

Burlington County Route 130 Corridor Municipal Questionnaire

**Please review these questions and fill in as much as you can
to paint a picture of your status and trends in planning:**

(We'd love to see additional planning documents if you have them, though we're primarily interested in you telling the story of your community in narrative form so that we get a feel for what makes it unique and what's important to you and your citizens.)

1. Visioning

Do you have a vision statement for your future? Please share it here:

Preface: The following vision statement is mostly from our Master Plan but has been updated to reflect additional concepts brought forth through various planning charettes and vision sessions. Inaccuracies have also been updated to reflect already completed projects. A new vision statement, developed through the Plan Endorsement Process, may modify or enhance the vision statement below, but we feel strongly that most of the concepts below will stand the test of time and be integral to a new vision statement.

The vision for the future of the City of Beverly is long-term, extending over the next twenty years. Many facets of the vision can be achieved today, from the guidance and initiative of the city and through public/private cooperation fostered by the city. The vision incorporates the goals and objectives of the city's master plan and the principles set forth in the *New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan* adopted in 1992. Further, the vision embraces the regional vision developed in the Burlington County sponsored Route 130/Delaware River Corridor Strategic Revitalization Plan, which is a product of the collaborative efforts of twelve municipalities including Beverly.

The general vision for Beverly is quite simple--develop Beverly into a close-knit, affordable, safe, clean, livable community in which the following are provided: a variety of affordable, code-compliant housing; a variety of local convenient goods and services; reliable, safe, convenient access to jobs in and outside the city; attractive and functional parks and recreational facilities; and quality community services and facilities for all ages. In essence, Beverly should achieve a high quality of life.

In every community, quality of life means something different, tailored to each community's unique setting and attributes. The vision for the City of Beverly recognizes this distinction and strives to capitalize and improve upon the resources that make Beverly unique. One of the city's key resources is its location on the Delaware River. The city has public access to the waterfront which affords attractive riverfront views. Another valuable resource is the city's residential neighborhoods which consist of a variety of housing types and architectural styles that reflect the historic development of the city. The city is fortunate to have a business district centrally located serving the entire community and parts of adjoining communities. Three county highways converge in the city's business district. Beverly has access to rail for freight service and light rail passenger service. The city has numerous small-scale commercial sites and buildings along the railroad and in close proximity to the county roads. Together, these resources form the basis upon which Beverly's vision is built.

The city envisions a transformation of its waterfront into a formally developed waterfront park located on consolidated parcels of land. The park is a part of the "Delaware River Heritage Trail," a pedestrian waterfront path which extends from Trenton to Palmyra over to Pennsylvania and back to Trenton, proposed by the National Park Service. The park has a number of amenities including, but not limited to: a promenade; a boat launch; a fishing pier; observation decks; gardens; open lawn areas; and a parking area. A ferry terminal is built to provide commuter ferry service between the city, other riverfront communities, the Camden Waterfront and the City of Philadelphia. The ferry also provides for recreational excursions for families during non-peak travel times. This new "River to Rail" connection offers residents and visitors several economical and environmentally friendly multimodal options for commuting to metropolitan areas while reducing vehicular traffic on already congested highways. A marina with a small commercial component, i.e., refreshment stand, marine chandlery, and bait shop, is also built. The park, ferry, and marina are an attraction for city residents and visitors.

In addition to the waterfront, the city's parks and recreational facilities are renovated and refurbished to meet the needs of the city's residents. Opportunities for active recreation are provided for the young and old. For example, basketball courts, spray parks, bocce courts, and other facilities are provided. Playgrounds and sitting areas are reconstructed. These facilities are well lit and designed for minimal maintenance.

The city envisions the revitalization of its neighborhoods. As part of the vision, older housing stock is rehabilitated or demolished when found to be unsalvageable and replaced with new environmentally responsible and affordable housing units. Housing maintenance codes are enforced to preserve and maintain the housing stock. Incompatible land uses, i.e., industrial facilities, are removed from residential neighborhoods and replaced by new, compatible housing. Affordable housing units are provided as apartments over businesses in the central business district.

The vision for the city includes a revitalized central business district (CBD) located along Warren and Cooper Streets. The CBD provides a mix of goods and services which meet the everyday needs of local residents and residents of nearby Delanco and Edgewater Park. Integrated into the mix of such goods and services are businesses that attract outside patrons and visitors to the city by capitalizing on the city's character, setting on the Delaware River and history, i.e., antique shops, specialty stores and a unique restaurant and/or cafe. Linkages are provided from the CBD to the waterfront via Cooper and Broad Streets. Landscaping, lighting, signage and walkway improvements define the linkages.

In the CBD, building facades are renovated into a cohesive attractive design. Stores and retail centers are rehabilitated consistent with the Green Building and Environmental Sustainability Element. The streetscape of Warren and Cooper Streets is revitalized with new sidewalks, street furniture and modern energy efficient lighting. New off-street parking opportunities are provided with strategically located parking facilities in the CBD. Vehicle charging stations are included in all new parking facilities. Incompatible uses are eliminated in the CBD. As the CBD improves and develops, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities in the CBD for city residents increase.

Access to and from the city is enhanced. The county highways which traverse the city are well maintained and safe. A new traffic circulation plan is considered to reduce the number of vehicles entering "Five-Points," Warren, Cooper and Bridge Streets. Vehicular travel speeds are reduced, particularly along Warren Street. Trucking is eliminated in residential areas because incompatible

industrial uses are removed from the neighborhoods. A light rail transit passenger stop is provided at Cooper Street and Railroad Avenue. Pedestrian access to the station stop is enhanced by reconstructing the sidewalk system and making major storm drainage improvements to eliminate flooding in the area of the stop. The light rail system accesses job markets outside the city, i.e., Camden, Philadelphia, Trenton and industrial complexes in and outside the county, and conveys workers to local industry and businesses in the city. Visitors to the city's CBD and waterfront have the opportunity to arrive by light rail and commuter ferry service.

The industrial buildings located along the railroad and county roads are renovated for new commercial uses. All formerly contaminated industrial sites have been remediated and returned to active, productive use. Industrial sites and buildings are cleaned up and are an asset to the community. In some instances, large buildings that once housed single industrial users are subdivided into flexible space occupied by multiple users. Local and nearby residents are employed in the commercial area of the city.

The city's community buildings and grounds are upgraded to meet the needs of the city's residents. All community buildings and facilities are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Green Building and Environmental Sustainability Element. The city's school facilities are renovated and updated, providing the latest in educational technologies. A new community center is built for city residents, young and old.

This vision is a guide for the future of Beverly. It is flexible and not cast in concrete. The vision sets the tone for the city's revitalization and provides achievable goals for how the city should look and function in the future. The changes and improvements recommended by the vision are significant and will most likely be accomplished incrementally. To that end, the redevelopment plan is prepared in phases for implementation.

Tantamount to developing this vision is revisiting it when the city's master plan is reexamined. The updated master plan and vision for the city should be made as one. Accordingly, the city's redevelopment plan should also be revisited, incorporating the principles, goals, and objectives of the revisited vision and reexamined master plan.

If so, when was it last affirmed? **2014**

Through what process? **Master Plan Re-examination**

Who participated? **A subcommittee that was comprised of members from the Land Use Board, Common Council, employees of the municipality, and citizens at large.**

What matters most to your community? **Economic Revitalization, and smart growth in an environmentally responsible manner with a sustainable future.**

Have you thought about your sustainability? Your contributions to Green House Gases (GHG)? How to reduce your GHG contributions? **Yes. Our municipality adopted two elements of our Master Plan, Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability and the Healthy Community Plan Element. Both documents outline some of the steps the City is planning to undertake for environmental sustainability. Additionally, the City has had several conversations with PSE&G to upgrade street**

lighting to LED technology on a small scale with the intention to expand the upgrades to all metal halide/mercury vapor fixtures in the future.

The City of Beverly is also a member of NJSEM; which is a single party aggregator of energy needs for over 200 municipal/public sector clients. Our NJSEM contracts require at least 30% of our energy purchases are from renewable resources.

Older municipally-owned vehicles are being systematically replaced with newer, cleaner, energy efficient vehicles and equipment.

Lastly, the City is also considering new sustainability initiatives for our Master Plan, Land Use Element, Zoning Code, and Design Guidelines. Some of these initiatives would require vehicle charging stations, and streamlining the process for solar panel installations. To that end, the City was recently contacted by an organization regarding a possible Community Solar Project for our residents; which the City intends to pursue if feasible.

2. Resiliency

Have you started planning for resiliency to climate change and sea level rise? **Yes. The City of Beverly was one of four (4) initial municipalities to take part in the DVRPC Coastal Vulnerability Assessment and we have since adopted the Coastal Vulnerability Assessment Report. We have also modified our Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to include the elevation of structures in the Flood Hazard Area to the elevation summary standard included in the Coastal Vulnerability Assessment Report.**

If so, please attach any planning documents. **Will attach: DVRPC Coastal Vulnerability Report and our Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.**

Who has been engaged in the discussions? **Engineers, Planners, members of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the Burlington County Office of Economic Development and Regional Planning, members of the Burlington County Bridge Commission/Burlington County Improvement Authority, Beverly City OEM, Beverly City Public Safety, Beverly Common Council, Mayor, Executive Director of the Beverly Sewerage Authority, and other interested stakeholders.**

Have you identified your risks? (Flooding? Erosion? Heat island effect? Increased storms? Disease? Other? **Yes. All risks have been outlined in our All Hazards Mitigation Plan Annex and submitted to the Burlington County OEM and NJ OEM.**

Have you assessed vulnerable populations? **Yes.**

Do you have an inventory of community assets? (Schools, emergency buildings, senior care, churches, businesses, infrastructure, transportation, energy, communications, health & medical facilities, hazardous materials; food water & shelter; safety & security, natural areas, parks, other?) **Yes, we have listed all locations in the Coastal Vulnerability Report**

3. Equity

Do you have issues of Environmental Justice or other concerns about equity in your community? If so, list communities/neighborhoods that have borne an outsized burden of pollution, traffic and or other considerations that impact on quality of life. **The City of Beverly is a small but diverse community with various levels of median household incomes spread across the entire municipality. The city does have a Federal Housing Project, Delacove Homes, that is located in our Waterfront District but it is well-managed and well-maintained. Through a positive relationship between the Beverly Housing Authority and the City of Beverly, the residents of Delacove Homes have a wonderful place to live in one of the more quiet sections of the City.**

The City of Beverly also participated in Regional Contribution Agreements with five (5) other municipalities to bring in approximately \$5 million in rehabilitation funds to assist residents in renovating their homes. The City also recently completed a Small Cities Rehabilitation Project that brought another \$175,000 to our residents to fix their homes.

The City of Beverly has also implemented an infrastructure improvement plan in the most economically challenged section of the City. To date, we have already invested \$1.4 million in infrastructure improvements so far with plans to invest another \$500,000 within the next 2-3 years.

Other quality of life issues are addressed through our Code Enforcement, Housing Code Enforcement and Police Department. To our knowledge there are no known Environmental Justice issues within our municipality.

What is the status of your affordable housing agreement? And, the status of implementation? **The City of Beverly is an older established community that is almost entirely built-out. According to COAH, the City of Beverly had met it's affordable housing obligation but we continue to create new affordable housing opportunities in all rehabilitation/new construction. The present developer, Beverly Revitalization Group, LLC has entered into several agreements with the City of Beverly to affirmatively market and maintain UHAC controls on all of their units. We presently have agreements in place for 29 units with another 6 units to be completed in 2021. Beverly has always been an affordable residential community and continues to do so. In 2016, Beverly had the lowest Average Purchase Price in Burlington County with the third lowest assessed value with an Average Assessment/Sales Ratio of 98.89%. Since that time, the average sale prices have increased and homes do not stay on the market for very long but still remain affordable.**

Additionally, Beverly has a robust rental housing market with over 280 rental units with most units with affordability controls. As such, the City of Beverly decided to not submit an affordable housing plan for certification nor did we request a Special Court Master.

4. Community Characterization

If not identified in the earlier questions, what are the key elements that define your community?

As stated earlier, the City of Beverly is an older established community that is almost completely built-out. In the early 1990's the city's population was close to 3,000 residents but, the population has steadily declined to roughly 2,400 residents in 2019. Even with a decline in population, the City has a

higher than normal population density of 4,630 people per square mile; which is 287% of the State average.

As with every other community, Beverly was hit hard by the housing market crash; which led to the Great Recession of 2009. At one point, more than 15% of properties were vacant leading to difficult financial issues for our residents and the City. Recovery was slower than most other communities, however the City has less than 2% vacant properties in 2020. We have seen an influx of new families and a large increase in construction activity. From 2009 through 2015, construction activity was almost non-existent. However, in 2020, even with the challenges of COVID19, the city has experienced a large increase in construction activity.

As expected, home sales drove much of the construction activity with investors purchasing older homes, rehabbing them and marketing these same properties. We have found the 2020 calendar year was a buyer's market in the City of Beverly with homes selling within days of listing, bidding wars for certain properties and homes selling sometimes \$30,000 over asking price. This resurgence is a welcomed element to the future development potential for the city.

According to the 2019 ACS, the median household income in Beverly rose to \$50,848 up from \$45,054 in 2000, but we still lag the State, which had a median household income of \$79,363 and the County, which had a median household income of \$84,992 during the same period. While there was an increase in median household income, the percentage of residents living below 100% of the poverty level was 15% with an unemployment rate of ~8.5%.

The 2018 American Community Survey states the average household size increased slightly to 2.6 people with 67% being family households. The travel time to work was an average of 32 minutes with 79.6% of people traveling in a car alone, 8.1% car-pooled, 8.1% walked, 1.8% bicycled, and 2.3% utilized commuter rail service.

The City of Beverly does have a transit hub (Riverline Station) in the eastern corner of the city. According to NJ Transit, the Beverly-Edgewater Park Riverline Station is the second busiest rail stop (highest ridership) outside of the terminuses of Trenton and Camden; which seems to contradict some of the findings in the ACS for travel to work by commuter rail service. This dichotomy appears to illustrate commuters from outside the community utilizing public transportation within the city; which indicates an apparent need for additional housing in close proximity of the station as was documented in various studies including the TCDI Inventory and TOD Study of 2004. There is a strong case for the City to pursue a Transit Village Designation.

Strategic development and redevelopment in the City of Beverly has great potential. While other surrounding communities have the benefit of highway commercial, large tracts of land available for warehouses, and vacant lands for housing developments, as stated earlier the City of Beverly had the lowest Average Purchase Price in Burlington County in 2016 with the third lowest assessed value with an Average Assessment/Sales Ratio of 98.89%. The availability of affordable properties, a transit hub within the city, the entire city being designated as an Area in Need of Rehabilitation, and large areas designated as Areas in Need of Redevelopment lends itself to great redevelopment potential.

The character of the city is best described as a quiet suburban/urban bedroom community with a small hometown feel in predominantly turn of the century homes. Some of the newer

neighborhoods, circa 1950, are especially appealing to many families as starter homes or affordable forever homes in quiet established developments with few quality of life issues. We have seen a resurgence in these areas as families move from larger cities to quiet suburbs within an easy commute of metropolitan areas.

The Central Business District (CBD) has many empty storefronts that are slowly being occupied but there is a lack of cohesiveness and a lack of available public parking which has created a significant hurdle to many small business ventures. Compounding the issues of already struggling “mom and pop” operations is the explosion of online retail options that were boosted even more by the COVID19 pandemic. The City sees the need to shift to “destination locations”, service-oriented businesses, and/or businesses that do not rely on drive-up or walk-by patrons if we hope to keep the CBD as a viable option for the City.

5. Mapping

Please attach a file with your zoning map in GIS format (shape files). **Burlington County Economic Development and Regional Planning to attach.**

If you have your community assets and vulnerabilities mapped, please include them as well.

Who is your municipal contact for GIS mapping? (please include email and phone #) **Burlington County Economic Development and Planning, Linda Wong, email: lwong@bcbridges.com, telephone: (609) 265-3156**

6. State Plan Consistency

Please review the 8 goals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (attached) and address how your master plan and vision for your community is (or is not) consistent with these goals, policies & indicators.

Goal 1: Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns

- The core concepts contained in our Master Plan, Master Plan Re-examination Report, vision statements and various planning studies all revolve around the revitalization and sustainability of the City of Beverly and our residents.

Goal 2: Conserve the State's Natural Resources and System

- Our Master Plan, which is in need of update, does not specifically address environmental conservation however elements that we have adopted recently and/or are considering adopting do address natural resource conservation. Our Healthy Community Plan Element, Green Building and Environmental Sustainability Element are just two examples of steps already taken. The governing body has drafted a tree conservation ordinance that closely monitors the State's zero-net loss policy but also includes elements from the Jackson Township Tree Conservation Ordinance; after it was amended due to a published court finding.

Goal 3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of NJ

- As stated in Goal 1, the core concepts of all our planning documents revolve around revitalization and sustainability which includes economic growth and renewal.

Goal 4: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution

- The City of Beverly, its employees, agencies and contractors are keenly aware of the dangers of pollutants and protecting the environment. We have a great natural resource in the Delaware River and we always strive to eliminate any risks manmade activities may have on the river. The Beverly Police Department, Public Works Department and Code Enforcement immediately stop, report and address any activities that may do harm to our environment. Where necessary, violators are issued a summons though we are pretty adept with gaining compliance without the need to involve the courts.

Goal 5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost

- Due to financial constraints of the city, new public facilities were not addressed as we focused on core facilities and operations. We have upgraded our school facility and municipal building with energy efficient equipment and materials as well as making both facilities ADA accessible. We have been speaking with developers, investors, and other community partners regarding the need for other community based/public-private partnership facilities for our community and we are making progress; albeit slower than we would like.

Goal 6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost

- This is an area where Beverly really shines. The city hosts a 71 unit Federal Housing Project, a 25 unit active adult/ADA apartment building, a 7 unit affordable apartment complex, a 6 unit affordable apartment complex, and several scattered-site affordable housing units which all have UHAC controls placed on the properties. In addition to these units, the city has approximately 280 rental units which are also affordable but do not necessarily have UHAC controls in place. As stated elsewhere in this response, most for-sale properties are small, affordable properties.

Goal 7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value

- Many of the areas of our community that have Historical and/or Cultural significance have already been identified on the State's LUCY database. Additionally, the City is currently working on wayfinding signage and historic/cultural markers to be placed throughout the community.
- We are exploring participation in the Green Acres Program and the Burlington County Open Space Program to preserve approximately 10 acres of natural areas along the Delaware River. We hope to be able to reach an agreement with the owners in the near future.
- We have also partnered with the Beverly Board of Education to include a local history curriculum into their History/Humanities Class to ensure future generations recognize the significance of our community in our region's history.

Goal 8: Ensure Sound, Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide

- The City is in full agreement with this goal and believe no community can thrive in a vacuum. Overarching principles and policies in planning guide everything we do. As an example, we recently requested assistance from the Burlington County Economic Development and Regional Planning Office to present to the DVRPC, for consideration, a request for a feasibility study for a commuter ferry service and eco-tourism as it relates to the Delaware River. If the feasibility study is conducted it will have regional economic, environmental, and recreational impact for our entire Delaware Valley region.

7. State requests

Please list any 'asks' that you have of the state including OPA, DEP, DOT, DCA, BPU or any other state agencies. OPA is committed to bringing them to the table, though we can't guarantee exactly the resolution that you're looking for.

As stated elsewhere, our city is a small municipality with limited resources but we are committed to revitalizing our community. We would respectfully request assistance with our planning efforts since we do not have an in-house planner, we do not have the financial resources to engage a planner for large scale planning projects and the Burlington County Economic Development and Regional Planning Office does not have sufficient personnel to complete these tasks due to staff reductions. The areas we would like to request assistance including Land Use Element completion (currently in draft), Zoning Review, Redevelopment Plan, Economic Development Plan, and Master Plan.

**Please feel free to add anything else that you feel would be pertinent to a planning discussion and
THANK YOU for your time!**