

Plan Endorsement Recommendation Report

Borough of Bound Brook



**New Jersey Department of State
Office of Planning Advocacy
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February 23, 2023**

Much of the details in this report come from information supplied by Bound Brook during the Plan Endorsement process as well NJ DEP and NJ DOT's O&C

The Image on the cover is attributed to

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/42/Bound_Brook%2C_NJ_-_hotel_and_clock_tower.jpg

This document is a recommendation report prepared by the Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA) as staff to the State Planning Commission (SPC or Commission), based on input of our partner agencies, Borough of Bound Brook and members of the public. OPA will post this report and other material related to the Borough of Bound Brook Plan Endorsement petition on our website. You can contact our office by email regarding petitions for Plan Endorsement by providing contact information, including name, organization, address, and e-mail address to osqmail@sos.state.nj.us.

Documents submitted by the Borough of Bound Brook for Plan Endorsement can be found here: <https://nj.gov/state/planning/plan-endorsement.shtml> and include the Borough's Master Plan, Amendments, Redevelopment Plans, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The Borough of Bound Brook (hereafter Bound Brook or the Borough) first was designated as a Joint Center with the Borough of South Bound Brook in May of 2000, prior to the formal Plan Endorsement process being established. Bound Brook received various extensions over the ensuing years that are scheduled to expire on March 31, 2023. South Bound Brook has decided not to pursue Plan Endorsement.

The Borough’s interest in pursuing a renewed Plan Endorsement was discussed on May 12, 2020 at a prepetition meeting with representatives from the Borough, state agencies and the Somerset County Planning Department. Bound Brook’s primary objectives in seeking Plan Endorsement (from the MSA): “maintain its partnership with the SPC, state agencies and Somerset County, and have the SPC formally recognize its efforts through the plan endorsement process.” They are also seeking assistance with to provide better access to recreational places in the borough, particularly in the northwestern portion of the borough; develop a trail along the Conrail right of way in the south; and provide better access to the Raritan River.

The local goals, objectives and vision for the Borough remain consistent with the State Plan, though some of the Center and Planning Area boundaries are being amended to reflect the Commission’s mapping policy concerning areas that flood. The Borough has third Round judgement of Compliance and Repose and consistently working to rehabilitate and provide additional affordable housing; completed a Master Plan Reexamination in 2019, continues to make great strides in its redevelopment efforts and toward the Statement of Goals and Objective set in the 2018 Master Plan Examination.

BACKGROUND/ CHRONOLOGY

The Mayor forwarded the Borough of Bound Brook’s petition for endorsement in February 2020.

In May 2020 a Prepetition meeting was held, the Borough’s longstanding Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) served as the Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee; and submitted their Municipal Self-Assessment Report in March, 2022. A waiver from further visioning was granted by Office of Planning Advocacy Executive Director Donna Rendeiro on January 11, 2023 because of their efforts to engage the public during the 2019 Master Plan Reexamination and in bilingual surveys.

The Borough of Bound Brook has been steadily building on its planning foundation, with efforts toward sustainability and smart growth as follows:

Event	Date	Notes
First Master Plan Adopted	1932	
Tea Street Area Study	2/15/1996	
Redevelopment Plans	2017-2022	
Designated a Town Center	2000	Originally designated a joint center with South Bound Brook
Transit Village Designation	2003	
Riverfront Access Plan for Bicycles & Pedestrians	2015	Public Access to the Raritan River Ribbon Cutting of Army Corp Project more than \$200 Million spent
Flood Levees created to protect against flooding	8/15/2016	

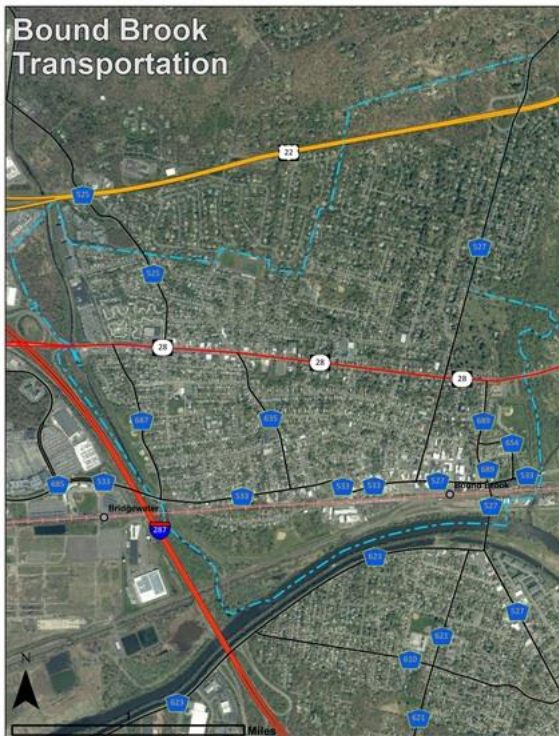
Master Plan Reexamination	6/8/2017	Adopted
Statement of Goals & Objectives	6/14/2018	Memorialized
New Land Use Plan element of Master Plan	2/28/2019	Adopted
Areas in Need of Redevelopment	November, 2019	Designated
Areas in Need of Rehabilitation	2019	Designated
Prepetition Meeting	5/12/2020	
Downtown/West End Redevelopment Area Study	11/8/2021	Block 10, Lots 4, 5, 9, 10, 18, 19 and 20

LOCATION & REGIONAL CONTEXT *(largely from Bound Brook’s MSA)*

A Planned Borough – *(History from Bound Brook’s MSA)*

Bound Brook is a Somerset County municipality of 1.7 square miles (1.66 land plus .03 water), located on the Northern bank of the Raritan River. To the West it is separated from the adjacent town of Bridgewater by the Middle Brook. To the East, it is separated from the adjacent Middlesex Borough by the Green Brook, into which flows the Bound Brook (also referred to as the Boundary Brook). Bridgewater is also the adjacent municipality to the North, on the other side of NJ Route 22. South Bound Brook is the neighboring town on the South side of the Raritan River.

I-287 runs immediately West of the Borough; US Route 22 runs immediately North, separating a small portion of the Borough. NJ Route 28 bisects the Borough. In the Southern part of the Borough, between Main Street and the Raritan River, is located an active passenger rail line (NJ Transit’s Raritan Valley line), and both active and inactive freight lines (CSX / Conrail). The NJ Transit line has two active grade crossings in the downtown. The CSX / Conrail freight line has an active grade crossing on South Main Street near the Queen’s Bridge.



The Borough is strategically positioned with respect to a number of employment centers. In addition to the

Newark and New York City job markets, the Borough is proximate to the New Brunswick “eds and meds” job market, as well as the I-287 corridor, to the North.

Bound Brook was first settled in 1681 and played a role during the Revolutionary War. The original Continental Flag was first raised in Bound Brook and flew at the Battle of Bound Brook in 1777.

When discussing the regional context, its roads, highways and historic train station must be mentioned. Interstate 287 runs north/south adjacent to the western boundary with an exit on Route 28/West Union that runs east/west thru the center of Bound Brook. Route 22 also runs east/west in the north with an exit in the northwestern portion of the Borough. The historic Bound Brook Train Station is located on Main Street in the southern part of the Borough north of the Raritan River.



One cannot speak of Bound Brook’s history without talking about flooding. Flooding has occurred due to Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and Hurricane Irene in 2011 and most recently in 2021, Ida as well as Nor-easter rains. In 2016, the Army Corp of Engineers completed the more than \$200 million, federally funded Green Brook Flood Control project that created a levee and floodgate system to protect the downtown. During Ida an abandoned NJ Transit train that is circled in the image below resulted in only moderate flood damage. Before the levees and floodgates, rescue boats were often needed to protect lives and properties.

Raritan River flooding, West Main Street levee system, and NJ Transit train stuck in flood gate



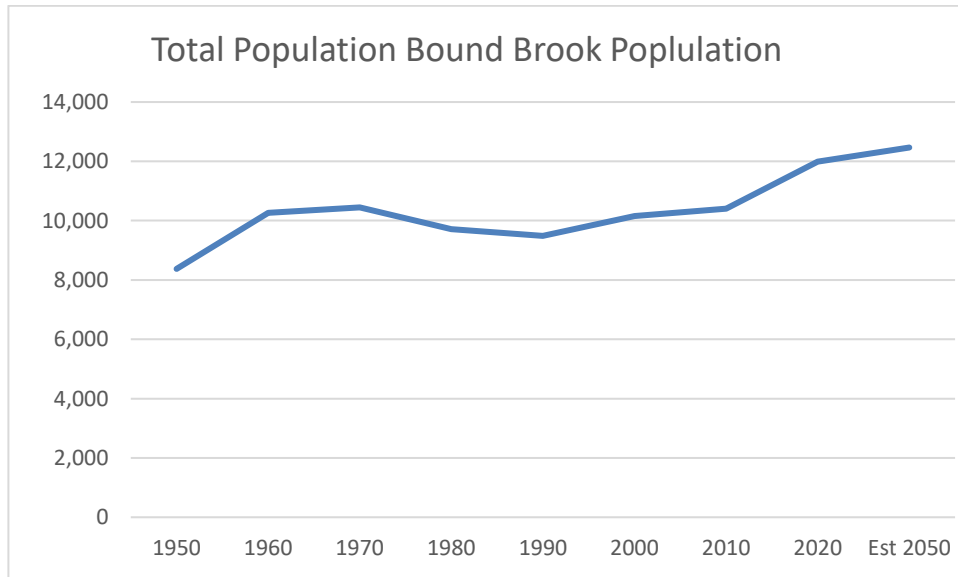
LAND USE, DEMOGRAPHICS AND FUTURE *(from 2020 Census)*

Population from 1970 to 2020

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Bound Brook	10,450	9,710	9,487	10,155	10,402	11,988
Somerset County	198,706	203,129	240,279	297,490	323,444	314,122
State of New Jersey	7,171,112	7,365,011	7,730,188	8,414,350	8,791,894	9,288,994

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and 2020: DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority projects that the population will climb to 12,466 by 2050. The Borough population decreased by 963 people or 9.2% between the 1970 and 1990 census due in part to flooding. Since a levee system was created by the Army Corp of Engineers in 2016, the steady growth should continue as the 2020 census population by 1,586 or 15.2%.



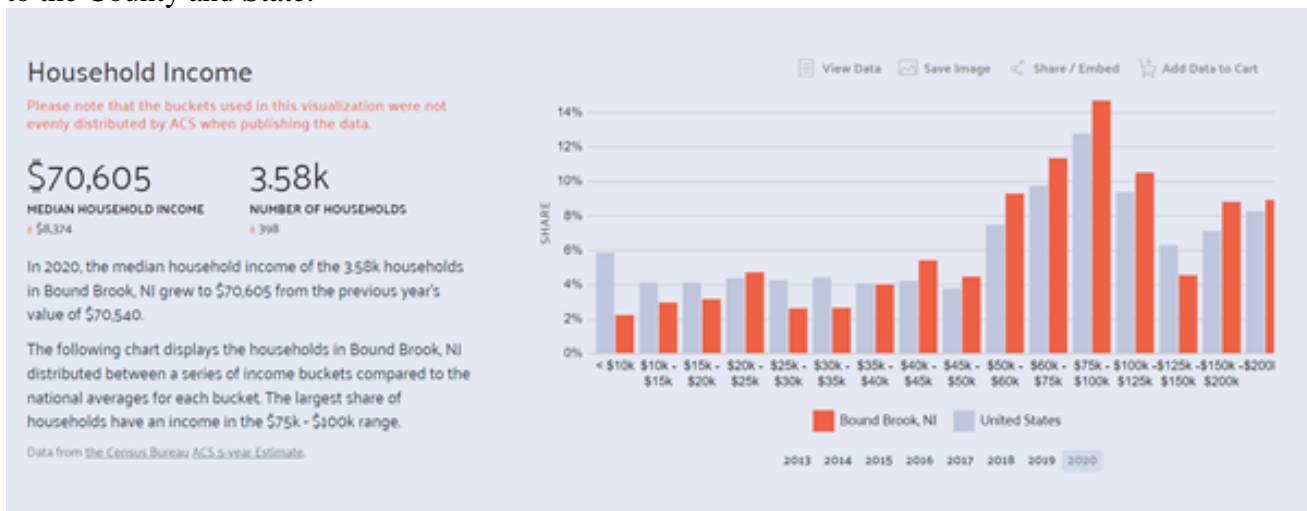
The age and ethnicity of the citizens of Bound Brook are noteworthy. The a median age of 34.1 years is significantly lower than the Somerset County 42.2 and State of New Jersey 40.2. People of Hispanic or Latino account for 53.2% of the population in comparison of the County 16.6% and State 21.6%

Occupation, 2019

	Bound Brook		Somerset County		New Jersey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	5,582		175,521		4,496,699	
Management, business, science and arts occupations	1,625	29.1	98,982	56.4	2,018,069	44.9
Service occupations	1,238	22.2	21,699	12.4	715,596	15.9
Sales and office occupations	1,134	20.3	30,990	17.7	918,830	20.4
Natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations	648	11.6	9,564	5.4	328,125	7.3
Production, transportation and material moving occupations	937	16.8	14,286	8.1	516,079	11.5

Source: 2019 5-Year American Community Survey; DP03 | Selected Economic Characteristics

The 2019 Survey indicates that the labor force is predominantly in the service, sales, construction and transportation industries, and not as much in administrative and managerial positions in comparison to the County and State.



The relatively working class community with a median household income of \$70,605 is not as wealthy as Somerset County of \$111,587. The housing stock is generally older and more affordable than rest of the County too.

Table 20: Year Structure Built, 2019

	Bound Brook		Somerset County		New Jersey	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total housing units	4,118	100.0	127,526	100.0	3,641,854	100.0
Built 2014 or later	463	11.2	3,732	2.9	105,455	2.9
Built 2010 or 2013	101	2.5	2,140	1.7	61,943	1.7
Built 2000 to 2009	43	1.0	12,902	10.1	323,354	8.9
Built 1990 to 1999	207	5.0	21,351	16.7	347,551	9.5
Built 1980 to 1989	221	5.4	25,366	19.9	434,094	11.9
Built 1970 to 1979	276	6.7	11,845	9.3	460,618	12.6
Built 1960 to 1969	296	7.2	15,346	12.0	472,383	13.0
Built 1950 to 1959	677	16.4	14,091	11.0	527,033	14.5
Built 1940 to 1949	595	14.4	6,507	5.1	251,000	6.9
Built 1939 or earlier	1,239	30.1	14,246	11.2	658,423	18.1

Source: 2019 5-Year American Community Survey; DP04 | Selected Housing Characteristics

Of the 4,118 housing units, 48.3% are single family homes, while 51.6% are apartments. There 617 housing units in apartments with 20 units or more. The average household size is 2.92 people per unit. According to information supplied in the Bound Brook Self-Assessment, Bound Brook is more affordable than the rest of Somerset County. In the Borough the median value of owner-occupied housing has fallen in three of the four years from 2015 to 2019, unlike the county and the state, where it has increased every year. The Average gross rent in the Borough (\$1,443) is considerably less than the county average (\$1,633), but not the state average (\$1,376).

Affordability and demand for housing have spurred the recent redevelopment of Citizen Bound Brook, a 105 unit apartment building with retail on the first floor on the site of the former Bound Brook Hotel. Also of note was the sale of the Mosaic on Main Street an apartment complex that is a short walk to the train station for \$22 million. This was the highest price paid for any multi-family residential building in Somerset County in 2022.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Water -

Bound Brook potable water is supplied by NJ American-Raritan Water company (NJ2004002) which covers the entire town.

Wastewater Treatment -

Bound Brook does not have its own public wastewater treatment system but is served by the Middlesex County Utility Authority.

Capacity Issues Raised by DEP -

While DEP did not raise any red flags concerning water and waste water treatment, they wanted to ensure that the Borough and their providers are mindful of the need to monitor and update the County WQMP at

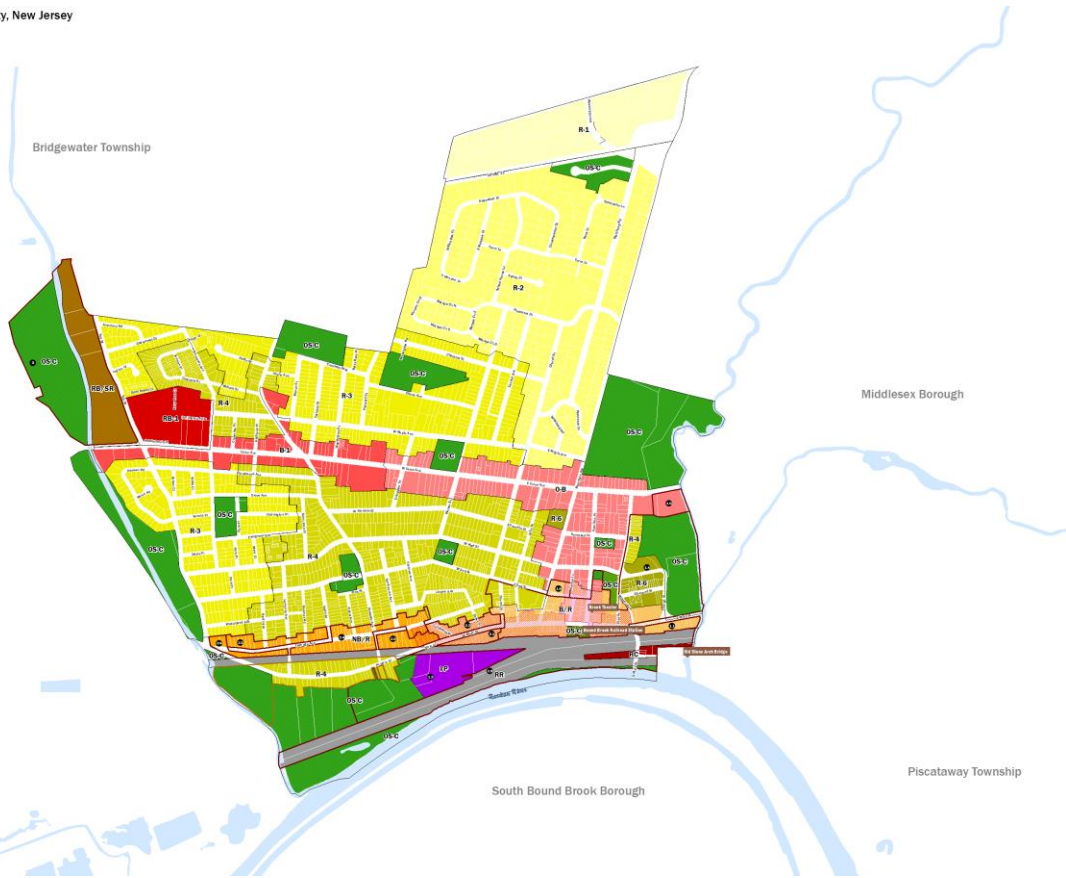
the appropriate time. Any other concerns that need to be addressed are included in the Plan Implementation Agreement attached to this report.

FUTURE LAND USE /ZONING MAP (Below)

Borough of Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey

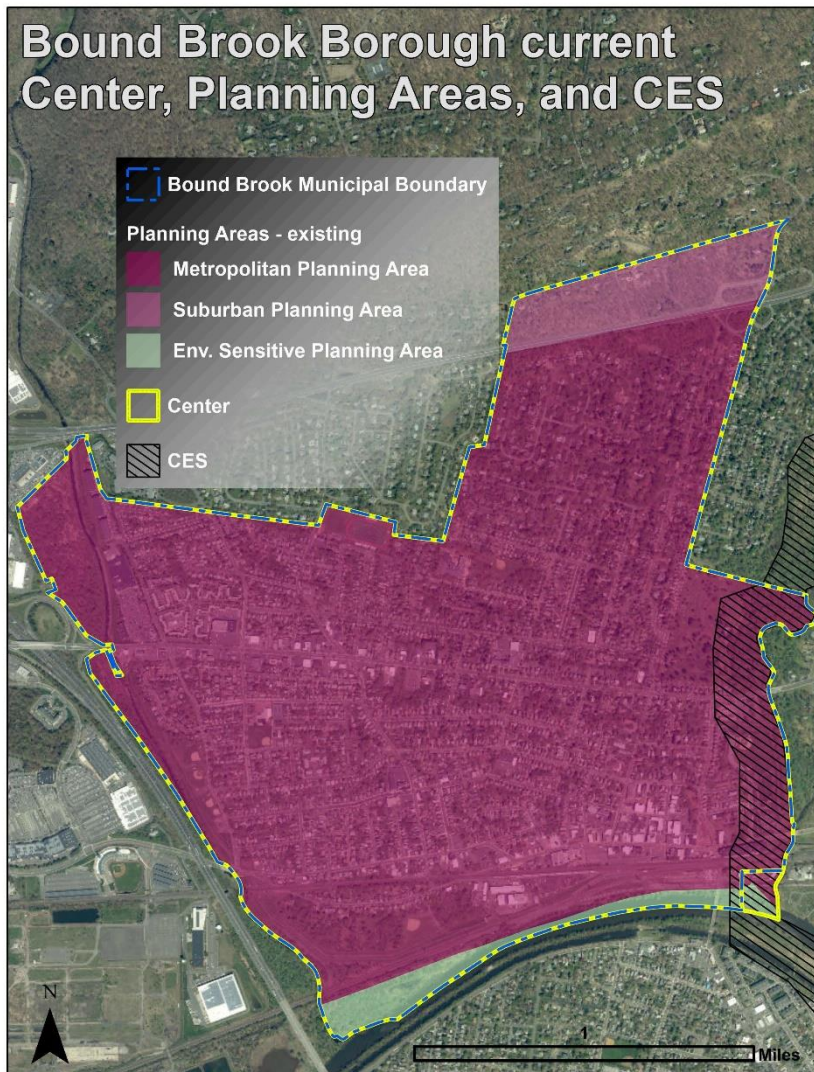
Zoning Map

- R-1 Single Family Residence District
 - R-2 Single Family Residence District
 - R-3 Single Family Residence District
 - R-4 One and Two Family Residence
 - R-5 Multiple Family Residence
 - BR Business Residential
 - NB-1R Neighborhood Business/Residential
 - NB-2R Neighborhood Business/Residential
 - O-B Office Business
 - B-1 General Business
 - NB-1 Regional Business District One
 - OS-C Open Space/Civic
 - IP Industrial Park
 - RR Railroad
 - RC Riverfront Commercial
 - Redevelopment Sub-Districts
 - The West Main Street Rehabilitation Area
- Overlay Districts**
- Arts District
 - Downtown Residential
 - Main Street District



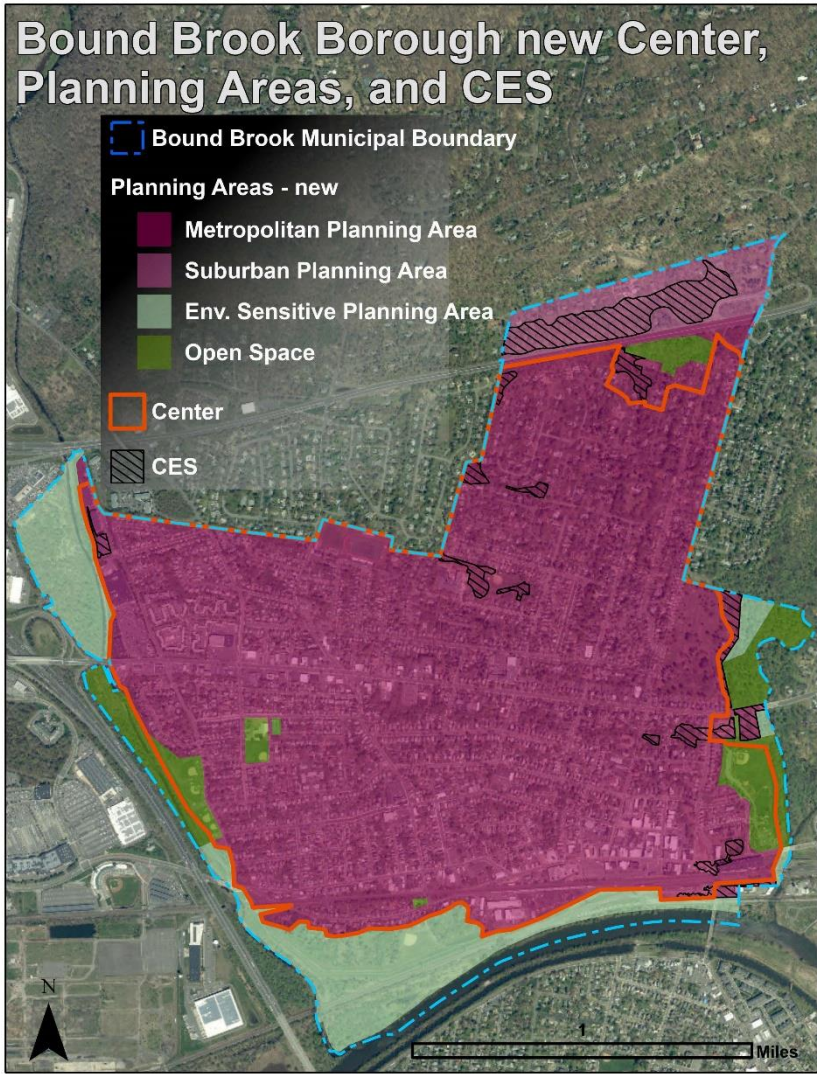
PROPOSED MAP AMENDMENTS

Existing SDRP mapping is below:



PA	Planning Areas	Acres
PA 1	METROPOLITAN	1,006.3
PA 2	SUBURBAN	54.0
PA 5	ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE	29.4

Current Center is 1,084.6 Acres



PA	Planning Areas	ACRES
PA 1	METROPOLITAN	844.9
PA 2	SUBURBAN	50.1
PA 5	ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE	113.1
PA 8	OPEN SPACE	72.9

Proposed Center is 839.9 Acres

Mapping Changes

PA	Planning Areas	Acreage Differences
PA 1	METROPOLITAN	-161.4
PA 2	SUBURBAN	-3.9
PA 5	ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE	83.8
PA 8	OPEN SPACE	72.9

The Center is 245.7 Acres Smaller

STATE PLAN GOALS REVIEW

Goal #1 Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns - The Borough's 2008 Master Plan, as well as all Master Plan Re-Examination Reports, place an emphasis on the continued revitalization of the Borough's downtown, by being an attractive place for people to live, work and play.

- 2011, the Downtown Design Plan was added as a Master Plan element
- 2018 Van Horne Plaza received Somerset County Excellence in Planning Award

Goal #2 Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems –

The Borough is committed to the preservation of its open space and water ways. Approximately 59 acres are dedicated to open space for passive and/or active parks which include Billian Legion Park, Codrington Park /Ben Maggio Recreation Center, Rock Machine Field, and Tea Street Sports Co 72.9 Acres of is open space. Reasons for pursuing plan endorsement including seeking funding to provide better access to the Raritan River, the Middle Brook and Green Brook as well as developing a rail to trail along the CSX/Conrail right of way.

Goal #3 Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for all Residents of NJ –

It is a long-stated priority of the Borough to foster economic growth and sustainability throughout the Borough. The downtown and train stations are important components of the economic planning in the Borough. Their planning goes beyond and in their redevelopment planning also include an Arts District and Downtown Residential overlays.

Goal #4 Protect the Environment, Prevent, and Clean Up Pollution -

Bound Brook's Environmental Commission supported Rutgers Water Resources Program to develop an Impervious Cover Assessment and Green Infrastructure Action Plan through which they began implementation of a raingarden at a local park, the Borough Hall Annex and a third at another location.

Borough's stormwater rules were last amended on 2/23/2021 to reflect the NJDEP Stormwater Management Rules

Rain gardens included in redevelopment plans and stormwater plans as well as non-structural

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

Bound Brook Public School system Kindergarten – Grade 12. South Bound Brook attends high school

Bound Brook Revitalization Partnership, a special improvement district was established in 2015 Parks, trails and open space

Goal #6 Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost -

Bound Brook received a judgement of compliance and repose and is working to rehabilitate additional affordable housing within the Borough.

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

The Brook Theater, on the National Register, reopened in 2010 after being closed for 23 years. There is also an active historical society, the Bound Brook Historical Society. Many buildings may not specifically be of historic significance, but they represent what a New Jersey Downtown is and should continue to be.

Goal #8 Ensure Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide -

By participating in the Plan Endorsement process, and as a State Plan-designated Center, Bound Brook is demonstrating its commitment to comprehensive planning, and its continuing commitment to working with surrounding municipalities, the County, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and any others who willing to support the community. Bound Brook's goal is to ensure that its planning is consistent at all levels, and Plan Endorsement will facilitate that.

RESILIENCY (largely from the MSA)

The Borough of Bound Brook has undertaken several efforts to support a more sustainable and resilient municipality and is preparing to undertake more:

- Participate in Somerset County hazard mitigation efforts, including chapter in the 2019 Hazard Mitigation Plan
- 2022 FEMA/OPA Riverine Resiliency Pilot

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Borough of Bound Brook has diligently and regularly planned and implemented measures to ensure that their center, and environs remain sustainable and grow using smart-growth principles. Based on this work, they have demonstrated that their actions and plans, including with the items identified in the PIA, are aligned with the State Plan. It is staff's recommendation that the Plan Implementation Committee forward this proposed Plan Endorsement to the State Plan Commission as presented. Please see the attached PIA for details of Bound Brook's implementation agreement.