

**LBI Grade School – Block 48, Lot 1
Area in Need of Redevelopment Investigation Report**

**Borough of Ship Bottom
Ocean County, New Jersey**

May 2, 2024

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

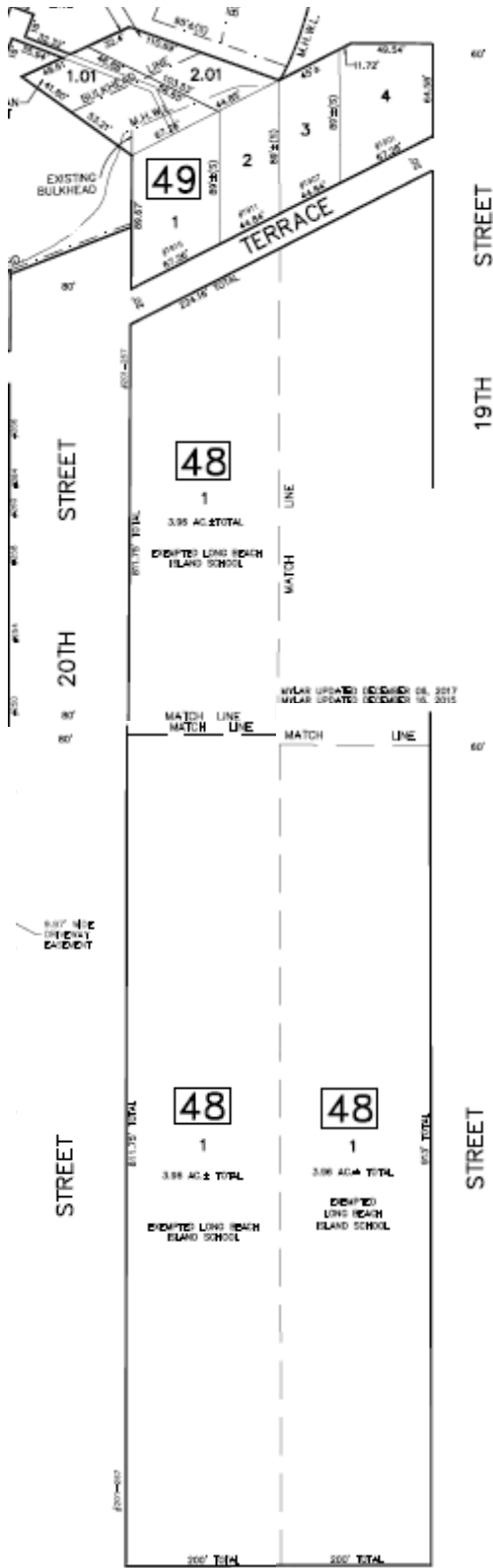
The purpose of this report is to determine whether the property at 201-267 South 20th Street, shown on the Borough of Ship Bottom Tax Map as Block 48, Lot 1 (the “Study Area”), qualifies as an “area in need of redevelopment” as defined in the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.* (“LRHL”). This report is written pursuant to Section 6 of the LRHL, which provides the following:

- 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.
- 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 Mayor and Council of the Borough of Ship Bottom adopted Resolution 2024-33 on January 4, 2024, authorizing the Borough Land Use Board to undertake a preliminary investigation to determine whether the Study Area is in need of redevelopment according to one or more of the statutory criteria (see Appendix A – Council Resolution). The Resolution specifies that the investigation shall be to determine if the Study Area is a “condemnation” area, which means that if the area is designated in need of redevelopment, the Borough shall have all the powers available under the LRHL including the ability to take property through condemnation (aka eminent domain.)

The Borough Land Use Board authorized HGA to prepare a preliminary investigation report on January 17, 2024. 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. 40A:12A-6).

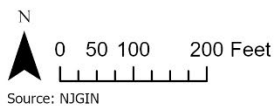
The purpose of this report is to take the first step in a proactive planning process by the Borough of Ship Bottom for the future of the Long Beach Island Grade School property. Despite the clear and continuing interest of the Borough of Ship Bottom in maintaining the LBI Grade School as a school, The Long Beach Island Consolidated School District determined and has reported to the State of New Jersey that the LBI Grade School will be closed, and its operations consolidated with the Ethel Jacobson School in Surf City. Due to this decision to close and consolidate, the building in which the LBI Grade School operates has



significant deferred maintenance and improvements over the past decade as the consolidation plans have played out, which result in the conditions described in this report that support the designation of an area in need of redevelopment.

Excerpts from tax map sheets 6, 7, and 10 (Figure 1) show Block 48, Lot 1, the study area. The Aerial map (Figure 2) constitutes a “map showing the boundaries of the proposed redevelopment area and the location of the various parcels of property included therein”.

Figure 1 - Ship Bottom Tax Map (Portions of Sheets 6, 7 & 10)



Long Beach Island Elementary School
Block 40, Lot 1
Ship Bottom, NJ

HGA
HEYER, GRUEL & ASSOCIATES
March 2024

Figure 2 - Redevelopment Study Area Map

CRITERIA FOR REDEVELOPMENT AREA DETERMINATION

The criteria contained in Section 5 of the LRHL that were considered in evaluating the Study Area are 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 a building or buildings previously used for commercial, retail, shopping malls or plazas, office parks, manufacturing, or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such building or buildings; significant vacancies of such building or buildings for at least two consecutive years; or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be untenable.
- c. Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, redevelopment agency or redevelopment entity, or unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years prior to adoption of the resolution, and that by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of the municipality, or topography, or nature of the soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital.
- d. Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these or other factors, are detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community.
- e. A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real properties therein or other similar conditions which impede land assemblage or discourage the undertaking of improvements, resulting in a stagnant and unproductive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare, which condition is presumed to be having a negative social or economic impact or otherwise being detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the surrounding area or the community in general.
- 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 that do not meet the criteria if they are 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.”

STUDY AREA AND LOCATION

OVERVIEW

The Study Area is Block 48, Lot 1 in the Borough of Ship Bottom, a parcel just under 4 acres in size occupying a full block. The Study Area is bound by West 19th Street to the north, Central Avenue to the east, West 20th Street to the south and East Bay Terrace to the west.

The Study Area is occupied by the Long Beach Island Grade School, which is located in the eastern half of the parcel. The eastern edge of the property includes athletic and play courts and a garden area. There are several discrete parking and loading areas along the north and south sides of the school building. A baseball / multi-purpose athletic field is located to the west of the school building. A separate playground area is at the southwest corner of the school along the West 20th Street frontage. The western edge of the Area is occupied by a school bus garage with seven bays facing East Bay Terrace and three bays facing West 20th Street.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The school building was originally constructed in 1951. In the ensuing 70+ years of its existence, there have been several additions and modifications. An addition from 1961, was added to the north side of the school that contains several classrooms and offices. Two classrooms in an approximately 3,000 square foot

addition were added to the east side of the gymnasium in approximately 1993. The media center, an approximately 4,100 square foot addition was added to the west side of the building in approximately 1994.¹ The total area of the building today is 48,165 square feet according to Exhibit J-18 of the 2023 District Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The Bus Garage was constructed in approximately 1956 and has a footprint of 7,216 square feet.



Figure 3 - 1970 Tidelands Aerial Image (Source: NJ Geographic Information Network)

EXISTING ZONING

The Study Area is in the Borough's P "Public" Zone District. According to Chapter 16.20.010 of the Borough Code the P Public Districts states permitted uses include:

"Educational and recreational activities, including the operation of public and private day schools of elementary and/or high school grades licensed by the state of New Jersey, as well as municipal and county buildings, public libraries, public open space, public parks, public recreation and conservation areas, public parking areas, public restrooms and other "public purpose uses." Public purpose uses shall include radio and/or cellular antenna systems that may receive and transmit and re-transmit signals and may be installed on the water towers located in the Borough of Ship Bottom, subject to the approval of the land use review board and mayor and council."

¹ "Evaluation of the Long Beach Island Grade School and E.J. Grade School" prepared by Owen, Little & Associates, LLC, April 2015. (Appendix D) Note that different portions of the report reference different years 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996 are all mentioned as possible dates for the addition. At any rate, the additions were constructed in the 1990s.

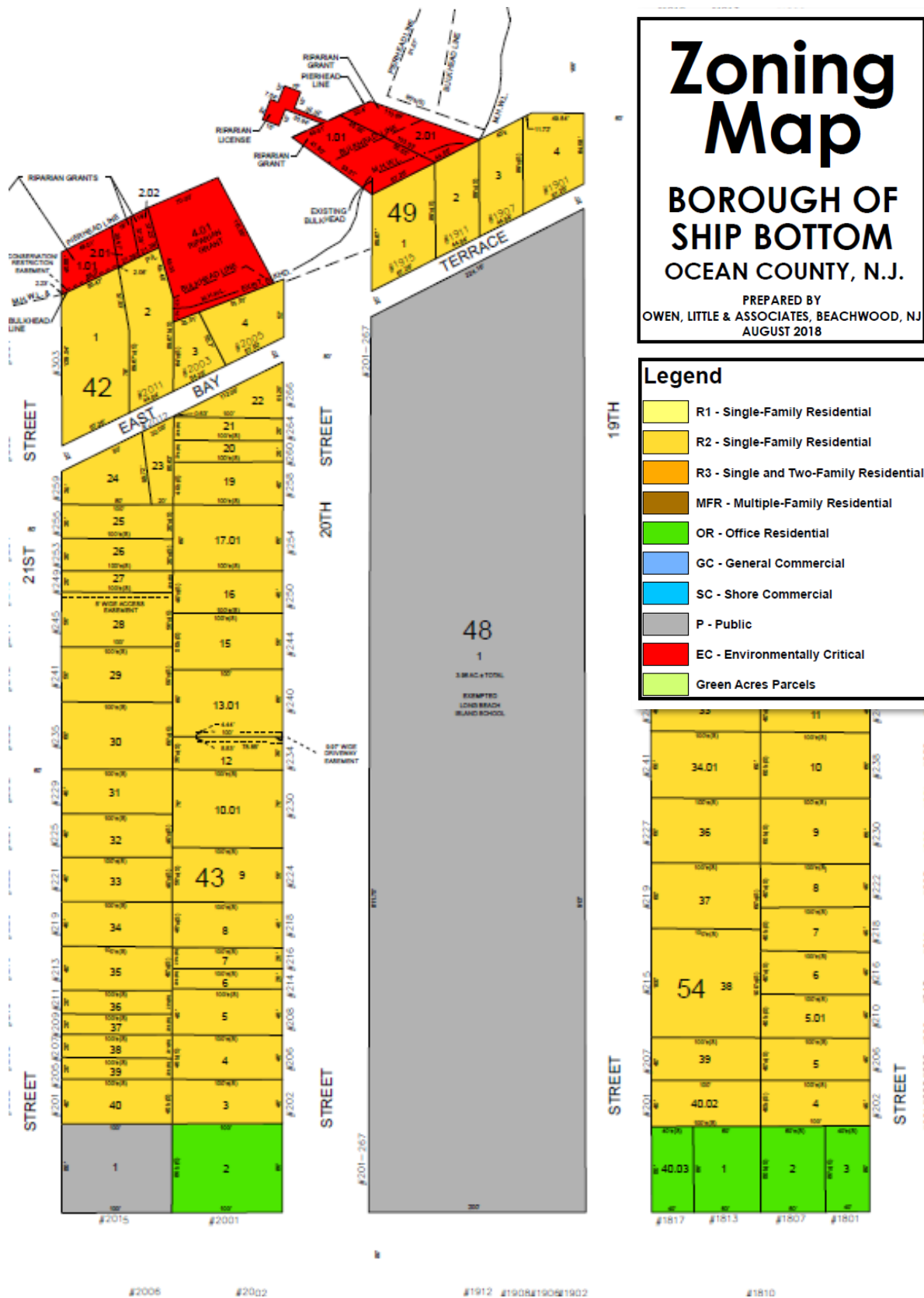


Figure 4 - Excerpt from 2018 Ship Bottom Zoning Map showing the Study Area

RELATIONSHIP TO THE BOROUGH MASTER PLAN

2018 COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION (OWEN, LITTLE & ASSOCIATES, INC.)

The Borough's 2018 Master Plan Re-examination Report includes a Municipal Public Access Plan and a Sustainability Element that includes a Coastal Vulnerability Assessment. The Sustainability Element identifies the coastal flood hazards using the mapped risk, observed impacts from Superstorm Sandy and other events, and the projected sea level rise models. The topography, historic fill, and built environment in the Borough (and throughout Long Beach Island) create potential hazards in the face of sea level rise and coastal flooding. The Borough's drainage and stormwater management systems are identified as being outdated and lacking comprehensive planning and efficiency, which impacts the regularity and severity of flooding.

The mapping included in the Sustainability Element shows that the Long Beach Island Grade School was inundated by Superstorm Sandy and is projected to be impacted by Category 2 storms and above and with 2 feet of sea level rise and above.

The goals and objectives of the Master Plan focus on maintaining the overall patterns of development in the Borough.

2021 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT (T&M ASSOCIATES)

The planned closure of the Long Beach Island Grade School is noted as a significant change to the assumptions, policies, and objectives that underpin the Master Plan. The Reexamination Report notes that the school is planned to close due to declining enrollment and planned improvements at the Ethel A. Jacobsen Elementary School in Surf City. The Reexamination Report notes that the Grade School property is "anticipated to be an essential component of the Borough's comprehensive recreation and open space plan."

The Reexamination Report identifies nuisance flooding, which is related to high levels of impervious cover in the Borough, as a significant concern. The athletic field that occupies about thirty percent of the property is an important porous area that helps mitigate nuisance flooding.

The Reexamination Report recommends that the school remain a public use and states that would be consistent with the following master plan goals and objectives:

- Community Facilities:
 - Maintain and support the acquisition of additional parcels to be used for community facilities.
 - Provide adequate municipal, education and cultural facilities to meet the needs of Ship Bottom residents and vacationers.

- Recreation and Open Space:
 - Maintain existing parkland and support the acquisition of additional parcels to be used for open space and recreation.
- Environmental Sustainability:
 - Protect, maintain and conserve the natural resources of Ship Bottom for continued environmental quality and health of all residents.
 - Encourage provision of such environmentally friendly features as rain gardens, porous pavement and natural landscapes with native plantings as appropriate.

EVALUATION OF THE STUDY AREA FOR CONFORMITY WITH REDEVELOPMENT AREA CRITERIA

An analysis of the Study Area’s existing land use, physical characteristics, history, operational needs, and other considerations was conducted using:

- Aerial photos of the Study Area from 1970 and 2020.
- Field Inspections of the Study Area, site, and surroundings on March 1, 2024.
- Ocean County Tax Assessment Data
- NJDEP Tidelands Records
- NJDEP GeoWeb and DataMiner Records
- Harrison Hamnett Temporary Shoring Reports, 2021 and 2022
- Owen, Little & Associates Engineering Building Analysis, 2015 and 2018
- Long Beach Island Consolidated School District Documents, including:
 - “The Way Forward” Presentation, January 2023
 - Long-Range Facilities Plan, Major Amendment Approval, February 2021
 - Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports, Year Ended June 30, 2023

TAX INFORMATION

Table 1 below provides a summary of the tax records for the Study Area. The property is Class 15A “Public School Property” and is exempt from municipal taxation.

Table 1: Property Sales and 2024 Assessed Value							
Block	Lot	Land Value	Improvement Value	Total Value	Year Built	Area	Owner
48	1	\$3,146,600	\$5,228,100	\$8,374,700	1951	3.96 acres	Long Beach Consolidated School District

LONG BEACH ISLAND CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Long Beach Island Consolidated School District (the “District”) owns and operates the Long Beach Island Grade School. Over the last decade, the District has been working on various plans to consolidate its

two schools into one facility. The long-term plan has been to construct additions to the Ethel Jacobsen School and to close the LBI Grade School and sell that property on which it sits.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) approved an amendment to the District's Long-Range Facilities Plan in 2021 (attached as Appendix B). The amended LRFP approved the proposed expansion of Ethel Jacobson and the closure of LBI Grade School and the bus garage in the Study Area.

According to the District's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the year ending June 30, 2023, the New Jersey Department of Education has approved the construction plans for the modification and addition to the Ethel Jacobson School, the consolidation of the two schools, and the sale of the Long Beach Island Grade School.²

According to "The Way Forward" (attached as Appendix C), a presentation prepared by the School District from January 2023, the reasons behind the pending merger are a decline in enrollment, rise in operating expenses (including increased maintenance costs for the school buildings), deferred capital improvements, and operational efficiency. The presentation cites a failed referendum from September 2017, at which time \$18.4 Million was sought for improvements to HVAC, lighting, and electrical, and an addition to Ethel Jacobson. A second referendum in December 2019 seeking \$7.7 Million for structural and ADA improvements and HVAC upgrades at the LBI Grade School also failed. The presentation identifies \$13.2 Million in necessary repairs for the LBI Grade School that would be avoided through the consolidation plan.

The cost of improvements, maintenance, and repairs to the LBI Grade School has substantially increased between the 2015 engineering and architectural study and 2018 update prepared by Owen Little and Associates (referenced in greater detail in ensuing pages) and the 2023 presentation from the School District outlining the anticipated costs. During the time since the 2015 study and 2018 update, improvements at LBI Grade School have been deferred, aside from some roof repairs and temporary shoring of the building foundation. The District's ongoing plan for consolidation calls for the closure of LBI Grade School so there has been no incentive to make substantial investments in improvements to the school over the last decade.

NJDEP RECORDS

Tidelands Claims

Under state law, the State of New Jersey claims ownership of formerly flowed tidelands that are delineated on Tidelands Claims Maps. A Tidelands Claim extends from the bayfront to the southwest of the Study Area across West 20th Street, through the school property and then continues across West 19th Street. In

² "Long Beach Island Consolidated School District Annual Comprehensive Financial Report Year Ended June 30, 2023." <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1703181925/lbischoolsorg/lfwkzxktk7sczu04cznz/ACFR1.pdf> (accessed 3/26/24)

circumstances where tidelands claims exist in areas that have been filled, it is possible to obtain a riparian grant from the State of New Jersey. According to the NJDEP website:

“A Riparian Grant is a deed from the State of New Jersey for the sale of its formerly flowed tidelands. Obtaining a riparian grant is appropriate if any portion of the upland of a property was, at one time, flowed by the mean high tide. That portion of the property that was formerly tidal is state-owned property despite the fact that it has been filled in and the former waterway is no longer evident. The state-owned section of the property is known as a Tidelands Claim; a Tidelands Claim is a cloud on a property owner’s title regardless of whether or not that property owner is aware of the claim at the time of purchase.”³

The Study Area is substantially encumbered by a tidelands claim, as shown in Figure 3, which is a condition of title that may potentially impede redevelopment. Per the NJDEP instructions, “Riparian grants require complex processing as well as the approval of state officials. Therefore, a grant takes approximately one year to obtain.”



Figure 5 - Tidelands Claim Boundaries (Source: NJDEP Tidelands Claim Viewer)

³ NJDEP Watershed and Land Management – Tidelands <https://dep.nj.gov/wlm/tidelands/> (accessed 3/26/24)

BUILDING CONDITION REPORTS

Evaluation of the Long Beach Island Grade School and E.J. Grade School, Prepared by Owen, Little & Associates – April 2015 (Appendix D)

A report was prepared by Owen, Little & Associates and several sub-consultants to comprehensively evaluate the condition of the LBI School District's elementary schools. The study reviewed the conditions at LBI Grade School, including the bus garage, and Ethel Jacobson Elementary School for purposes of considering the cost to upgrade and add on to the facilities with the goal of consolidating the schools.

The report notes that the floor system in the LBI School needed to be temporarily shored prior to the fall 2015 school year. The estimated cost for temporary shoring was \$75,000 with a cost estimate of \$912,000 for permanent repairs. The temporary shoring was installed and as of 2021 and 2022 has been monitored by Harrison-Hamnett, PC Structural. A summary of the report's conclusions are below, and the full report is attached as Appendix D:

The estimated cost summary in the report is:

1. Architectural / Structural
 - a. School - \$2,201,796
 - b. Bus Garage - \$43,996
2. Electrical / Mechanical / Plumbing / Fire Protection
 - a. School - \$407,700
 - b. Bus Garage - \$124,700
3. Roofing and Building Maintenance
 - a. Flat Built Up Roof - \$10,500
 - b. Metal Roof Area - \$116,370
 - c. Bus Garage - \$178,000

Total Cost Estimate:

School \$2,736,366
Bus Garage \$346,696

Architectural/Structural – Ronald A. Sebring Associates, LLC

- ADA Compliance
 - Insufficient accessible ramps to the building entrances.
 - Non-compliant handrails.
 - The interior doors do not provide a clear accessible width of 32" between the face of the door in open position and the frame stop. At least half of the classrooms serving each grade require wider doors.
 - Toilet rooms have insufficient turning clearances for wheelchairs. Enlargement would require complete demolition of the plumbing fixtures.
 - The gymnasium stage has no provisions for handicap access. A ramp or lift would be necessary for access.
- Structural repairs – the original floor joists are deteriorated and require stabilization. The Harrison-Hamnett structural reports from 2021 and 2022 document inspections of the temporary shoring that was installed. This issue has not been resolved in a permanent manner.

- Exterior Façade
 - Bulging brickwork at each column line.
 - Lintels over the windows and those supporting the brickwork above the HVAC units are in poor condition and need to be replaced.
 - Exterior brickwork requires pointing.
- Interior Walls
 - Cracking was observed in the interior brick and block walls. An estimated 7,000 square feet of interior pointing and refinishing was required.
 - Cracking in concrete slab and walls in the locker and shower rooms.
- Water Infiltration
 - Evidence of water infiltration was observed at windows and skylights.
- Doors
 - Interior doors and the door between the gymnasium and B-Wing corridor are damaged or deteriorated and require replacement.
- Bus Garage
 - The bus garage is described as in poor condition.
 - There are gaps in the doors that allow rain and snow infiltration.
 - The floor slab needs to be replaced along the bearing wall between bays.
 - Exterior masonry requires new backing rods and joint sealant.
 - All windows should be replaced.
 - The walls should be waterproofed.
 - The exterior concrete block should be repainted.
- “It would not be feasible, from a construction or economic basis, to bring the current building in compliance with current code standards.”

DLB Associates (Electrical/Mechanical/Plumbing/Fire Protection)

LBI Grade School Summary:

- It is unlikely that the existing steam infrastructure can be expanded to provide space heating to the addition.
- New fire protection service to serve the addition and back feed the existing limited coverage system.
- Addition of new gas service.
- Extension of domestic cold and hot water piping with[in] the existing building to serve the addition.
- Provide new feeders from the existing electric service equipment to the addition.
- New rooftop HVAC equipment to serve the addition.

Bus Garage Summary:

- The existing facility would require substantial engineering infrastructure upgrades to meet the energy, safety, and functionality requirements of the current adopted codes.
- Ventilation and exhaust system for bus parking and repair bays.
- Ventilation air for occupied spaces adjacent to bus parking bays.
- New sealed combustion unit heaters and flues.
- Vacuum breakers for all hose bibs.
- Programmable temperature controls for all HVAC equipment
- GFCI protection on receptacles in bus parking and repair bays.
- Relocation of water heater relief valve discharge.

Harrison-Hamnett, P.C.

LBI Grade School Summary:

- Standing water was observed in the crawl space of the original building and the 1960s era addition. The report recommended installing a sump pump and a mechanical venting system be installed to mitigate the condition.
- Lintels around the perimeter of both buildings were in disrepair, with about 25% damaged beyond repair and about 60% having superficial damage that needed to be addressed.
- Rusting steel column base plates have created damaged to the masonry brick around windows. Removal of the masonry, cleaning and repair of the column base plates, and then replacement masonry was recommended.
- Approximately half of the structural joists were noted as structurally in need of repair. A temporary shoring system was recommended as a short-term solution, but a permanent remedial system needed to be installed within two years.
- "The LBI Grade School is in poor condition and immediate reinforcement plans need to be implemented to make the school safe for future occupancy. The precast I-joists, timber piles and singular concrete grade beams have been structurally compromised and need to be temporarily shored and repaired or replaced. The other listed structural deficiencies are not as much of a life safety concern as the first floor structure but need to be repaired."⁴

Evaluation/Updates for the Long Beach Island Grade School, August 2018 (Appendix E)

In August 2018, the team that prepared the 2015 evaluation report of the LBI Grade School conducted a follow-up evaluation and review of the conditions at the school. The 2018 report continued to identify structural issues, which were addressed by temporary shoring, which is discussed below. The update notes that some roof repairs were completed between the 2015 report and 2018.

The estimated cost summary in the report is:

1. Architectural / Structural
 - a. School - \$2,744,151.50
2. Electrical / Mechanical / Plumbing / Fire Protection
 - a. School - \$1,423,730.00

Total Cost Estimate:

School \$4,167,881.50

Architectural/Structural – Ronald A. Sebring Associates, LLC

The 2018 update recognizes numerous continued areas of ADA non-compliance, most of which were noted in the 2015 report. The exterior conditions noted in 2015 are described as remaining and noted as worsening in the ensuing years. Standing water was again identified in the crawl space, a condition that has remained throughout each of the investigations of the property.

⁴ Evaluation of the Long Beach Island Grade School and E.J. Grade School, Prepared by Owen, Little & Associates – April 2015, p. 154 (Appendix D)

Harrison-Hamnett, P.C.

The 2018 report notes the same conditions as 2015 but concludes that the structural issues are worsening. The report states:

“The structural system for this building is approaching the end of its lifespan, and a major structural renovation is required to protect the building from an inevitable destabilized condition. We have noticed in our visits that the existing damaged conditions appear to have worsened in some locations and will continue to worsen. The shoring work that was designed by our office and installed by others is also showing signs of weakening and not being entirely effective.

“It is our main concern that within a few years the increasing damage will most likely make the building unsafe for occupancy. If a major and permanent renovation is not implemented then the existing building will need to be demolished and a new facility constructed. Some of our reasons are based on the facts that it is difficult and expensive to repair existing damaged piles, which are critical to the building’s support. Plus the repair of concrete members with the reinforcing steel has mostly been deteriorated creates a difficult and expensive repair solution.”

Harrison-Hamnett, PC Structural Report (Appendix F)

Temporary shoring was installed in a crawlspace under the Grade School after deficiencies in the foundation were observed. The 2018 report noted that the shoring was showing signs of being ineffective at that time. A structural engineer has been conducting annual inspections to evaluate the shoring and recommend additional work if necessary. The inspection reports from 2021 and 2022 are included as Appendix F of the report. The following summarizes the main points:

- 8/11/21 Inspection
 - Temporary wood shoring was installed to support the compromised ground floor precast concrete floor joists.
 - Majority of shoring appeared intact, water covered one area, a timber pile was observed not providing support to a structural member. Recommended shoring in place.
- 12/1/22
 - Water accumulation related to a leaking pipe observed again, as it was in 2021.
 - Both 2021 and 2022 visits entailed excessive standing water in the crawl space that inhibited the ability to fully inspect.
 - The temporary shoring needs to be inspected on an annual basis and re-certified.

Essentially, the temporary shoring has been installed, is being monitored, and has been recertified as necessary. However, the solution is by its nature temporary and the District has not moved forward with a permanent fix to the structural concerns, which was recommended to be undertaken within two years of the 2015 inspection report. The 2018 report identified that the condition was getting worse and that it would soon become untenable. In addition, the District has not taken steps to ameliorate the presence of water in

the crawl space, which was recommended in the 2015 report and 2018 update, and has on multiple occasions inhibited full inspections of the shoring work.

SITE VISIT NOTES

A site visit was conducted on the afternoon of Friday March 1, 2024. As indicated in the property summary, the Study Area consists of the LBI Grade School, the bus garage building, an athletic field, several multi-purpose play areas, a playground, a garden, and several parking and circulation areas.

The exterior conditions of the buildings show signs of wear that would be expected of 70+ year old structures that have had some deferred maintenance. The main entrance driveway and parking area along West 20th Street are well defined and generally designed to modern standards. The driveways and parking areas adjacent to the bus garage and along West 19th Street lack defined driveways and striping and are not designed to modern spacing and circulation standards.

There are gutter / downspout and other discharge pipes throughout the site that drain either into the right-of-way or in an uncontrolled manner into parking lots or other impervious surfaces. There is no evidence of drains, catch basins or other drainage on the property. The age of the property is consistent with the site not having modern stormwater management installations.

The bus garage building occupies the western section of the property. The building has garage bays on three sides, each of which has access to public rights-of-way without any curbing, defined driveway aprons, sidewalks, pavement markings, or other guides to proper circulation. The west side of the bus garage includes six doors, which comprise the main access for bus parking. The property is sloped toward the street with uncontrolled drainage and access patterns. Residential properties line the opposite side of East Bay Terrace.



Image 1 - LBI Grade School Entrance along West 19th Street



Image 2 - Flood vents and foundation wear along West 19th Street



Image 3 - Small parking lot with un-enclosed dumpster, uncontrolled downspouts, and limited circulation



Image 4 - View toward Central Avenue, overflow vehicle parking



Image 5 - Northeast corner of the Study Area, play courts near the intersection of West 19th Street and Central Ave



Image 6 - Basketball / multi-purpose court



Image 7 - Drainage pipe from the Study Area to the sidewalk



Image 8 - Garden beds in the southeast corner of the Study Area



Image 9 - Main entrance to the school from West 20th Street



Image 10 - View west along West 20th Street



Image 11 - Baseball / athletic field



Image 12 - Southwest corner of the Study Area



Image 13 - South side of the bus garage



Image 14 - West side of the bus garage



Image 15 - View north along East Bay Terrace with uncontrolled driveway to the bus garage bays



Image 16 - Cracking in the bus garage brick / masonry



Image 17 - Northwest corner of the bus garage



Image 18 - Bus garage and northern bay, some foundation and facade damage is evident



Image 19 - North side of the bus garage



Image 20 - View of the baseball field from West 19th Street

CRITERIA ANALYSIS

The conditions and supporting documentation demonstrate that there is substantial evidence to support a recommendation that the Study Area be designated in need of redevelopment. The Study Area meets criteria “a”, “d”, and “e” as outlined herein:

Criterion “a”

Criterion “a” of the LRHL states:

- 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.”

There are several factors outlined in this report that substantiate the substandard and obsolescent nature of the buildings in the Study Area. The school building is more than 70 years old, and the bus garage is approximately 68 years old. In 2015, comprehensive engineering and architectural reports were prepared to analyze the condition of the buildings. The reports list numerous defects that reflect the buildings’ obsolescence that would require substantial resources to remedy. In 2015, the estimated costs were over \$3 Million. By the time the reports were updated in 2018, the estimated cost of repairs and modernization was up to \$4,167,881 and most of the same issues were identified and noted as having deteriorated further.

Since the reports were issued, the School District has failed to address the issue of flooding in the crawl space and has only undertaken temporary shoring of the foundation. The structural analysis from 2015 recommended permanent fixes for both issues be undertaken within a two-year horizon. The 2018 report, as quoted earlier in this report noted that the issues had become more severe. The District has deferred the needed improvements to the school because there has been a long-term focus on decommissioning the building and consolidating operations into the Ethel Jacobson building. In the ensuing years, that estimate has climbed with the School District's "The Way Forward" presentation indicating that over \$13 Million of "necessary repairs" for the LBI Grade School were estimated in January 2023. As a result, the issues catalogued in 2015 and redocumented in 2018 have worsened to a point where it has become economically infeasible to rehabilitate the school without significant injection of funds from either private or public/private partnerships.

The 2015 architectural analysis in the Owen Little report stated about the bus garage: "The building is in poor condition."⁵ The building was noted as having numerous defects, including structural issues and a lack of fire service infrastructure and sprinkler systems. The photos of the bus garage in this report show some of the obvious physical external defects present in the bus garage. The report from 2015 outlined a variety of issues and described the building as in generally poor condition. There are 10 garage doors facing multiple streets, without any dedicated area for parking or storage and limited on-site space for circulation, which requires buses to use the right-of-way without controlled driveway access. The bus garage doors have 10 feet of clearance, according to measurements taken by the Borough Engineer's office and provided to my office. A typical new school bus, such as a Thomas Saf-t-Liner C2 exceeds 10 feet in height (see Appendix F.) The height of the garage doors is undersized to accommodate new buses. This speaks further to the obsolescence of the garage structure.

Aside from roofing repairs, no substantial improvements have been made to the garage since the 2015 report, and our investigation saw many of the same exterior factors. It is assumed that the balance of the interior issues identified remain unaddressed and that the conditions have aged an additional nine years, resulting in increased potential remedial and maintenance costs through the deferred maintenance.

These conditions reflect an unwholesome working condition for students, the faculty, and staff at the school. While the building condition reports do not identify specific life safety issues, the reports clearly show substandard facilities with maintenance issues that have not been addressed. They require substantial investment that has not been made to offer an up-to-date working and learning environment.

⁵ Evaluation of the Long Beach Island Grade School and E.J. Grade School, Prepared by Owen, Little & Associates – April 2015, p.34 (Appendix D)

Criterion “d”

Criterion “d” of the LRHL states:

- 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.”

This criterion was crafted based on standards to incorporate commercial and other properties into the blight analysis and allow for a focus on limitations on the reasonable productivity of a property as a component of determining whether it is an area in need of redevelopment. As the Appellate Division has previously recognized:

“Commercial blight embraced not only economic deterioration in tax revenue terms but also all the adverse physical conditions of property that individually or in combination impeded its reasonable productivity and resulted in its negative impact upon the general welfare and economic well-being of the community.”⁶

The conditions of the Study Area outlined in the evaluation of criterion “a” apply to the first prong of criterion “d” through a showing of dilapidation and obsolescence. In addition, there is reference in the building evaluation reports to lack of ventilation in portions of the building, including the crawl space that retains standing water.

The conditions of the school buildings creates a detriment to the welfare of the Ship Bottom community. The District has been attempting to find a way to consolidate its grade schools for years due to rising costs and declining enrollment. Between 2014 and 2023, the enrollment at LBI Grade School decreased from 127 students to 98 students. This represents a nearly 23% decrease in enrollment over a ten-year period. The decline in enrollment is part of a larger trend and a reason why the District has been pursuing a consolidation plan for over a decade. Excess capacity in the District’s facilities detracts from operational efficiency and has an impact on the District’s finances and, by extension, the tax payer’s bills.

“The Way Forward” report from January 2023 shows increasing expenses as the cost of utilities, property insurance, health insurance, and personnel continue to increase. The report also cites the financial burden of repairs and maintenance on two school buildings (p.3). The report anticipates that the savings from consolidation through reductions in expenditures on utilities, insurance, grounds upkeep, building repairs, technology, and personnel would be about \$600,000 per year (p.6). The fiscal impact on the District and

⁶ Forbes v. Bd of Trustees of Tp. of S. Orange Village, 312 N.J. Super. 519 (1998)

local tax payers of continuing to operate and maintain a redundant and obsolete building is a detriment to the general welfare.

The routine repair and maintenance costs for the aging and obsolete buildings have consistently increased and the capital costs for necessary repairs have increased by an estimated \$10 Million between 2015 and 2023. The obsolescence and continued operation of the LBI Grade School places a burden on the School District which leads to an increase in property tax for residents without an attendant increase in services or continued deferred maintenance and improvements. Either the property owners in the Borough are detrimentally impacted through an increased taxation burden or the students attending the school are detrimentally impacted by the deleterious effects of attending school in a substandard building that is in need of substantial repairs and upgrades.

Both prongs of criterion d are satisfied and substantiated by the evidence outlined in this report and attached in full as appendices.

Criterion "e"

- e. "A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real properties therein or other similar conditions which impede land assemblage or discourage the undertaking of improvements, resulting in a stagnant and unproductive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare, which condition is presumed to be having a negative social or economic impact or otherwise being detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the surrounding area or the community in general."

The Study Area also qualifies under criterion "e" due to a condition of title associated with the substantial tidelands claim area. The tidelands claim is an ownership interest held by the State of New Jersey that impacts the title of the property and potentially impedes or slows future development. Assuming the school district follows through with the approved plan to consolidate its grade schools, the condition of title associated with the tidelands claim can discourage the undertaking of a redevelopment project or other improvements.

Furthermore, the District's Long-Range Facilities Plan, which has been approved by the State, calls for the school to be closed, which discourages the undertaking of improvements at the site. The lack of improvements related to the physical deficiencies that were documented in 2015 and updated in 2018 demonstrates that the property has become stagnant as improvements in its condition. In fact, the three year period between the 2015 and 2018 condition assessments demonstrated not only stagnation, but deterioration of the physical conditions in the Study Area.

The school building was constructed and added onto periodically to serve its institutional purpose as a public elementary school. The property is unlikely to be retrofitted for another use due to the purpose-built nature of the structure, the age of the building, and the extensive maintenance and upgrade needs noted in the various studies of the property. The School District intends to discontinue the school, ending its productive use. When it is vacated, the school building will be unproductive and have a negative social and economic impact on the Borough. The School District will continue to incur property ownership and maintenance costs without any productive use of the land, and the Borough will not benefit from either the social benefit of a school nor the economic benefit of a tax ratable.

As outlined in the discussion of criteria “a” and “d”, the discontinuance of the school use at the property and the inherent issues of title and other conditions that discourage the undertaking of improvements in the Study Area are detrimental to the welfare of the surrounding area and the Borough in general.

CONCLUSION

There is substantial evidence to designate the Long Beach Island Grade School at Block 48, Lot 1 in the Borough of Ship Bottom as a condemnation area in need of redevelopment. The buildings on the property are approximately 70 years old and there are substantial necessary maintenance issues that have been deferred for nearly a decade that need to be addressed. The School District has confirmed the obsolescence of the LBI Grade School through its state-approved plan to consolidate the elementary schools at Ethel Jacobson in Surf City. The obsolescence of the LBI Grade School represents a financial burden to the School District and the Borough’s residents and provides a sub-standard setting for the students. The District enrollment has been steadily declining and the number of students at the LBI Grade School has decreased by nearly 23% over the last decade. The District’s enrollment no longer warrants having two separate schools, and the financial burden associated with excess capacity places a strain on local tax payers and the District’s ability to provide the best service to its students. The obsolescence is directly connected to a detriment to the general welfare.

The reuse of the school property is impacted by the presence of a state tidelands claim. The tidelands claim is a condition of title that impacts the property’s ability to be reused or redeveloped. Cessation of school operations coupled with an impediment associated with the condition of title will lead to stagnation and underutilization of the Study Area and create an economically and socially detrimental impact to the Borough.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Governing Body Resolution

Appendix B: LBI School District Long Range Facilities Plan, 2021

Appendix C: The Way Forward – LBI School District Presentation, January 2023

Appendix D: Evaluation of the Long Beach Island Grade School and E.J. Grade School – Owen, Little & Associates, April 2015

Appendix E: Evaluation/Updates for the Long Beach Island Grade School – Owen, Little & Associates August 2018

Appendix F: Harrison-Hamnett, P.C. Temporary Floor Shoring Inspection Reports – 2021 & 2022

Appendix G: Thomas Bus Saf-T-Liner C2 Specifications

APPENDIX A: GOVERNING BODY RESOLUTION

APPENDIX B: LBI SCHOOL DISTRICT LONG RANGE FACILITIES PLAN, 2021

APPENDIX C: THE WAY FORWARD – LBI SCHOOL DISTRICT PRESENTATION, JANUARY 2023

APPENDIX D: EVALUATION OF THE LONG BEACH ISLAND GRADE SCHOOL AND E.J. GRADE SCHOOL – OWEN, LITTLE & ASSOCIATES, APRIL 2015

APPENDIX E: EVALUATION/UPDATES FOR THE LONG BEACH ISLAND GRADE SCHOOL – OWEN, LITTLE & ASSOCIATES AUGUST 2018

**APPENDIX F: HARRISON-HAMNETT, P.C. TEMPORARY FLOOR SHORING INSPECTION REPORTS – 2021
& 2022**

APPENDIX G: THOMAS BUS SAF-T-LINER C2 SPECIFICATIONS