

# **Environmental Impact Assessment**

for

## **Sunset Park Boat Ramp Improvement Project**

### **Green Acres Funding Application**



*\*\*This is a conceptual rendering of the proposed project and the final design will vary\*\**

**Borough of Harvey Cedars**

**Ocean County, New Jersey**

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## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

Sunset Park is comprised of 9.02 acres and provides a children's playground as well as an open ball field, basketball courts, a volleyball area, tennis courts, and two pickleball courts. A permanent restroom building is also available for public use at the center of the site. This park area encompasses more than three full blocks between West Burlington and West Salem Avenues and along the Barnegat Bay and within a predominately residential area.

The Borough proposes improvements to Sunset Park consisting of dredging the adjacent waterway to restore navigable depth and constructing a new boat ramp at the site of the existing hand-launch area. The current launch area is an unimproved dirt surface intended solely for kayaks and paddleboards and is not designed or structurally capable of accommodating trailered vessels. The proposed project will formalize and upgrade this access point to safely support boat launching activities. The proposed project will include construction of a stabilized boat ramp, associated access improvements, shoreline stabilization, and limited dredging to provide safe and functional water access.

The boat ramp will be approximately 30 feet in width to accommodate two-way trailer movement. extending from the upland staging area into the water at a slope consistent with safe launching standards (generally 12%–15%). The ramp will extend waterward to a depth sufficient to allow vessel launching at mean low water, anticipated to be approximately –4 to –5 feet below mean low water, subject to final hydrographic survey and permitting requirements. The ramp will be comprised of ArmorFlex cellular concrete blocks to ensure erosion control and to provide structural stability and prevent settlement.

A vinyl or composite bulkhead will be installed landward and/or laterally adjacent to the ramp to stabilize the shoreline, reduce lateral erosion, and provide structural reinforcement. The bulkhead will also serve to diffuse wave energy generated by vessel activity and tidal action, minimizing scour at the ramp edges and protecting adjacent parkland. Riparian toe protection (stone riprap) may be installed at the base of the bulkhead and ramp interface to further prevent undermining.

The existing dirt access surface will be removed and replaced with a stabilized clamshell surface to provide durable, permeable access for vehicles and trailers while maintaining a natural aesthetic consistent with the park setting. The clamshell material will be compacted over a prepared subgrade and geotextile separation layer to enhance load-bearing capacity and reduce rutting. This improvement will significantly reduce sediment tracking and erosion associated with the current unimproved surface.

Pedestrian walkways or docks will be constructed adjacent to the launch area to separate foot traffic from vehicular movements and will be approximately 2 to 2.5 FT feet in width.

Dredging of the adjacent waterway will likely be performed using a barge-mounted excavator with sediment removed to achieve the required navigable depth. All dredging activities will comply with applicable NJDEP and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit conditions, including proper disposal or beneficial reuse of dredged material.

Collectively, these improvements will formalize the launch facility, enhance public safety, reduce shoreline erosion, improve storm resilience, and provide long-term, environmentally responsible access to the waterway.

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It's anticipated that this new boat ramp will accommodate users from all six municipalities that comprise Long Beach Island including the Boroughs of Beach Haven, Ship Bottom, Surf City, and Barnegat Light as well as Long Beach Township and nearby mainland communities such as Stafford and Barnegat Townships.

The objective of the proposed project is to enhance the existing park by providing additional recreational opportunity and public access to tidal waterway not only for the residents and vacationers of Harvey Cedars, but for all those who spend time and enjoy Long Beach Island and its surrounding areas. This project will be completed within 6 months of Notice to Proceed by the contractor.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Vegetation**

The site is characterized primarily by sandy, sparsely vegetated upland and shoreline areas typical for a coastal park setting. Vegetation consists predominantly of low-growing dune grasses and herbaceous groundcover interspersed with patches of beach shrub species. Several small to medium-sized trees are present which provide limited canopy coverage. Portions of the area are minimally vegetated with exposed sand and compacted surfaces especially near the existing launch area.

### **Wildlife**

Long Beach Island is part of a dynamic barrier island ecosystem that supports a wide range of coastal and estuarine wildlife, underscoring the environmental importance of projects undertaken within this region. The island's bayfront areas provide critical habitat for migratory shorebirds, wading birds, and waterfowl, including protected and state-monitored species such as piping plovers and ospreys. The adjacent Barnegat Bay estuary serves as an essential nursery for finfish, shellfish, and blue crabs, supporting both ecological health and the local economy. Tidal wetlands, dune grasses, and maritime shrub communities contribute to shoreline stabilization while providing habitat for small mammals, reptiles, and pollinators.

According to NJDEP GeoWeb mapping, no threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitats are present within the project site. While the proposed project includes dredging activities that will temporarily disturb the existing area, no impacts to protected wildlife resources are anticipated based on current mapping and available data. The project is not expected to adversely affect sensitive species or habitats.

### **Geology, Topography and Soils**

The majority of the site is classified as Psammaquents, sulfidic substratum (PstAt) which is 0 to 2 percent slopes, and frequently flooded. To the west of the site is Urban land-Hooksan complex (USHOOB) which is 2 to 10 percent slopes. Along the Barnegat Bay is the demas fine sand (WDe1) which is 0 to 1 meter water depth. The proposed improvements will not alter the soil composition, site geology and any changes to topography will be minor in nature to support project construction.

### **Water Resources/Hydrology**

Sunset Park is located on a narrow section of the barrier island bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the east and Barnegat Bay to the west, creating a dynamic coastal hydrologic system influenced by tidal fluctuations, storm surge, and groundwater movement. Surface waters are primarily tidal, with daily

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exchanges that support estuarine habitats and influence shoreline conditions. The island's shallow groundwater system is sensitive to recharge, saltwater intrusion, and coastal flooding. Storm events and sea level rise further affect drainage patterns, shoreline stability, and water quality. As a result, this project will be designed while considering tidal hydraulics, sediment transport, groundwater conditions, and stormwater management to protect both natural resources and built infrastructure.

#### **Historic/Archeological Resources**

According to NJDEP Digital GIS Data, the site is not located within a designated historical area nor is it impacted by any archeological resources.

#### **Transportation/Access to Site**

Sunset Park is readily accessible from Ocean County Road 607 (Long Beach Boulevard) and is situated adjacent to Salem Avenue, Burlington Avenue, Hudson Avenue, and Passaic Avenue, all of which function as residential collector streets with posted speed limits of 25 MPH. The park includes an on-site parking area that adequately accommodates existing recreational users, including vehicles with boat trailers. The parking layout allows for safe maneuvering, staging, and circulation of trailered vessels without impacting adjacent residential streets. The proposed boat ramp improvements will utilize the existing parking footprint and circulation pattern and are not anticipated to create additional parking demand or traffic conflicts. In addition, many visitors access the park by foot or bicycle from the surrounding residential neighborhood. Harvey Cedars is a highly walkable community with established sidewalks and bicycle lanes, further supporting safe, multimodal access to the park.

#### **Adjacent Land Uses**

As depicted in Attachment G, the project site is located within the Public Zoning District and is directly adjacent to the RA – Residential Zoning District. The southwest corner of the block is occupied by the Harvey Cedars Water Department facility, while the southeast corner and all other surrounding properties are developed for residential use. The surrounding neighborhood is therefore predominantly residential in character. As a seasonal resort community, Harvey Cedars experiences a substantial increase in population during the summer months, resulting in heightened demand for public recreational facilities and waterfront access.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION**

#### **Affected Resources and the Significance of Each Impact**

Since the project is located within an area previously disturbed by development of the existing paddleboard/kayak launch, recreational fields, and playground, the proposed boat ramp and associated improvements are not expected to result in significant adverse impacts. The site's existing level of disturbance and recreational use demonstrates that the project will not negatively affect sensitive or undisturbed natural resources.

No significant impacts to ecological, water quality, or other environmental resources are anticipated as a result of the proposed improvements. On the contrary, the project will provide a positive community benefit by enhancing public access, safety, and utility of Sunset Park's waterfront facilities.

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All construction activities, including boat ramp installation, shoreline stabilization, and dredging, will be conducted in full compliance with applicable regulatory requirements. Required approvals are expected to include, but may not be limited to: the NJDEP Waterfront Development Permit, Coastal Wetlands Permit (if applicable), and any necessary U.S. Army Corps of Engineers authorizations. All work will adhere to the conditions and mitigation measures outlined in these permits to ensure protection of water quality, critical habitats, and other environmental resources.

### **Short-term and Long-term Project Impacts**

Short-term impacts associated with the proposed project will primarily occur during the construction phase. These may include temporary roadway disruptions related to equipment mobilization, minor traffic delays, construction noise, dust, and visual disturbance to nearby residents and park users. In-water work associated with dredging may result in temporary turbidity; however, appropriate sediment control measures, including turbidity curtains and compliance with permit conditions, will be implemented to minimize impacts. All construction-related disturbances will be temporary in nature and limited to the duration of active work, after which the site will be restored and stabilized.

Long-term impacts of the project are anticipated to be predominantly beneficial. The boat ramp will be structurally engineered to withstand coastal conditions, including tidal fluctuations, wave action, storm events, and regular vehicular use, thereby ensuring durability and extended service life. The incorporation of Armortech concrete blocks and appropriate shoreline stabilization measures will minimize erosion, reduce scour at the ramp interface, and enhance overall structural integrity. These improvements will provide a stabilized, resilient shoreline condition, improve public safety, and ensure reliable, low-maintenance operation of the facility over time, while reducing the potential for ongoing sediment disturbance and shoreline degradation.

### **Anticipated Increase in Recreation and Overall Use**

The proposed boat ramp will address the Borough's need for improved access to accommodate small pleasure boats, as well as kayaks and paddleboards, thereby expanding the range of waterfront recreational opportunities available to residents and visitors. Located within an established public park and situated more than 200 feet from the nearest residential dwelling, the project is compatible with surrounding land uses and is appropriately buffered from adjacent neighborhoods.

Construction of the boat ramp is anticipated to increase recreational activity and overall park utilization by providing safe, dependable, and clearly defined access to the adjacent waterway. While the waterway is presently navigable, moderate dredging will improve depth and usability, enhancing the boating experience and reducing operational limitations. By formalizing and upgrading access to an existing recreational resource, the project will encourage greater participation in boating and passive waterfront activities, support seasonal tourism, and strengthen the park's role as a community amenity—without creating new land-use conflicts or substantially altering the character of the area.

### **Adjacent Environmental Features Affected**

Environmental features in the vicinity include open tidal waters and maintained upland parkland consisting of sandy soils and landscaped vegetation. The shoreline in this area has been previously disturbed and is

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actively used for recreational access, and it does not contain undisturbed dune systems, freshwater wetlands, or forested habitat within the immediate footprint of the proposed improvements.

Potentially affected environmental features are limited to the nearshore aquatic environment where minor dredging and ramp installation will occur. These activities may temporarily disturb bottom sediments and benthic habitat within a confined area. However, the project will be designed to minimize encroachment beyond the existing disturbed shoreline and will incorporate shoreline stabilization measures to reduce long-term erosion and sediment transport. No significant impacts to threatened or endangered species habitat, wetlands, or critical coastal resources are anticipated. All work will be conducted in accordance with applicable NJDEP and federal permit conditions to ensure protection of adjacent environmental features and water quality.

#### **Permits Required for Project**

This park improvement project will likely require NJDEP Waterfront Development Individual Permit as well as federal and state dredging authorizations.

#### **Natural Heritage Data Request Form**

As shown in Attachment I, the proposed improvements are situated on a presently developed site and there are no mapped T&E species present on site according to NJDEP Digital GIS Data (Geoweb). As such, the proposed project is not anticipated to impact any threatened and endangered species and a Natural Heritage Data Request form was not required.

#### **If/How the Project may be Impacted by Sea Level Rise**

The site lies within the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area and faces the same exposure to sea level rise as other structures and community amenities within the Borough. The NJDEP Strategic Climate Action Plan states flooding and storm events are becoming more frequent and severe in New Jersey, and as a result, Sunset Park may experience increased flooding conditions. To address these risks, the project will incorporate resilient design elements, including structurally engineered concrete ramp construction, shoreline stabilization, and erosion control measures capable of withstanding projected coastal conditions. Consideration of anticipated tidal changes and adaptable maintenance strategies will help ensure the facility remains functional and safe under evolving sea level conditions.

#### **ALTERNATIVES OF THE PROPOSED ACTION**

An alternatives analysis was conducted to evaluate potential locations and design options for the proposed boat ramp. Due to the Borough's limited bayfront frontage, existing development patterns, and site constraints, Sunset Park represents the only viable location for a municipally accessible boat ramp within the Borough. Other waterfront areas are either privately owned, environmentally constrained, or lack sufficient upland area to accommodate safe vehicular access and trailer maneuvering.

The existing launch area at Sunset Park is not developed to support trailered vessels and functions solely as an unimproved hand-launch site. Given site size limitations and surrounding land uses, no alternative ramp configurations or locations were determined to be feasible.

Accordingly, the only practical alternative to the proposed action is the “no-build” option. Under this scenario, no boat ramp would be constructed, and the current unimproved launch area would remain in place, continuing to limit safe and reliable public access to the waterway. The no-build alternative would not address the Borough’s documented need for improved boating access and would forgo the safety, shoreline stabilization, and recreational benefits associated with the proposed improvements.

For these reasons, the proposed project represents the only feasible and practical alternative.

### **MITIGATING MEASURES**

The proposed project will comply with all applicable Green Acres Program requirements for park development which includes the addition of a public boat ramp within an existing municipal recreation area. The project footprint is confined to a previously disturbed portion of the park and adjacent shoreline in order to avoid unnecessary impacts to undisturbed natural resources.

As with any construction activity, temporary impacts such as noise, dust, equipment emissions, and minor traffic disruptions may occur during the construction phase. These impacts will be minimized through implementation of best management practices, including limiting construction hours, utilizing properly maintained equipment, applying dust control measures as needed, and maintaining safe traffic circulation patterns. In-water work will incorporate turbidity controls and sediment management measures consistent with NJDEP and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit conditions to protect water quality and aquatic habitat.

Shoreline stabilization elements, including reinforced ramp construction and erosion control measures, have been incorporated into the design to reduce long-term scour, sediment transport, and shoreline degradation. By formalizing and stabilizing an existing disturbed launch area, the project will ultimately reduce ongoing erosion associated with the current unimproved surface.

Harvey Cedars Borough is a fully developed coastal community with substantial experience implementing infrastructure and shoreline improvement projects, particularly following Superstorm Sandy. The Borough has demonstrated its ability to effectively manage construction activities in sensitive coastal environments and to implement mitigation strategies for projects of similar and greater complexity. Accordingly, the proposed project will be constructed in a manner that avoids, minimizes, and mitigates potential impacts to the maximum extent practicable.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Site Location Map

Attachment B: USA Topography Map

Attachment C: USGS Imagery Topography Map

Attachment D: Soil Classification Map

Attachment E: FEMA Flood Mapping

    Location FIRMette

    Effective FIRM Map

    Preliminary FIRM Map

Attachment F: Tax Map

Attachment G: Zoning Map

Attachment H: Color Photos

Attachment I: Historic Districts

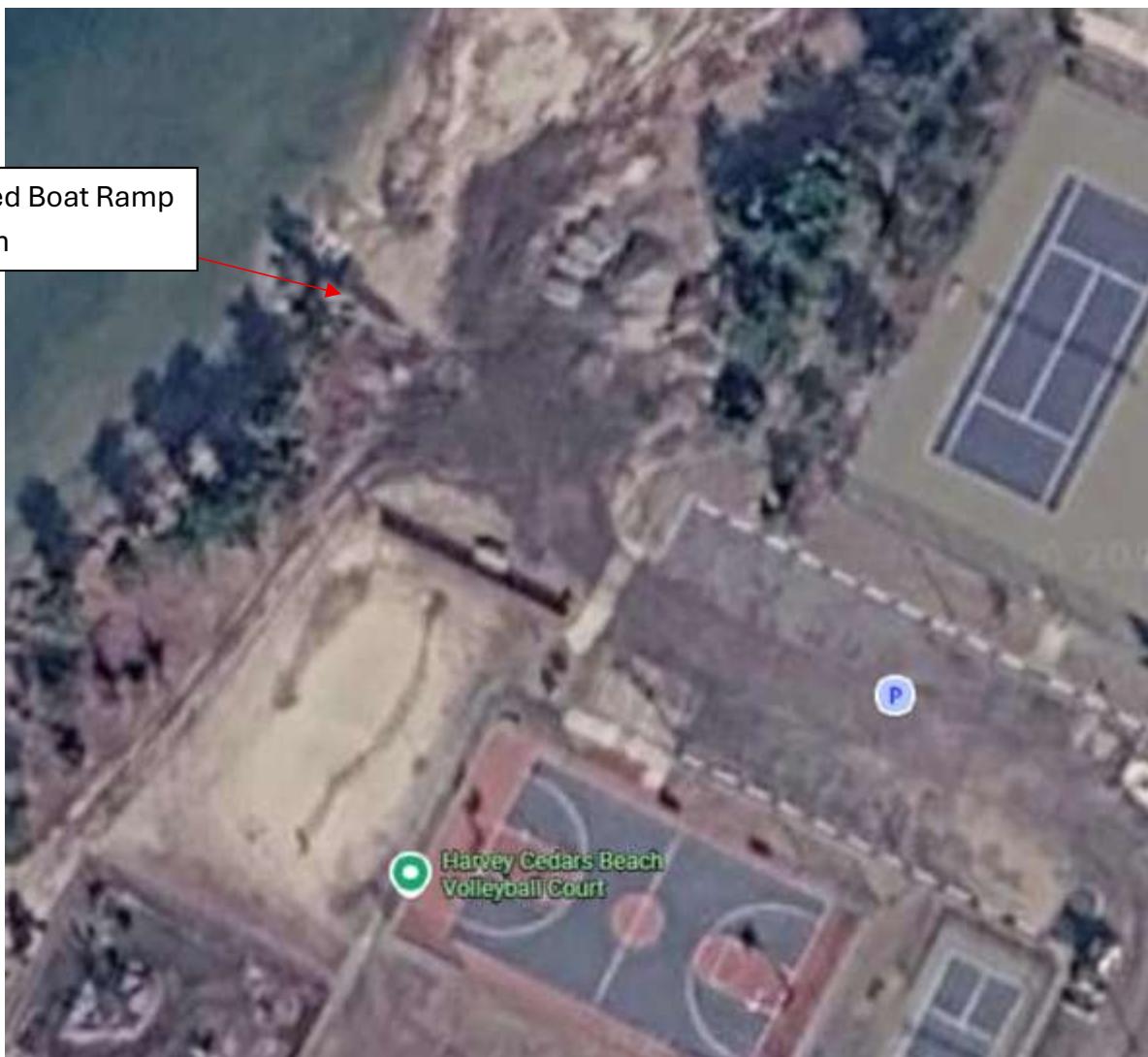
Attachment J: Qualifications of Preparer

Attachment A: Site Location Map

Source: Google Maps

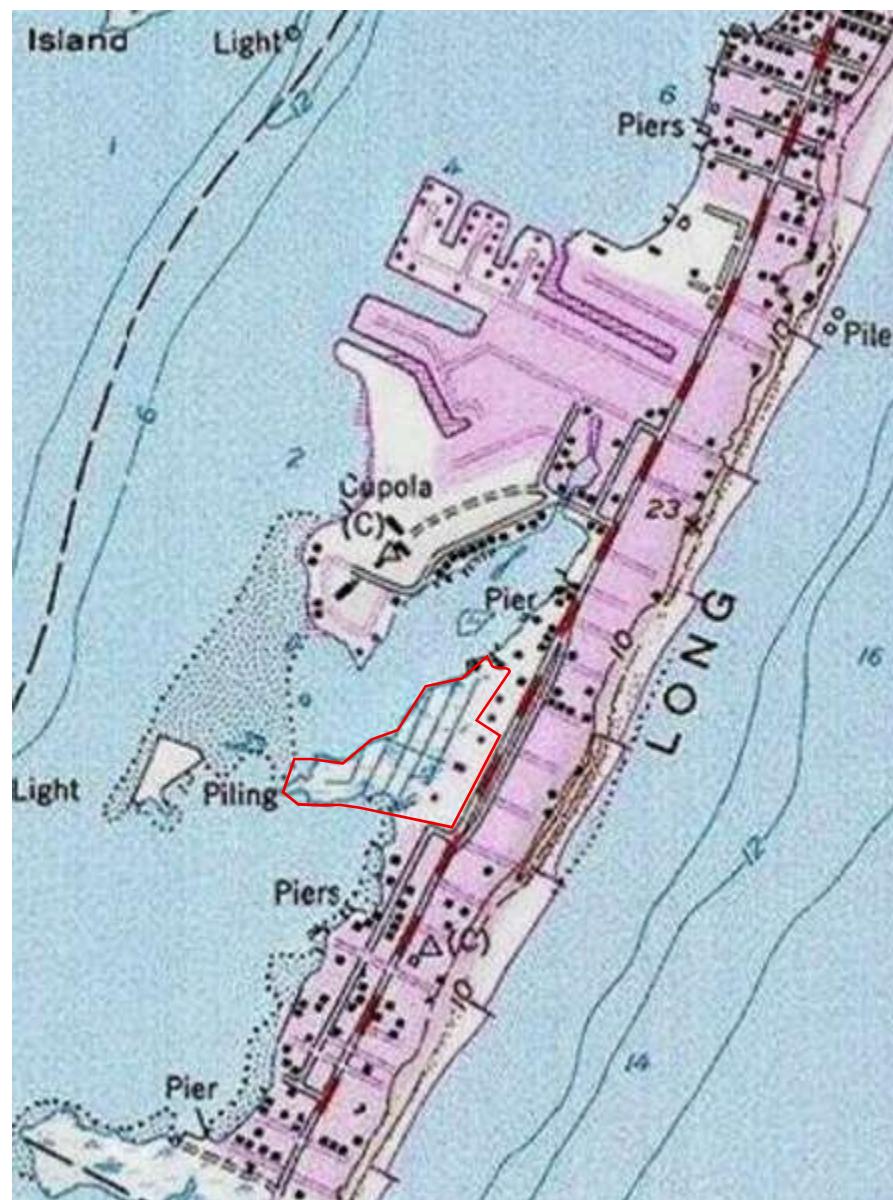


Proposed Boat Ramp  
Location



Attachment B: Harvey Cedars Topography Map

Source: USGS



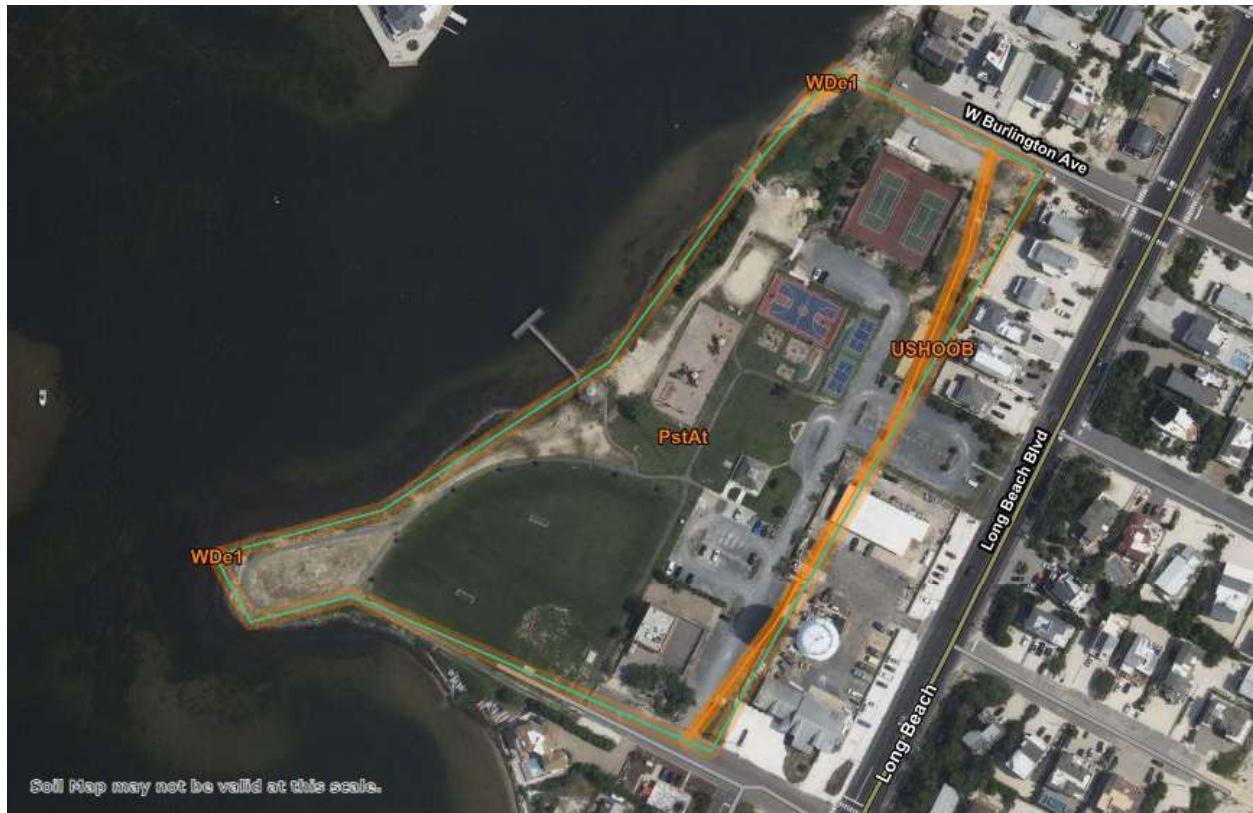
Attachment C: USGS Imagery Topo

Source: USGS



## Attachment D: Soil Classification Map

Source: Web Soil Survey, National Cooperative Soil Survey



### Map Unit Legend

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
PstAt	Psammaquents, sulfidic substratum, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded	8.1	95.0%
USHOOB	Urban land-Hooksan complex, 2 to 10 percent slopes	0.4	4.8%
WDe1	Demas fine sand, 0 to 1 meter water depth	0.0	0.1%
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>		<b>8.5</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

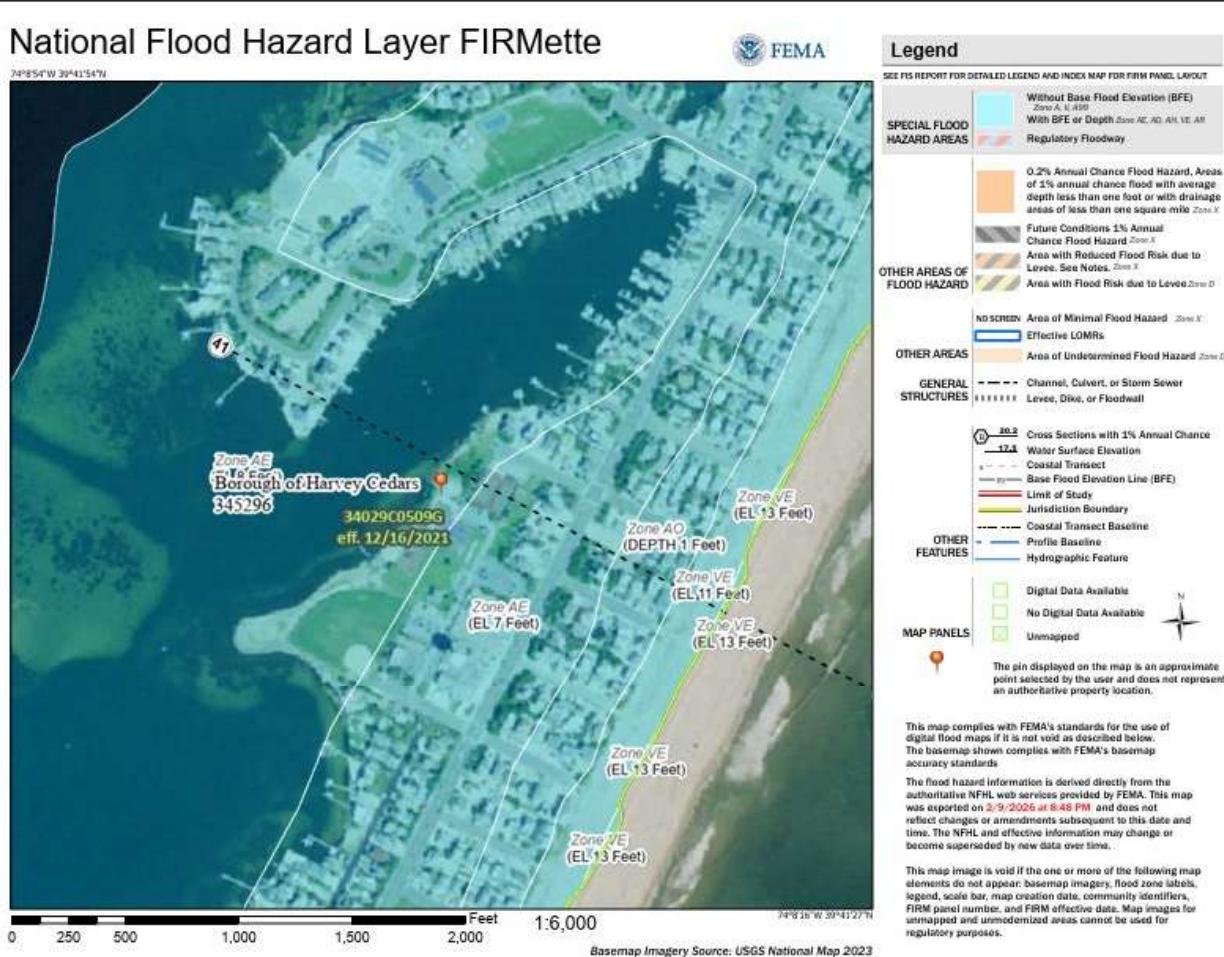
## Attachment E: FEMA Flood Mapping

Source: FEMA Map Service Center

Effective 34029C0509G

Preliminary 34029C0509H

FIRMette



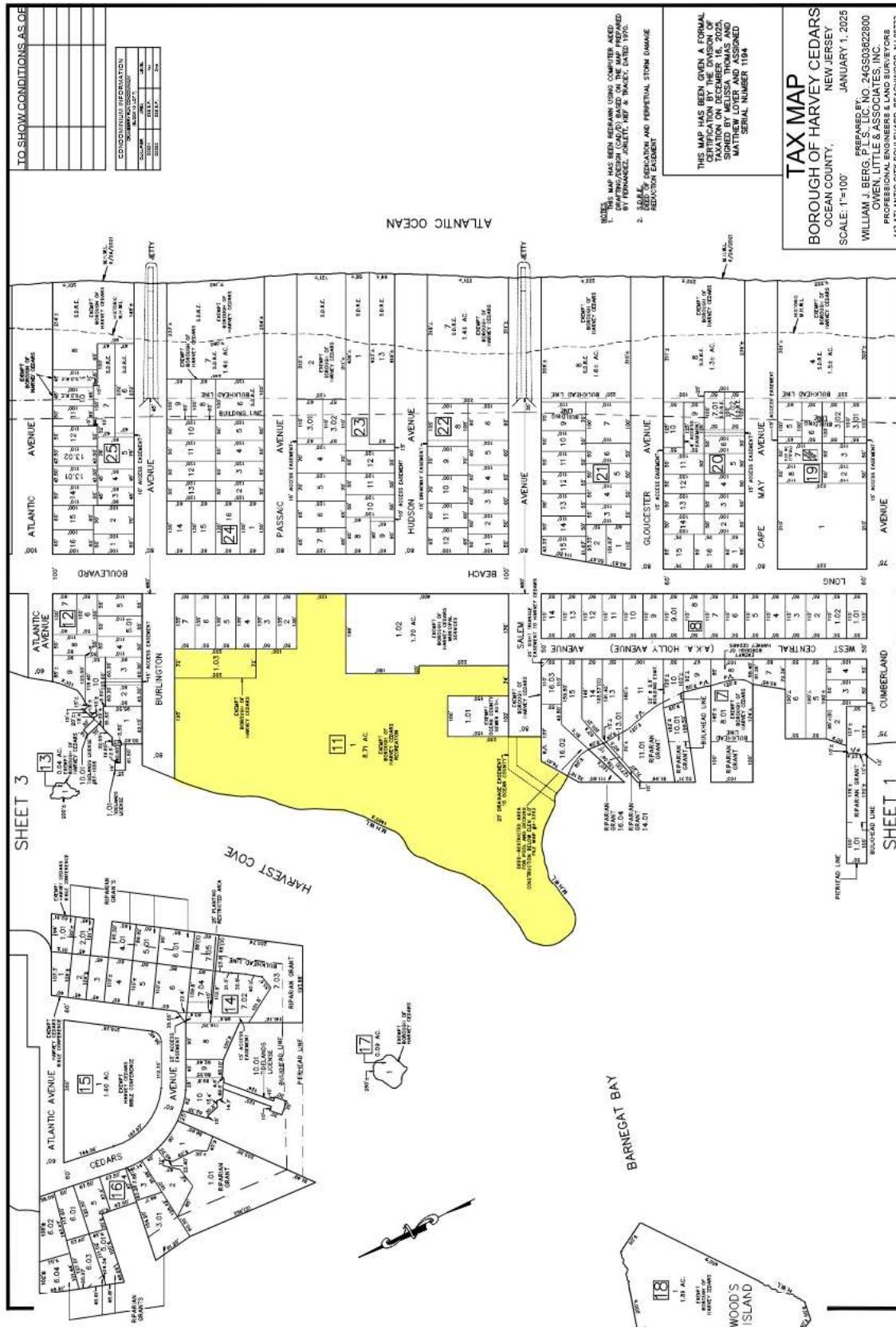




## Attachment F: Tax Map

Source: Borough of Harvey Cedars Tax Map

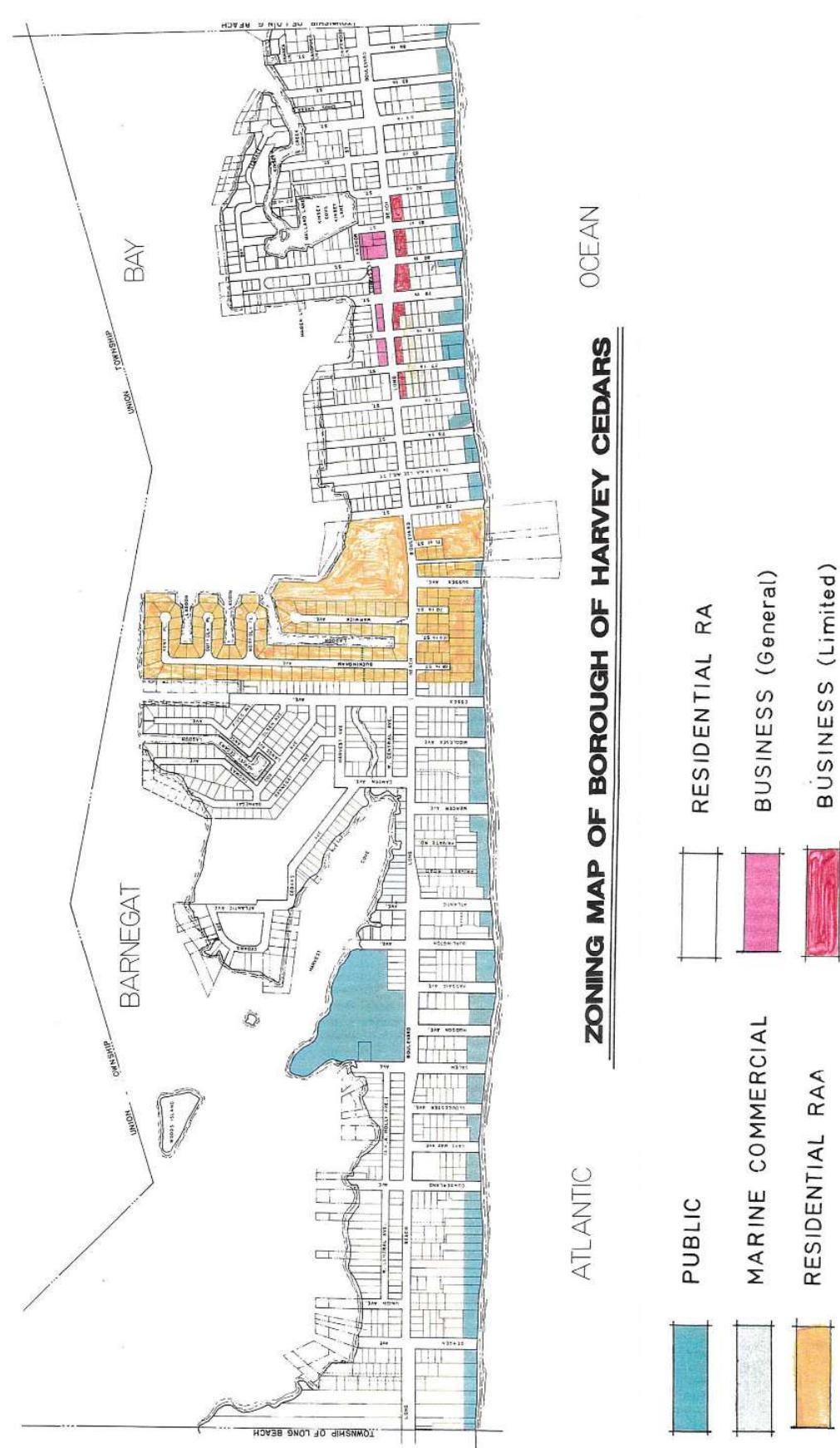
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## Attachment G: Zoning Map

Source: Borough of Harvey Cedars Zoning Map



Attachment H: Color Photos

Source: Google Maps, Site Inspection





Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5



Attachment I: Historic Districts

Source: LUCY, NJ CRGIS Online Viewer

