

HOPELAWN SOUTH REDEVELOPMENT STUDY

Township of Woodbridge
Middlesex County, New Jersey

January 2008

Prepared by

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The original of this report was signed and
sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12.

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to determine whether portions of the Township of Woodbridge, shown on the Redevelopment Area Study Area Map, referred to herein as the Study Area, qualify as an "area in need of redevelopment" as defined in the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL). This report is written pursuant to Section 6 of the LRHL, which provides the following:

- a. No area of a municipality shall be determined a redevelopment area unless the governing body of the municipality shall, by resolution, authorize the planning board to undertake a preliminary investigation to determine whether the proposed area is a redevelopment area according to the criteria set forth in Section 5 of P.L. 1992/c.79 (C.40A:12A-5)... The governing body of a municipality shall assign the conduct of the investigation and hearing to the planning board of the municipality.
- b. After completing its hearing on this matter, the Planning Board shall recommend that the delineated area, or any part thereof, be determined, or not be determined, by the municipal governing body to be a redevelopment area. After receiving the recommendation of the planning board, the municipal governing body may adopt a resolution determining that the delineated area, or any part thereof, is a redevelopment area.

The Municipal Council of the Township of Woodbridge in Resolution RA07-06, dated July 10, 2007, authorized the Planning Board to undertake a preliminary investigation to determine if the Study Area is an area in need of redevelopment according to the criteria set forth in N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5 and to conduct a hearing in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6. The resolution defined the Study Area by map; the Study Area consists of three properties totaling approximately 10 acres in the Hopelawn section of the Township of Woodbridge (see map). The authorizing resolution is attached as Appendix A of this document.

This report serves as the "statement setting forth the basis for the investigation" which is required by Section 6(b) of the LRHL. (N.J.S.A. 40:12A-6).

Criteria for Redevelopment Area Determination

The criteria contained in Section 5 of the LRHL that were considered in evaluating the Study Area were the following:

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

- g. In any municipality in which an enterprise zone has been designated pursuant to the "New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zones Act," P.L.1983, c.303 (C.52:27H-60 et seq.) the execution of the actions prescribed in that act for the adoption by the municipality and approval by the New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zone Authority of the zone development plan for the area of the enterprise zone shall be considered sufficient for the determination that the area is in need of redevelopment pursuant to sections 5 and 6 of P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-5 and 40A:12A-6) for the purpose of granting tax exemptions within the enterprise zone district pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1991, c.431 (C.40A:20-1 et seq.) or the adoption of a tax abatement and exemption ordinance pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1991, c.441 (C.40A:21-1 et seq.). The municipality shall not utilize any other redevelopment powers within the urban enterprise zone unless the municipal governing body and planning board have also taken the actions and fulfilled the requirements prescribed in P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) for determining that the area is in need of redevelopment or an area in need of rehabilitation and the municipal governing body has adopted a redevelopment plan ordinance including the area of the enterprise zone.

- h. The designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.

Furthermore, Section 3 of the LRHL permits the inclusion of parcels necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area, stating:

"A redevelopment area may include lands, buildings, or improvements which of themselves are not detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare, but the inclusion of which is found necessary, with or without change in their condition, for the effective redevelopment of the area in which they are a part. "

Hopelawn South Study Area and Location

The Township of Woodbridge is 24.2 square miles in size and is located in northeastern Middlesex County. The Township of Woodbridge is bordered by Clark Township, the City of Rahway, the City of Linden, and the City of Carteret to the north, the Arthur Kill and the city of Perth Amboy to the east, the Raritan River to the south, and Edison Township to the west.



HOPELAWN SOUTH REDEVELOPMENT STUDY AREA

Woodbridge Township
Middlesex County, New Jersey
HOPELAWN SOUTH REDEVELOPMENT STUDY
CONTEXT MAP



Heyer, Gruel & Associates

N
1 inch equals 800 feet
0 200 400 800 Feet
Data Source: 2002 NJ Aerial Orthophotography and Woodbridge Township GIS Parcel Base



Class II Railroad Property

Perth Amboy Secondary Branch

Block 22, Lot 2 (Old)
Block 22, Lot 2 (New)

N

1 inch equals 200 feet

0 100 200 400 Feet

Data Source: 2002 NJ Aerial Orthophotography and Woodbridge Township GIS Parcel Base

Woodbridge Township
Middlesex County, New Jersey

HOPELAWN SOUTH REDEVELOPMENT STUDY

2002 AERIAL PHOTO



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1:2,400 January 2008



Class II Railroad Property

Perth Amboy Secondary Branch

Block 22, Lot 2 (Old)
Block 22, Lot 2 (New)

NJ 440

NJ 440

RAMP

QUINCY CT

EM...

PEN...

...CK AVENUE

N
1 inch equals 200 feet
0 100 200 400 Feet
Data Source: 1995 NJ Aerial Photography and Woodbridge Township GIS Parcel Base

Woodbridge Township
Middlesex County, New Jersey
HOPELAWN SOUTH REDEVELOPMENT STUDY
1995 AERIAL PHOTO
 Heyer, Gruel & Associates
1:2,400 January 2008



Aerial view of the Hopelawn South Redevelopment Study Area

Data Source: Microsoft Virtual Earth 2007 Aerials, Image courtesy of USGS



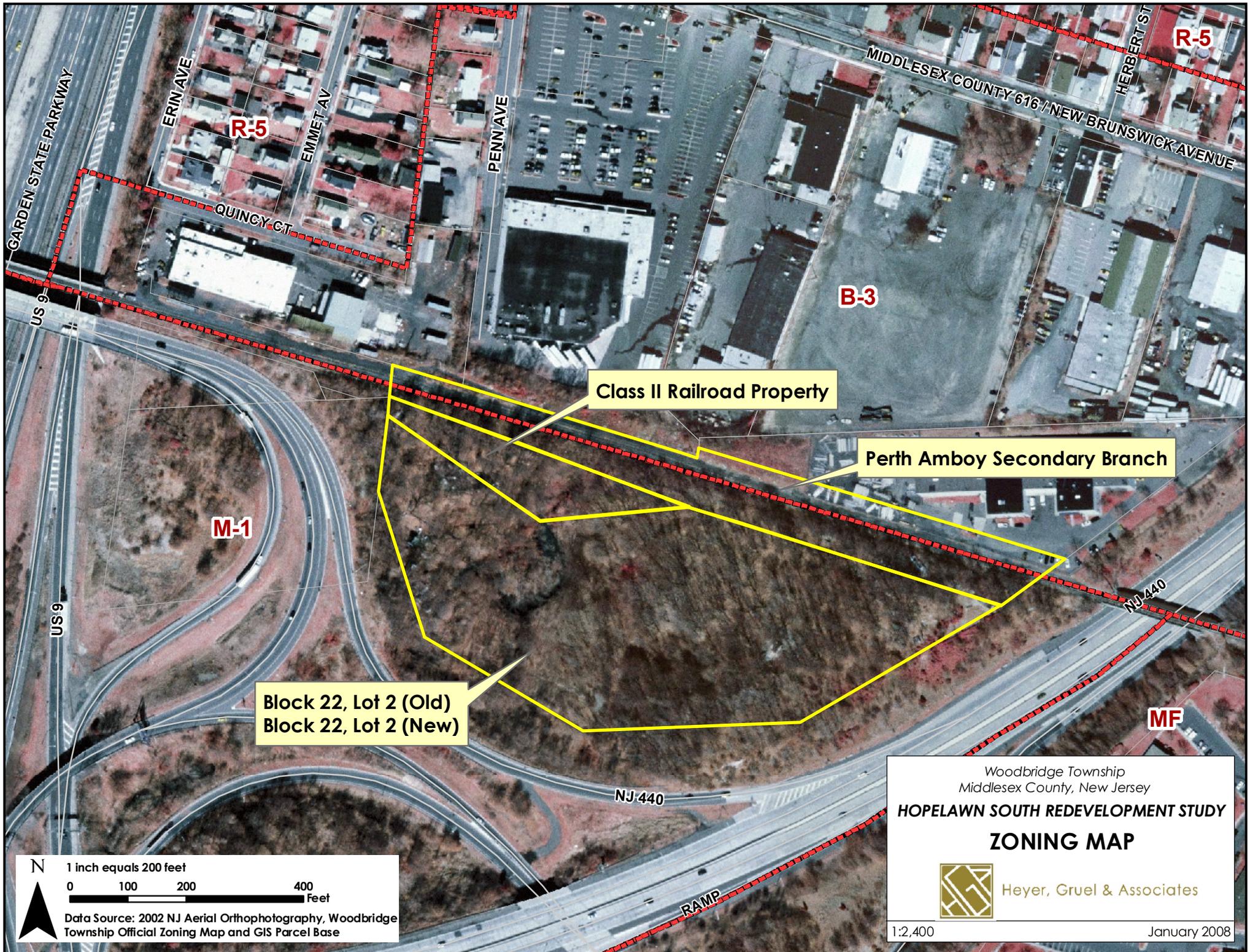
Bird's-eye view of the Hopelawn South Redevelopment Study Area, looking north

Data Source: Microsoft Virtual Earth 2007 Aerials, Image courtesy of USGS



Bird's-eye view of the Hopelawn South Redevelopment Study Area, looking south

Data Source: Microsoft Virtual Earth 2007 Aerials, Image courtesy of USGS



R-5

R-5

B-3

M-1

MF

Class II Railroad Property

Perth Amboy Secondary Branch

Block 22, Lot 2 (Old)
Block 22, Lot 2 (New)

N
1 inch equals 200 feet
0 100 200 400 Feet
Data Source: 2002 NJ Aerial Orthophotography, Woodbridge Township Official Zoning Map and GIS Parcel Base

Woodbridge Township
Middlesex County, New Jersey
HOPELAWN SOUTH REDEVELOPMENT STUDY
ZONING MAP
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The “Hopelawn South” study area (Study Area) is located within the Hopelawn neighborhood of Woodbridge, in the southeastern section of the Township (see Context Map). The Study Area is bounded by commercial and industrial uses to the north; Route 440 to the east; and the Industrial Highway exit to the south (see Aerial Photo maps).

The Study Area contains three properties: Block 22, Lot 2, which is approximately 6.8 acres in size and fronts the Industrial Highway exit off of Route 440; a discontinued rail right-of-way (part of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Line) measuring approximately 2.3 acres; and a smaller piece of property, approximately 0.8 acres in size, adjacent to the rail right-of-way.

The vast majority of the Study Area is located within the M-1 Light Industrial Zone, which requires a minimum lot area of one acre and permits a variety of light industrial uses (see Zoning Map). A very small portion of the site is located within the B-3 Highway Business Zone, which requires a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet and permits numerous commercial uses. (For the complete zoning requirements of the B-3 and M-1 Zoning Districts, see Appendix B).

Master Plan

The Township of Woodbridge’s last comprehensive Master Plan was prepared in 1990. Subsequently, the Master Plan was revised in January 1994 and a Master Plan Reexamination Report was adopted in July 1994. The purpose of the Reexamination Report is to review and evaluate the local Master Plan and Development Regulations on a periodic basis in order to determine the need for update and revisions. The purpose of the Reexamination Report is to review and evaluate the local Master Plan and Development Regulations on a periodic basis in order to determine the need for update and revisions.

Three of the broad goals from the 1990 Master Plan have relevance to this study area:

- To control industrial development by limiting industrial development to only land suitable for industrial use in relation to flat topography, good storage, and access to arterial and primary roadways and by permitting a range of industrial lot sizes and uses within industrial districts.
- To promote a balanced variety of residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, public and conservation land uses.

- To safeguard the tax base and provide for a continuing source of employment and tax ratables through appropriate use of nonresidential land.

The land use plan element of the 1990 Master Plan shows the study area as industrial to the south of the railroad right-of-way and commercial to the north. The Hopelawn Keasbey Land Use Plan recommends that the MF Multi-Family Zone south of the Lehigh Valley Railroad line should be extended westward to the Edison border due to recent (in 1990) expansion of the multi-family development in this area. The 1994 and 2003 Re-examination reports did not recommend any land use changes for the study area.

Evaluation of the Study Area for Conformity with Redevelopment Area Criteria

An analysis of the Study Area's existing land use, physical characteristics, history and accessibility was conducted using:

- Tax maps and GIS data of Woodbridge Township
- Tax and ownership records for each property within the study area
- Aerial photos of study area properties - 1995 and 2002 NJ Aerial Orthophotography, and Microsoft Visual Earth 2007 Aerials (image courtesy of USGS)
- 1990 Master Plan, 1994 Master Plan Re-examination Report, and 2003 Master Plan Re-examination Report of the Township.
- Field inspections of the study area and surrounding areas.
- NJDEP environmental data (i.e. wetlands, contaminated sites)
- USDA SCS Soil Survey of Middlesex County

The study area is characterized by vacant land and railroad rights-of-way.

The analysis indicates that the Township-owned property within the Study Area meets the "c" criterion as established by Section 5 of the LRHL as a Redevelopment Area. The properties owned by the Conrail do not meet the redevelopment criteria but are necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area as per Section 3 of the LRHL.

The basis for portions of the Study Area meeting the "c" criterion and Section 3 of the LRHL follows.

- c. Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, redevelopment agency or redevelopment entity, or unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years prior to the adoption of the resolution,**

and that by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of the municipality, or topography, or nature of the soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital.

Block 22, Lot 2: The property is a vacant parcel owned by the Township. The remoteness, physical separation between Lot 2 and other developed portions of the Township, and inaccessibility of the property make it unlikely to be developed via private capital.

Section 3. Section 3 of the LRHL permits the inclusion of parcels necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area, stating: "A redevelopment area may include lands, buildings, or improvements which of themselves are not detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare, but the inclusion of which is found necessary, with or without change in their condition, for the effective redevelopment of the area in which they are a part".

Two properties owned by Conrail include a vacant and wooded triangular-shaped Class II railroad right-of-way, and a portion of railroad right-of-way containing railroad tracks that do not appear to be active. Both these properties are part of the former Perth Amboy Secondary Branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Although the railroad rights-of-way do not qualify as an area in need of redevelopment, these properties are necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area under Section 3 of the LRHL. The effective redevelopment of the block would depend on their inclusion for access to Block 22, Lot 2 that is designated as an area in need of redevelopment. The location of these properties in the middle of the block and abutting a developed portion of the Township are critical factors for providing access to adjacent property designated as area in need of redevelopment (Block 22, Lot 2) and no comprehensive redevelopment of the area is possible without their inclusion.

Block 22, Lot 2 (Old)
Block 22, Lot 2 (New)

Florida Grove Road

Owner: Township of Woodbridge

Assessment (2007): \$36,000
Land Value: \$36,000
Improvement Value: \$0

Lot Area: 6.855 acres

Property Description

The property is Township-owned vacant land located within the M-1 Light Industrial zone (as per the official zoning map; although the MODIV tax record indicates its location in the MF Multi-Family zone). The property is currently densely wooded and is land-locked by Industrial Highway exit off of Route 440 in south and east, by railroad rights-of-way in the north, and Route 440 to the west.

The network of highways and ramps in the area effectively separates the property from the developed portions of the Township. The property can be accessed either via the Industrial Highway exit ramp off of Route 440, which is narrow and single-lane with no safe place to stop; or connect to New Brunswick Avenue via the railroad properties immediately to the north, through the commercial and industrial properties which front New Brunswick Avenue.

Redevelopment Designation

The property meets the requirements to be designated an area in need of redevelopment under the "c" criterion of the LRHL. The property is a vacant parcel owned by the Township. The remoteness, physical separation between Lot 2 and other developed portions of the Township, and inaccessibility of the property make it unlikely to be developed via private capital.



Block 22 (Old)
Block 22 (New)

Owner: Conrail
Conrail, Property Tax Dept
P. O. Box 8499
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Lot Area: 0.79 acres

Property Description

The property is a triangular-shaped Class II railroad right-of-way of the former Perth Amboy Secondary Branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The property is located to the south of the railroad right-of-way and north of Block 22, Lot 2 within the M-1 Light Industrial zone. The property is currently vacant and wooded.

Redevelopment Designation

Although the railroad right-of-way does not qualify as an area in need of redevelopment, this property is necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area under Section 3 of the LRHL. The effective redevelopment of the block would depend on its inclusion for access to Block 22, Lot 2 that is designated as an area in need of redevelopment. The location of this property in the middle of the block is a critical factor for providing access to adjacent property designated as area in need of redevelopment (Block 22, Lot 2) and no comprehensive redevelopment of the area is possible without its inclusion.

Block 22 (Old)
Block 22 (New)

Owner: Conrail
Conrail, Property Tax Dept
P. O. Box 8499
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Lot Area: 2.32 acres (portion of a larger property)

Property Description

The property is portion of the Class II railroad right-of-way of the former Perth Amboy Secondary Branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The property is located in both M-1 Light Industrial and B-3 Highway Commercial zones. The property contains railroad tracks that do not appear to be in use.

Redevelopment Designation

Although the railroad right-of-way does not qualify as an area in need of redevelopment, this property is necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area under Section 3 of the LRHL. The effective redevelopment of the block would depend on its inclusion for access to Block 22, Lot 2 that is designated as an area in need of redevelopment. The location of this property abutting a developed portion of the Township is a critical factor for providing access to adjacent property designated as area in need of redevelopment (Block 22, Lot 2) and no comprehensive redevelopment of the area is possible without its inclusion.