

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION FOR AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT DETERMINATION MUNICIPAL COMPLEX



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Municipal Complex Area in Need of Redevelopment Preliminary Investigation - Non-Condemnation

City of Plainfield, Union County, New Jersey

Presented to the Planning Board on July 21, 2022

Prepared for:



The original of this report was signed in accordance with NJSA 45:14A-12.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq. (the "LRHL"), the City Council of the City of Plainfield (the "City Council") adopted Resolution R 222-22 on June 13, 2022, which authorized a preliminary investigation of Block 601, Lot 1 (201-249 E. 4th Street); Block 602, Lot 1 (317-347 Watchung Avenue); Block 603, Lots 1.01 (229-239 E. 5th Street); 3 (225-227 E. 5th Street); 15 (218-232 Court Place); 16 (234-236 Court Place); and 17 (242-246 Court Place) on the official Tax Maps of the City, (the "Study Area") to determine whether it meets the statutory



criteria to be designated as a Non-condemnation redevelopment area.

Report Sections

This report contains five sections: Introduction, Study Area Characteristics, LRHL Statutory Criteria, Study Area Evaluation and Conclusion. Section 2 describes the Study Area in terms of its location, existing zoning and land use, physical, regulatory, fiscal and environmental conditions. Section 3 reviews and applies the statutory criteria and sets forth the findings based upon the characteristics and conditions of the Study Area that have been observed and analyzed. Section 4 summarizes and evaluates the Study Area, based upon the criteria set forth in the LRHL. Supporting documentation includes tax assessments, field observations, and photo surveys. Section 5 proposes recommendations to the City of Plainfield Planning Board (the "Planning Board") relative to the designation of the Study Area as a Non-condemnation redevelopment area.

Methodology

On June 15, 2022, a site visit was conducted of the Study Area in order to investigate and analyze site conditions. A photo survey was completed to illustrate and inventory the physical conditions of the Study Area. Additionally, in preparation of this analysis, the following records and documents were reviewed:

- Official Tax Maps of the City of Plainfield;
- Tax records for the properties located within the Study Area;
- City of Plainfield Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance;

- Ownership information and property survey; and
- City Council Resolution R 222-22, dated June 13, 2022.

To this end, this report is a collection of the findings based on the research conducted.

1.1. Study Authorization

On June 13, 2022, the City Council adopted Resolution R 222-22 authorizing and directing the Planning Board to undertake an investigation of the Study Area and to make recommendations to the City Council as to whether the Study Area is “in need of redevelopment” in accordance with the criteria set forth in the LRHL. Once the Planning Board has made its recommendations, the City Council will consider whether to designate the Study Area as a Non-condemnation Redevelopment Area pursuant to the LRHL.

This report is written pursuant to Section 6 of the LRHL (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6) which requires the following:

1. 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.
2. (1) Before proceeding to a public hearing on the matter, the planning board shall prepare a map showing the boundaries of the proposed redevelopment area and the location of the various

parcels of property included therein. There shall be appended to the map, a statement setting forth the basis of the investigation.

(2) The Planning Board shall specify a date for and give notice of a hearing for purpose of persons who are interested in or would be affected by a determination that the delineated area is redevelopment area

1.2. Scope of Study

This study is undertaken as a first step to engage, benefit and create opportunities through redevelopment planning, which involves the following steps:

- Conduct an inventory of the Study Area and physical characteristics of the same.
- Assess whether the existing characteristics and conditions meet the criteria to recommend the need for redevelopment, as outlined within the LRHL.
- Propose findings and recommendations relevant to the determination of the need for redevelopment of the Study Area.

1.3. Redevelopment Objectives

The renewal activities of the Study Area should be undertaken in conformity with, and should be designed to meet the following objectives of an area investigation:

- To improve the functional and physical layout of the project area for contemplated new development and the removal of impediments to land deposition.
- To provide redevelopment that minimizes the need to

relocate residents or businesses.

- To create new employment/or housing opportunities for residents.
- To coordinate redevelopment activities that mitigate and eradicate blighted conditions.

1.4 Redevelopment Process

The LRHL provides the statutory authority for municipalities to engage in a number of redevelopment activities, including: designating an “Area in Need of Redevelopment,” preparing and adopting redevelopment plans and implementing redevelopment projects. More specifically, a redevelopment designation allows the municipality to:

1. Adopt a redevelopment plan that will identify the manner in which an area will be developed, including its use and intensity.
2. Issue bonds for the purpose of redevelopment.
3. Acquire property.
4. Lease or convey property in lieu of the public bidding process.
5. Collect revenue from a selected developer.
6. Grant tax exemptions and/or abatements.

The City can utilize the powers granted to municipalities under the LRHL to improve the conditions of the Study Area.

The LRHL sets forth a multi-step process that must be observed by the City Council and Planning Board in order to enable the City to lawfully exercise the powers of the LRHL. The steps required to declare an area in need of redevelopment must be undertaken pursuant to the LRHL. It should be noted that only upon completion

of this public process is a municipality able to exercise the powers granted pursuant to the LRHL.

1.5. Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Areas

P.L. 2013, Chapter 159 amended the LRHL to allow two types of redevelopment area: Condemnation Redevelopment Areas and Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Areas. The amendment requires the resolution authorizing the planning board to undertake a preliminary investigation to state whether the redevelopment area determination shall authorize the municipality to use all those powers provided by the State Legislature for use in a redevelopment area other than the use of eminent domain (a “Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area”) or whether the redevelopment area determination shall authorize the municipality to use all powers provided by the Legislature for use in a redevelopment area, including the power of eminent domain (a “Condemnation Redevelopment Area”). The City Council authorized a study for a Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area for the Study Area.


2.0 STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

2.1. Locational Context

According to the 2020 American Community Survey, the Study Area is located in Census Tract 390, which has a total population of 3,943 residents. As depicted on Map 1, the Study Area is bounded by NJ Transit’s Raritan Valley Line’s train tracks to the north, Roosevelt Avenue to the east, East 5th Street to the south and Watchung Avenue to the west. The Study Area consists of seven tax parcels, as shown on Map 2. The Study Area has a total area of

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

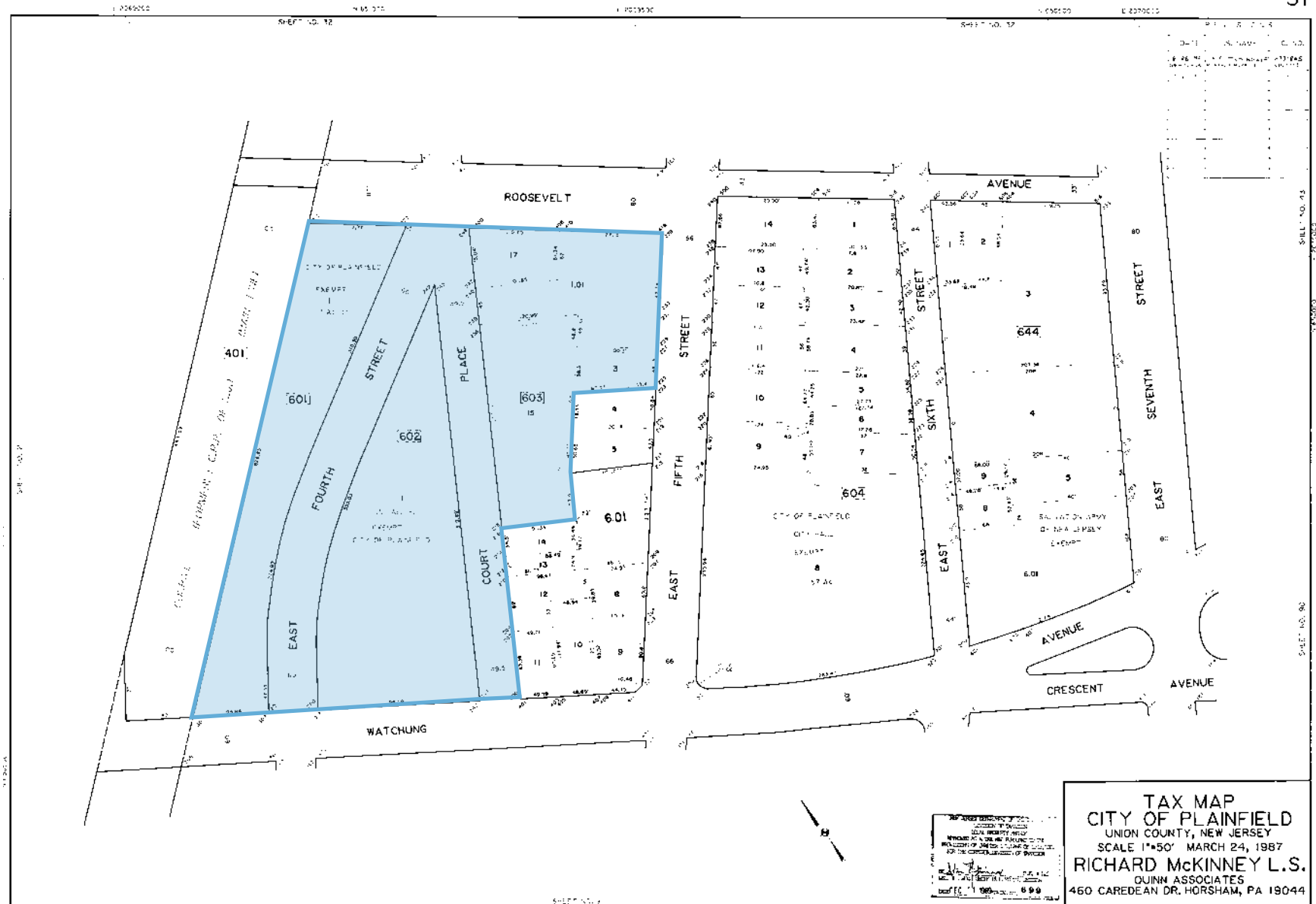


 Study Area


Source: Google Maps. Accessed 2022.



Map 1: Study Area



Source: City of Plainfield Tax Map 93

 Study Area

Map 2: Tax Map

approximately 6.04 acres and is in the City's 1st Ward.

Regional Setting

The City of Plainfield is located within Union County, New Jersey. Plainfield is bordered by eight municipalities: in Union County, the Borough of Fanwood to the north and the Township of Scotch Plains to the north and east; in Somerset County, the Boroughs of Watchung and North Plainfield to the west; in Middlesex County, the Borough of Dunellen to the south, the Township of Piscataway to the southeast and the Borough of South Plainfield to the east.

Public Transportation

The City is served by two train stations located on New Jersey Transit's Raritan Valley Line. These train stations are the Plainfield Train Station and the Netherwood Train Station. The Study Area is situated approximately 0.3 miles south of the Plainfield Train Station. Additionally, there are multiple New Jersey Transit bus routes that serve the City. The Study Area is proximate to numerous bus routes along with NJ Transit Bus Routes 59, 65, 113, 114, and 819 stopping along Watchung Avenue and East 5th Street.

2.2. Existing Zoning

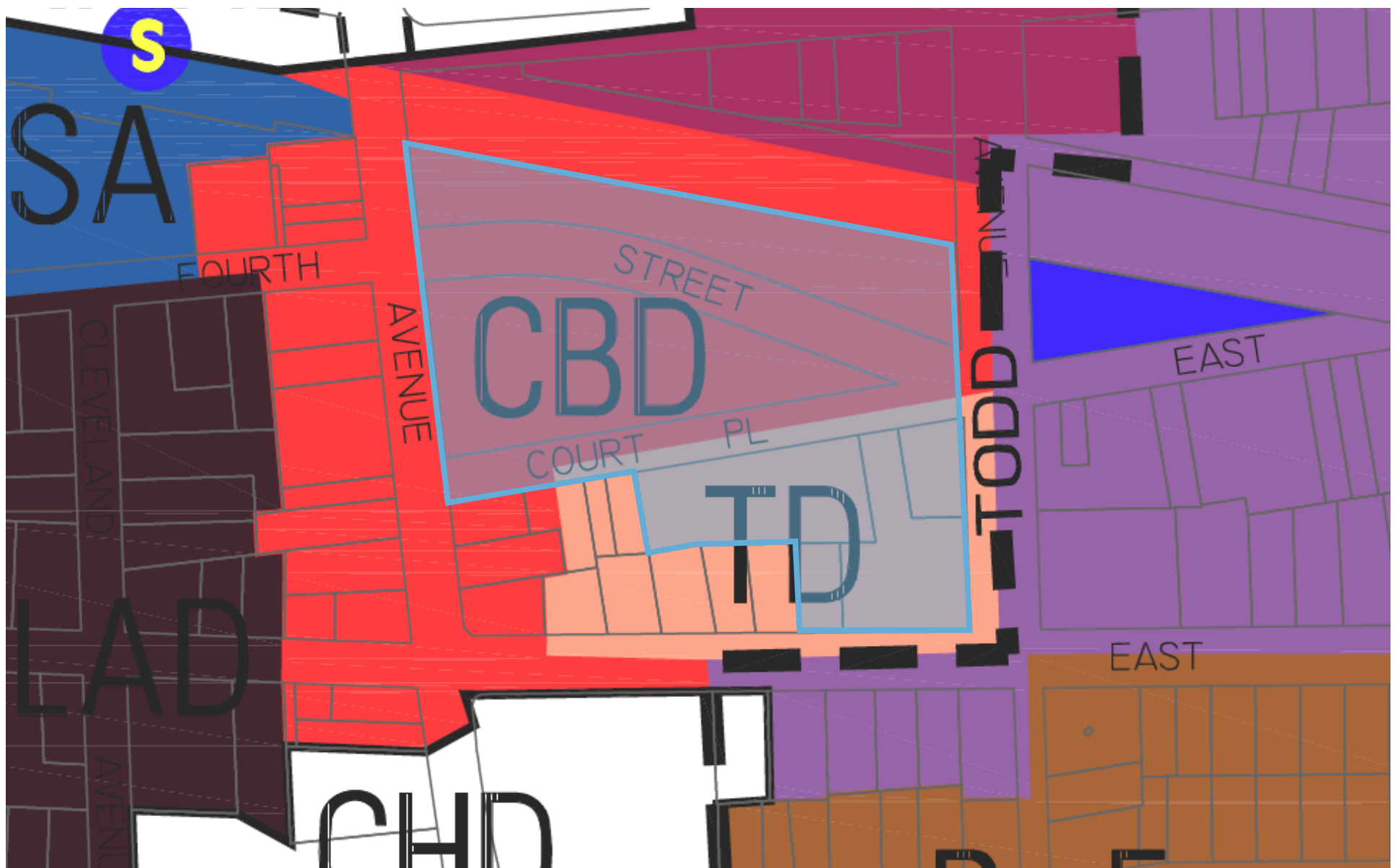
As shown on Map 3, the Study Area parcels fell within two zoning districts: Block 601, Lot 1 and Block 602, Lot 1: TODD/Central Business District (CBD); and Block 603, Lots 1.01, 3, 15, 16 and 17: TODD/Transition District (TD).

TODD/Central Business District (CBD)

Section 17:9-18.C notes that the purpose this zone is to serve as the main pedestrian shopping district. The following are the permitted principal uses of the TODD/CBD:

- Mixed-use structures
- Childcare centers
- Retail sales
- Personal service establishments
- Office
- Restaurants
- Taverns
- Nightclubs
- Banks, excluding drive-through facility
- Health and fitness club
- Theaters
- Hotels
- Banquet halls
- Parking lots
- Adult day care facilities
- Wireless communication facilities
- Fraternal organizations
- Open space

The bulk and area standards of the CBD Zone are summarized in Table 1.C. below.



Source: City of Plainfield Zoning Map


 Study Area



Table 1: Bulk Table of TODD/CBD Zone

Requirement	Requirement
Area (square feet)	5,000
Maximum Density (d.u. per acre)	100
Minimum Lot Width (feet)	50
Minimum Lot Frontage (feet)	50
Minimum Lot Depth (feet)	100
Front Yard Setback (feet)	0
Side Yard Setback (feet)	0
Combined Side Yard Setbacks (feet)	0
Rear Yard Setback (feet)	10
Maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	4.5
Maximum Percent Building Cover	75%
Maximum Percent Total Lot Cover	90%
Minimum Number of Stories	4
Maximum Number of Stories	6
Maximum Building Height (feet)	65
Minimum Improvable Area (MIA) (square feet)	2,700
MIA- Diameter of Circle	36

Source: City of Plainfield, Land Use Ordinance, Schedule B – Bulk Zoning Requirements.

TODD/Central Business District (CBD)

Block 603, Lots 1.01, 3, 15, 16 and 17 are located in the TODD/Transition District (TODD/TD). As discussed in the City's Zoning

Ordinance (Section 17:9-18.2. I), the purpose this zone is that "[t]his district serves as a transition between the high intensity uses permitted in the TODD, CBD, NAHD, CLAD and PD Districts and the surrounding lower density housing and commercial uses at the perimeter of the TODD Zone." This zone permits the following uses:

- Mixed-use structures
- Apartments
- Townhomes
- Child care center
- Retail sales
- Personal service establishments
- Offices
- Art studios
- Art galleries
- Museums
- Taverns
- Restaurants
- Bank, with drive-through facility
- Bank, excluding drive-through facility
- Health and fitness club
- Banquet halls
- Parking lots
- Laundromats
- Nursing homes
- Adult day care facilities
- Assisted living facilities
- Funeral homes
- Houses of worship
- Fraternal organizations
- Open space

As indicated in Schedule B of the City's Land Use Ordinance, there are no bulk and area zoning requirements for the TODD/TD.

2.3. Existing Land Use

The existing land uses among the Study Area are detailed on Map 4 and Table 2. Mainly, the Study Area consists of vacant land, commercial, institutional/public uses. Block 601, Lot 1 is used as a parking lot. Block 602, Lot 1 consists of institutional/public uses as it contains the City's Police Division and Municipal Court. Block 603, Lot 1.01 is used as a child day care and storage/warehouse and Lot 3 is classified as vacant, however it is utilized as a play area serving the child daycare center. Lot 15 contains a commercial building occupied by an automobile repair establishment. Lot 16 is classified as vacant; however it is used as parking area to store vehicles being repair by the adjacent repair shop. Lot 17 is classified as commercial but the building on this property is vacant.

Table 2: Existing Land Use

Block	Lot	Address	Existing Land Use
601	1	201-249 East 4th Street	Institutional/public
602	1	317-347 Watchung Avenue	Institutional/public
603	1.01	229-239 East 5th Street	Commercial
603	3	225-227 East 5th Street	Vacant
603	15	218-232 Court Place	Commercial
603	16	234-236 Court Place	Vacant
603	17	242-246 Court Place	Commerical

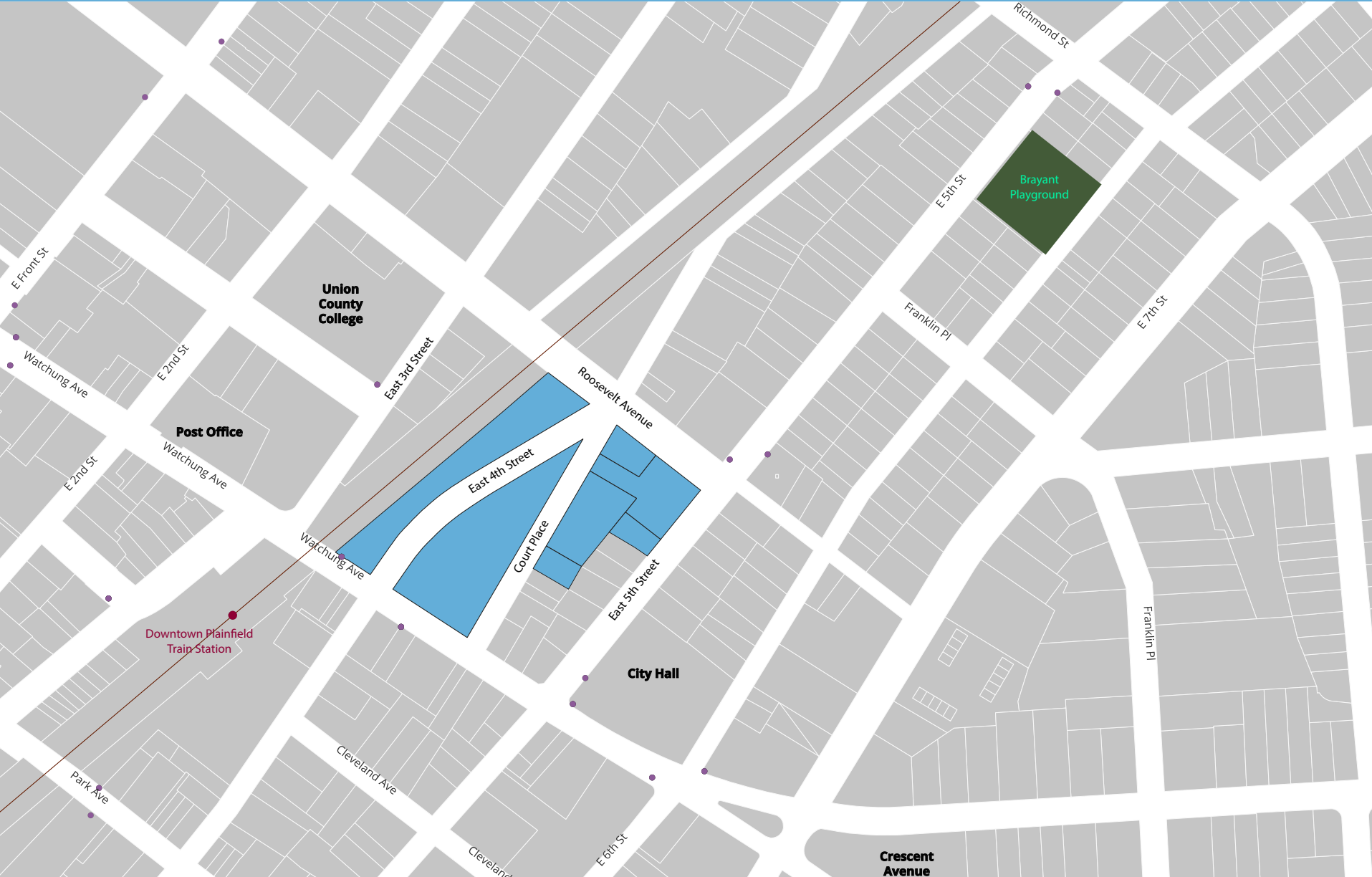
Source: MOD-IV




2.4. Relevant Planning Studies

2020 Master Plan

The City's 2020 Master Plan was adopted by the Planning Board in August 2020. There are numerous goals, objectives, and excerpts stated in this Plan that are consistent and relevant to the Study Area:

- Continue to further the goals from the 2009 Master Plan: Revitalize/redevelop underutilized areas. (Land Use Element, pg. 20)
- Promote the redevelopment of vacant, abandoned and underutilized properties. (Economic Development, pg. 66)
- "Development is also taking place and proposed throughout the Central Business District" (Land Use Element, pg. 34)
- Proposed Community Facilities Improvements, Growth Plans, and Needs Assessment: Municipal Court: In order to adequately serve the City, options are being explored for the Court to operate optimally in the future. These options include:
 - o Expanding the existing facility
 - o Construct a new facility to house the Municipal Court and Police Division. A potential site of this facility would be across 4th Street, which is currently a parking lot. (Community Facilities Element, pg. 134)
- Conduct a feasibility study of a new Public Safety Complex: This feasibility study will assess the needs of the Fire Division, Police Division and Municipal Court in determining siting and operations of a new Public Safety Complex.
- "Commercial and mixed-uses are primarily concentrated in and around the Central Business District (CBD.) This area continues to



 Study Area  Bus Stops
 Open Space

be developed as the City's Downtown, following recommendations in the 2009 Master Plan and in this one. Development has continued to take place at an accelerated rate throughout the CBD, with a mix of commercial, residential and mixed-use developments occurring throughout." (Land Use Element, pg. 23)

- "The City's Central Business District (CBD) is located in the northern central area of the city and was intended to be the downtown retail center as well as serving a broader population of Plainfield residents and the surrounding region. The city has targeted the CBD as such a center because of its proximity to the Downtown Train Station. This area should continue as a priority for the City's primary retail and business center." (Land Use Element, pg. 26)

Other Redevelopment Areas in the Neighborhood

TODD South Redevelopment Area

In January 2020, the City Council adopted the Transit Oriented Development District (TODD) South Redevelopment Plan. This plan has been subsequently amended in November 2020. The plan area is NJ Transit's Raritan Valley Line right-of-way to the north; Central Avenue, Madison Avenue, and Arlington Avenue to the west; East Sixth Street and East Seventh Street to the south; and Watchung Avenue to the east. This plan area is divided into multiple subdistricts: Central Business District; Cleveland Arts and Culture District; Institutional District; Light Industrial District and Medium/Moderate-Density Residential District. The goals of this Plan are: 1. Promote Transit-Oriented Development and Transit Usage; 2. Stimulate Economic Development; 3. Promote Active Commercial Corridors; 4. Infuse Arts and Culture into the Community; 5. Improve Site Design and Layout; and 6. Incorporate Principles of

Sustainability.

2.5. Urban Enterprise Zone, Opportunity Zone and Smart Growth Classification

Urban Enterprise Zone

The entire Study Area is located within the City's Urban Enterprise Zone (the "UEZ"). One of 32 designated UEZs in the State of New Jersey, business located within a UEZ are provided benefits such as reduced sales tax, tax free purchases on certain items such as capital equipment, facility expansions, upgrades and certain personal property, financial assistance from agencies such as NJEDA, subsidized unemployment insurance costs for certain employees, energy sales tax exemption, and tax options. Tax options consist of up to \$1,500 for new permanent full-time employees hired or up to 8% corporate business tax credits on qualified investments. The Urban Enterprise Zone designation is important as it can be used as a mechanism for funding in efforts to revitalize the Study Area.

Opportunity Zone

The entire Study Area is located within a designated Opportunity Zone. Opportunity Zones are designed to drive long-term capital investments into low-income communities. Federal capital gains tax incentives encourage investors to support investment in designated low-income district communities through participation in Qualified Opportunity Funds.

Smart Growth Classification

Smart Growth commonly refers to growth that serves the environment,

economy, and community equally. When possible, it attempts to concentrate development into already-existing communities. Additionally, it addresses the inherent interconnections between environmental protection, social equity, public health, and economic sustainability. Selected areas throughout the State of New Jersey are designated as a Smart Growth Area. They are designated by the Department of State, Office for Planning Advocacy, from spatial data relating to the NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and several other master plans.

The City of Plainfield is located in the smart growth boundary for a Metropolitan Planning Area 1 (PA1). This area includes a variety of municipalities that range from large urban centers to 19th century towns shaped by commuter rail. The communities in the area have strong ties to major metropolitan centers-New York/Newark/Jersey City Metropolitan Region; the Philadelphia/Camden/Trenton Metropolitan Region; and on a smaller scale, the Easton/Phillipsburg Metropolitan Region.

The following are the ten (10) accepted principles of Smart Growth:

1. Mixed land uses;
2. Take advantage of existing communities' assets;
3. Foster walkable neighborhoods;
4. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
5. Promote distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
6. Preserve open space, farmland and critical environmental area;
7. Strengthen and encourage growth in existing communities;
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices;
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost

effective; and

10. Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions.

The Study Area is less than 1,000 feet southeast of the Downtown Plainfield Train Station. It is in close proximity to several community amenities and services including the Plainfield Police Headquarters, City Hall, Plainfield Post Office, and the array of businesses and services located in the City's Central Business District.

2.6. Municipal Actions

City records were requested from City departments regarding property management, building code violations, and other incidents within the Study Area. Research conducted indicates the following municipal actions.

Tax Collector

On June 30, 2022, the City Tax Collector provided tax records of the Study Area properties. Based on the records, all property taxes were current.

Fire Department

On June 15, 2022, the Plainfield Fire Department provided records of fire and emergency incidents that occurred in the Study Area between 2017 to present. These records are itemized in the Appendix of this report.

Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority (PMUA)

On June 15, 2022, PMUA provided information pertinent to the Study Area's sanitary sewer. It was noted that that sewer line connecting to the Study Area parcels is over 100 years old and that the lines are flushed daily to prevent any issues. PMUA has not had any issues within the last 5 years in the main sanitary sewer line

Planning Division

Environmental/Brownfield Records

Block 601, Lot 1 is noted as a brownfield site as per the City's Brownfields Map, dated April 2007 and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (Activity Number: LSR120001) has case



status of "LSRP oversight".

Land Use Boards Applications

There have been no Land Use Board Applications filed involving the Study Area since 2017, according to the Planning Division as of June 15, 2022. However, there was a Zoning Board of Adjustment application filed in 2014 involving Block 603, Lots 1.01, 3 and 17. As noted on the planning review memo, this application involved requests for waivers from the completeness checklist requirements, relief from supplementary zoning regulations, relief from design and performance standards, preliminary, and final site plan approval to expand a childcare center from 5 classrooms / 79 children to 10 classrooms / 162 children." Part of the application involved reconfiguring "the parking areas on Lot 1.01 and Lot 17- the parking lot will serve the 300 square foot bail bond office, the warehouse and the childcare center," according to the planning review memo. This application was approved by the Planning Board.

3.0. LRHL STATUTORY CRITERIA

Criteria for Area In Need of Redevelopment

The laws governing redevelopment by municipalities in New Jersey are set forth in the LRHL - this statute grants the governing body of a municipality the power to authorize the planning board to conduct a study to determine whether an area is in need of redevelopment; to make such a determination following the completion of the study; and to adopt a redevelopment plan for the designated area. Such an area may be determined to be in need of redevelopment only if, after an investigation by the planning board and a public

hearing for which notice has been given, it is found to meet one or more of the following eight criteria:

1. **"Criteria 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.
2. **"Criteria B."** The discontinuance of the use of a building or buildings previously used for commercial, manufacturing, retail, shopping malls or plazas, office parks or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such building or buildings; significant vacancies or 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.
3. **"Criteria 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.
4. **"Criteria 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.



5. **"Criteria 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.

6. **"Criteria 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 areas has been materially depreciated.

7. **"Criteria 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.

8. **"Criteria H."** The designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.

In addition to the above criteria, individual properties that do not meet any of the statutory conditions may still be included within an area in need of redevelopment provided that within the area as a whole, one or more of the expressed conditions are prevalent. This provision is referred to as **"Section 3"** and is set forth under N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-3, which states in part that "a redevelopment area may include lands, buildings, or improvements which of themselves are not detrimental to public health, safety or welfare, but the inclusion of which is found necessary, with or without change in this condition, for the effective redevelopment of the area of which they are a part."

3.1. Application of Study Area Criteria

The finding that an area is in need of redevelopment is an area wide determination. As such, the statutory charge for a positive finding of redevelopment eligibility requires a demonstration of physical deterioration, illustrated by the presence of improvements, which are dilapidated, obsolete and faulty in term of arrangement, lack

of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities or in any way detrimental to the safety, health, morals or general welfare of the community.

The conditions evidenced by this Needs Determination Study are measured against the criteria for designation of a Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area and summarized in a fashion that enables a determination to be made regarding whether one or more criteria is prevalent within the Study Area.

4.0. STUDY AREA EVALUATION

4.1. Study Approach

Nishuane Group, LLC conducted site visits and prepared a photo survey of the Study Area to establish and confirm existing conditions and land uses. The firm reviewed relevant plans and municipal documents (i.e. City of Plainfield's Master Plan, City of Plainfield's Zoning and Land Development Ordinances, and City Council Resolution) related to the Study Area. Property records of the Study Area were obtained from City agencies in support of the existing conditions assessment. The information retrieved by the firm allowed planners to holistically evaluate the conditions of the Study Area.

4.2. Property Evaluations:

The following is a breakdown of the Study Area, examining its characteristics, site analysis and LRHL criteria applied, if any.

201-249 EAST 4TH STREET (BLOCK 601, LOT 1) PROPERTY EVALUATION

Owner: City of Plainfield

Property Class: 15C (Public property)

Property Characteristics:

This irregularly-shaped property has an area of approximately 1.7 acres. It has street frontages along Watchung Avenue to the west, East 4th Street to the south and Roosevelt Avenue to the north. This lot is located within the TODD/Central Business District (CBD) Zoning District. It is currently used as a surface parking lot (known as Parking Lot #5).

Site Analysis:

Vehicles access the lot via two one-way curb cuts along the East 4th Street frontage.

During the time of the site visit (between 9:00am and 10:30am on Wednesday, June 15, 2022), the parking lot was utilized by Police Division and commuters who travel via the Downtown Plainfield Train Station.

The lot was formerly the site of the Plainfield Gas Works and is identified as a brownfield, according to NJDEP. This site (Activity Number: LSR120001) has case status of "LSRP oversight".



Satisfies LRHL Criteria:

- **Criteria "C":** The lot is owned by the City. Due to its irregular shape and previous environmental contamination, this property is not likely to be redeveloped solely through the instrumentality of private capital.
- **Criteria "G":** The lot is located within the City's UEZ.
- **Criteria "H":** The redevelopment of Block 601, Lot 1 is consistent with Smart Growth principles because the lot is approximately 110 feet east of the Downtown Plainfield Train Station. Additionally, it is adjacent to several community amenities including the Plainfield Police Headquarters, City Hall, Plainfield Post Office, and the City's Central Business District.

Recommendation:

Based on the existing conditions of Block 601, Lot 1 as described in detail above, the Study Area satisfies Criteria C, G and H and should be designated as an "area in need of redevelopment".



317-347 WATCHUNG AVENUE (BLOCK 602, LOT 1) PROPERTY EVALUATION

Owner: City of Plainfield

Property Class: 15C (Public property)

Property Characteristics:

The property has an area of approximately 2.54 acres. The site is currently used as the City's Police Headquarters and Municipal Court. These administrative agencies are housed in a 2-story building which was built in 1964. This lot is located within the TODD/CBD Zoning District.

Site Analysis:

In addition to the Police Headquarters/Municipal Court building standing on the property, site improvements present on the site consist of surface parking, generator, five-bay garage attached to the building and accessed via the Court Place frontage.



Satisfies LRHL Criteria:

- **Criteria "C":** This parcel is owned by the City. Due to its vital operations as the City's Police Headquarters and Municipal Court, it is not likely for this property to be redeveloped solely through the instrumentality of private capital.
- **Criteria "G":** The lot is located within the City's UEZ.
- **Criteria "H":** The Redevelopment of Block 602, Lot 1 is consistent with Smart Growth principles because the lot is approximately 225 feet southeast of the Downtown Plainfield Train Station. Additionally, it is in close proximity to several community amenities including City Hall, Plainfield Post Office, and the City's Central Business District.

Recommendation:

Based on the existing conditions of Block 602, Lot 1 as described in detail above, the Study Area satisfies Criteria C, G, and H, and should be designated as an "area in need of redevelopment".



229-239 EAST 5TH STREET (BLOCK 603, LOT 1.01) PROPERTY EVALUATION

Owner: Cardoso, Antonio J

Property Class: 4A (Commercial)

Property Characteristics:

The irregularly shaped property has an area of approximately 0.72 acres and has street frontages along Court Place to the north, Roosevelt Avenue to the east and East 5th Street to the south. A 2-story building stands on the site, which is currently used as a child daycare facility. A portion of the building is also used as a warehouse/storage, which is accessed via two bays on the Roosevelt Avenue façade and two additional bays at the rear of the building. The parcel is located within the TODD/Transition District (TD).

Site Analysis:

The site has curb cuts along Court Street and East 5th Street, which provides vehicular access to the surface parking associated with the child daycare facility. The warehouse/storage portion of the building has a building height of 1 story and contains two bays fronting along Roosevelt Avenue and two at the rear of building. There is no meaningful separation separate between the child daycare center and the warehouse/storage facility, which could lead to conflicts between the children and individuals accessing the warehouse/storage facility. The lot is also essentially entirely covered with either asphalt surfaces or building coverage.



Satisfies LRHL Criteria:

- **Criteria "D"**: Because of the lack of separation, the proximity of the warehouse/storage facility to the child daycare facility could lead to perilous conditions, especially if loading activities were to take place while the children are present. The lot is almost completely covered with impervious surfaces, which can lead to issues regarding stormwater management, drainage, and runoff. Cumulatively, the conditions of this property are detrimental to the public health, safety and general welfare of the community.
- **Criteria "G"**: The lot is located within the City's UEZ.
- **Criteria "H"**: Redevelopment of Block 603, Lot 1.01 is consistent with Smart Growth principles because the lot is approximately 750 feet southeast of the Downtown Plainfield Train Station. Additionally, it is in close proximity to several community amenities including City Hall, Plainfield Post Office, and the City's Central Business District.

Recommendation:

Based on the existing conditions of Block 603, Lot 1.01 as described in detail above, the Study Area satisfies Criteria D, G and H and should be designated as an "area in need of redevelopment".



225-227 EAST 5TH STREET (BLOCK 603, LOT 3) PROPERTY EVALUATION

Owner: Cardoso, Antonio

Property Class: 1 (Vacant land)

Property Characteristics:

Although this lot is classified as vacant, there are some site improvements on the property, which consist of playground equipment and a white fence with a gate opening. The lot is used as a play area for the adjacent child daycare facility.

Site Analysis:

The building on the property was boarded-up and vacant during the time of the site visit. From an exterior perspective, graffiti on the building, broken and open windows, and general disrepair was observed. As witnessed through a first-floor window, one of the ground floor spaces was in a disheveled state, with exposed walls, debris scattered throughout, including equipment related to the prior occupant.



Satisfies LRHL Criteria:

- **Section 3:** Effective redevelopment cannot occur without the inclusion of this property. The lot is contiguous to properties to that are recommended to be designated to the north and east, and therefore is necessary to include for proper land assemblage.
- **Criteria "G":** The lot is located within the City's UEZ.
- **Criteria "H":** Redevelopment of Block 603, Lot 3 is consistent with Smart Growth principles because the lot is approximately 705 feet south east of the Downtown Plainfield Train Station. Additionally, it is in close proximity to several community amenities including City Hall, Plainfield Post Office, and the City's Central Business District.

Recommendation:

Based on the existing conditions of Block 603, Lot 3 as described in detail above, the Study Area satisfies Section 3 and Criteria G and H and should be designated as an "area in need of redevelopment".



218-232 COURT PLACE (BLOCK 603, LOT 15) PROPERTY EVALUATION

Owner: Zackowitz, Harry
Property Class: 4A (Commercial)

Property Characteristics:

The irregularly shaped property has an area of approximately 0.66 acres (23,106.24 square feet). A 1-story commercial building stands on the property, which was constructed in 1930 according to MOD-IV tax records. The building is currently utilized as an automobile repair shop. The lot is located in the TODD/TD.

Site Analysis:

During the time of the site visit, paint on the exterior of the building was deteriorating and peeling and a bay door was damaged and in need of repair. The building needs maintenance and improvement. Vines have grown on the northern side of the building's exterior. Insulation was hanging from the top of the building during the time of the site visit. General deterioration of the building is present due age and lack of upkeep.

Almost the entire lot is occupied by the existing building, with little to no open space. The extreme amount of impervious coverage raises concerns about stormwater management and traffic circulation.



Satisfies LRHL Criteria:

- **Criteria "A":** The existing conditions of the interior and exterior of the commercial building are substandard. Significant maintenance and repairs are needed to the building and property. To that end, these conditions are insufficient for a wholesome working environment.
- **Criteria "D":** The fact that the existing building encompasses almost the entire area of the lot demonstrates a faulty arrangement and design, along with excessive land coverage, which are detrimental to the welfare of the community.
- **Criteria "G":** The lot is located within the City's UEZ.
- **Criteria "H":** The redevelopment of Block 603, Lot 15 is consistent with Smart Growth principles because the lot is approximately 535 feet southeast of the Downtown Plainfield Train Station. Additionally, it is in close proximity to several community amenities including City Hall, Plainfield Post Office, and the City's Central Business District.

Recommendation:

Based on the existing conditions of Block 603, Lot 15 as described in detail above, the Study Area satisfies Criteria A, D, G and H and should be designated as an "area in need of redevelopment".



234-236 COURT PLACE (BLOCK 603, LOT 16) PROPERTY EVALUATION

Owner: Zackowitz, Harry

Property Class: 1 (Vacant land)

Property Characteristics:

According to tax records, this irregularly shaped property has an area of approximately 5,837.3 square feet. The parcel is located within the TODD/TD. It is currently vacant with no principal buildings.

Site Analysis:

A chain-link fence with a gate opening surrounds the property. This chain-link fence contains barbed wire at its top, which is banned in the City. Numerous vehicles were parked on the property during the time of the site visit. These vehicles are not within any designated parking area. Additionally, this parking area lacks space delineation, directional arrows and other necessary features required for safe parking lot circulation. Many of these vehicles appeared to have been stored on the property for a substantial period of time, appear to be non-operational and are in poor condition. The lot needs maintenance as overgrown vegetation was present along its edges.



Satisfies LRHL Criteria:

- **Criteria "D":** The abundance of non-operational and dilapidated vehicles parked on the lot creates a detriment for the community especially since the lot is visible from the street through the chain-link fence. This site creates a large gap in the land development pattern along Court Place. Overall, these conditions present detriments to the public health, safety and general welfare of the community.
- **Criteria "G":** The lot is located within the City's UEZ.
- **Criteria "H":** Redevelopment of Block 603, Lot 16 is consistent with Smart Growth principles because the lot is approximately 0.3 miles south of the Downtown Plainfield Train Station. Additionally, it is in close proximity to several community amenities including City Hall, Plainfield Post Office, and the City's Central Business District.

Recommendation:

Based on the existing conditions of Block 603, Lot 16 as described in detail above, the Study Area satisfies Criteria D, G and H and should be designated as an "area in need of redevelopment".



242-246 COURT PLACE (BLOCK 603, LOT 17) PROPERTY EVALUATION

Owner: Cardoso, Antonio J
Property Class: 4A (Commercial)

Property Characteristics:

The irregularly shaped property has an area of approximately 8,250 square feet. It is a corner lot with street frontages along Court Place to the north and Roosevelt Avenue to the east. A 1-story commercial building with dual drive through access stands on the property. This lot is in the TODD/TD.

Site Analysis:

Vehicles access the site via two curb cuts with one two-way curb cut along Court Place and the second along Roosevelt Avenue. A surface parking area is shared with the uses on Lot 1.01 (child daycare facility and storage/warehouse).

During the time of the site visit, the commercial building was vacant and boarded up. It was most recently operated as a convenience store with drive-through facility. There were some deficiencies observed, including peeling paint. Previous to the convenience story, the building was occupied by a bail bond establishment.



Satisfies LRHL Criteria:

- **Criteria "D":** The site and building arrangement is obsolete. The existing building is unoccupied and has had a high turnover of commercial occupants in recent years. Due to its limited size, the building is not conducive to the needs of modern commercial tenants and therefore it is difficult to find and secure a long term tenant that will fit this space. Ongoing vacancies can attract nefarious activity and other related issues. To that end, the site's conditions are detrimental to the public health, safety and general welfare of the community.
- **Criteria "G":** The lot is located within the City's UEZ.
- **Criteria "H":** Redevelopment of Block 603, Lot 17 is consistent with Smart Growth principles because the lot is approximately 685 feet southeast of the Downtown Plainfield Train Station. Additionally, it is in close proximity to several community amenities including City Hall, Plainfield Post Office, and the City's Central Business District.

Recommendation:

Based on the existing conditions of Block 603, Lot 17 as described in detail above, the Study Area satisfies Criteria D, G and H and should be designated as an "area in need of redevelopment".



4.3. Findings

Based upon the analysis above, it can be concluded that Block 601, Lot 1; Block 602, Lot 1; and Block 603, Lots 1.01, 3, 15, 16, and 17 meets several of the LRHL statutory criteria. It is suggested that the Plainfield Planning Board recommend that the City Council designate Block 601, Lot 1; Block 602, Lot 1; and Block 603, Lots 1.01, 3, 15, 16, and 17 as a Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area based on the findings below, which are also summarized in Table 3:

Area In Need of Redevelopment Criteria

A: Criteria "A" is applied to Block 603, Lot 15. The building on this property is dilapidated and in substandard condition. In its current state, this building is not conducive to wholesome working conditions.

B: Criteria "B" does not apply to the Study Area.

C: Criteria "C" is applied to Block 601, Lot 1; Block 602, Lot 1. Block 601, Lot 1 and Block 602, Lot 1 are owned by the City. Due to varying conditions, these lots are not likely to be redeveloped solely through the instrumentality of private capital.

D: Criteria "D" is applied Block 603, Lots 1.01, 15, 16 and 17. The site overall contains physical conditions that are detrimental to the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community.

E: Criteria "E" does not apply to the Study Area.

F: Criteria "F" does not apply to the Study Area.

G: Criteria "G" is applied to the entire Study Area. The Study Area is located within the City's Urban Enterprise Zone. Criteria G states "In municipalities in which an enterprise zone has been designated pursuant to the NJ Enterprise Zones Act, P.L. 1983, c.303 (c.52:37H-60et. seq.) 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 development. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs has designated Plainfield as one of the 32 Urban Enterprise Zones.

H:Criteria "H" is applied to the entire Study Area. In 2003, the LRHL was amended to include smart growth criteria which encouraged livable neighborhoods. It is a planning approach that directs new growth to locations where infrastructure and services are available, limits sprawl development, protects the environment, and enhances and rebuilds existing communities. The existing neighborhood, in which the Study Area is located, has public transportation options, is surrounded by mixed use development, open spaces and other City amenities. Consequently, Block 713, Lots 1, 2, 3 4, and 5 are in a prime location for redevelopment.

Section 3: Section 3 does not apply to the Study Area.

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

Table 3: Criteria Satisfied

Block	Lot	Address	Criteria Satisfied									Designate as an "area in need of redevelopment"
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Section 3	
601	1	201-249 East 4th Street			X				X	X		Yes
602	2	317-347 Watchung Avenue			X				X	X		Yes
603	1.01	229-239 East 5th Street				X			X	X		Yes
603	3	225-227 East 5th Street							X	X	X	Yes
603	15	218-232 Court Place	X			X			X	X		Yes
603	16	234-236 Court Place			X	X			X	X		Yes
603	17	242-246 Court Place				X			X	X		Yes





5.0 CONCLUSION

The foregoing investigation report has been prepared to determine whether the Study Area meets the statutory criteria for designating an “Area in Need of Redevelopment” pursuant to the LRHL. Block 603, Lots 1.01, 15, 16, and 17 demonstrates site deterioration and underutilization that is detrimental to the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community, in addition to opportunities for new and appropriate development. Block 601, Lot 1 and Block 602, Lot 2 are owned by the City and not likely to be redeveloped solely through the instrumentality of private capital. Block 603, Lot 3 is necessary to include within the overall “Area in Need of Redevelopment” despite the fact that this lot cannot be considered blighted based on its existing conditions. Additionally, the entire Study Area is located within the City’s Urban Enterprise Zone. The existing conditions do not support the development goals and objectives of the Master Plan.

For the reasons articulated in Sections 2.6 and 4.0 of this report, it is recommended that the City Council and Planning Board take the action necessary as prescribed by the LRHL to declare Block 601, Lot 1; Block 602, Lot 1; and Block 603, Lots 1.01, 3, 15, 16, and 17 as a Non-condemnation “Area in Need of Redevelopment”. Once declared as an “Area in Need of Redevelopment”, a redevelopment plan can be prepared and implemented to ensure proper utilization and development of the property.

6.0 APPENDICES

Fire Division records
Resolution R 222-22

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

Fire Division Incident Records			
Incident and Report Number	Date	Type/Offense	Location
19000030-0	1/3/2019	Service call, other	201 4th Street
18001018-0	3/12/2018	Service call, other	201 4th Street
17002000-0	9/8/2017	Smoke detector activation, no fire	201 4th Street
21002616--0	9/30/2021	Detector activation, no fire-unin	233 5th Street

Fire Division Violation Records			
Nature	Location	Status	Date
Need exit sign warehouse office area	225-239 East 5th Street	Abated	6/21/2017
Have emergency exit lights installed over all means of egress doors in warehouse area	225-239 East 5th Street	Abated	6/21/2017
Truss roof sign required for building	225-239 East 5th Street	Abated	N/A
Sprinkler system annual test report required from certified technician/company	225-239 East 5th Street	Abated	N/A

Have emergency exit lights installed over all means of egress doors in class next to office	225-239 East 5th Street	Abated	N/A
Truss floor sign required for building at front (mounted) near-main entrance	225-239 East 5th Street	Abated	N/A
Have 2 emergency exit lights installed over all means of egress doors	225-239 East 5th Street	Abated	N/A

CITY OF PLAINFIELD

R 222-22

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE PLANNING BOARD TO CONDUCT AN AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT INVESTIGATION OF BLOCK 601, LOT 1 (201-249 E 4TH STREET); BLOCK 602, LOT 1 (317-347 WATCHUNG AVENUE); BLOCK 603, LOT 1.01 (229 – 239 E. 5TH STREET); BLOCK 603, LOT 3 (225 – 227 E. 5TH STREET); BLOCK 603, LOT 15 (218 – 232 COURT PLACE); BLOCK 603, LOT 16 (234-236 COURT PLACE); AND BLOCK 603, LOT 17 (242-246 COURT PLACE) TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE PLANNING BOARD FINDS THAT THE PROPERTY SATISFIES THE LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING LAW CRITERIA TO BE DECLARED AN AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT, AND IF SO, COMMENCE WITH THE PREPARATION OF A REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

WHEREAS, the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq. as amended and supplemented (the “**Redevelopment Law**”), authorizes municipalities to determine whether certain parcels of land within the municipality constitute an area in need of redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, to make such a determination under the Redevelopment Law, the Municipal Council (the “**City Council**”) of the City of Plainfield (the “**City**”) must first authorize the Plainfield Planning Board (the “**Planning Board**”) to conduct a preliminary investigation of the area and make recommendations to the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the City Council believes it is in the best interest of the City that an investigation occur with respect to the properties identified on City Tax Maps as Block 601, Lot 1, identified in the City Tax Records as 201-249 E. 4th Street; Block 602, Lot 1, identified in the City Tax Records as 317-347 Watchung Avenue; Block 603, Lot 1.01, identified in the City Tax Records as 229-239 E. 5th Street; Block 603, Lot 3, identified in the City Tax Records as 225-227 E. 5th Street; Block 603, Lot 15, identified in the City Tax Records as 218-232 Court Place; Block 603, Lot 16, identified in the City Tax Records as 234-236 Court Place; and Block 603, Lot 17, identified in the City Tax Records as 242-246 Court Place; along with all streets and rights of way appurtenant thereto (the “**Study Area**”) and to determine whether all or a portion of the Study Area meets the criteria set forth in the Redevelopment Law to be designated as an area in need of redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, the City therefore authorizes and directs the Planning Board to conduct an investigation of the Study Area and to make recommendations to the City Council, all in accordance with the Redevelopment Law; and

WHEREAS, the redevelopment area determination requested hereunder, in connection with the Study Area authorizes City Council to use all those powers provided by the Redevelopment Law for use in a redevelopment area except the power of eminent domain; (hereinafter referred to as a “**Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area**”); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Plainfield, New Jersey as follows:

1. The foregoing recitals are incorporated herein as if set forth in full.
2. The Planning Board is hereby authorized and directed to conduct an investigation, pursuant to the Redevelopment Law to determine if the Study Area satisfies the criteria set forth in the Redevelopment Law and should be designated a “Noncondemnation Redevelopment Area.”
3. As part of its investigation, the Planning Board shall prepare a map showing the boundary of the Study Area.
4. The Planning Board shall conduct a public hearing in accordance with the Redevelopment Law, after giving due notice of the proposed boundary of the Study Area and the date of the hearing to any persons who are interested in or would be affected by a determination that the Study Area shall be a Noncondemnation Redevelopment Area.
5. At the public hearing, the Planning Board shall hear from all persons who are interested in or would be affected by a determination that the Study Area is an area in need of redevelopment and

evidence in support of those objection shall be received and considered by the Planning Board and shall be made part of the public record.

6. After conducting its investigation, preparing a map of the Study Area and conducting a public hearing at which all objections to the proposed designation are received and considered, the Planning Board shall make a recommendation to the City Council as to whether the City Council should designate all or a portion of the Study Area as a Noncondemnation Redevelopment Area.

7. If the Planning Board recommends that all or a portion of the Study Area be designated as a Noncondemnation Redevelopment Area, the Planning Board shall commence with the preparation of the redevelopment plan without need of further action by the City Council.

8. If any part of this resolution shall be deemed invalid, such parts shall be severed and the invalidity thereby shall not affect the remaining parts of this Resolution.

9. A copy of this resolution shall be filed in the Office of the City Clerk.

ADOPTED BY THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

June 13, 2022



Abubakar Jalloh, R.M.C.
Municipal Clerk

CLERK’S CERTIFICATION

I, Abubakar Jalloh, City Clerk of the City of Plainfield do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Plainfield City Council.

Abubakar Jalloh, R.M.C.
Municipal Clerk

✓ Vote Record - Resolution R 222-22						
<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted as Amended <input type="checkbox"/> Defeated <input type="checkbox"/> Tabled <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn <input type="checkbox"/> Consensus</div>			Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Absent
	Charles McRae	Voter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Joylette Mills-Ransome	Voter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Steve Hockaday	Seconder	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Ashley Davis	Voter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sean McKenna	Mover	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Terri Briggs-Jones	Voter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Barry N. Goode	Voter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>