

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is intended to provide a set of policies for Bridgeton City that will guide municipal officials and citizens on decisions and regulations within the city. The Master Plan is a broad policy document that guides the future physical, economic, and social development of a community. It contains an inventory of the municipality's existing conditions, articulates the community's vision and goals, identifies its needs, and provides long-range policy recommendations for achieving the community's vision and goals in the future. It is the principle document used to formulate the contents of a community's zoning and subdivision regulations. A thorough Master Plan also provides the foundation for future planning decisions for proposed capital improvements, program funding, regulation changes, and future planning priorities, thereby providing the logic, foresight, and defensibility to the community's decisions. The Master Plan is intended to serve as a road map and reference guide so that future community decisions are made in a consistent and reasoned manner.

The Bridgeton Planning Board is charged with the responsibility of developing the Master Plan through the authority from the New Jersey state planning laws. The Master Plan is concerned primarily with the physical and natural environment of the city as it affects the use of the land. Physical environment has a direct impact on land use in terms of buildings, roads, and utilities. The Master Plan is generally valid for twenty years, but its policies, goals and objectives are required to be re-examined at least every six years to comply with the NJ Municipal Land Use Law. In communities like Bridgeton where changes are forecasted, the Master Plan should be reviewed more frequently.

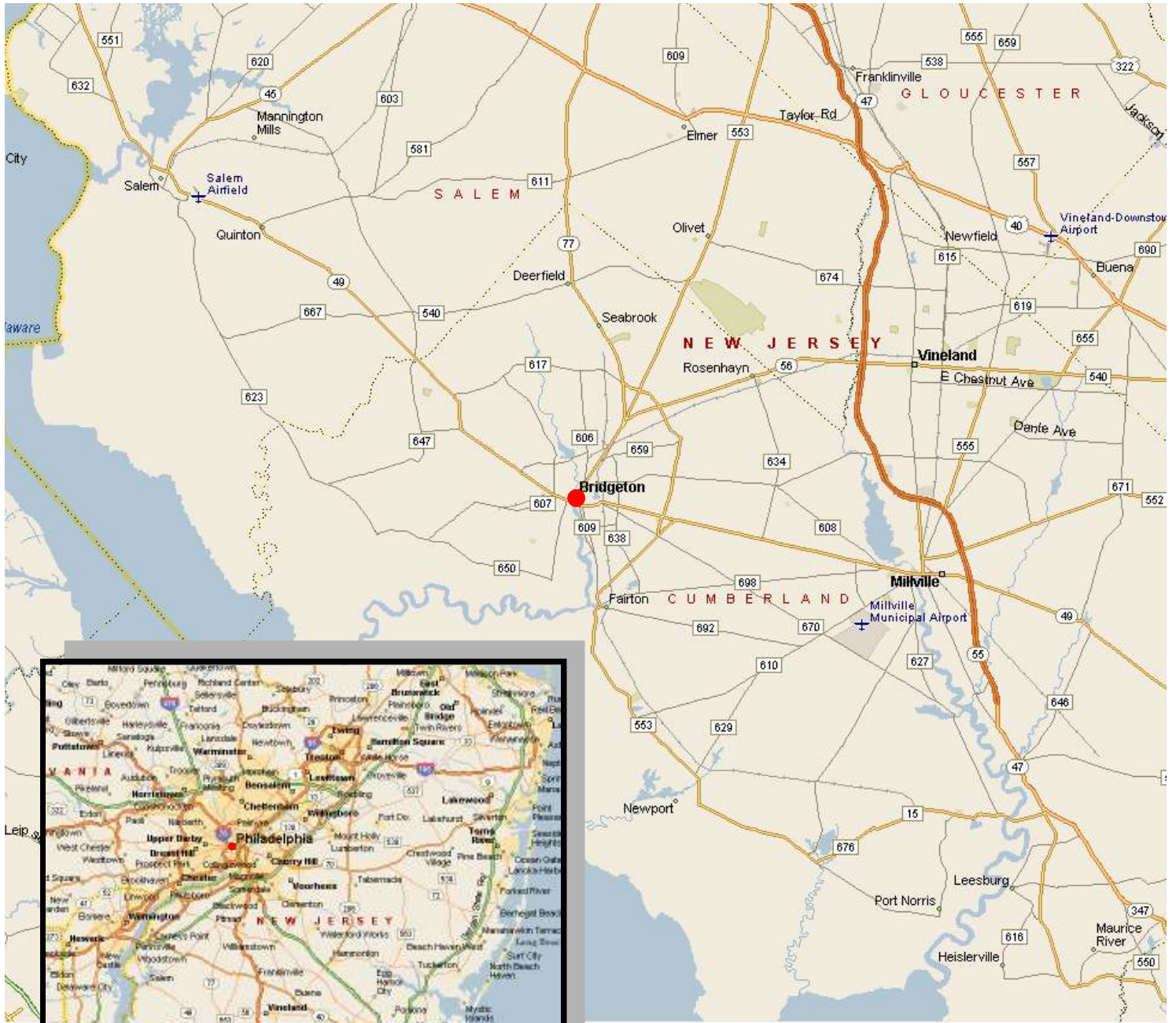
B. City Location and Background

Bridgeton City is located in Cumberland County approximately 40 miles southeast of the Philadelphia and Camden metropolitan area. The City location is shown on the *City and Region Location Map*. It is comprised of 4,065 acres with a 2000 population of 22,771 people and 18,311 households. The city's first settlement was recorded in 1686 and the first bridge over the Cohansey River was built in 1716. Bridgeton was originally named Cohansey Bridge, and then became known as Bridge Town in 1765, which transformed into Bridgeton in 1816. The City was appointed the county seat in 1749 and remains so today. Bridgeton was a prosperous industrial center from the late nineteenth century through the mid 20th century, but the decline of the industrial sector and the development of suburban shopping centers outside of the city have caused an increase in poverty and unemployment. A more detailed account of Bridgeton's history is provided in the Historic Preservation Element of this Master Plan. Bridgeton has evolved into the financial, governmental and cultural center of the area as manufacturing declined. This decline left the City with significant areas of land that are under utilized.



CITY AND REGION MAP

CITY OF BRIDGETON CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NJ



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| SCALE: 1" = 600' | CITY AND REGION MAP |
| DATE: 5/17/07 | |
| SOURCE: CITY OF BRIDGETON GIS DATA & CUMBERLAND COUNTY GIS DEPT. DATA | CITY OF BRIDGETON CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY |
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Bridgeton City Hall

evidenced by the County office complex, the County library, the County Courthouse, a regional wastewater treatment plant and other public and semi-public institutions that serve the County.

The City is accessible from the north by Route 55 and Route 77 and from the east and west by Route 49. It is located less than an hour from Philadelphia, Wilmington, and the New Jersey shore communities. The Cohansey River runs north to south through the center of city. The City Park is one of the city's greatest assets that has the potential to attract visitors to the city. The park contains an outdoor amphitheatre, guarded swimming beach, guided nature trails, playgrounds, tennis courts, zoo, picnic areas, historic reconstruction area and boat rentals. The City's downtown provides a traditional retail core that is supported by a Main Street New Jersey program. The Master Plan will seek to identify and improve upon the city's assets while providing recommendations for the future.

C. Background for Elements of the Master Plan

In 2006, a Systems and Programs: Inventory and Analysis was completed by Thomas Comitta Associates, Inc. (TCA). The inventory and analysis was conducted to position Bridgeton for a "bright new beginning" and rediscover itself as a vibrant, attractive place. One of the first initiatives recommended for the City is to update its Master Plan. The City's existing Master Plan is dated 1976 and has not been comprehensively updated since that time. Critical needs identified in the Systems and Programs Inventory and Analysis process that are related to the Master Plan are:

- The need for a cohesive vision and work program.
- The need to improve the appearance of the City.
- The need to improve the perception of the City.
- The need for the City to realize its potential.

Issues discovered during the process that are related to the Master Plan include the following findings:

- The City lacks a unified and cohesive vision from which to coordinate planning and operational decisions.
- The City's Master Plan and codes, including the Zoning, Historic District regulations, and property maintenance codes, are outdated and do not support preferred types of development or create incentives for development and redevelopment.
- The City has an uneven record of following through on planning efforts.
- The City's Historic District, while an asset, is also a strong deterrent to redevelopment and revitalization efforts.
- The City is in need of a concerted economic development plan that supports its Regional Center designation and the downtown to attract higher paying jobs.
- The City Park, Zoo, and Cohansey River are all underutilized resources that distinguish Bridgeton within the Region.
- The City needs stronger and more effective code enforcement measures.
- The demand for housing rehabilitation and neighborhood preservation far outweigh the current funding and support levels available.
- The City is becoming increasingly diverse in its population.
- The City's reputation suffers from the reality and perception of crime and a rundown appearance.

The Inventory and Analysis contained the following topics that should be of primary emphasis as part of the Master Plan:

- Provide a cohesive and unified vision so that City leaders and staff can work cooperatively towards agreed upon goals and priorities;
- Establish a City-based Economic Development Plan;
- Reevaluate the Historic District to emphasize a three tiered approach that ranks properties from the most important to those of lesser importance, and review regulations for appropriateness;
- Establish a Utility Services Plan for construction and long term maintenance of new infrastructure and equipment;
- Establish city-wide goals for neighborhood preservation programs, prioritize geographic targets, and evaluate gaps;
- Establish a Capital Improvements Plan in order to prioritize and plan for capital expenditures including new facilities and equipment;
- Update Property Maintenance Codes;
- Reevaluate, prioritize and provide an implementation agenda for the Cohansey River redevelopment;
- Promote mixed use, upstairs living downtown and increased density to support the downtown district;
- Assess the connection between the downtown, the City Park and Zoo, Cohansey River, and City neighborhoods;
- Map and evaluate 5 to 10 minute walks between important hubs within the city and identify needed linkages

D. Scope of Master Plan

The Municipal Land Use Law, (MLUL) N.J.S.A. 40:55 D-28b(1), requires the Master Plan to provide a statement of goals, objectives, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the constituent proposals for the physical, economic, and social development of the municipality are based. A land use plan element is also a required element. Other elements are optional. The City has chosen, with this Master Plan to prepare the elements and studies described in Section E below.

E. Organization of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is organized into Elements with each describing a different topic. Within each element, existing conditions are described, followed by recommendations and steps for implementation. The City's 2008 Master Plan includes the following Elements:

1. Land Use Plan Element

The Land Use Plan Element, as per the MLUL 40:55D-28b(2), includes (a) taking into account and stating its relationship to the statement of goals, other master plan elements, and natural conditions, including, but not necessarily limited to, topography, soil conditions, water supply, drainage, flood plain areas, marshes, and woodlands, (b) showing the existing and proposed location, extent and intensity of development of land to be used in the future for varying types of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational and other public and private purposes or combination of purposes; and stating the relationship to the existing and any proposed zone plan and any proposed zone plan and zoning ordinance; and (c) showing the existing and proposed location of any airports and the boundaries of airport safety zones...; and (d) including a statement of the standards of population density and development intensity recommended for the municipality.

2. Housing Plan Element

The Housing Plan Element is prepared in accordance with the latest COAH regulations. As per the MLUL requirements, it includes residential standards and proposals for the construction and improvement of housing.

3. Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation Element

The Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation Element discusses the movement of people and goods. It examines pedestrian and bicycle mobility, vehicular circulation, public transit, and railroads.

4. Neighborhood Development and Redevelopment Element

A number of neighborhood planning, development, redevelopment and housing efforts have been made in Bridgeton, which are summarized in the Planning History section. This element prioritizes them in a comprehensive manner for neighborhood development and redevelopment. This section also contains recommendations for future redevelopment areas that may initially appear to meet the criteria for an Area in Need of Redevelopment.

5. Open Space and Recreation Element

This section contains an inventory of existing recreation and open spaces based on land use maps, tax records and consultation with the Recreation Director. The open space inventory is utilized to determine future recreation needs and pedestrian and circulation connections.

6. Historic Preservation Element

The Historic Preservation Element is based upon the results of the reconnaissance level architectural survey completed by McCabe & Associates, Inc. The Historic Preservation Element reflects identified resources and establishes a series of specific recommendations that will help further the preservation of Bridgeton's historic resources. It includes an introduction, an overview of development, an outline of benefits of preservation, the locations and significance of the city's historic sites, historic preservation plan recommendations, and standards to evaluate historic worthiness and mapping.

7. Riverfront Access Element

A plan for Riverfront Access to develop the "City's most underutilized amenity" was created utilizing past planning studies, including The Riverfront Urban Design Plan and the 2003 Comprehensive Riverfront Planning, Riverfront Redevelopment and Open Space Strategy (RROSS). The Plan addresses how the area can be redeveloped to extend the park and riverfront into the downtown to create attractive business frontages with safe, convenient pedestrian access.

8. Streetscapes and Design Guidelines

The Streetscapes and Design Guidelines reviews the City's existing streetscapes and provides appropriate recommendations for improvements and adoption into the zoning ordinance, design standards and design guidelines. This includes recommendations for a manual for Design Guidelines that includes general design standards, architectural facades and other standards such as those for streetscapes, plazas

and common areas, and signs. The Design Guidelines address rehabilitation of existing structures, maintenance and inspection of existing structures and new construction.

9. Economic Development Plan Element

The purpose of the Economic Plan Element is to describe the economy and economic situation of the City of Bridgeton in the regional and state context; to identify and describe the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and trends; to state the City's economic goals, objectives, and priorities; and to outline the policies and programs the City intends to use to achieve those goals and objectives.

10. Zoning Plan and Code Recommendations

This section contains a review of the City's current zoning code, the recommendations of the Systems & Programs: Inventory and Analysis, the Upstairs Living in the CBD study, and findings of this Master Plan process and recommendations to land use, redevelopment and the historic district. This section contains a list of recommendations for the Zoning Code that should be implemented pursuant to the Master Plan adoption.

11. Interrelationship of the Plan to Municipal, County, State Plans

This section of the Master Plan reviews plans of contiguous municipalities, the Cumberland County Plan and the State Development and Redevelopment Plan in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law 40:55D-28 d.

12. Capital Improvement Plan through 2013

The City's Capital Improvement Plan will be reviewed and correlated with key development aspects of this Master Plan. This section of the Master Plan identifies and prioritizes the projects and estimates costs in accordance with the recommendations for implementation.

13. Implementation Plan

The implementation/action plan identifies the specific public and private actions that Bridgeton should promote as its agenda for development over the next five years and longer. This section brings together the findings and recommendations in an implementation framework. The implementation plan will address the following matters:

- Broad Strategies
- Public and private actions that make up the program
- Prioritized schedule of actions
- Responsibilities of each party in the implementation process
- General estimates of funding for projects and programs