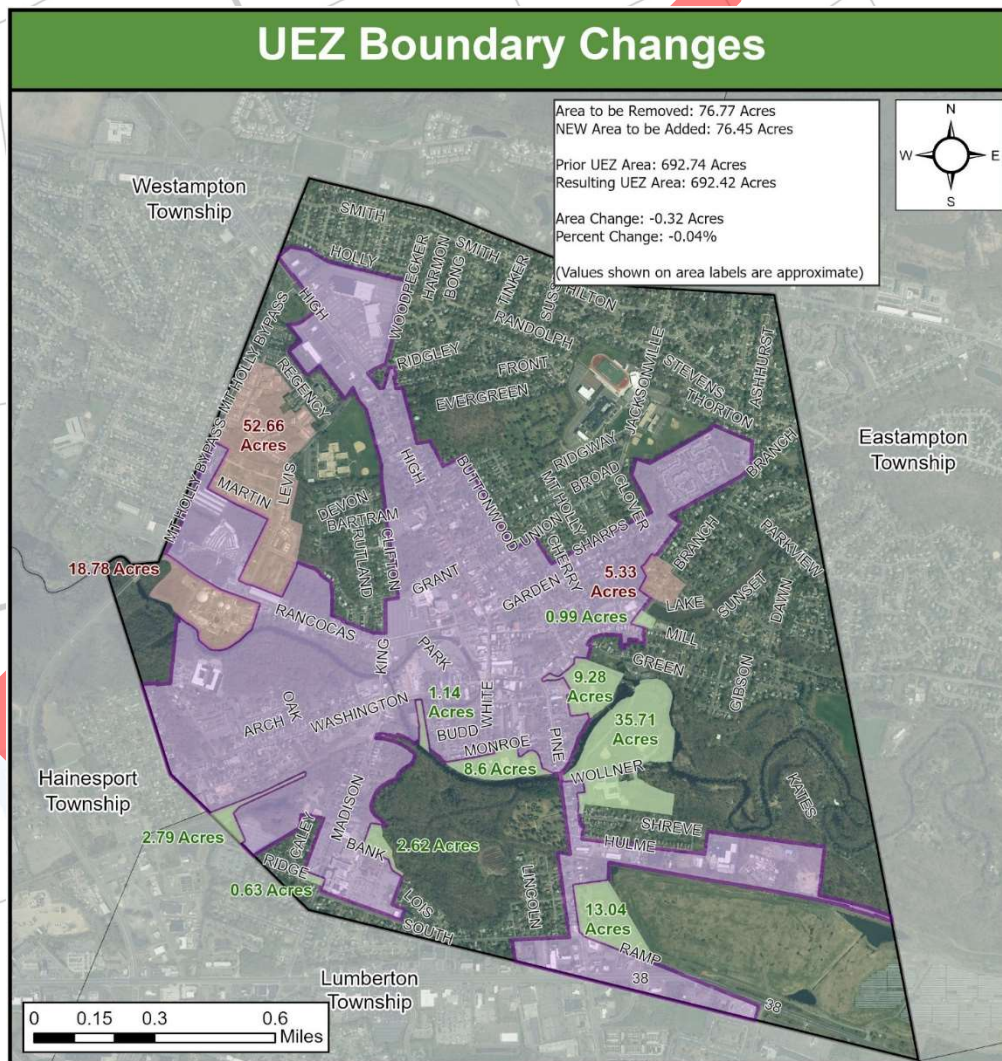
- Improve Safety and Strengthen the Community:
 - Increase police presence and street lighting.
 - Implement policies to reduce loitering and enhance public safety.
- Promote Cultural and Recreational Activities:

Mount Holly Township Urban Enterprise Zone Plan

- Develop new events and activities that cater to diverse interests.
- Revitalize empty buildings for use in cultural and recreational initiatives.

Revised UEZ Boundaries

As discussed in Section 3, several areas throughout the Township were identified to be removed from the current UEZ, while concurrently areas were recommended to be added to the UEZ. These revisions to the boundaries remove non-business uses from the Zone while incorporating new areas into the UEZ such as parks, which are vital to drawing in visitors and potential customers to the Township. The revised UEZ Map, with areas of addition and removal, is as follows:



Legend

- Area(s) to Add
- Area(s) to Remove
- Urban Enterprise Zone Boundaries

Date: 9/3/2024 Drafted By: PVB

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Final Thoughts

In conclusion, this UEZ plan serves as a foundation for Mount Holly's future, balancing the preservation of its historic character with the need for modern improvements. By addressing the challenges identified and building on the community's strengths, a dynamic and prosperous Downtown that is cherished by residents and visitors can be created. The journey ahead may be challenging, but with a clear vision, strong community involvement, and strategic planning, Mount Holly is poised to thrive as a cultural and economic destination.



List of Appendices

Appendix A - Otteau Group Market Study Report

Appendix B - Resident & Non-Resident Survey Responses

Appendix C - Business Survey Responses

Appendix D - UEZ Performance Indicators

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