

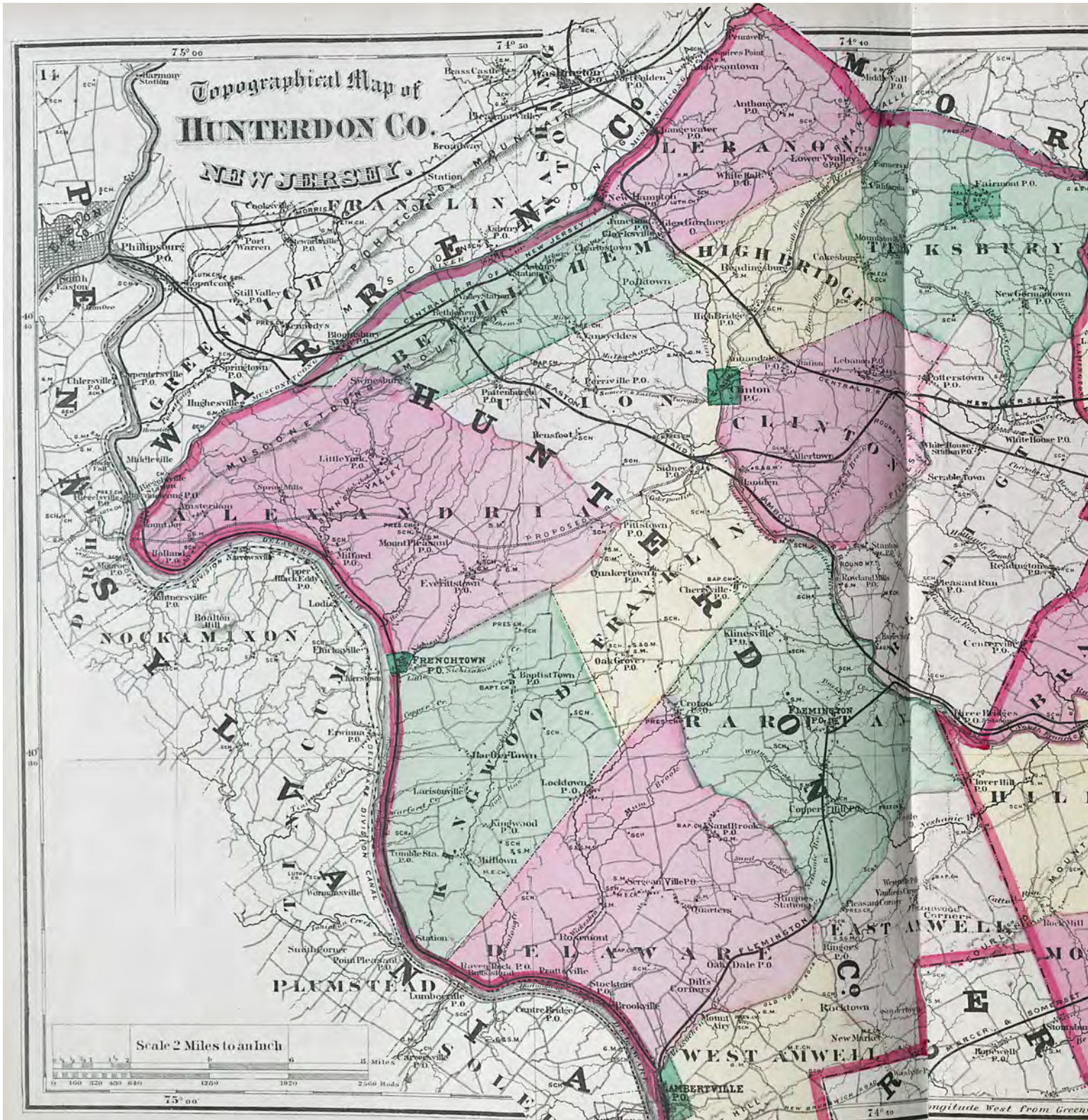


TOWN OF CLINTON

# SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

PREPARED FOR THE TOWN OF CLINTON, HUNTERDON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY BY  
PHILLIPS PREISS GRYGIEL LEHENY HUGHES LLC  
PLANNING & REAL ESTATE CONSULTANTS  
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# Acknowledgements

## Town of Clinton

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Sherry Dineen | Town Council, Economic Development Committee, Land Use Board

Elizabeth Halpin | Economic Development Committee

Rielly Karsh | Town Council (2017-2021), Economic Development Committee

Richard Phelan | Business Administrator

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler | Planning Manager, New Jersey Highlands Council

Marjorie Frankel Nathanson | Executive Director, Hunterdon Museum of Art

Christopher J. Phelan | President & CEO, Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce

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# Introduction



The Town of Clinton is a historic community built along the banks of the South Branch of the Raritan River in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. From its beginnings as a mill town through the present day, the Town has been a picturesque center within the Hunterdon County region that is now characterized by its walkable downtown, historic residential architecture, pristine river views and cultural landmarks. Interstate 78 provides access to New York City and Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, while State Route 31 connects Clinton to Trenton, the state capital.

In 2021, the Town of Clinton engaged Phillips Preiss Grygiel Leheny Hughes LLC to develop a Sustainable Economic Development Plan with funding provided by the New Jersey Highlands Council. The Sustainable Economic Development Plan provides a proactive framework for the Town

to capitalize on its existing social, cultural, and environmental assets to capture new economic opportunities, enhance the downtown public realm, and sustain Clinton's high quality of life.

In particular, the Plan has been shaped with a focus on recovery and revitalization in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Long-term impacts to the economy, social fabric, and built environment may include potentially transformative changes to how Clinton residents and visitors work, shop, dine, and travel. As the entirety of the Town is located within the Highlands Region, this Plan is intended to support the Highlands Region's overall economic sustainability strategy, seeking to balance economic success with stewardship of the area's natural resources.







## Vision: Areas of Focus

**1** Active, high-quality gateways will demarcate the entrances into Town from Old Route 22 and West Main Street to welcome visitors.

**2** Modern public realm amenities and a clear, recognizable identity will energize Downtown Clinton and reinforce its reputation as a regional destination and gathering place.

**3** Downtown property owners, proprietors, and residents will be empowered and incentivized to collaborate and connect with the Town to achieve mutual benefits.

**4** The Town will promote sustainable economic development through supportive land use policies that can adequately respond to market conditions, while remaining sensitive to the Clinton's unique fabric.

**5** Clinton's reach and capacity will be amplified throughout the region through strategic partnerships with Hunterdon County, the Highlands Council, and regional municipalities and entities.

# 1 VISION: Activate Town Gateways



Active, high-quality gateways will demarcate the entrances into Town from Old Route 22 and West Main Street to welcome visitors.



## Key Goals:

- Draw visitor attention with visual landmarks
- Incentivize zoning in transitional areas for increased flexibility.
- Reclaim pedestrian space along NJ-173.
- Encourage cross-access and management strategies.
- Explore strategic open space planning



## 2 VISION: Enhance the Downtown Experience

Modern public realm amenities and a clear, recognizable identity will energize Downtown Clinton and reinforce its reputation as a regional destination and gathering place.



### Key Goals:

- Develop brand reflecting Clinton's unique identity.
- Establish wayfinding and parking management strategies.
- Pursue development of a welcome center and visitor amenities.
- Attract new dining and experiential retails to create a destination.



### 3 VISION: Promote Public-Private Coordination



Downtown property owners, proprietors, and residents will be empowered and incentivized to collaborate and connect with the Town to achieve mutual benefits.



#### Key Goals:

- Enhance the gathering experience in both public and private realms.
- Facilitate small physical and site improvements by private owners.
- Visually connect Old Route 22 and Main Street.
- Sustain the implementation of the Sustainable Economic Development Plan.



## 4 VISION: Support Sustainable Progress

The Town will continue to promote sustainable economic development through supportive land use policies that can adequately respond to market conditions, while remaining sensitive to the Clinton's unique fabric.



Home » Businesses » Economic Development Committee

### An Easy-Start Guide

Curious about doing business in Clinton? You h

The Town of Clinton embraces our business community, and we welcome people and businesses looking to locate in our vibrant and beautiful town. Here is an easy step-by-step guide to streamline your information about doing business in Clinton:

- **Step 1:** Read [What Makes Clinton Special](#), a brochure that shares important data about Clinton and highlights the unique and special advantages that the town provides business owners.
- **Step 2:** Take a look at our [Local Business Community](#), which includes the professional business organizations that produce events and support our local businesses.
- **Step 3:** Check out the [Available Commercial Properties](#) available throughout the town. Feel free to contact us for a list of commercial realtors as well.
- **Step 4:** If you need to modify existing properties, we recommend you review the [Developer's Checklist](#), which includes maps and a comprehensive guide to property development.



### Key Goals:

- Undertake a regulatory review and zoning amendments.
- Target priority sites for future improvement or redevelopment.
- Continue highlighting the Town's public-facing presence.
- Prioritize multi-modal planning through Complete Streets policies.

## 5 VISION: Engage with the Region

Clinton's reach and capacity will be amplified throughout the region through strategic partnerships with Hunterdon County, the Highlands Council, and regional municipalities and entities.

### Key Goals:

- Expand access to open space and trail connections.
- Pursue regional shuttle links for both leisure and commuter travel.
- Showcase tourism opportunities in the regional context.
- Diversify the Town's economy through coordination with regional partners.





# SUMMARY: Existing Conditions

A detailed **Existing Conditions Report** was developed as the initial volume of the Sustainable Economic Development Plan ("the Plan") in order to understand the present and historical conditions affecting the Town's land use and economy that would provide a foundation for the Plan's preparation.

## Methodology

The tasks undertaken to create this report included:

- Discussions with Town representatives and stakeholders to understand the Town's goals and economic development vision, including within the regional context
- Review and summary of previous plans impacting the Town and surrounding areas, including those prepared by local, regional, and state agencies
- Identification and analysis of relevant socioeconomic data related to population, housing and employment trends
- Map and inventory of existing mobility and circulation patterns, including pedestrian and bike infrastructure.
- Review of environmentally sensitive areas within the Town and its environs that may encourage or inhibit economic development
- Overview of existing land uses and analysis of zoning regulations in the Town

## Local and Regional Planning

- Clinton's previous plans have focused on maintaining a balance between maintaining Clinton's small-town residential and historical character and providing a variety of land uses to support economic health and meet the needs of the Town's residents, as supplemented by regional planning efforts.

- The Town has a robust public-facing presence, led the Economic Development Committee's development of a start-up guide for new businesses on the Town's website.
- Clinton's 2008 master planning process included extensive analysis and community engagement, resulting in a robust Master Plan that identified a number of strengths, issues, and action items that are still relevant in 2021.
- Most recent regulatory changes in Town have been spurred by the affordable housing settlement process, with development generally targeted towards redevelopment sites identified in the 2008 Master Plan.
- The Highlands Council identifies the Town as an appropriate location for redevelopment, based on its infrastructure and community form.
- Hunterdon County has sought to balance economic development strategies with growth management, recognizing that development should be targeted to existing downtown areas like Clinton when possible.

## Demographics and Population

- Clinton's residential population is generally similar to Hunterdon County's overall demographics, including income and educational attainment, with the Town characterized as slightly younger and more racially diverse in comparison.
- Clinton's historic development patterns have resulted in more housing choices for residents, including more rental housing and multi-family housing than is typically seen throughout Hunterdon County.
- Town residents are employed in fields reflective of Statewide employment patterns, including healthcare, education, professional services, and manufacturing, while the Town's employ-

ment base is led by tourism- and hospitality-related industries such as retail, accommodations and food service.

## Mobility and Transportation

- Interstate highways, State routes, county roads and regional trails all pass through the Town, framing the highly pedestrianized downtown hub. This confluence of access and circulation has made the Town a focal point for the region and a prime location for multi-modal mobility planning.
- Downtown's built environment features - like a clear streetwall, pedestrian amenities, and clear demarcation of pathways - create the classic Main Street feel of these blocks, but quickly deteriorate outside of the central core at Route 173, where intermittent sidewalks and highway-oriented design limit pedestrian accessibility.
- Previous Town plans have encouraged access management strategies between individual properties, which the Town can control via zoning and development approvals, and Complete Streets solutions, which requires NJDOT sign-off.
- Parking challenges - real or perceived - near the Town's center are often related to the distribution and location of spaces, rather than sheer supply and demand. Parking outside the immediate downtown core tends to be underutilized by visitors who are potentially unaware of these options.
- I-78's traffic volume, high speeds, and truck routing results in frequent congestion, during which the Town's roadways are used as a cut-through. Major shortcut routes lack the necessary capacity to handle this additional traffic but are under the jurisdiction of the State or County, which has hindered improvement efforts.

- In Hunterdon County's rural environment, public transportation advocacy has focused on regional solutions that can attract both visitors and leisure riders - not just commuters.

## Environmental and Cultural Resources

- The South Branch of the Raritan River established Clinton's historic form and remains a defining asset of the Town. The historic district provides the Town's most iconic architecture and viewsheds.
- Large swaths of the Town are located within flood zones or even the floodway, limiting redevelopment and infill opportunities and even open space opportunities. Where feasible, creative site design will be necessary to manage flood-prone areas in accordance with modern environmental regulations.
- Municipal, State, and County parks provide recreation opportunities in nearly every corner of Clinton, but some are hidden or lack clear connections.
- History and cultural institutions can drive economic development while contextualizing the Town's historic form within the modern landscape.



Clinton's historic grid and form is evident on this 1903 Sanborn Map  
(Princeton University Libraries)



## Land Use and Zoning

- Residential zoning reflects the Town's diverse housing options. Clinton is unique among Hunterdon County municipalities in that it has few exclusively single-family zoning districts. The Town's residential districts are essentially built-out, including upcoming inclusionary projects intended to meet the Town's fair share requirements, but opportunities remain for infill development that encourages strong connections between commercial and residential areas.
- The Town's commercial districts are wide-ranging, including historic downtown retail to highway commercial centers and offices, and should be updated to reflect built conditions and changing markets. Several districts have use or bulk standards that are not reflective of the built environment and existing conditions, which may preemptively stifle the redevelopment potential of certain sites.
- Other districts do not permit increasingly common non-residential uses that are often appropriate in downtown settings, like fitness uses, medical offices, pharmacies, counter service food establishments, food markets, and flex spaces. Narrow lists of permitted uses and locations may discourage diversifying uses downtown, particularly in the challenging retail environment.
- The Town's Industrial District has access issues and environmental constraints that limit its development potential. This has effectively left no location in Town that would allow for fabrication, processing, light manufacturing, or similar types of production uses, even at a small scale.



# SUMMARY: Economic Base Assessment and Market Analysis



The Economic Base Assessment and Market Analysis (EMA) was prepared as the second volume of the Sustainable Economic Development Plan. In connection with Existing Conditions Report, the EMA considers existing inventory, surrounding regional context, and likely competition in order to understand the relative health and viability of various development sectors, including retail and commercial space, residential development, and recreation and tourism.

## Methodology

The methodology to prepare the EMA included the following steps:

- Analysis of the existing economic base in the Town by sector (e.g., retail, commercial, residential), including physical characteristics, tax impacts, and overall strengths and weaknesses.
- Delineation of primary and secondary market areas within which the Town may compete (defined as Hunterdon County and the area within 30-minute drive-time radius, respectively).
- Assessment of housing characteristics, preferences, and supply within the Town and the market areas
- Evaluation of existing and projected commercial, retail, and residential development markets, including the impact of tourism and regional efforts
- Review of local organizations, committees, boards, and initiatives that represent the Town's capacity to implement the Plan.
- Analysis of opportunities and challenges within various sectors, which considers Clinton's unique context in association with regional and national trends.



## Downtown and Retail Base

- The Town's downtown opportunities will be realized by sustaining a mix of dining, specialty goods, and experiential retail that capitalizes on the Town's physical and historic assets, while meeting the needs of residents of all ages and capturing new regional visitors.
- The downtown retail environment is characterized by customer-oriented stores and services that are crucial to the vitality of a successful downtown but may not serve as wider regional draws. In this context, the **overall fabric of the downtown should encourage visitors to spend several hours or more casually browsing stores, dining out, enjoying public space, and visiting the Town's museums and attractions.**
- Non-retail storefronts downtown, like financial services and real estate offices, are perceived to have a negative impact on Clinton's street activity and foot traffic. **Uses should be balanced to minimize vacant storefronts, while also encouraging evening activity for traditional retailers and restaurants,** few of which are open past the early dinner hour.
- In interviews, stakeholders reiterated their desire for retail and dining options that would supplement existing businesses, and which better align with their desired customer base: namely, **retail that is compatible with the Town's family-friendly atmosphere to draw the young families and affluent suburbanites who propel successful downtowns throughout the state.**
- The first quarter of 2020 represented the first time that the number of service-oriented establishments overtook traditional retailers in the United States, favoring businesses whose services cannot be easily replaced via online shopping. **The Town's mix of service and retail should reflect changing preferences and business patterns; zoning should be**



reviewed to ensure that certain businesses are not excluded due to outdated or overly specific requirements.

- Downtown's many historic buildings are both a signature asset and a potential obstacle to economic growth. As the Town looks to support ongoing economic development, a **key balance will need to be struck between encouraging the reuse and upkeep of historic buildings (and in turn, the area's character), while targeting locations for commercial space that will help attract visitors and nearby residents.**

### Residential and Housing Base

- The varied age of housing structures in Clinton provides existing and potential residents with a relatively diverse selection of housing, ranging from duplexes and smaller multi-family options to "starter" single-family homes and upscale, larger historic residences.
- Since 2015, municipalities statewide have negotiated court-mandated affordable housing settlements to ensure provision of their "fair share." Clinton's plan includes up to four new inclusionary multi-family residential projects, **which are likely to absorb much of the projected regional growth over the next five years.**
- New zoning or Master Plan amendments should continue to encourage and sustain diverse housing choices in Clinton, including **"Missing Middle Housing," which contains more than one unit, but is compatible with the height, scale and overall physical form of nearby single-family residential homes.**

### Regional Office and Industrial Market

- Since Clinton's origins as a mill town, the nature of private industry has continued to shift across the region. Now, new industrial development overwhelming takes the form of warehouse and distribution centers serving the e-commerce industry, with some of the nation's largest facilities in the nearby Lehigh Valley. Meanwhile, the suburban office market across Central New Jersey has struggled for the past decade-plus, culminating with a precipitous increase in vacancy rates following the onset of COVID-19.
- With a small office footprint amid an over-saturated regional market, **growing and promoting the Town's amenities – such as restaurants, walkability, and public access to open space – will support existing offices and encourage new businesses consider the Town.**
- Outside of the downtown core, **residential conversions can provide locations for small offices in transitional or former residential areas**, while retaining the development patterns and building characteristics that define the area.
- Warehousing is not permitted in the Town's industrial district. However, **creative industrial or flex facilities can provide an alternative to traditional office and industrial development** by offering opportunities for fabrication, light manufacturing, artisan workshops, or high-tech entrepreneurs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: Activate Town Gateways



**Precedent: Town-specific street signs mark visual interest on a State highway in Somerville, NJ.**

### Key Goals:

- **Draw visitors' attention with visual landmarks**

Heading west towards downtown, the iconic image of the Red Mill greets visitors on a roadside Welcome to Historic Clinton sign, but there is little else to signify to visitors that the historic core is less than a half mile away from this eastern gateway. Besides signage, street markers, landscaping, street furniture, and pavement markings can denote transitions between municipalities and set a stage for the Town's unique identity.

- **Incentivize zoning in transitional areas for increased flexibility.**

Outside of the downtown core, single-family residences can house small offices or two- to four-unit dwellings while retaining the development patterns and building characteristics that define the area. For example, the R-3 Zone permits home occupations under certain conditions; the Town should review how this type of zoning may be applicable around the downtown periphery.

- **Reclaim pedestrian space along NJ-173.**

East of downtown, NJ-173's travel lanes are flanked by wide shoulders, but sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure are inconsistent. To the south and west, property-wide curb cuts and narrowing sidewalks discourage pedestrian mobility. Downtown, Main Street's clearly demarcated pathways, accessible crosswalks, and streetwall all contribute to pedestrian comfort and safety. Future planning efforts - in collaboration with NJDOT and the private sector - should prioritize pedestrian amenities and traffic calming techniques along NJ-173 that incorporate these successful features of the downtown pedestrian realm. Street furniture, property frontage maintenance and wayfinding signage can also be used to enhance pedestrian space with limited right-of-way disturbance.

- **Encourage cross-access and management strategies.**

As a continuation of previous planning efforts, the Town should encourage access management strategies between individual properties at both ends of NJ-173 to reduce curb cuts and create a more cohesive streetscape. Given NJDOT jurisdiction, the Town alone cannot control the pattern of high-



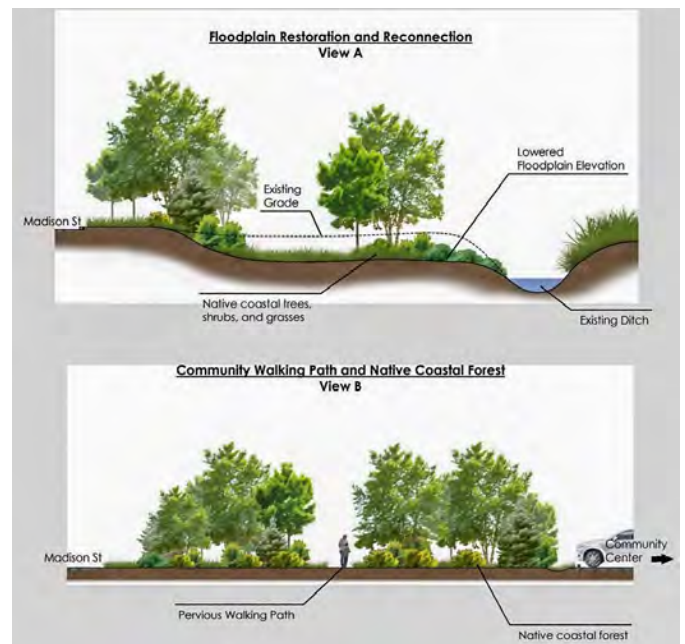
### Precedent: Before and After pedestrian improvements & access management strategies in British Columbia



way interchanges or design capital improvements along the NJ-173 corridor. Provision of human-scale infrastructure should be a component of any future redevelopment along the corridor.

- **Explore strategic open space planning.**

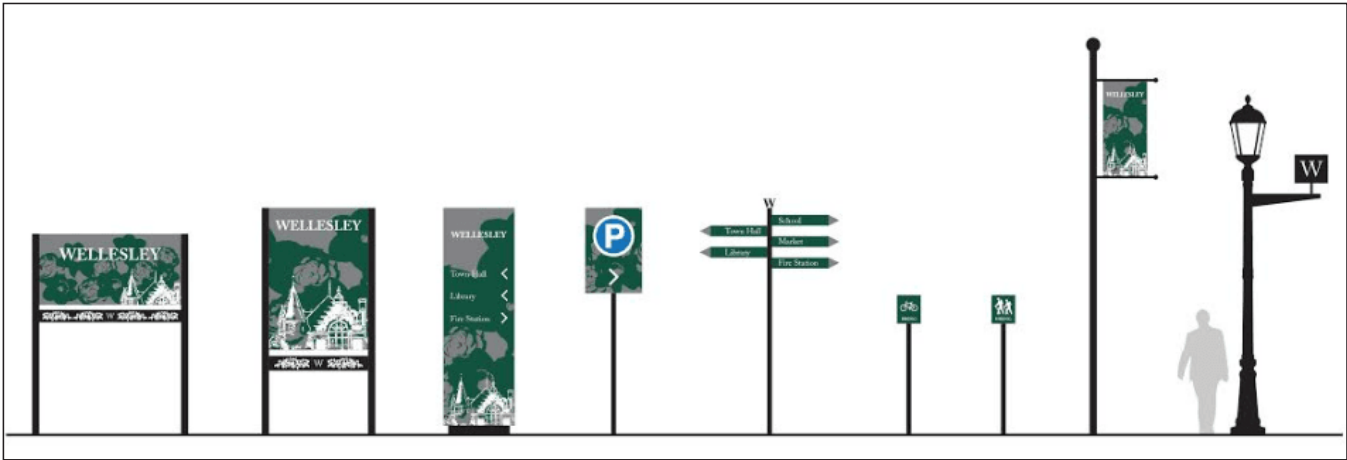
Several developed lots on the south side of Old 22 are significantly constrained from future redevelopment due by their location in the floodway and 300-foot riparian buffer required for the Beaver Brook. NJDEP regulations severely restrict development in these areas, limited to certain permit-by-rule exceptions and essential infrastructure improvements. If supported by future conditions and planning efforts, the Town may consider pursuing avenues that restore certain areas to passive open space use that would manage water flow while “greening” the corridor in the vicinity of Town Hall. Preliminary options may include engaging NJDEP’s Blue Acres funding program or pursuing area in need of redevelopment designation as part of a wider planning effort.



**Precedent: Detail from Linden, NJ Floodplain Restoration Project (Princeton Hydro Engineers)**

## RECOMMENDATIONS: Enhance the Downtown Experience

**Precedent: Wayfinding signage in Wellesley, Mass., provides a variety of options that are unified by cohesive graphics depicting local landmarks.**



### Key Goals:

- **Develop a brand reflecting Clinton's unique identity.**

A Town-wide brand is an opportunity to reflect Clinton's vision, strengths and values. generate excitement, bolster a sense of community, and assign credibility to the Downtown. Downtown stakeholders should collaborate to establish a brand that reflects Clinton's history, dedication to the arts, and iconic landmarks. Through careful consideration, the brand's signifying graphics can work in tandem with the actions detailed in this chapter to showcase Clinton to both established and potential residents, merchants, and visitors. The brand can then become an inherent component of the Town's overall economic development efforts.

- **Establish wayfinding and parking management strategies.**

Clinton provides a variety of parking options with a significant number of available parking spaces that generally meet the needs of the downtown. However, on a busy Saturday or during a special event, parking can be challenging due to management and wayfinding rather than supply and demand.

The Town's free parking lots at the municipal Building and on Water Street are within a few blocks of Main Street but are disconnected from the downtown fabric by the river and Route 173, respectively, and lack directional signage. Some businesses along Main Street have private employee parking areas, while businesses along Route 173 often have a handful of dedicated parking spaces for their customers alone, creating a patchwork of parking rules and regulations. Wayfinding improvements are a low-cost measure that can assist visitors with accessing all corners of downtown Clinton, as part of an overall strategy to facilitate coordination with both public and private off-street parking areas.

- **Pursue development of a welcome center and visitor amenities.**

The Town should continue to pursue a permanent site for an information and welcome center to orient new visitors upon arrival. Successful visitors' centers can range from an unmanned kiosk to a storefront or small building on the outskirts of downtown. The visitors' center can highlight the Landsdown Trailhead or other specific downtown sites and tie into the overall Town wayfinding





Left and below: A public restroom facility in Cold Spring, NY, and a visitors' center in Cape May, NJ, provide amenities in context-appropriate buildings.



scheme. In addition, public restrooms - as part of the visitors' center or standalone facilities - are crucial amenities for tourist destinations, especially for families with children.

- **Attract new dining and experiential retailers that can serve as a destination.**

As the retail market shifts, the service and food and beverage sectors provide in-person experiences that drive visitors downtown. Downtown activity at present is generally limited to daytime hours, with few shops or restaurants open past the early dinner

hour. Many restaurants are open only for lunch - in part, related to the lack of available liquor licenses that drive nighttime crowds, which has a disproportionate impact on downtown environments. Stakeholders reiterated their desire for an upscale restaurant, brewpub, or other venue for evening entertainment in Town that can serve a younger regional crowd. A satellite branch of another local brewery or winery could expand the reach of an existing brand at a scale appropriate to the limited size of many downtown floorplates.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: Promote Public-Private Coordination



**Precedent:** Unified, but not uniform, signage and plantings create a high-quality streetscape.



### Key Goals:

- Enhance pedestrian and gathering experiences in both public and private realms.

Downtown's pedestrian passageways facilitate pedestrian mobility between the public-facing storefronts of Main Street and East Main Street and functional parking and loading areas to the north and south. As a best practice, both public and private pedestrian passageways should be clearly marked with wayfinding signage and/or street furniture to catch the attention of pedestrians and signal that these areas prioritize pedestrians. Similar treatments can be utilized, where appropriate, for privately-owned spaces such as the Hunterdon Art Museum's plaza. Overall, owners and tenants should be encouraged to activate their spaces by extending their spheres into these existing areas where such can be done safely.

- Facilitate small physical and site improvements by private owners.

The Town can provide guidance and potentially financial support, to support owners and tenants who seek to make small improvements to their properties. In addition to the recent public-private partnership between The Red Mill Museum Village and the Historic Preservation Commission, in which the Red Mill will provide grant funding to eligible applications to assist in the rehabilitation and restoration of historic facades in Clinton, support can facilitate signage improvements, provide guidelines for window and sidewalk displays, and encourage planters or landscaping. Uniformity is not the goal and should not be encouraged - rather, promoting high-quality property maintenance on a Town-wide level.



- **Visually connect Old Route 22 and Main Street.**

The Town should encourage property owners to upgrade service areas between Old Highway 22 and Main Street that are clearly within the pedestrian viewshed, to enhance both their function and aesthetics. Quality varies among the rear private parking and loading areas serving buildings and businesses on the south side of Main Street, but they are inseparable from the public-facing realm on the other side of the buildings. With the understanding that this is private space serving local businesses, and that flood control issues may pose challenges to upgrades, the Town should collaborate with these property owners to determine whether technical or regulatory incentives could be used to encourage improvements.

- **Sustain the implementation of the Plan.**

Even in an established downtown like Clinton, public, private, and institutional support and coordination will be required to implement the Plan's recommendations. Without a formal district management entity, the Economic Development Committee can work with a coalition of Guild members, property owners, and regional entities to increase awareness and advocate for the Plan's vision to build momentum as part of a phased implementation strategy (see Implementation Matrix, in the final section of this report). The implementation effort should engage a wide-ranging coalition of Town stakeholders of diverse backgrounds and experience.



**Above: Upgraded trash enclosures, left, and parking area screening, right, can functional and visually improve service areas.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS: Support Sustainable Progress

### Key Goals:

- Undertake a regulatory review and zoning amendments, if applicable, to ensure economic development opportunity.

Commercial zoning should be reviewed to ensure that certain businesses are not excluded due to outdated or overly specific requirements. For example, some districts do not permit increasingly common uses that can add vibrancy and character to downtown settings, such as fitness uses, medical offices, pharmacies, counter service food establishments, food markets, and flex spaces. The Town could also evaluate whether certain locations may be suitable for small-scale or artisan production, processing, or light manufacturing, with strict performance controls. When such uses are not permitted, a new tenant or owner would potentially have to seek a use variance, which can serve as an expensive deterrent to doing business in Town.

- Target priority sites for future improvement or redevelopment.

The US Post Office on East Main Street and the Clinton Fire Department building at the intersection of East Main and New Streets provide essential community services, but the design of each site is incongruous with its downtown surroundings. The Town should explore long-term possibilities related to relocation of these services, followed by site improvements or redevelopment for each of these properties. These properties could serve as crucial transitions between downtown and Old Highway 22 with sidewalk connections, streetscape improvements, and context-sensitive development.

- Continue highlighting the Town's public-facing presence.

The Town's Economic Development Committee has publicized a clear start-up guide for new businesses through the Town's website, which can be invaluable for assisting small businesses with Clinton on their radar. The Town should continue this type of targeted, collaborative effort with the Hunterdon County Economic Development, the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce, and any other stakeholders interested in putting Clinton on the map as a notable place to grow a business. Growing and promoting the Town's amenities – such as restaurants, walkability, and public access to open space – will also help preserve existing businesses and encourage others, no matter how small, to consider the Town.





**Below left: bike racks integrate seamlessly into downtown streetscapes.**

**Below right: Bike Rodeos can connect families with the community while promoting safe cycling.**



- **Prioritize multi-modal planning through Complete Streets policies.**

In addition to continuing to pursue NJDOT improvements to I-78 and NJ-173, the Town should focus on prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian policies on a Town-wide scale through Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School policies. While the Town does not have direct jurisdiction over installation of bike lanes on State or County roads, signage designating bike routes and provision of bike racks can encourage cycling and promote safety between travel modes. Coupled with pedestrian policy recommendations provided in the Plan and goHunterdon's active transportation resources, bike and ped planning can bring in new visitors and shift resident travel modes away from cars.

# Bike RODEO



**July 17 from 8:30am-11:30am**

**Piscataway Community Center**

**520 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ 08854**

For more information, call:  
**Mobile Family Success Center**  
 (732) 387-1120 or [mfscmiddlesex@ccdom.org](mailto:mfscmiddlesex@ccdom.org)

For weather  
 cancellation  
 call:  
 (732) 562-2389

*\*Bring your bikes, scooters, skates & helmets\**

**Bike Raffles, 10 Bike Games & Challenges & Much more!**

**Register: <http://bit.ly/PiscatawayBikeRodeo>**



## RECOMMENDATIONS: Engage with the Region

### Key Goals:

- **Expand access to open space and trail connections.**

The Town should work with Hunterdon County and NJDEP to increase opportunities for access to open space and recreation areas in Town. Visitors to Spruce Run Recreation Area can easily bypass the Town, as there's no access to the reservoir from Clinton, while the Landsdown Trail lacks signage or any notable indication of its trailhead. Improvements like dedicated parking, clearly marked entrances, and trail connections can bring visitors and increase overall quality of life in Town. In conjunction with the ongoing municipal playground improvements, increasing access to open space can set Clinton apart as a premiere recreation destination.

- **Pursue regional shuttle links for both leisure and commuter travel.**

While transit access can be challenging in a rural environment like Hunterdon County, the Town should explore opportunities for bus or shuttle connections that provide service for special events or to regional landmarks. Trial routes could include seasonal weekend connections in collaboration with Hunterdon Main Streets or nearby downtowns. Clinton should also continue working with regional private bus operators and Clinton Township to provide consistent, reliable service to and from the Lehigh Valley, Newark Airport, and New York City that maximizes availability for Town residents - including adequate parking, bike infrastructure, and pedestrian connections to the park-and-ride lot.

**Below: Examples of open space amenities and signage (Rails to Trails Conservancy)**







The Hunterdon Main Streets initiative can provide a baseline for cross-marketing with nearby communities.

- **Showcase tourism opportunities in the regional context.**

Marketing efforts should be coordinated with Hunterdon County and Highlands economic development, sustainability, and tourism priorities. The recent Highlands Economic Sustainability Plan recommends reviewing the role that natural resources play in the broader economy to help reframe how agritourism, heritage tourism and outdoor recreation contribute to the region. In this context and with its wealth of water resources, Clinton could coordinate with other Raritan River municipalities as part of a cohesive tourism plan. In tandem with County programs like the Hunterdon Main Streets initiative, Clinton can also seek to tie into nearby communities like High Bridge to combine resources: for example, encouraging visitors to the Columbia Trail to try Landsdown on their next trip to the area.

- **Diversify the Town's economy through coordination with regional partners.**

Partners like Hunterdon County Economic Development and the Hunterdon Chamber of Commerce can assist with identifying supply and demand in the greater regional market. In coordination with the Economic Development Committee, the Town should utilize this information to target specific sectors to attract businesses that can be a good match. For example, as the life science sector continues to grow in Central New Jersey, Clinton can explore small-scale opportunities to support wider growth that can benefit the Town even without a significant office or lab footprint.





# How to Use the Implementation Matrix



The implementation matrix is intended as a tool to assist the Town of Clinton and interested stakeholders by outlining prioritization and responsible parties for each of the plan recommendations. Strategies are prioritized as short-term (0 to 2 years), medium-term (2 to 5 years) or long-term (6 to 10 years) actions. The timeline for proposed strategies can be defined as follows:

**Short-Term Recommendations** can be completed within 6 to 24 months from initiation and do not involve significant public or private investment or capital improvements.

**Medium-Term Recommendations** can be completed within 2 to 5 years from initiation and may involve significant preparation efforts, public-private partnerships, private redevelopment actions, and/or capital funding.

**Long-Term Recommendations** are anticipated as goals that may take up to 10 years to implement that may require long-term policy or development actions, significant public and private buy-in, or major infrastructure improvements.

The matrix is flexible and is intended to be used as a dynamic tool, which may be revised and updated to reflect changing priorities or conditions in Town.



## VISION: Implementation Matrix

The matrix below outlines the responsible parties and prioritization for each of the plan recommendations. Strategies are prioritized as short-term (0 to 2 years), medium-term (3 to 5 years) or long-term (6 to 10 years) actions.

### Town of Clinton

#### 1 Activate Town Gateways

- Establish a landmark entry point
- Incentive zoning in transitional areas
- Reclaim pedestrian space along NJ-173
- Encourage cross-access management strategies
- Explore strategic open space planning

Town Council	Land Use Board	Economic Development Committee
X		X
X	X	
X		
X	X	
X	X	

#### 2 Enhance the Downtown Experience

- Develop Downtown branding
- Wayfinding & parking management strategy
- Pursue welcome center & amenities
- Attract destination dining & experiences

X		X
X		X
X		X
		X

#### 3 Promote Public-Private Coordination

- Enhance pedestrian & gathering experiences
- Facilitate small physical improvements
- Visually connect Old Rt. 22 & Main Street
- Sustain the Plan's implementation

	X	X
X		X
		X
		X

#### 4 Support Sustainable Progress

- Undertake zoning review & amendments
- Target priority sites for improvement
- Highlight public-facing presence
- Prioritize multi-modal planning

X	X	
X	X	X
X		X
X	X	

#### 5 Engage with the Region

- Establish open space & trail connections
- Pursue regional shuttle links
- Showcase regional tourism opportunities
- Diversify economy through coordination

X		
X		X
		X
X		X



Downtown  
StakeholdersRegional and  
State EntitiesTime  
FramePrivate Landowners/  
DevelopersClinton Guild/  
Proprietors/  
TenantsCultural &  
Social  
InstitutionsNJDOT/  
NJDEPHunterdon  
CountyHighlands  
Council

		X				S-M
X	X				X	S
			X			L
X	X	X	X			M
X			X	X	X	M
	X			X		S
	X		X		X	S - M
X	X	X		X		M
X	X					S-M
X		X	X			M
X	X					S
X						M
X	X	X		X	X	S - M - L
X				X	X	S
X						M
	X			X	X	S - M - L
			X			M
X		X	X	X	X	M
	X	X	X	X		S-M
	X	X		X	X	S
X				X	X	M-L













# TOWN OF CLINTON SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

## APPENDIX A: **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

PREPARED FOR THE TOWN OF CLINTON, HUNTERDON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY BY  
PHILLIPS PREISS GRYGIEL LEHENY HUGHES LLC  
PLANNING & REAL ESTATE CONSULTANTS  
MARCH 2022







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# 1. Introduction



The Existing Conditions Report has been developed as part of the Town of Clinton Sustainable Economic Development Plan (SEDP). The intention of this document is to provide a foundation for the preparation of the SEDP by understanding present and historical conditions affecting the Town's land use and economy. Through a review of existing planning documentation and data, physical inspection of the Town, and stakeholder interviews, this report serves to build a baseline of information upon which to undertake future SEDP recommendations.





## Project Background & Goals

The Town of Clinton is a historic community built along the banks of the South Branch of the Raritan River in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. From its beginnings as a mill town through the present day, the Town has been a picturesque center within the Hunterdon County region that is now characterized by its walkable downtown, historic residential architecture, pristine river views and cultural landmarks. Interstate 78 provides access to New York City and Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley, while State Route 31 connects the Town to the County seat of Flemington and the State Capital of Trenton.

In late 2020, the Town of Clinton engaged Phillips Preiss Grygiel Leheny Hughes LLC to develop a Sustainable Economic Development Plan with funding provided by the Highlands Council. In particular, the SEDP process has been shaped with a focus on recovery and revitalization in the wake of economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Long-term economic recovery is likely to extend over the next decade and include potentially transformative changes to how Clinton residents and visitors work, shop, dine, and travel. The Existing Conditions Report is meant to relate one snapshot in time during the COVID-19 pandemic to ongoing economic trends and baseline conditions present in the Town and region prior to early 2020. The SEDP is intended to provide a proactive framework for supporting the Town's economic activity by capitalizing on its existing assets and identifying potential new opportunities for continued success.

## Methodology

To facilitate the development of a sustainable economic development plan and lay the foundation for future recommendations, Phillips Preiss undertook the following tasks:

- Discussion with Town representatives to understand the Town's goals and economic development vision, including within the regional context
- Summary of previous plans impacting the Town and surrounding areas as prepared by local, regional, and state agencies
- Identify relevant population, housing and employment trends
- Map and inventory existing mobility and circulation patterns, including pedestrian and bike infrastructure.
- Review of environmentally sensitive areas within the Town and environs that may impact economic development
- Overview of existing land uses and analysis of zoning regulations in the Town
- Evaluation of the existing commercial, retail, and residential development markets, including the impact of tourism and regional building patterns.
- Review of local organizations, committees, boards, initiatives that represent the Town's capacity to implement SEDP

## Location Map









## 2. Regional Context



**The 78/22 Coalition is comprised of leaders representing 8 municipalities along the I-78 and US-22 corridors in Hunterdon County - Bloomsbury, Bethlehem, Union, Clinton, Clinton Township, Franklin, Lebanon Borough and Readington. The Coalition was initially formed in 2018 as a collaborative economic development effort to continue promoting the corridor as a prime location for tech and entrepreneurship, spurred by UNICOM's purchase of the former Merck campus and growing real estate interest in the corridor. The municipalities along the corridor share similar opportunities and challenges related to economic development, including office and industrial vacancies, managing growth, and providing sustainable transportation options, which the Coalition intends to jointly address as part of a cohesive and collaborative partnership.**

The Town of Clinton is located in north-central Hunterdon County at the crossroads of the South Branch of the Raritan River, Interstate 78, and bucolic western New Jersey. The Town's 1.5-square mile area includes a nationally recognized historic district, a regional downtown featuring nearly 50 small retail and service businesses, State parklands, and a close-knit residential community.

Within this north-central portion of the County, Clinton and the nearby municipalities of Franklin Township, Union Township, Clinton Township and High Bridge are representative of the fabric of Hunterdon County, as evident by dense historic centers and outlying areas with wide swaths of rural open space, low-density residential areas, and sporadic suburban-style highway commercial corridors.

- **Franklin Township**, located to the south and southwest of the Town, is the most rural of the three municipalities, but provides an important regional retail center in its most developed area, located adjacent to the Town's southwest border.
- **Union Township** encompasses both the I-78/US 22 corridor to the west of the Town and the western half of the Spruce Run Reservoir and Recreation Area. Much of Union Township's development is concentrated along this highway corridor, including a cluster of life science and pharmaceutical companies (e.g., Celldex, Mallinckrodt, and Mutare Life Sciences) located in the Perryville III office building on the I-78 Frontage Road.
- **Clinton Township** is located generally to the east of the Town and is home to the ExxonMobil research and development campus, one of the region's largest employers. Clinton Township's Route 31 corridor provides north-south access along what is still largely a rural roadway; limited downtown services are offered in



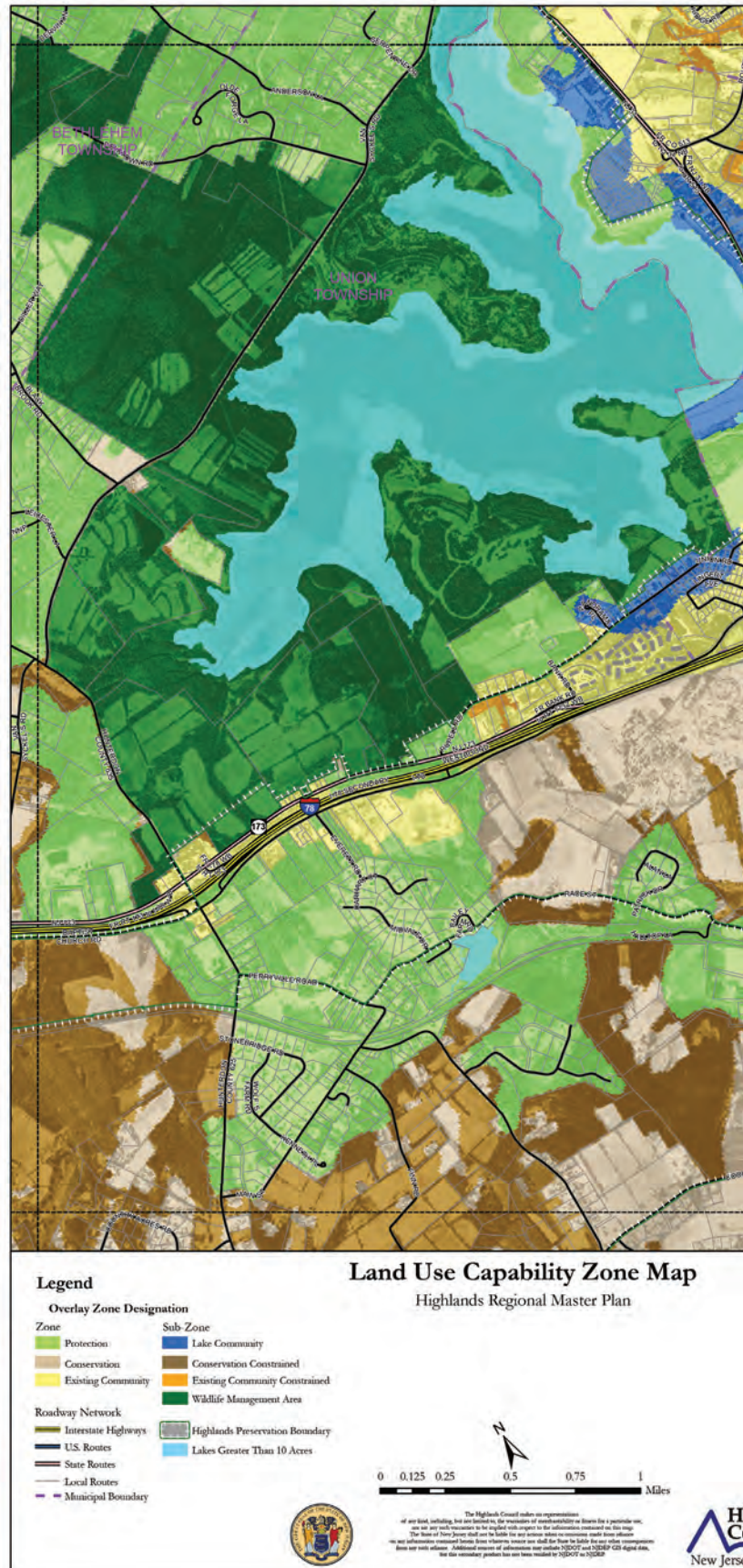
the historic village of Annandale and further to the east in Lebanon Borough, an independent municipality fully encircled by Clinton Township.

- The **Borough of High Bridge** is located approximately 2 miles to the north of the Town and is similarly characterized by its historic riverfront downtown (though smaller than Clinton's) and residential nature. High Bridge is also the southern terminus of the Columbia Trail, a multi-use trail connecting Hunterdon County to Morris County along a 15-mile former rail right-of-way.

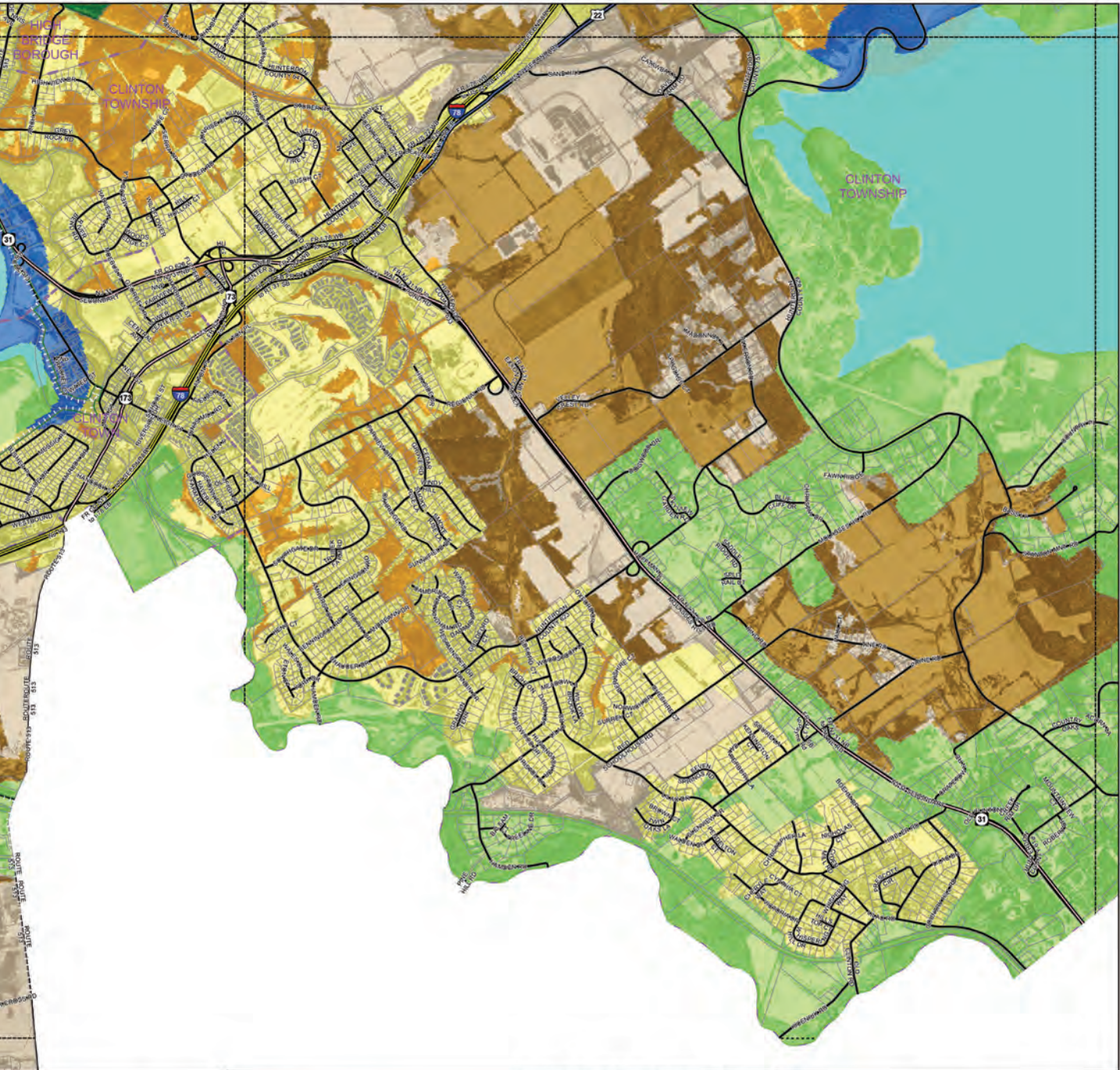
The Town, Clinton Township, Union Township, and High Bridge also represent the areas in northern Hunterdon County with the most available water and sewer and development capacity.

## Transportation

Interstate 78 and US Highway 22 form North Hunterdon County's primary east-west transportation spine, connecting the area to the Lehigh Valley and Phillipsburg, New Jersey to the west and New York City, Newark, and environs to the east. Interstate 78, in particular, is a major freight truck route. New Jersey State Route 31 provides a north-south route within Hunterdon County and south to Trenton. High Bridge is the western terminus of NJ Transit's Raritan Valley Line, which provides limited weekday service to three stops in Hunterdon County (Annandale, Lebanon and High Bridge). Pre-pandemic, the daily combined weekday ridership for these stations was under 200 passengers. Transportation and mobility in the Town and surrounding areas are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this report.







### Legend

#### Overlay Zone Designation

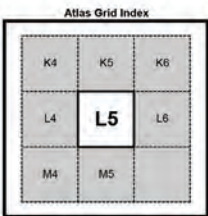
- |                        |                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Zone</b>            | <b>Sub-Zone</b>                 |
| Protection             | Lake Community                  |
| Conservation           | Conservation Constrained        |
| Existing Community     | Existing Community Constrained  |
|                        | Wildlife Management Area        |
| <b>Roadway Network</b> | Highlands Preservation Boundary |
| Interstate Highways    | Lakes Greater Than 10 Acres     |
| U.S. Routes            |                                 |
| State Routes           |                                 |
| Local Routes           |                                 |
| Municipal Boundary     |                                 |

## Land Use Capability Zone Map

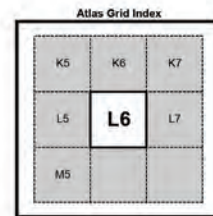
### Highlands Regional Master Plan



The Highlands Council makes no representation of any kind, including but not limited to the accuracy of information on this map for a particular use, nor does it warrant, represent or be held responsible for any information contained on this map. The State of New Jersey shall not be liable for any action taken or inaction taken based on this map. Information contained herein from various sources may not be State or local law. Use of this map is at the user's discretion. Additional resources of information may include NJDOT and NJDEP GIS digital data. Not for emergency printed map and does not meet the NJDOT or NJDEP.



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## Hunterdon County

Hunterdon County leadership has been proactive over the past two decades in planning for economic development, while balancing rising housing prices and overall costs of living, changing trends in the regional office and industrial markets, and the area's land development capacity. Hunterdon County's recent economic development efforts have focused on expanding the tourism market (including working to establish a State-recognized Destinated Marketing Organization) and attracting new targeted industries, with a focus on technology, life sciences, agribusiness, and advanced manufacturing. In 2020, the County's tourism marketing included the launch of websites dedicated to Hunterdon's Main Street Communities - including the Town of Clinton - and the "579 Trail," promoting the farmers markets, wineries, and farms along County Road 579 in the western part of the County. In terms of business attraction and retention, the County offers a detailed site selection tool on their website that provides information as to financial incentives and area resources in addition to facts about available properties. The County has also been providing grant funding to support economic development-related planning efforts at the municipal level.

## Highlands Region

The County has sought to collaboratively align their goals with that of the Highlands Council by petitioning for Plan Conformance, which is nearing approval as of late 2021. Clinton is one of fourteen municipalities within the County located within in the **Highlands Region**, which was formed in 2004 by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act. The guiding purpose of the Highlands Act and Highlands Council is to protect the region's sensitive environmental features, particularly water resources, by designating Planning Areas and more restrictive Preservation Areas that recognize the location of

environmentally sensitive features that are not appropriate for development.

The Highlands Regional Master Plan Monitoring Program Recommendation Report (MPRR), released in 2018, recognizes that sustainable economic development is critical to maintaining the long-term viability of the region: "A sustainable economic future must be crafted by balancing the resource protection mandates of the Highlands Act and the Regional Master Plan with the economic, fiscal, social, and cultural needs of Highlands communities. These characteristics are not mutually exclusive, and realization of both natural resource and economic health is envisioned by both the Act and the RMP [Regional Master Plan]." Tourism, agriculture, redevelopment, smart growth, transit-oriented development, and low-impact development are encouraged as methods of efficient land use in accordance with this goal.

Most of Clinton is located in the Highlands Planning Area, in what is further identified by the Highlands Council's Land Use Capability Zone Map as an "Existing Community Zone," representing the highest land use capabilities in the Region. This zone is characterized by fewer environmental constraints and more substantial infrastructure than surrounding areas. Nearby "Main Street" towns like High Bridge, Flemington, and Lebanon have similar characteristics and infrastructure capacity. However, like the Town, these municipalities generally lack the land area required for the type of significant development or redevelopment projects that are often seen as the crux of large-scale economic development projects. Clinton's Sustainable Economic Development Plan will seek to reframe this view of economic development by leveraging the Town's assets within a regional, mutually beneficial context.

## 3. Previous Plans

### Master Plans

The Town of Clinton adopted a comprehensive Master Plan in 2008 and subsequent periodic reexaminations in 2016 and 2018.

#### 2008 Town of Clinton Master Plan

The Land Use Element of the 2008 Master Plan sought to achieve a balance between maintaining Clinton's small-town residential and historical character and providing a variety of land uses to support economic health and meet the needs of the Town's residents. To support this goal, the plan set forth an objective to channel commercial uses into the existing commercial and office zones and discourage conversion of residential dwellings in residential zones to commercial and office uses. The Plan also specifically identified the potential issue of incompatible building size and massing related new or infill development in existing commercial areas with small building footprints, particularly the downtown historic district. The plan included a number of recommendations for infill development throughout the Town, including:

- o Establish two sets of architectural design standards: one for buildings within the historic district and one for buildings located outside of the historic district.
- o Address building massing, scale, and architectural style for non-residential and mixed-use buildings
- o Improve design along the Route 173 corridor to permit entertainment, expanded office uses, and mixed residential uses
- o Redevelop the lumberyard area as a continuation of the existing businesses and the addition of pedestrian-oriented mixed-use and/or senior housing

**This chapter provides a summary of previous planning efforts relating to the study area. This includes an overview of past plans prepared by the Town, Hunterdon County, and regional entities, including a summary of the vision, strategies, and planning principles applicable to the preparation of the Sustainable Economic Development Plan.**

- o Adopt an historic district ordinance to provide standards for historic preservation
- o Encourage remediation of any brownfield tracts within the Town.
- o Provide parking facilities to satisfy the needs of both the commercial and historical needs of the town.
- o Develop plans for the rejuvenation of Old Route 22, with new urban design, and relating existing and new development to the historic center of town.

The 2008 Master Plan process also involved a Community Design Workshop, which brought together stakeholders and design professionals to brainstorm creative solutions for redevelopment of targeted tracts of land in the Town. Presently, development is proposed for the Moebius Tract and the lumberyard area as part of the Town's affordable housing settlement agreement, while regulatory changes to the industrial zone and Route 173 are still pending.





### 2016 Master Plan Reexamination Report

The 2016 Master Plan Reexamination Report was intended to reexamine the Master Plan for conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan and to recommend specific changes in the Town's goals, objectives, policies, and development recommendations to advance consistency. The reexamination recommended specific changes to implement the objectives, policies and standards as outlined in the Highlands Element of the Town's Master Plan. These changes included "incorporating a variety of Highlands Resource protections, providing an emphasis on infrastructure and environmental carrying capacities, and initiating a substantial modification to the methodology to be used in determining permitted densities of development within the municipality." As a result of the Town's Highlands planning, development applications now require that evidence of consistency with the Highlands Regional Master Plan be submitted as a requirement of application completeness.

### 2018 Periodic Reexamination of the Town of Clinton Master Plan and Development Regulations

The 2018 Periodic Reexamination of the Town of Clinton Master Plan and Development Regulations reviewed the progress made on the recommendations of from the 2008 Master Plan. The Reexamination reaffirmed many of the goals and objectives of the 2008 Master Plan, while identifying that the recommendations for the Route 173 corridor and West Main Street (including the C-1 to C-4 districts), the Industrial zone, and the lumberyard area were not implemented. Since 2008, mixed-use development of the lumberyard area was under consideration; to accommodate such development, the Reexamination noted the possibility of relocating the Landsdown Trail to a location along the South Branch of the Raritan River. The Reexamination further recommended that the Land Use Board reconsider whether the Industrial zone is appropriate at its existing location, and noted that generally, the non-residential areas of the Town had remaining development potential.

### Affordable Housing and Present-Day Actions

All municipalities in New Jersey are required to plan, zone for, and take affirmative steps to provide realistic opportunities for their “fair share” of the region’s affordable housing. The Town executed a settlement agreement with the Fair Share Housing Center, a Supreme Court-designated interested party in New Jersey affordable housing litigation, in 2018 (amended through 2021). Per the settlement, the Town agreed to adopt a conforming Housing Element and Fair Share Plan and to effectuate all required actions to meet their agreed-upon affordable housing obligation. In order to implement the plan, the Town has adopted two redevelopment

plans in accordance with the requirements of New Jersey’s Local Redevelopment and Housing Law at NJSA 40A:12A-1 et seq.:

- **Redevelopment Plan for the Former A&P Supermarket** - Block 8, Lots 23.02, 23.05, 24, 27, 29.02, and 33  
This site is located in the Old Highway Redevelopment Area, which was deemed an Area in Need of Redevelopment by the Town in 2019 following an investigation per N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6. An amended Redevelopment Plan for the site was adopted in August 2020. The plan permits mixed-use development of multifamily and non-residential uses as well as existing single-family residences. In November 2020, the Town Land Use Board granted preliminary and final major site plan approval to permit a mixed-use development consisting of ±6,005 square feet of retail space, ±500 square feet of office space and 120 multi-family residential units, inclusive of 24 units set-aside for low- and moderate-income housing in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan and settlement agreement.
- **Redevelopment Plan for Global Agway and Fox Lumber** - Block 24, Lots 2 and 10 and Block 25, Lots 18, 19, and 20  
The site and surrounding properties were designated as an Area in Need of Redevelopment in December 2016 and known as the Riverside Redevelopment Area. The subsequent redevelopment plan for this site was adopted in August 2020 and permits townhomes, multi-family development, group homes or supportive housing for the developmentally disabled, age-restricted multifamily on Block 25, Lot 19 only, non-residential uses within a mixed-use development, and existing single-family resi-



dences. Permitted non-residential uses include retail; offices; restaurants, cafes, and taverns for seated patrons with waiter service; wineries, breweries, or distilleries including tasting rooms and retail sales; studios for the visual, written, and performing arts; food markets excluding convenience stores; day spas, hair salons, and barber shops; and municipal or public uses.

## County, State, and Regional Plans

One of the Town of Clinton's defining qualities is its ability to retain its historic, small-town character in a central Hunterdon County location where its proximity to major thoroughfares like NJ-31 and I-78 provides easy regional access. The Town is also located in both the Planning and Preservation Areas of the Highlands, reflecting the area's balance between infrastructure, development, and natural resources. This section provides a summary of recent County and Highlands Council plans that provide a basis for future economic development planning in the Town.

### Hunterdon County

In 2007, Hunterdon County prepared a **Growth Management Plan** that set forth a vision for the County in 2020 that sought to balance economic growth with preservation of natural resources. Subsequently, a **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy** (CEDS) was prepared in 2014 to be a strategic framework for meeting economic development goals. The CEDS identified the need for creative techniques for job growth, as the existing power sectors such as healthcare and insurance had matured and were not generated substantial growth. The County's high cost of living was particularly identified as a challenge, including the lack of multi-family housing options. Agriculture was also noted for its value as an historical, brand-

ing, environmental, and social asset, with some economic benefits to agrotourism at specialty farms and the locally grown food market. Further, Hunterdon County's location outside of the NJ Turnpike corridor is a competitive disadvantage in the warehousing sector, resulting in lower sale and lease prices and higher vacancy. The CEDS identified the potential for revitalization of the historic downtowns such as Clinton that had served as the backbone of the County by reducing sprawl and promoting walkable, higher-density downtowns.

### The 2018 Hunterdon County Land Use Process

**Review** provided data and summaries on the Town's population, housing, employment and labor sectors, land use, the zoning ordinance, and relevant planning documents. Property tax data from 2017 showed that 9% of the Town's total land area was occupied for nonresidential (e.g., commercial) uses, with 34% residential, 34% public or exempt, and 23% farmland or vacant land. Employment between 2012-2016 was highest in the Education - Health Care - Social Assistance sector, followed by Professional - Scientific - Management, Manufacturing, and Arts - Entertainment - Recreation, and Accommodation- Food Services sectors. The report also recapped conversations held with stakeholders regarding the land development process and other general concerns for the Town. The Town expressed the desire to proactively attract businesses to Main Street to address vacancies and stagnation, without undermining the downtown's strengths. The Town also recognized the need to update the signage ordinance and the parking ordinance. There was a perception that the downtown suffers from a lack of parking, but that "parking requirements" hurt businesses. In general, the land use process review attempted to clarify the land use application process and reduce "red tape" that unnecessarily hurts businesses.

### New Jersey Highlands Council

The **Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act of 2004** recognized the important natural resources in the Highlands, including a significant portion of the State's drinking water, established the Preservation Area encompassing 415,000 acres across 52 municipalities and seven counties, limits development in the Preservation Area, and establishes protections for public trust resources. The **2008 Highlands Regional Master Plan** set forth fundamental principles for communities in the region, including to "Maintain and enhance the fiscal and economic viability of the Region and its constituent communities," and "Ensure that all new growth and development is sustainable over the long term based on water, energy, and other critical resources, is organic to its environment, harmonious with historical settlement patterns, and is compatible with the history and character of the regional communities of place."

Tools available to support the fiscal health of Highlands municipalities include Property Tax Stabilization, Incentive Planning Aid, Regional Master Plan Compliance Aid, a Legal Shield, and other State Aid. The plan established a **Land Use Capability Map** to guide the location, magnitude, and character of growth and development in the Highlands. The plan identifies a majority of the Town (the southern and eastern portions) as being an "Existing Community Zone," which is characterized by limited environmental constraints and as having infrastructure which can support development and redevelopment that maintains community character. However, Lebanon Borough remains the only designated Highlands Center in the County.

## Points of Interest

- ▶ Clinton's 2008 master planning process included extensive analysis and community engagement, **resulting in a robust Master Plan that identified a number of strengths, issues, and action items that are still relevant in 2021.**
- ▶ Most recent regulatory changes in Town have been spurred by the affordable housing settlement process, with development generally **targeted towards redevelopment sites identified in the 2008 Master Plan.**
- ▶ Hunterdon County has sought to balance economic development with growth management, recognizing that development should be targeted to existing downtown areas like Clinton when possible.
- ▶ **The Highlands Council identifies the Town's existing infrastructure and community form as providing an appropriate location for redevelopment.**

The purpose of the **2016 Highlands Environmental Resources Inventory for the Town of Clinton** is to, "provide a framework that supports the efforts of the Town of Clinton to bring its planning documents, including the ERI, into conformance with the Regional Master Plan (RMP)." The Preservation Area encompasses the northwest quadrant of the Town, consisting of 141 acres. The remaining 781 acres are part of the Planning Area. The ERI identified historic resources, scenic resources, contaminated sites, water and sewer services, and protection areas within the Town for inclusion in its Highlands Plan Conformance documents.







# 4. Demographics

## Introduction

The Town of Clinton is a small, developed municipality that measures approximately 1.5 square miles. A background analysis of demographic and employment conditions has been prepared in order to understand more wholly the Town’s existing and future economic conditions. The demographics of the Town will also be analyzed in relation to trends within Hunterdon County and throughout the State as appropriate. The following section will present an overview of the existing population, with a focus on household characteristics, housing trends, income, and race and ethnicity.

**In summary, Clinton is a mature, built-out community that has benefitted from its central location in Hunterdon County as a historic crossroads of transportation, agriculture, and industry. The Town’s compact development patterns over the 19th and 20th centuries are evident today in its mixed-use downtown, stable population, and high-income population.**

Except where noted, the source for data in this section is the United States Census Bureau’s Decennial Census and American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

## General Population Characteristics

Clinton, along with much of Hunterdon County, saw rapid population growth through the 1960s and 1970s as construction progressed on Interstate 78. In the 1990s, Clinton experienced another growth period following the development of Kings Crossing subdivision and Alton Place townhouses in the Town’s southeast quadrant. The Town’s population has remained relatively stable over the past 20 years, as population growth has generally slowed throughout Hunterdon County. Table 1 depicts cumulative population growth from 1990 through 2020 in the Town and County.

Table 1: Population and Age Over Time	Year	Clinton		Hunterdon County	
		Population	Change	Population	Change
	1990	2,054	-	107,775	-
	2000	2,632	28.1%	121,989	13.2
	2010	2,719	3.3%	128,349	5.2%
	2020	2,773	2.0%	128,947	0.5%
Source: US Decennial Census; ACS 2019 5-Yr Estimates, DP05					



As shown in Table 2, the Town has a lower median age than Hunterdon County and, proportionately, more children and fewer senior citizens. While the age of a population is not necessarily indicative of preferences or phase of life, these characteristics can play a role in providing appropriate services, housing, and recreation options to meet the population's needs, which will in turn be reflected in the Sustainable Economic Development Plan.

<b>Table 2: Population and Age, 2019</b>	Category	Clinton	Hunterdon County	New Jersey
	Total population	2,686	124,823	8,878,503
	Median age (years)	42	46.3	39.9
	Under 18 years	22.2%	19.9%	22.1%
	65 years and over	13.6%	17.9%	15.9%
	Source: ACS 2019 5-Yr Estimates, DP05			

### Diversity

In terms of race and ethnicity, the Town is more diverse than Hunterdon County as a whole, with 83.5% of the population identifying as white, 12.5% as Asian (including South Asian, East Asian, and Southeast Asian), and 6.7% as Hispanic or Latino. The proportions of residents identifying as Black/African American or Hispanic or Latino are lower than New Jersey but in line with the County. Selected statistics related to race and ethnicity are shown in Table 3.

<b>Table 3: Race and Ethnicity</b>	Category	Clinton	Hunterdon County	New Jersey
	White	83.5%	90.5%	67.8%
	Black or African American	1.8%	2.6%	13.5%
	Asian	12.5%	4.1%	9.5%
	Asian Indian	3.4%	1.4%	4.2%
	Chinese	2.7%	1.2%	1.7%
	Filipino	3.9%	0.6%	1.3%
	Other	2.5%	1.0%	2.2%
	Some other race	0.6%	1.1%	6.3%
	Two or more races	1.6%	1.5%	2.7%
	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	6.7%	6.5%	20.2%
	Source: ACS 2019 5-Yr Estimates, DP05   Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding.			

## CHANGING AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS

Since the 1970s, single-person and non-family households have reflected rising ages of first marriage and longer lifespans. As relevant to this analysis, non-family households tend to be smaller than family households, less likely to own a home, and more likely to live in multi-unit structures. Nationally, about 75% of family households own their homes, as compared to just over 50% for non-family households. In 2019, 83% of Clinton's family households lived in single-family dwellings and 78% of families owned their home.

### Household and Family Characteristics

A "household" is defined by the U.S. Census bureau as those persons who occupy a single room or group of rooms constituting a housing unit; however, these persons may or may not be related. As a subset of households, a "family household" includes a householder and one or more persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption, all living in the same household. The Town's proportion of family to non-family households is similar to the State of New Jersey (65.8% and 68.9%, respectively) but lower than Hunterdon County (73.2%).

Median household income in Clinton in 2019 was approximately \$104,000, which is lower than the median in Hunterdon County – the wealthiest county in the state, by some metrics – but more than 25 percent higher than the statewide median income. This comparison is shown in Table 4. Family households are generally correlated with higher median incomes, and the Town's family income is 25% higher than that of all households. The Town's poverty rate of 5.4% in 2019 was also in line with Hunterdon County and significantly lower than the 10% rate statewide.

Table 4: Median Household Income	Category	Clinton	Hunterdon County	New Jersey
	All Households	\$103,958	\$115,379	\$82,545
	Family Households	\$129,844	\$143,105	\$102,260
	Non-Family Households	\$50,909	\$60,788	\$45,065
Source: ACS 2019 5-Yr Estimates, S1501				

### Education and Employment

Regional educational attainment levels reflect the existing employment in a given area and serve as an indicator for focusing future economic development efforts. Clinton's educational attainment aligns with the overall high education levels in Hunterdon County; among adults over 25, over 96 percent are high school graduates, and 55% percent hold bachelor's degrees or higher. Statewide, approximately 39 percent of adults hold bachelor's degrees or higher, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Educational Attainment		Clinton	Hunterdon County	New Jersey
	Population 25 years and over			
	High school diploma (includes equivalency)	17.1%	20.9%	27.2%
	Some college, no degree	17.5%	15.1%	16.4%
	Associate degree	6.7%	6.2%	6.5%
	Bachelor's degree	34.1%	31.4%	24.2%
	Graduate or Professional degree	21.1%	21.3%	15.4%



Approximately 1,500 Clinton residents were employed as of 2019 Census estimates. The plurality of residents (21.7%) were employed in the industry classified as “Education services, health care, and social assistance,” which encompasses wide-ranging occupations including physicians, nurses, social workers, elementary school teachers, and college professors, as well as administrators and assistants. Employment patterns of Town residents generally reflect those of Hunterdon County and New Jersey residents, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Resident Employment by Industry, 2019	Industry	Clinton	Hunterdon County	New Jersey
	Civilian employed population 16 years and over			
	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.5%	1.4%	0.3%
	Construction	3.9%	6.8%	5.9%
	Manufacturing	11.2%	11.4%	8.2%
	Wholesale trade	4.1%	3.4%	3.3%
	Retail trade	10.6%	10.0%	10.9%
	Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4.9%	2.8%	6.1%
	Information	4.7%	3.5%	2.7%
	Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	9.5%	8.8%	8.5%
	Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	11.7%	14.1%	13.5%
	Educational services, and health care and social assistance	21.7%	21.6%	23.9%
	Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	9.9%	8.0%	8.1%
	Other services, except public administration	3.3%	4.3%	4.3%
	Public administration	3.9%	3.9%	4.2%
Source: ACS 2019 5-Yr Estimates, S2405				

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of industries - primarily in the information, finance, and professional services industries - have seen a massive shift towards employees working from home. Prior to COVID-19, nearly 30% of Clinton’s residents worked within Somerset County, and 60% worked within 25 miles of the Town. However, the initial public health response may become an overall shift in the American workplace for certain sectors, with potential implications on the employee and the employer. Commuting and workforce patterns will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 8 of this report.

Per an analysis of jobs in Clinton by industry, the largest share of the Town’s ±1,550 jobs are in the Retail Trade industry (35.4%), followed by Finance and Insurance and Real Estate (13.3%) and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation; Accommodation and Food Services (11.9%). This is consistent with the nature of the Town’s downtown businesses, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 8 of this report.

### Housing

Clinton's housing stock has been shaped by historic development patterns dating back over two centuries; as a result, its physical characteristics are distinctive as compared to predominately rural Hunterdon County. Housing units in Clinton are more diverse in terms of building typologies (e.g., fewer single-family dwellings, more small multi-family buildings) and housing tenure than the County (i.e., 67% of Clinton's housing units are owner occupied, as compared to 83% across Hunterdon County), as represented in Table 7. The median home value in Clinton for owner-occupied units in 2019 was \$358,200, which represents the opportunity for more affordable home ownership. Of the Town's housing units, 56.8% are detached single-family dwellings, which is something of an anomaly in Hunterdon County, where nearly 83% of all dwelling units are detached single-family in nature. Statewide, the figure is approximately 55 percent. The physical characteristics of the Town's housing stock and housing market will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 of this report.

### Points of Interest

- ▶ Clinton's residential population is generally similar to Hunterdon County's overall demographics, including income and educational attainment, with the Town characterized as slightly younger and more racially diverse in comparison.
- ▶ Employment of Town residents is generally proportional to overall employment of New Jersey residents, including the fields of healthcare, education, professional services, and manufacturing.
- ▶ The Town's employment base is led by tourism- and hospitality-related industries such as retail, accommodations and food service.
- ▶ Clinton's historic development patterns have resulted in more housing choices for residents, including more rental housing and multi-family housing than typically seen throughout Hunterdon County.

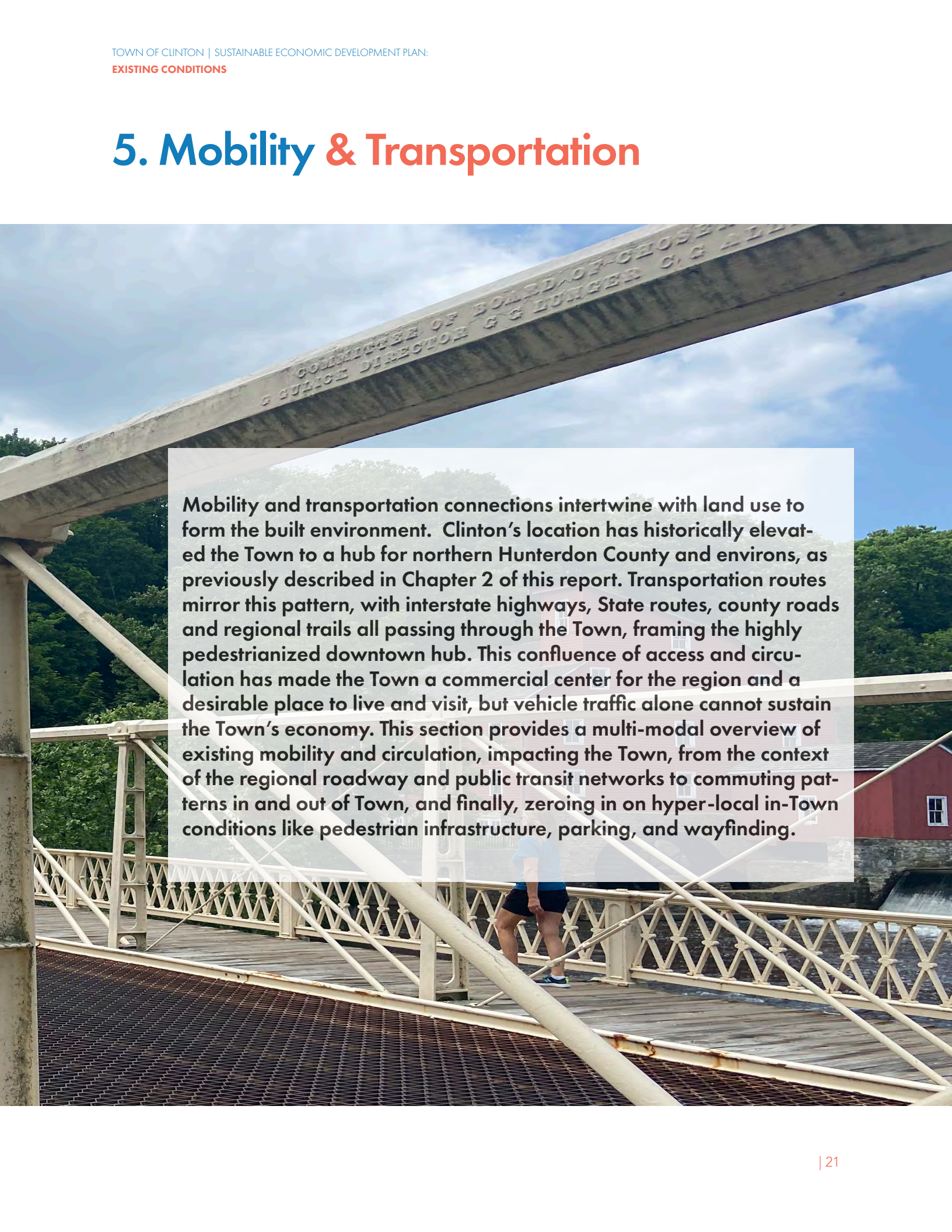
Table 7: Selected Housing Characteristics, 2019		Clinton	Hunterdon County	New Jersey
	Owner-occupied	67.3%	82.8%	63.9%
	Renter-occupied	32.7%	17.5%	63.1%
	Median value, owner-occupied	\$358,200	\$415,100	\$335,600
	Unit type: Single-family detached	56.8%	74.9%	53.5%
	Units in Structure: 10 or more	13.3%	5.5%	15.8%
	Year Built: Before 1940	25.7%	18.7%	18.3%
	Year Built: 1960 to 1999	49.9%	57.2%	47.4%
	Source: ACS 2019 5-Yr. Estimates, B25003			







## 5. Mobility & Transportation



Mobility and transportation connections intertwine with land use to form the built environment. Clinton's location has historically elevated the Town to a hub for northern Hunterdon County and environs, as previously described in Chapter 2 of this report. Transportation routes mirror this pattern, with interstate highways, State routes, county roads and regional trails all passing through the Town, framing the highly pedestrianized downtown hub. This confluence of access and circulation has made the Town a commercial center for the region and a desirable place to live and visit, but vehicle traffic alone cannot sustain the Town's economy. This section provides a multi-modal overview of existing mobility and circulation, impacting the Town, from the context of the regional roadway and public transit networks to commuting patterns in and out of Town, and finally, zeroing in on hyper-local in-Town conditions like pedestrian infrastructure, parking, and wayfinding.



Top: Route 78 Interchange 15

Below: Intersection of Leigh Street and Route 173



## Regional Access Major Vehicle Routes

The roadway that is now known as **Interstate 78** was originally constructed in the vicinity of the Town as the US-22 Clinton Bypass in the late 1950s. By the late 1960s, the highway was extended west towards Warren County and east through Somerset and Union Counties to meet the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT)'s goal to "provide an express highway for transcontinental traffic crossing the state from Easton-Phillipsburg to the Newark metropolitan area and the Holland Tunnel. It will divert cross-country traffic from US 22,

permitting that primary highway to fulfill its design function as a land service road, and facilitate the flow of local and commuter traffic."

At present, I-78 is a federal highway under the maintenance of NJDOT. It provides 3 travel lanes in each direction through the Town of Clinton and offers access to major employment centers across the corridor. Exits for Interchanges 15 and 16 are located within the Town's limits near the intersections of West Main Street and CR-513 and Old Highway 22 and Center Street, respectively; Interchange 17 (Route 31) is located just outside of Town limits and

has substantial impacts on traffic due to its connections to Route 173/West Main Street. I-78 is also the region's major truck route.

I-78's combination of traffic volumes, high speeds, and truck routing predictably results in frequent congestion, particularly following vehicle crashes in the vicinity of the Town. During times of heavy congestion, the Town's roadways are frequently used as a cut-through to avoid the interstate traffic. Route 173 and Halstead Street, two major shortcut routes, lack the necessary capacity to handle this additional traffic. As a result, the impacts are felt throughout the Town, including on residential streets. These impacts, in addition to noise and air pollution, were identified as major issues for the Town at the time of the 2008 Master Plan. While the Town has continued to work with NJDOT on this matter, there has not been significant improvement, and the Master Plan recommendations to continue working with NJDOT, along with a coalition of neighboring municipalities, remains relevant in 2021.

**New Jersey State Route 31** is a state highway that serves as a principal north-south commuter route through Hunterdon County. As opposed to I-78, individual lots are permitted access to Route 31, in addition to public street connections. Route 31 runs through the northeastern quadrant of the Town, with public street access to Moebus Place and Georges Place (both low-volume roads). Primary access to Route 31 is provided via Halstead Street and Route 173 in Clinton Township. In February 2020, NJDOT released public information related to a proposal to rebuild the one-mile section of Route 31 from I-78 to Route 173 just east of the Town in Clinton Township. The project would replace the existing road surface with new, high-performance asphalt, complete safety improvements at the intersection of Center Street/Route 31 and extend the acceleration lane from I-78's Interchange 16. Per

NJDOT's FY 2020-2029 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, construction is proposed to be finalized by 2025.

The Town's primary east-west route is **New Jersey State Highway 173**, which is also known as Old Highway 22 (its designation prior to the construction of the bypass) and West Main Street. Route 173 traverses the entire length of Town north of I-78 and is the major commercial corridor and "gateway." Office and commercial areas are located at the east and west ends adjacent to the interstate interchanges. The eastern end of the corridor is characterized by front yard parking areas and suburban strip-mall style design, while the west side of the corridor features auto-oriented uses and limited pedestrian connectivity from the adjacent downtown area. Nearly every lot has its own access driveway and parking area; some older sites have most or all of their frontage open to the roadway. This design scheme results in complicated vehicle turning traffic and a lack of pedestrian connectivity to the downtown area, just one-quarter mile to the west. These conditions are particularly aggravated during the times that Route 173 serves as a "cut-through" between I-78 interchanges and Route 31 for vehicles avoiding heavy traffic congestion or crashes.

### Focus Area: Route 173

Route 173 serves as the gateway to downtown Clinton, from I-78 at the Town's western boundary to Route 31 at the border with Clinton Township. Upon entrance to the Town from the east by vehicle, the tangle of highway interchanges at the junction of Routes 31, 173 and 78 narrows into one travel lane in either direction coming around the bend. The iconic image of the Red Mill greets visitors on a roadside Welcome to Historic Clinton sign to the right, installed next to a utility pole on a lot housing an office building. To the left, I-78 snakes to the southwest, where its wide right-of-way serves



### Streetscape: Route 173, east of New Street



as an informal parking area accessed from Route 173. Well-maintained office buildings and banks surrounded by seas of parking give way to smaller retail and service businesses. The sidewalk that had started 750 feet east on the south side of Route 173 abruptly stops, while a new sidewalk begins on the north side along the A&P Redevelopment Area, with no crosswalk or signal to mark the transition. The single travel lanes are flanked by wide shoulders, but since no bike lanes or other facilities are provided, the wide right-of-way encourages speeding.

Besides the Historic Clinton welcome sign, there is little to signify to visitors that Clinton's downtown core is less than a half mile away from the eastern gateway. For Town residents, this corridor is home to many shopping and service businesses, including

pharmacies, dry cleaners, and banks, but the lack of human-scale infrastructure can deter even nearby residents from walking or biking.

Clinton's prior Master Plans have understandably focused on connecting the Route 173 gateways to the downtown through pedestrian connections and traffic calming techniques, and by championing significant infrastructure improvements, many of which are dependent on NJDOT approval and/or funding. The 2008 Master Plan and associated Community Design Workshops set forth a number of recommendations for the Route 173 corridor. Some have been implemented with great success, such as the gateway pedestrian plaza at Route 173/Quarry Street. Others, such as the implementation of access management strategies and complete

## STREETS FOR ALL

Clinton's Complete Street Policy was established by Town Council resolution in December 2020. The Complete Streets approach to provide safe, comfortable and convenient street access for pedestrians, bicyclists, people with disabilities, public transit riders and other users who may not be prioritized in traditional vehicle-centric road designs. The conceptual framework for Complete Streets was formally established in 2004 as an offshoot of Smart Growth America, and NJDOT released their own policy in 2009. Since then, nearly a third of New Jersey municipalities have adopted a Complete Streets policy. Complete Streets policies do not mandate that all facilities provide all forms of infrastructure; rather, the policy provides for a review process to determine where such improvements are feasible and desirable.

streets solutions along the length of the corridor have not been implemented and remain as relevant as ever. However, the Town alone cannot control the existing pattern of highway interchanges to its east and west or design capital improvements along the corridor. However, the Town has exclusive jurisdiction over local streets and municipally owned properties and further, has the power to enact zoning regulations, adopt Town-wide policies like Complete Streets (see inset) and establish priorities via budgeting. Establishing both targeted and Town-wide multi-modal policies also imparts influence over private investment in development, such as in the case of the recent A&P Redevelopment Plan.

### Regional Transit Networks

Hunterdon County's low-density, rural character is not conducive to extensive and frequent public transportation service. Several transit options do serve the Town and surrounding areas, with a primary focus on serving commuters. **Trans-Bridge Lines** operates regional bus service from the Lehigh Valley to the Port Authority Bus Terminal and Wall Street in New York City via Clinton Township's Park and Ride, located at the intersection of NJ-31 and Center Street approximately ¼ mile west of the Town boundary. Limited service is also offered to and from Newark Liberty Airport. Like other private bus and motorcoach companies, Trans-Bridge ridership was significantly impacted following the onset of COVID-19 restrictions in March 2020, leading to significant service cuts that continued through 2020. As restrictions eased, Trans-Bridge returned

with limited service that has gradually increased along with ridership. As of late 2021, Trans-Bridge operates 13 to 15 NYC-bound runs from Clinton Park and Ride on weekdays and 3 to 5 runs on weekends. Prior to COVID-19, the park and ride lot were frequently at capacity, and pedestrian connections are limited due to the I-78 interchange crossings in the vicinity.

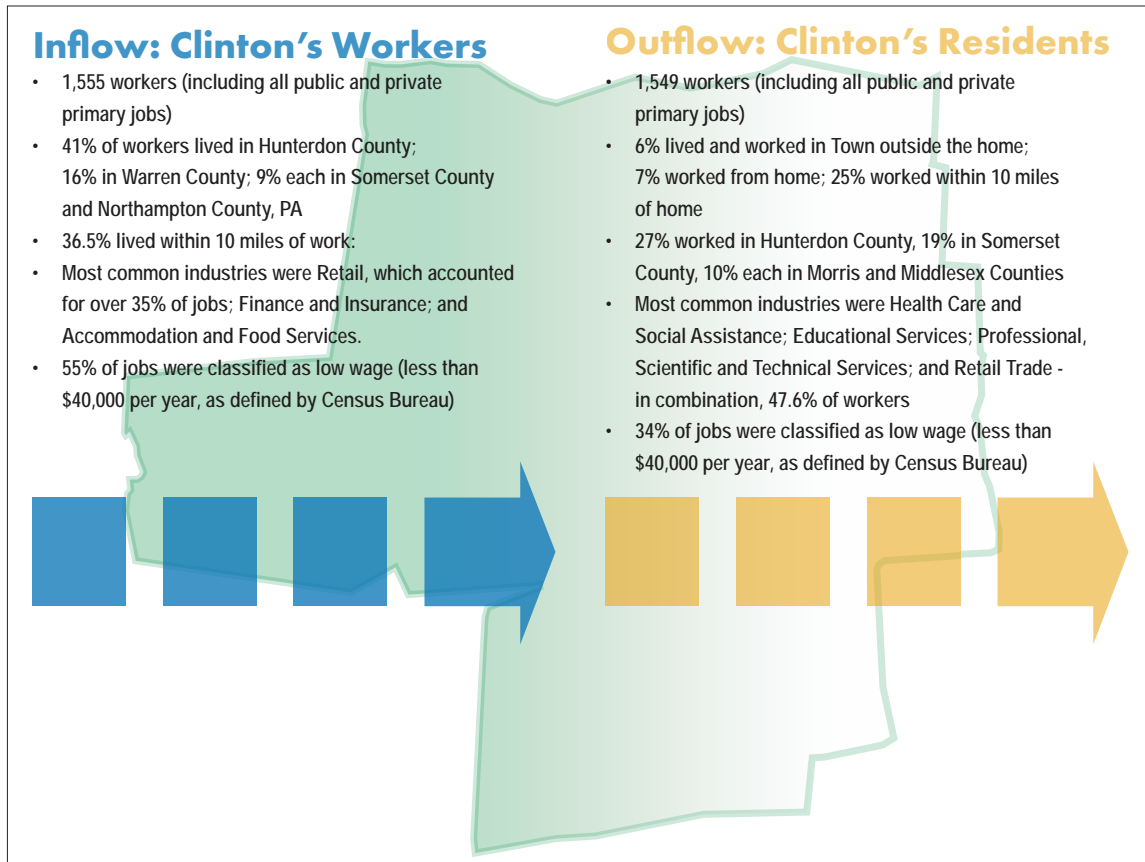
The western terminus of NJ Transit's **Raritan Valley Line** is High Bridge Station, two miles northeast of Clinton. NJ Transit operates limited service between High Bridge, the far western terminus of the Raritan Valley Line, and Newark/New York. However, the majority of trains on this line terminate and start at Raritan in Somerset County. Three inbound trains and four outbound trains operate from High Bridge to Newark Penn Station during weekday rush hours; additional mid-day trains run local to New York Penn Station. No weekend service is provided west of Raritan.

Hunterdon County's Department of Human Services administers The LINK system, which provides scheduled mini-bus service from Clinton Township's Park and Ride and Walmart Plaza to Flemington, Milford, and Hampton on its Cross County Shuffle Routes (15, 17, and 18). The LINK also provides weekday, daytime on-demand bus service within the County on a first come-first serve basis for those needing direct transportation.



For many workers, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an urgent shift to remote work in March 2020. Over 18 months later, remote work still has an outsize role compared to pre-pandemic levels - particularly for white-collar and highly educated workers. The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics started tracking new COVID-19 indicators in May 2020; that month, just over 35% of all workers nationwide (including 60% of workers with a bachelor's degree or higher) were teleworking due to the pandemic. By September 2021, these figures were reduced to 13% and 24%, respectively. In terms of commuting impact, as of late 2021 local automobile traffic is similar to pre-pandemic levels and NJ Transit is up to approximately 60% of its previous peak ridership. While the exact figures are difficult to quantify, the pandemic accelerated a shift to remote and hybrid work that is likely to continue, particularly in regions with high levels of educational attainment, like Hunterdon County.

## THE FUTURE OF REMOTE WORK



## Commute and Workplace Patterns

Reviewing the direction, frequency, and mode of commuting patterns in and out of the Town demonstrates how and where the Town can plan to both support existing patterns and encourage new options. The US Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program records the number of jobs in a given workplace location and household location at the Census block level. An analysis of this data as of 2018 (the most recent year available) showed that Clinton has a balance in terms of the number of jobs and number of workers, but a disconnect in the types of jobs held by its

householders and its workers. In summary, Clinton residents tended to travel further to seek higher paying jobs. Key findings are summarized below.

In an economic development framework, commuter mobility patterns can inform one aspect of determining the Town's market area - the geographical region from which Clinton serves and from where the Town can expect to see the most demand. Market areas for housing, employment, retail, and tourism may slightly differ, but each operates under the same principle: identifying the populations and areas with which the Town is most intertwined.

Consistent storefront sizes, building shapes, and awnings demarcate the pedestrian realm along Main Street.



Clinton's inflow and outflow patterns reflect the Town's role as a hub of Hunterdon County, but also demonstrate how the area's low-density character may allow for wider trade areas, even extending into Pennsylvania. Employment patterns - including number of workers, hours of operation, and mode of transport - also impact built environment and mobility infrastructure, as described in the next section.

### **Focus Area: Main Street & East Main Street**

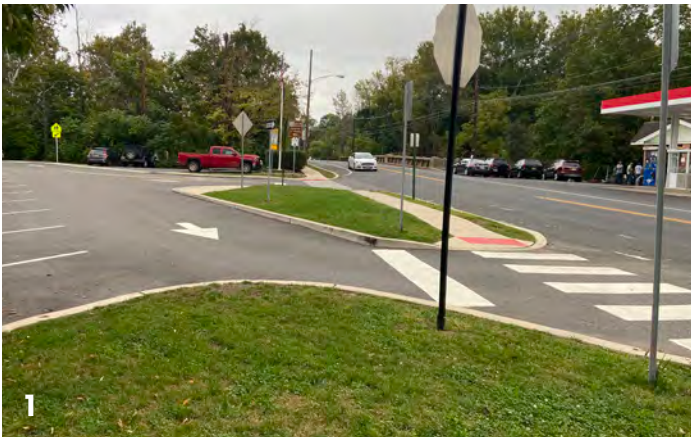
Downtown Clinton's streetscape, walkability and history are at the heart of the Town's overall desirability and charm. However, there are specific mobility challenges that impact this type of setting, precisely because it is pedestrian-friendly locus within its suburban-rural environs. The downtown street grid is framed and traversed by state and federal highways, which provide regional accessibility but are nearly exclusively vehicle oriented. As a

result, the downtown street grid and development patterns quickly devolve as sidewalks narrow, curb cuts increase in number and width, and auto-friendly development replace the historic form along Route 173. Given these circumstances, the Town can encourage pedestrian connections by focusing on preserving and enhancing the existing features that already provide walkability and character. The figure on the following page provides an overview of specific strengths and weaknesses related to existing mobility in the downtown and its immediate environs.

Within the downtown core, sidewalks are wider, street trees meet building fronts to form a street wall, and the plentiful street furniture is both functional and decorative. Wide sidewalks allow for retail and restaurant activity to expand out of doors, with signage, seating and welcoming décor, while still providing ample room for pedestrians. Downtown's sidewalks and trees appropriately enclose



## Strengths and Weaknesses: Downtown Mobility



- 1** Pedestrian infrastructure provides a safe connection to Center and Main Streets from Route 173.
- 2** Wide, inviting sidewalks and street furniture enhance the perception of walkability.
- 3** Pedestrian passageways offer safe connections to rear parking areas and between downtown blocks.





**4** Informal rear parking areas provide necessary employee parking and loading, but are cut off from the adjacent pedestrian realm.

**5** Sidewalks narrow in the vicinity of the downtown gateway at Leigh and Route 173.

**6** East Main Street's streetwall trails off one block from Leigh Street due in part to the USPS facility.

**7** Route 173 quickly becomes a suburban-style retail corridor east of New Street.





**The Clinton Fire Department site serves as both a symbolic and physical marker of downtown's limits.**



the pedestrian realm so that walking feels safe from vehicle traffic and pedestrians can easily see into downtown establishments, creating a relationship through their windows and storefronts.

There are few vehicular curb cuts between buildings in the downtown core east of Leigh Street, which further enhances the feeling that this street was designed for people, rather than cars. However, this pattern shifts as one walks east along East Main Street. While the western half of this block has similar sidewalks and amenities as west of Leigh Street, auto-centric design takes over to the east, with a large parking area to the north and the US Post Office to the south. The pedestrian realm comes to a halt at the T-intersection of East Main and New Streets, where the Town Fire Department building is constructed in the middle of a large parking lot, with no sidewalks provided along Route 173 to the south. The sidewalk along New Street abruptly ends at a curb ramp to nowhere at Route 173.

There are also a number of pedestrian passageways between buildings that provide access to parking areas and side streets and simply provide shortcuts. Aesthetic quality differs between one passageway and another, but their function remains the same: providing pedestrian mobility between the pub-

lic-facing storefronts of Main Street and East Main Street and functional areas to the north and south, home to parking, loading, and trash collection. Some passageways are simply concrete sidewalks, while others have pavers and other markers relating to adjacent storefronts or properties. These passageways are generally privately-owned throughout the Town, but uniformity is not the goal - and would not reflect the character of the downtown. As a best practice, pedestrian passageways should be clearly marked with wayfinding signage and/or street furniture to catch the attention of pedestrians and signal that these areas are open to the public, no matter what particular form that takes.

There is also a variation in quality among the rear, private parking areas primarily serving buildings and businesses on the south side of Main Street. These areas are privately owned and generally serve as areas for employee parking, loading, storage and trash removal. However, they are inseparable from the public-facing realm on the other side of the buildings. Pedestrians on Main Street can see through the aforementioned passageways, while drivers along Route 173 also have a clear view inward. Typical features of these areas include gravel lots, informal parking of vehicles, visible trash containers, and haphazard location of

**Top: Downtown businesses use wider sidewalks to provide seating and amenities.**

**Bottom right: Pedestrian connections between buildings take varied forms throughout the downtown.**



outbuildings such as sheds. With the understanding that this is private space serving local businesses - and that there may be flood control issues that pose challenges to upgrades - these areas stand in significant contrast to the street-facing facades. Visual improvements to areas that are clearly within the pedestrian viewshed would further enhance the pedestrian experience along Main Street and set the stage for eventual connections to Route 173.

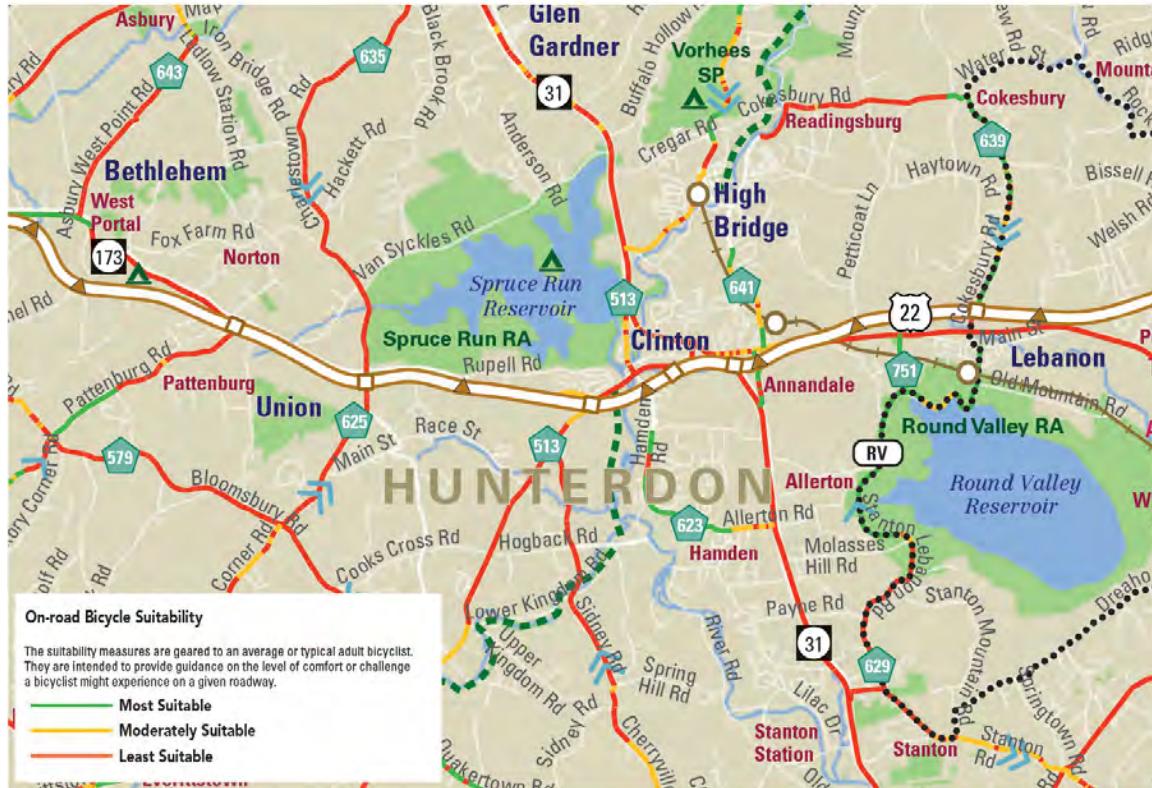
## Bicycle Facilities

Despite the fact that Hunterdon County's rolling hills have long been a haven for bicycle hobbyists and experienced road racers, there are no dedicated bike lanes or facilities within the Town. Bike lanes are located along Hamden Road/Leigh Street in Clinton Township, and the Landsdown Trail multi-use path provides connections to Franklin Township to the southwest. NJDOT's most recent Bicycle Map identifies Routes 173 and 31 as Least Suitable

for cycling, while portions of Halstead Street are deemed Moderately Suitable. No roadways within Town limits are identified as Most Suitable, the safest classification. While the Town does not have direct jurisdiction over installation of bike lanes State or County roads, the new Complete Streets policy requires bike facilities to be considered as



## Detail from NJDOT Bicycle Map



part of future designs. In lieu of dedicated bike lanes, signage designating bike routes and provision of bicycle racks can serve to encourage cycling and promote safety between travel modes.

## Public and Private Parking

Clinton's historic downtown lot arrangement precludes on-site parking for many establishments, to the benefit of residents and visitors enjoying Main Street by foot. Municipal parking lots are presently located at Lower Center Street (Block 10, Lot 11), Water Street across the river from downtown (Block 16, Lot 21) and the Municipal Building south of Route 173 (Block 22, Lot 1). The Water Street and Municipal Building lots provide 24-hour parking, while the Lower Center Street lot has a 3-hour limit from 8am until 6pm, Monday through Saturday (excluding holidays.) Additional 24-hour parking is provided in portions of the Clinton Fire House

parking lot and at the Community Center north of downtown. On-street parking is limited to 2 hours on Main Street, East Main Street and Leigh Street (between Route 173 and Center Street). Untimed on-street parking is available on Halstead Street, Center Street, Lower Center Street, and West Main Street.

Parking, or lack thereof, is often a focal point within historic downtowns, but Clinton provides a variety of parking options with a significant number of available parking spaces that generally meet the needs of the downtown. On a busy Saturday or during a special event, parking can be challenging, with visitors often resorting to private parking lots along Old Route 22 that lack adequate pedestrian infrastructure to access Town.

Often, parking issues are due to location and management rather than simply supply and demand. In downtown Clinton, parking locations are scattered; there is little wayfinding signage or information available to visitors, and there are limited connections between some public parking areas and downtown. Twenty-four-hour parking lots are located within two to three blocks of downtown businesses in the Municipal Building and on Water Street. In reality, both of these locations are disconnected from the downtown fabric by the river and Route 173, respectively, and lack signage that would alert a visitor to the option.

Further, the difference in lot arrangements between Main Street and Old Route 22 can also create confusion; some businesses along Main Street, as previously described, have private parking lots that are reserved for employees, while businesses along Old 22 often have a handful of dedicated parking spaces for their customers alone, creating a patchwork of parking rules and regulations. Efforts to improve coordination between both public and private off-street parking areas could result in better distribution of parking within all of the Township's convenient public lots, coupled with wayfinding improvements to ensure that visitors can access all corners of downtown Clinton.

## Points of Interest

- ▶ The impacts associated with I-78 are well-documented in the Town's existing plans and remain relevant to date. The Town should continue pursuing opportunities with NJDOT (such as improvements to situate the Exit 15 intersection as a gateway) while focusing on goals under Town jurisdiction.
- ▶ Hunterdon County's rural environs make it difficult to provide meaningful public transit service, but both local and regional service can attract visitor and leisure riders - not just commuters.
- ▶ Downtown's idyllic streetscape abruptly ends at Route 173, where intermittent sidewalks and highway-oriented design limit pedestrian accessibility. Previous Town plans have encouraged access management strategies between individual properties, which the Town can control via zoning and development approvals, and Complete Streets solutions, which requires NJDOT sign-off.
- ▶ Along Main Street, streetscape features like the streetwall, pedestrian amenities, and clear demarcation of pathways contribute to the classic downtown feel of these blocks. Look at how the most successful features can be incorporated along blocks on the outskirts of downtown via street furniture, property improvements, or wayfinding signage.
- ▶ Parking challenges (real or perceived) are frequently due to the distribution and location of available spaces, rather than sheer supply and demand. To combat this, encourage coordination between the public and private parking realms and private shared parking arrangements.
- ▶ Bicycle infrastructure, when provided, can provide benefits by bringing in new visitors and shifting mode of travel away from vehicles for residents.







## 6. Environment & Open Space

The South Branch of the Raritan River was the predominant driver of Clinton's founding and early development. As a result, the Town's environmental context and historical assets are forever connected. In the 18th century, Clinton's riverfront set the settlement apart from other turnpike hamlets, allowing for the construction of water-powered mills and limestone quarries that marked the beginning of the village development patterns that are still ingrained in the Town today. This section provides an overview of Clinton's environmental features, open space and recreation opportunities, and historic context.

### Water Resources

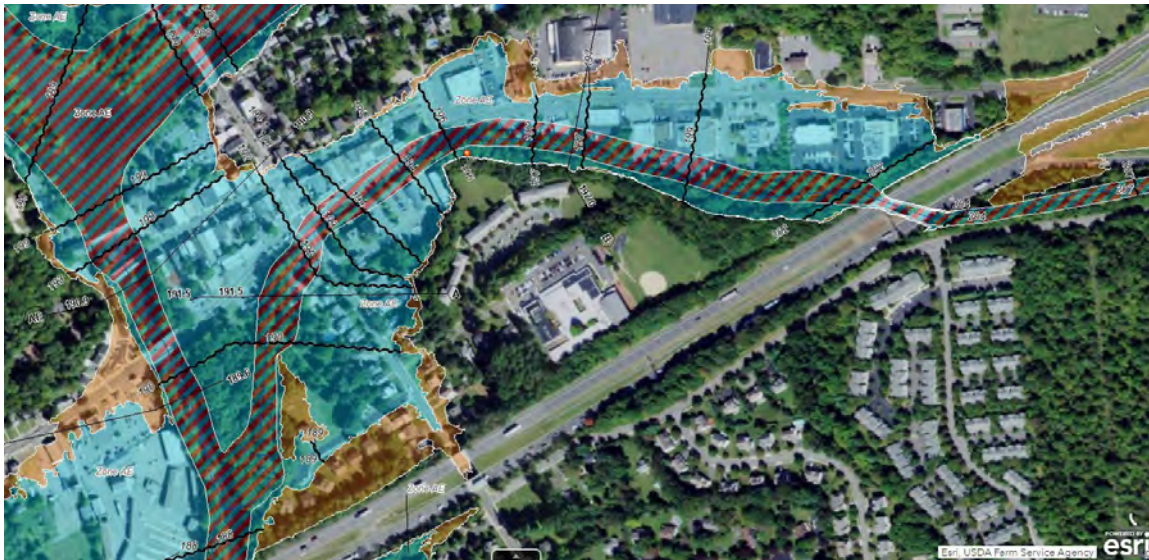
The South Branch is a tributary of the Raritan River measuring 50 miles in length and extending from Morris County through Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, where it meets the North Branch near Bridgewater Township to form the Raritan River's eastward flow. The Raritan River is an integral part of New Jersey's ecosystem and provides drinking water to a large swath of the state. Round Valley Reservoir in adjacent Clinton Township is New Jersey's largest reservoir, while Spruce Run Reservoir abuts the Town to the northeast and serves as both a recreation area and an alternate source of drinking water in case of drought.

In addition to the South Branch, which runs north-south through the Town, Clinton's other important waterway is the Beaver Brook, which runs east from the South Branch, south of Route 173 and north of I-78. through the Town to the east of the South Branch of the Raritan and between Route 173 and Interstate 78. Both the South Branch and the Beaver Brook are designated as Category 1 (C1) waterways by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), with the entirety of the Beaver Brook being upgraded to C1 status in 2020 (see sidebar for more discussion).



### Category 1 Status

Per NJDEP, Category 1 waterways are “noted for their exceptional ecological, water supply, recreation, and/or fisheries values” and are subject to more stringent water quality standards for wastewater and other regulated discharges. Notably, C1 waterways are also subject to a 300-foot development buffer per the requirements of the Flood Hazard Area Control Act (NJAC 7:13). The 300-foot buffer is intended to protect the riparian zone, which encompasses land and vegetation within 300 feet from the top of the bank along both sides of a C1 waterway. The enhanced protection of C1 waterways allows for preservation of the State’s most fragile riparian ecosystems, but can severely restrict even low-impact development, like pedestrian connections. Creative land use solutions should balance policy and design goals with environmental protection.



Existing crossings over the South Branch include the historic Main Street Truss Bridge, Route 173 at the southern edge of downtown, and Halstead Street to the north. Route 31 and I-78 also cross the South Branch within Town limits. Each of the three downtown bridges provide pedestrian and vehicular access across the river, with physically separated pedestrian walkways on the truss bridge and Route 173 crossing. There are limited crossings of the Beaver Brook; in fact, previous master plans identified the need for a new crossing that would provide access from the Municipal Building to Route 173 and New Street, which has not been provided to date.

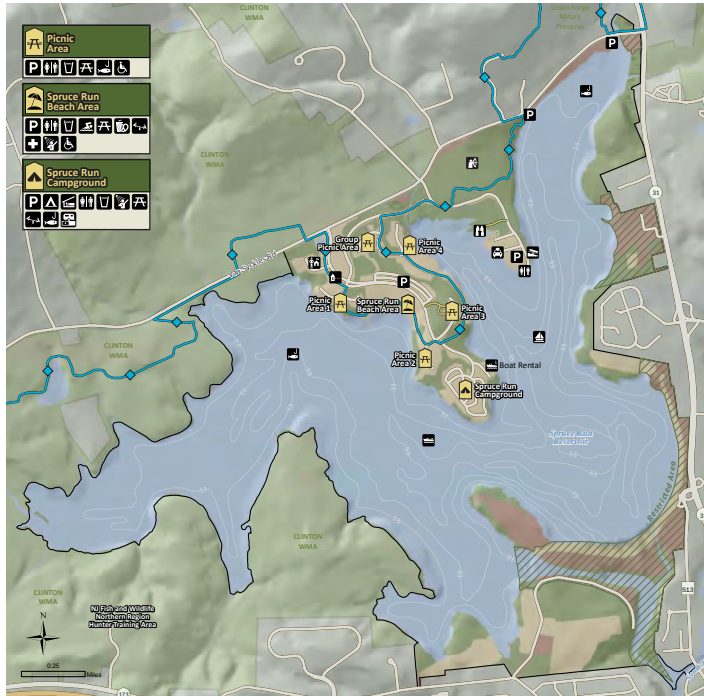
### Floodplains

For all of the natural beauty and resources derived from the South Branch, the challenges associated with Raritan River flooding have been well-documented

across Hunterdon County and throughout New Jersey. Clinton is all too familiar with flooding issues, as most of the downtown core, Route 173 corridor, and areas between Route 173 and I-78 lie within designated flood hazard areas, or floodplains. The 100-year floodplain is defined as having a 1% chance of annual flooding; however, these areas of the Town flood regularly during heavy rainstorms and can experience catastrophic flooding due to severe tropical cyclone events like Floyd (1999), Irene (2011) and Ida (2021). As indicated in the 2008 Master Plan, this flooding is a regional problem among Raritan River communities that requires a regional solution among cooperating entities (the Army Corps of Engineers, NJDEP, and affected municipalities).

Right: Detail from NJ State Park Service  
Brochure for Spruce Run Recreation Area

Bottom: County Parks Map of  
Landsdown Trail



#### About Landsdown Meadows & Trail

The Landsdown Trail was once a spur line for the Lehigh Valley Railroad, which was completed in 1881 and connected the Town of Clinton with Landsdown. While the line was mainly used for passenger service, freight was also moved on the line to and from Mulligan's Mill (known today as the Clinton Mill), which operated as a grist mill and also processed graphite. Operation on the line discontinued several decades ago but the old train station survives and has been converted and used as a store for Cyrus Fox Lumber Company in Clinton. The County acquired the old rail line in 1993, and the adjoining property in 2009, bringing the total acreage of Landsdown Meadows and Trail to 186.

The Landsdown Trail adjoins the South Branch of the Raritan River. Over 1000 acres of parkland exist along this river, and these pieces collectively are called the South Branch Recreation. This reservation provides recreational opportunities, helps preserve the watershed from development, and provides wildlife habitat. Visit the county park website for trail maps and guides for these other park areas.



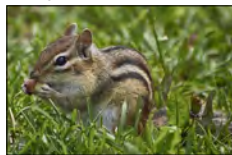
South Branch of the Raritan River

The Hunterdon County Division of Parks & Recreation is dedicated to preserving open space and natural resources, providing safe parks and facilities, and offering educational and recreational opportunities, all contributing to an enhanced quality of life for present and future generations.

#### Landsdown Meadows & Trail

**Location:** The Landsdown Trail Section is located between Lower Landsdown Road in Franklin Township and 21 West Main Street in the Town of Clinton. An additional parking area to an undeveloped part of the property is located at 5 Sidney Road, Pittstown 08867. The park area is open from sunrise to sunset. No restroom facilities are available.

**Directions from the Flemington Area:** Travel Route 31 north to the jug handle north of Interstate 78. Take the overpass over Route 31 and follow the signs for the business area of Clinton. Proceed past the traffic light for Leigh Street. The trailhead is located between the Cyrus Fox Lumber Company and the former Clinton Global Ag on the left. Turn in just before the Global Ag Building, and two parking spots are available alongside the building.



Eastern Chipmunk

**Directions from the Hampton Area:** Take Route 31 south to the traffic light at the intersection with Halstead Street. Turn right and proceed into the town of Clinton. At the traffic light, turn right onto West Main Street. The trailhead is located between the Cyrus Fox Lumber Company and the Clinton Global Ag.

(Revised 11/2019)

With the exception of park properties with reservable facilities, all properties are "carry in / carry out" and trash/recycling receptacles are not provided. Please plan accordingly and do not leave any trash/recyclables behind.

#### Recreational Opportunities

The Landsdown Trail is 1.5 miles long and stretches from Lower Landsdown Road to the center of the town of Clinton. The trail's natural surface is conducive to hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing. The trail traverses through both open fields and forests as well as some wetland, offering several opportunities to view a wide range of wildlife.

At one point the trail crosses over the Capoolong Creek, which is one of the main tributaries to the South Branch of the Raritan River. The State's Capoolong Creek Trail is a short hike down Landsdown Road and offers about an additional four miles of hiking, and ends in Pittstown. For more information on the Capoolong Creek Trail, contact NJ Fish & Wildlife at 609-984-0547 or visit [www.njfishandwildlife.org/wmas.htm](http://www.njfishandwildlife.org/wmas.htm).

The Landsdown Trail does provide limited access to the South Branch of the Raritan River and the Capoolong Creek for fishing. The river is stocked with Rainbow, Brook, and Brown Trout. A state fishing license with a trout stamp must be displayed.

The parking lot on Sidney Road allows access to field edges, but currently has no formal trails.

#### Nearby County Park Area

**Melick's Bridge:** Located along Hamden Road and offers two fishing trails to access the South Branch of the Raritan River. For more information, see its specific guide.

Spring Peeper



It is the policy of the County to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities upon advance notice of need. Persons requiring accommodations should make a request at least two weeks prior to program attendance.

## Landsdown Meadows and Trail

### Map and Guide



Ahiaman (Hi) Wagner, Conductor (right), with his crew, Clinton Train Station, ~1910



Hunterdon County  
**Division of Parks & Recreation**  
PO Box 2900, Flemington, NJ 08822-2900  
1020 State Route 31, Lebanon, NJ 08833  
Telephone (908) 782-1158  
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E-mail: [parks@co.hunterdon.nj.us](mailto:parks@co.hunterdon.nj.us)  
Website: [www.co.hunterdon.nj.us](http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us)  
(click on "Parks & Recreation")

Office Hours:  
Monday to Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM



The impacts of the flood hazard area are especially prevalent on the south side of Route 173. Per most recent FEMA mapping, properties in this area are located within not just the 100-year floodplain, but the floodway - the inner portion of the flood hazard area, which carries and discharges most flood waters and is characterized by faster and deeper flows than the remainder of the flood hazard area. NJDEP regulations severely restrict development in the floodway, to the extent where generally only essential infrastructure improvements are permitted to be constructed in the area. The Town's Land Use Ordinance includes provisions regulating the FP Floodplain district, an overlay district defined as encompassing the flood hazard areas within the Town, and a Flood Damage Prevention ordinance. The 2018 Master Plan noted that the FP District should be updated to reflect current FEMA mapping and guidelines, which has not been amended to date.

## Wetlands and Critical Habitat Areas

Wetland areas associated with the South Branch and Lingerts Pond are located primarily in undeveloped and/or preserved areas of the Town. Smaller wetland areas are located on the far eastern side of the Industrial tract, and on undeveloped portions of the TownePlace Marriot property. The Town's existing wetland areas comprise some of New Jersey's most important ecosystems and are home to a number of the State's threatened and endangered species, and species of special concern. NJDEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife provides a method of understanding important habitat areas via their Landscape Project, which maps and ranks New Jersey's environmentally sensitive areas based on the importance of habitats found within the area. Clinton's wetland and riparian areas contain habitats ranked 1 (least critical) to 4 (includes at least one State endangered species).

The Town should continue to site development away from wetlands in accordance with the New Jersey Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act Rules at NJAC 7:7A and the guidelines of the Landscape Project. The following recommendation of the 2008 Master Plan remains relevant:

*Development of lands ranked by the Landscape Project should include careful consideration of the best methods to retain wildlife habitat. Such methods may include but not be limited to development clustered on a small area of the lot, utilization of native plants and maintaining natural buffers around water features and environmentally constrained land, such as wetlands.*

## Open Space & Recreation

Clinton's northwest quadrant is comprised of the **Spruce Run Recreation Area**, a state park that surrounds the Spruce Run Reservoir's 15 miles of shoreline. Spruce Run is one of the most frequently visited New Jersey State Park, recording an estimated 374,000 visitors in 2019. Spruce Run offers a number of trails, campsites, fishing, boating, and winter sports. Recently, swimming and other water-based activities have been limited due to the presence of harmful algal blooms, which have similarly impacted water bodies throughout the state. Spruce Run includes trail connections to the Highlands Trail System, which extends from Storm King Mountain in New York to Riegelsville. While Spruce Run encompasses 150 acres within the Town, vehicular access to the Recreation Area is via Van Syckles Road in Clinton Township. No public access is permitted to the portion of Spruce Run along the eastern banks of the reservoir, adjacent to Halstead Street in the Town, which is controlled by the water company. As a result, visitors to Spruce Run can easily bypass the Town if arriving via I-78 or Route 31.

**Top: Landsdown Trailhead as seen from West Main Street (Route 173)**

**Bottom: Town bulletin board at Water Street parking lot; a visitor's center and wayfinding system can serve a similar unified purpose.**



The **Landsdown Trail** is a multi-use trail along the former right-of-way of a spur line of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Hunterdon County acquired the railroad right-of-way and completed the trail conversion in the mid-1990s, following decades of disuse by the railroad. The trail currently begins just south of Route 173, passing under I-78 and continuing 1.5 miles south before ending at Lower Landsdown Road. The Capoolong Creek picks up at a trailhead located just south of Lansdown Road and continues 4 miles south onto Pittstown. In Clinton, the trailhead is located between the Fox Lumber Company and the former Global Agway building. In its current condition, the trailhead lacks signage or notable indication of the trail that lies to the south. As part of the Global Agway Redevelopment Plan, the Town has proposed to initiate work with the County to relocate the trail right-of-way to the east to serve as a greenway along the Raritan River and provide more direct access to downtown Clinton. The future of the relocation is uncertain pending development of the Global Agway Redevelopment Plan Area and County planning efforts.



Hunterdon County also maintains the Dunham Park section of the South Branch Reservation on an isolated peninsula located east of Halstead Street. Access is a barrier to enjoyment of this passive recreation area, which lacks a demarcated entrance or dedicated parking area. The Town's website offers clear instructions for visitors to access both Landsdown Trail and Dunham Park, but access to both sites remains poor.



The Town also provides a number of municipally owned open space and recreation facilities providing playing fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, and passive recreation space. Gebhardt Field, located west of Halstead Street, offers lighted outdoor active recreation facilities. Hunts Mill Park is located in the southern portion of the Town and encompasses 42 acres of active and passive recreative uses. The Town is in the process of renovating the existing playground on Halstead Street, using County funds to provide modern, ADA-compliant play opportunities.

Prior master plans have proposed new open space and recreation infrastructure throughout the Town, including trails along the Beaver Brook, boat launches throughout the Town, and conversion of portions of the Industrial tract to a Town or County Park. While the viability of these projects may be limited by land ownership, funding, or other barriers, the Town's ongoing open space policies should stress expanding accessibility to existing natural areas. In situations where the Town does not control the open space assets, off-site signage or displays can aid with wayfinding and circulation. The hub of the wayfinding system could be a visitor's center, the form of which may range from an unmanned kiosk to detached building outside of downtown that provides parking for those visiting open space attractions. There are also potential opportunities to explore further open space acquisition through NJDEP programs like Blue Acres, a voluntary program that allows residential property owners to sell their flood-prone properties to the State to be returned to open space.

## Historical and Cultural Context

Clinton's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is tasked with promoting the conservation of historic areas in Town and the preservation of cultural,

social and architectural history. The majority of the downtown is located within the Clinton Historic District, which was designated on the National and State Registers of Historic Places in 1995. The Historic District includes portions of Center, West Main, Main, East Main, Halstead, Water, and Leigh Streets, including areas to the north, west, and south of downtown.

In addition, several individual sites are listed on the National and State Registers:

- Clinton Historical Museum (Red Mill) / 56 Main Street
- Dunham's Mill (Parry's Mill) / 7 Center Street
- M.C. Mulligan & Sons Quarry / 56 Main Street
- Old Grandin Library / 12 East Main Street

The Main Street truss bridge has received a Certificate of Eligibility but is not officially listed. The Music Hall at 23 West Main Street was previously listed but demolished following a 2016 fire.

At present, the HPC has an advisory role in coordination with the Land Use Board. While past Master Plans have recommended that historic design guidelines be implemented downtown, such zoning has not been adopted at this time. Most recently, the Town approved a public-private partnership between The Red Mill Museum Village and the HPC that would provide grant funding to eligible applications to assist in the rehabilitation and restoration of historic facades in Clinton. The project would be funded by Red Mill donors, with applicants reviewed by a joint board consisting of Red Mill and HPC representatives.

Clinton's remaining historic mills both now serve as cultural centers. The Red Mill Museum Village comprises the Red Mill and the adjacent M.C. Mulligan & Sons Quarry on the west bank of the South



Branch, both of which are listed on the State and National Registers. The Museum's core collection consists of over 40,000 artifacts documenting the agricultural, industrial and domestic history of Hunterdon County and the Clinton community. The Hunterdon Art Museum is located in Dunham's stone mill on the east bank and serves as a regional center for art, craft and design. The Red Mill features annual events like the Haunted Red Mill at Halloween, while the Hunterdon Art Museum offers a number of classes and programs for children and adults that are open to the public.

The Town's historic resources are crucial to its identity and its economic future. As will be discussed in the forthcoming Economic Base Analysis, sustainable economic development will place the Town's historic form in the modern landscape of tourism, housing preferences, the post-COVID retail environment.



## Points of Interest

- ▶ Water resources are the defining characteristic of the Town's environment. Historic development patterns center on the waterfront, but modern environmental regulations require more creative site design.
- ▶ Floodplains, including large areas of the floodway, impede redevelopment and infill opportunities south of downtown.
- ▶ Municipal, State, and County parks are located in nearly every corner of the Town, but are often hidden. Prioritizing visual and wayfinding improvements can "advertise" these locales to visitors and residents alike.
- ▶ The historic district provides the Town's most iconic architecture and viewsheds. History and cultural institutions can drive economic development and keep their character through careful, contextual planning.



## 7. Land Use & Zoning Analysis

### Commercial Zoning

The Town's retail, commercial, non-residential and mixed-use zoning districts provide the regulatory framework for the Town's several commercial areas, which range from the traditional downtown core, transitional commercial areas to the east and west on Route 173, and the highway-style commercial corridor along Route 31.

Over the last 5 years, several of the Town's non-residential sites have been the subject of zoning changes and development approvals, including two redevelopment plans and a rezoning, as shown on the updated Zoning Map. In this context - where infill development will represent most future opportunities in the Town - we offer an overview of current nonresidential zoning and land use patterns.

This section provides an overview of existing zoning regulations and land use patterns in the Town that is informed by the review of previous plans in Chapter 3, analysis of the Town's existing zoning and land use documentations, and on-the-ground visits to understand conditions as of 2021. This baseline regulatory analysis will, in turn, inform the land use recommendations that will be a part of subsequent phases in the development of the SEDP.



### Commercial Districts

The **C-1 Downtown Commercial District** encompasses the Town's traditional downtown business district, including prime lots fronting on Route 173, Main Street, East Main Street, Leigh Street



and Center Street. Buildings are located directly abutting the sidewalk and generally present a continuous street facade, with occasional breaks to provide access to parking and services in the rear. Parking is generally provided either on the street or





in common parking lots, and the buildings and signage are oriented to pedestrian traffic. The district provides standards that align with the underlying walkable character of the area, but certain bulk requirements such as FAR and building coverage are incongruous with existing development patterns.

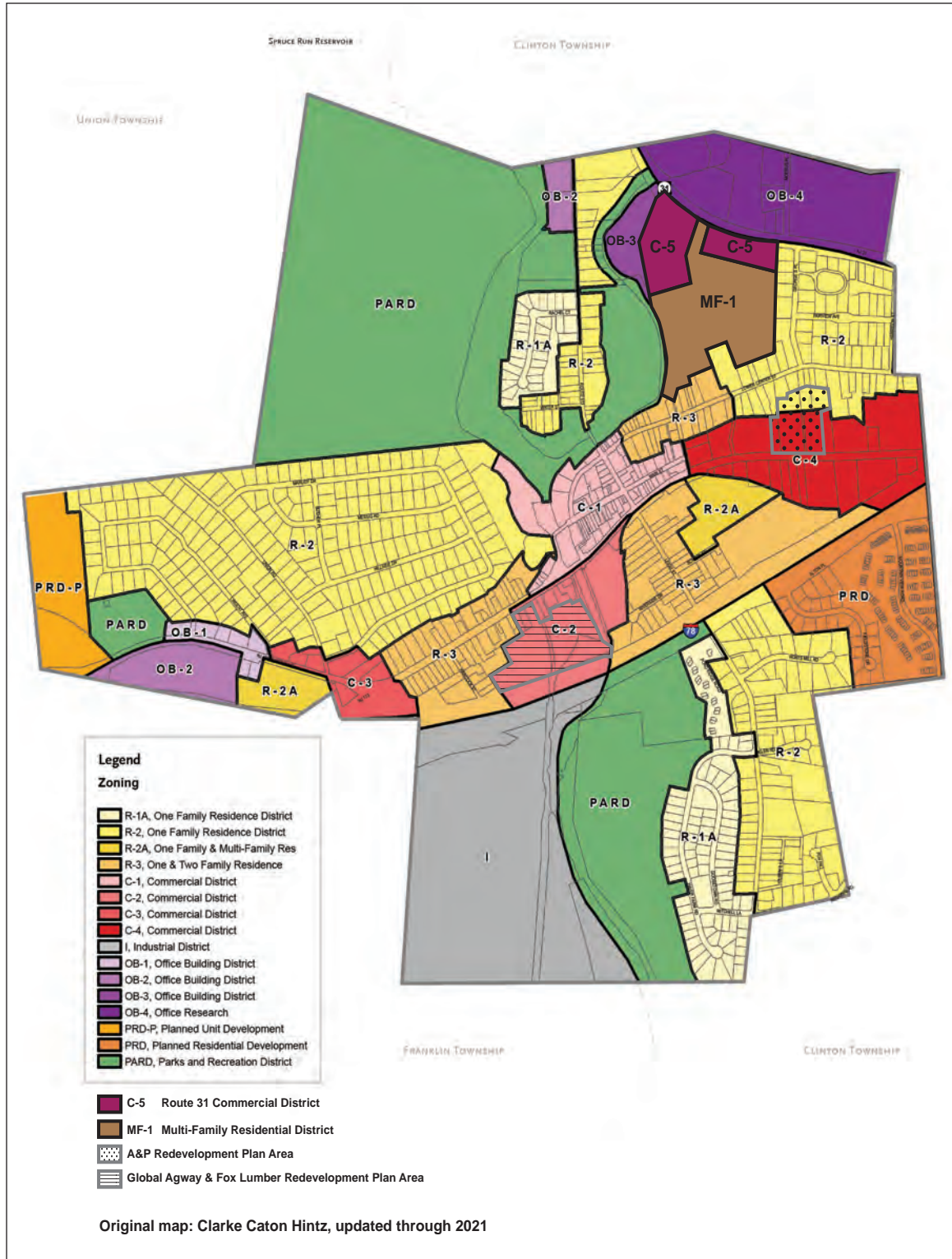
- Permitted uses: Retail; offices; restaurants where patrons are seated and served; studios for art, dancing, language and similar; museums; municipal buildings; apartments above the first floor; beauty salons and day spas; banks, finance, and insurance uses.
- Bulk Requirements: Minimum lot size is 1,200 square feet in area, with a minimum lot width of 18 feet and no requirements for front, rear or side yard setback. The zone has generous allowance for building coverage and floor area ratio, at 87% for each, and permits up to 100% impervious coverage. The maximum permitted height is two stories and 35 feet.
- Design Requirements: Buildings to abut sidewalk; accessways shall be designed to promote circulation throughout Main Street; buildings on Route 173 to provide pedestrian access

across front yard parking; outdoor display of goods shall not impede pedestrian movement; dumpsters shall be in the rear and/or screened; mechanical equipment shall be screened from upper floor residences.

The **C-2 Transitional Commercial District** encompasses the extension of the downtown commercial area along Route 173, to the south of downtown and west of the South Branch. The largest sites in this district - Global Agway and Fox Lumber - are now the subject of a Redevelopment Plan that supersedes these underlying zoning requirements. Many of the other lots in the district are undersized such that productive redevelopment would be difficult under the required FAR and building coverage conditions.

- Permitted uses: Retail; offices (except medical); restaurants where patrons are seated and served; funeral homes; studios for art, dancing, language and similar; municipal buildings and municipal uses.
- Bulk requirements: The minimum lot size is 30,000 square feet, the minimum lot width is 40

## Existing Zoning Map







feet at the street and 50 feet at the building line, the minimum front and rear yards are 20 feet, the minimum side yard is 10 feet (or 1/3 of the combined side yard requirement), and the minimum combined side yard is the greater of 25 percent of the lot width at the building line or 20 feet. The minimum front, rear, and side yards are additionally required to be 50 feet from the South Branch of the Raritan River, the Beaver Brook, or a residential zone. The required maximum height is two stories and 35 feet, the maximum building coverage is 25 percent, the maximum FAR is 0.30, and the maximum impervious coverage is 75 percent.

The **C-3 Highway Oriented Commercial District** encompasses an area of several blocks immediately north of I-78's Interchange 15, further west of downtown. This portion of the Town is vehicle-oriented (befitting its location and designation) and suffers from more traffic and less walkability than other commercial districts along Route 173. There are few remaining development sites; however, existing lot areas and development are generally consistent



with the underlying zoning requirements.

- Permitted uses: Offices (except medical); studios for art, dancing, language and similar; gas stations, which may include a coffee shop but not convenience store; banks and financial institutions; and beauty salons, barbershops, and day spas.
- Bulk requirements: Minimum lot size is 14,250 square feet, minimum front yard is 30 feet, minimum rear yard is 35 feet, the minimum side yard is 10 feet (or 1/3 of the combined side yard requirement), and the minimum combined side yard is the greater of 25 percent of the



lot width at the building line or 20 feet. The maximum permitted height is two stories and 35 feet, the maximum building coverage is 25 percent, the maximum FAR is 0.30, and the maximum impervious coverage is 75 percent.

The **C-4 Locally Oriented Commercial District** extends east along Route 173 from the C-1 District to the boundary with Clinton Township. This district contains the Town's largest commercial lots, but many are nonconforming with the district's minimum lot size of approximately 1.5 acres. The Town's A&P Redevelopment Plan Area is located in this district, the requirements of which supersede the underlying C-4 zoning. This area is generally developed with freestanding buildings with front-yard parking areas and some areas of typical highway strip center design, with office uses predominat-

ing towards the eastern end of the corridor, which serves as a gateway to the Town. Lots located on the south side of the corridor are significantly constrained due to the Beaver Brook, which is now a Category 1 waterway requiring a 300-foot buffer. Environmental constraints are further discussed in Chapter 7 of this report.

- Permitted uses: Same as C-2 District plus indoor theaters; emergency services buildings; laundry and dry-cleaning establishments; automobile repair and service garages; fast-food with drive-thru; food markets; and health and fitness centers
- Bulk requirements: The minimum lot size is 60,000 square feet, the minimum lot width is 200 feet, the minimum front and rear yards are 60 feet, the minimum side yard is 10 feet (or 1/3 of the combined side yard requirement), and the minimum combined side yard is the greater of 25 percent of the lot width at the building line or 20 feet

The **C-5 Route 31 District** was adopted in 2019 as part of the Town's affordable housing settlement agreement with Clinton Moebus 34, LLC. This district comprises the portions of the Moebus tract with frontage along Route 31 and is intended to provide for commercial uses that are designed in a



manner sensitive to the character of the surrounding area.

- Permitted uses: Retail; convenience stores with or without gasoline sales; food markets; fast-food with drive thru- banks and financial institutions; indoor theaters; health and fitness centers; beauty salon, barbershop or day spa; offices (except medical); restaurants where patrons are seated and served; studios for art, dancing, language and similar; municipal buildings and municipal uses.
- Bulk Requirements: 100-foot side yard setback, 50-foot front and rear yard setbacks to property boundary for principal buildings; maximum tract impervious coverage of 55%; maximum FAR 30%.

## Industrial & Office Districts

The I Industrial District comprises an isolated area located south of I-78, which remains largely undeveloped farmland except for the Town's 6-acre wastewater plant along the South Branch. The district is most notably constrained by its lack of vehicular access. Access is available only via Pittstown

Road (CR-513) and the I-78 frontage road in adjacent Franklin Township to Ramsey Road, which is a narrow, unmarked, and poorly paved service road that lacks the capacity required for safe operation of many of the uses contemplated in this district. Further, the County's Landsdown Trail cuts north-south through the east side of the district

- Permitted uses: Manufacturing, fabrication, processing; scientific or research; office buildings (except medical); data processing facilities; warehouses and wholesale distribution centers; municipal buildings and municipal uses; agricultural uses.
- Conditional uses: Facilities for tennis, squash, handball and similar sports activities; places of worship; public and private schools; public utility & power generating buildings.
- Bulk requirements: The required minimum lot size is 217,800 square feet, the minimum front yard is 60 feet (which may be reduced 10 percent if the front yard is devoid of parking), the minimum rear yard is 100 feet, and the minimum side yard is 30 feet. The required maximum height is 40 feet, the maximum FAR



is 0.26, and the maximum impervious coverage is 75 percent.

The **OB-1 Office Building District** consists of approximately 8 parcels along Route 173 west of downtown that are developed with small office and service buildings. Several of these parcels are undersized per the zoning requirements, and development is generally characterized by front yard parking areas and limited pedestrian connectivity.

- Permitted uses: Offices (except medical); nonprofit clubs and organizations; municipal buildings and uses; medical and dental clinics; nursery schools; funeral homes; nursing homes; vocational schools and studios. Places of worship and public and private schools are permitted as conditional uses.
- Bulk requirements: Minimum lot size is 22,500 square feet, the minimum lot depth and width are 150 feet, the minimum front yard is 40 feet (which may be reduced 10 percent if the front yard is devoid of parking), the minimum rear yard is 50 feet, and the minimum side yard is 15 feet. The required maximum height is 35 feet, the maximum FAR is 0.20, and the maximum impervious coverage is 70 percent.

The **OB-2 Office Building District** comprises two separate land areas in the southwest and northern portions of the Town. The southern OB-2 District is located south of Route 173 and consists of the Holiday Inn site, which recently received approval to permit an assisted living facility and is targeted for senior affordable housing per the Town's settlement agreement. The northerly tract is developed with the North County Branch of the Hunterdon County Library and the Halstead Place apartment building. Given these existing conditions, the northerly portion of OB-2 District is functionally obsolete in terms of its relationship to existing land uses.

- Permitted uses: Office buildings (except medical); data processing facilities; banks and financial institutions; municipal buildings and municipal uses including a municipal or county library. Places of worship, public and private schools, and assisted living facilities are permitted as conditional uses.
- Bulk requirements: The required minimum lot size is 130,680 square feet, the minimum lot depth and width are 150 feet, the minimum front yard is 40 feet (which may be reduced 10 percent if the front yard is devoid of parking), the minimum rear yard is 50 feet, and the minimum side yard is 15 feet. The required maximum height is 40 feet, the maximum FAR is 0.20, and the maximum impervious coverage is 80 percent.

The OB-3 Office Building District was functionally eliminated following the rezoning of the Moebus Tract.

The **OB-4 Office Research District** is located on the north side of Route 31 adjacent to the Town's northern boundary and encompasses the Towne-Place Suites hotel, several medical and professional office buildings, and the ±13-acre property where Puleo International recently received approval to construct a 100,000-square foot warehouse development. The OB-4 District provides an area for large-scale, highway-oriented and non-retail development that serves to diversify the Town's tax base but is not viable in the downtown core area. Following the Puleo International approval, this zone is effectively built out barring future redevelopment of the smaller office properties, which are significantly undersized per zoning requirements.

- Permitted uses: Office buildings (except medical); scientific or research laboratories; data-processing facilities; medical and dental





clinics and laboratories; nursery schools and child-care centers; funeral homes; studios for art, dancing, language and similar; hotels; restaurants where patrons are seated and served; wireless telecommunication towers.

- Bulk requirements: Minimum lot size is 217,000 square feet, the minimum front yard is 100 feet, the minimum rear yard is 50 feet to nonresidential and 100 feet to residential, the minimum side yard is 50 feet, and the minimum combined side yard is 100 feet. The maximum permitted height is 40 feet, the maximum FAR is 0.15, and the maximum impervious coverage is 50 percent.

## Residential Zoning

The Town's residential neighborhoods include historic dwellings, postwar suburban homes, and a variety of multi-family options. In particular, the Town is unique among Hunterdon County municipalities in that it has few exclusively single-family zoning districts. The Town's residential districts are essentially built-out, including upcoming inclusionary and senior housing projects intended to meet the Town's fair share requirements. However, opportunities remain for infill development and, particularly, working to encourage improvements that

further orient the Town's commercial and residential districts to encourage walkability.

- The **R-1A District** is located south of I-78 (west of Leigh Street) and along Rachel Court (west of Halstead Street). This district permits single-family detached dwellings, patio homes, zero lot line attached homes, and side-by-side duplex structures at a gross density of 2.6 dwelling units per acres. Most of the dwellings in this district were constructed in the early 1990s, but their scale and lot size (minimum of 7,500 square feet for single-family dwellings) is consistent with Clinton's historic neighborhoods.
- The **R-2 District** encompasses the most area of any residential districts and can be found in all corners of the Town. This is the Town's only district to permit only single-family residential dwellings, on a minimum lot size of 15,000 square feet. Existing dwellings in this district represent some of the Town's most historic homes through 1980s-era development, - 1968 is the median year of construction.
- The **R-2A District** comprises the Clinton Garden Apartments behind Clinton Elementary School and the Clinton Arms Apartments along Route 173 west of downtown, both of which were constructed in 1990s. The maximum permitted density in the district is 10 units per acre. Though these apartments sites are not specifically historic in character, they provide additional housing options to complement the single-family character typically seen in the Town and elsewhere in this portion of the State.
- The **R-3 District** is home to many of the Town's most historic dwellings, where the median year of construction is 1885 per Town tax records. The R-3 Districts are located along Route 173 west of downtown and the South Branch, and

**Examples of residences within the various residential districts**





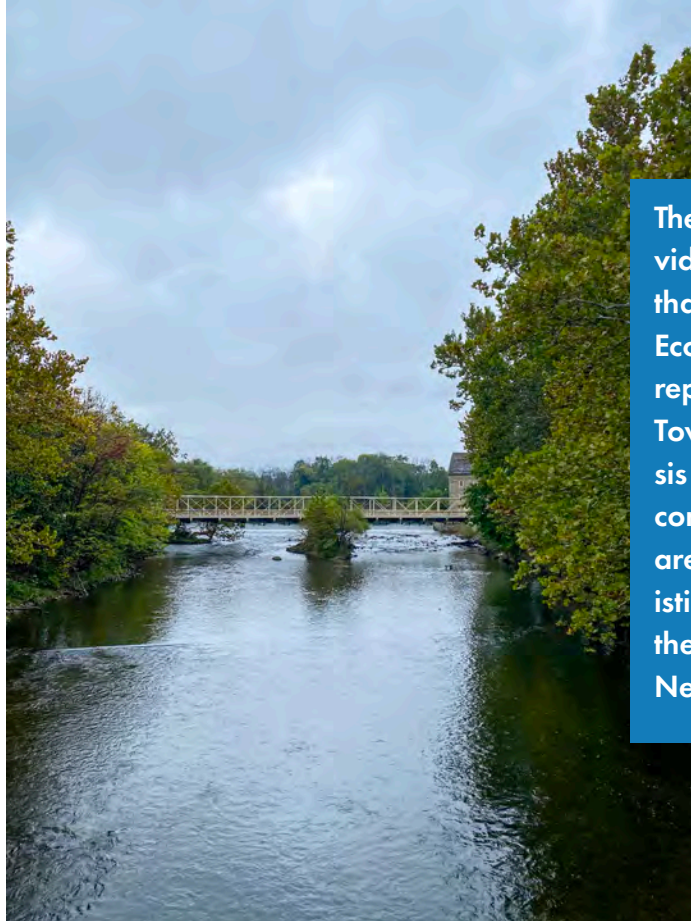
## Points of Interest

- ▶ Many of the Town's commercial districts do not permit increasingly common non-residential uses seen in downtown settings, such as fitness uses, medical offices, pharmacies, counter service food establishments, food markets, and flex spaces. Narrowed lists of permitted uses and locations may unnecessarily restrict the diversity of economic opportunities in Town in a challenging retail environment.
- ▶ Due to the access and environmental challenges associated with the Industrial District, there are effectively no further locations in Town that would allow for production, processing, light manufacturing, and food or beverage production. The Town may consider reevaluating possible locations where smaller-scale versions of these uses - with strict performance controls - may be appropriate.
- ▶ The primary concern in past plans relates to new development is maintaining a compatible scale and architectural style to the primarily small, historic scale of the core commercial area. As the Town's larger development sites are built out, this remains the most important consideration for approaching infill development, particularly in transitional areas between districts.
- ▶ The C-2, C-4 and OB-1 Districts should be evaluated to ensure that lot and area standards are reflective of the built environment and existing conditions. The inability to meet FAR or other lot requirements may preemptively stifle redevelopment potential of certain outmoded sites.
- ▶ Some of the districts are obsolete in that they do not reflect underlying or existing land use conditions. For example, the northern section of the OB-2 district is developed with the County Library and multi-family residential development, and the OB-3 Zone has been functionally eliminated.

flanking Leigh Street to the south of downtown. Single-family and two-family dwellings are permitted with minimum lot sizes of 7,500 and 11,250 square feet, respectively. However, west of downtown, the district is located along a portion of West Main Street that serves as a cut-through between commercial areas, which is incongruous with the intended pedestrian-oriented character of this area.

- The **PRD Planned Residential Development** and **PRD-P Planned Residential Development Park Districts** encompass the Alton Place condominiums and Fieldstone single-family residences (PRD District) at the southeastern edge of Town and the Twin Ponds tract (PRD-P) at the western edge. Alton Place and Fieldstone were constructed in the 1990s and are somewhat isolated from the Town due to their location south of I-78. Twin Ponds, similarly, is located west of DeMott Park and south of a preserved 11-acre tract. Generally, development in the Town's PRD districts provides additional housing choices in transitional locations outside of the historic core.

# Summary Recommendations & Next Steps



The preceding existing conditions report provides a foundation for the recommendations that will form the core of Clinton's Sustainable Economic Development Plan. Volume 2 of this report will encompass an assessment of the Town's existing economic base and an analysis of current and projected real estate market conditions in the Town and surrounding market areas, with particular consideration given to existing inventory and surrounding competition in the region, as well as general trends throughout New Jersey.

Stakeholder interviews are presently underway, which will be distilled as part of the final analysis and summarized as an appendix to the final report. Stakeholder interviews are intended to encompass a wide swath of downtown merchants, local officials, representatives Town institutions, and regional economic development entities, among others. The success of the SEDP relies on the ability for the Town and its stakeholders to collaborate to directly impact the plan and its resulting recommendations.

The final Sustainable Economic Development Plan will synthesize each of the prior steps by providing an overall vision for the Town's economic development, complete with specific long- and short-term recommendations and implementation strategies, all of which consider existing conditions, prior planning efforts, stakeholder outreach, and delineated market trends. To conclude this report, Phillips Preiss offers the following initial principles, recommendations, and strategies that will guide the development of the final SEDP:

- Clinton's location along the I-78 corridor provides excellent regional access, as well as public water and sewer capacity that is hard to come by in Hunterdon County.
- While new large-scale development is limited by the Town's sheer size - and the challenges associated



with some undeveloped properties, like the Industrial tract - the Town is well-positioned to welcome infill development, particularly along the Route 173 Corridor.

- Continue and expand partnerships with Hunterdon County, adjacent I-78 corridor municipalities, and the Highlands Council to maximize funding sources and the Town's public profile.
- The efforts of the Town's Economic Development Committee have streamlined parts of the business development process by providing clear, frequently updated information online, including an Easy-Start Guide and commercial property listings.
- Ensure sure that technical land use procedures are in step with EDC's efforts by updating Town zoning regulations to reflect existing conditions to promote new development and encourage existing property owners to make improvements on their sites.
- Downtown Clinton's streetscapes represent everything there is to love about historic, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods. Identify opportunities to bring the best features of Main Street to the transitional areas to the south, east and west by encouraging aesthetic upgrades to pedestrian passageways, bringing development closer to the street through décor and street furniture, and directing pedestrian movement to better distribute parking among the area.
- Parks and recreation opportunities are plentiful throughout the Town, even though State and County parks are not always clearly marked or readily accessible. Explore opportunities for a permanent Town visitors' center with coordinating wayfinding and branding to forge a Town identity while clearly demarcating these valuable assets, potentially through partnerships with regional and/or private entities.







TOWN OF CLINTON  
SUSTAINABLE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

APPENDIX B:  
**ECONOMIC BASE  
ASSESSMENT &  
MARKET ANALYSIS**





**This Economic Base Assessment and Market Analysis (EMA)** is intended to provide a summary of existing economic activity and conditions within the Town of Clinton and the greater region at present and provide a baseline for preparing realistic and implementable market-based recommendations as part of the Sustainable Economic Development Plan. In connection with the review of demographic trends, the built and natural environments, mobility and regulatory conditions established in the Existing Conditions Report, this analysis considers the existing inventory and surrounding regional context and competition in order to determine the relative viability of various types of development, including but not limited to retail and commercial space, industrial, residential and recreation uses.





Clinton's compact development patterns over the past three centuries have resulted in a diverse mix of uses throughout the Town, ranging from the small retail spaces within the historic downtown to larger-scale office and hospitality uses at the outskirts. This report reviews a baseline of information related to these existing economic assets and opportunities within the Town that will be used to support findings and recommendations in the SEDP to better position the Town for continued economic success through retention of existing businesses and encouragement of new context-sensitive uses.

This report has been prepared in late 2021 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its continuing impacts on public health and local and national economies. Over the past 20 months, these impacts have been felt across every sector of the economy in Clinton and beyond, even as "normalcy" returns to many aspects of life. Long-term economic impacts are likely to extend over the next decade, including potentially transformative changes to work environments, retail spending, travel, and mobility.

In particular, the COVID-19 crisis accelerated trends that were evident over the past decade; the national retail environment has shifted online and towards big box retail, while New Jersey sees demographic and cultural shifts where urban and suburban residents and businesses are seeking small, walkable, amenity-rich towns for living, dining, shopping, and working. This report is intended to provide a framework for the SEDP that will allow the Town to stabilize existing businesses and identify opportunity sites that take advantage of its specific retail environment while exploring alternative commercial and economic avenues.

## Methodology

This overview utilizes a combination of quantitative

data acquired from a number of public and private data sources (such as the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the Census Bureau, and ESRI); conversations with a range of local and regional elected and appointed officials, Town business owners and residents; visits to the Town and surrounding region; and a review of existing planning and zoning studies and reports.

The overall methodology for the EMA was predicated on the understanding that this assessment would serve as both a future demand analysis and a snapshot in time. The Existing Conditions Report provides additional context and framework. This report is intended to serve as a technical memorandum that bridges the Existing Conditions Report and final SEDP recommendations.

The basic methodology for this market study included the following steps:

- An analysis of the existing economic base in the Town by sector (e.g., retail, commercial, residential), including physical characteristics, tax impacts, and overall strengths and weaknesses.
- A delineation of primary and secondary market areas within which study area may compete, which have been defined as Hunterdon County and a 30-minute drive-time radius from Clinton's center.
- A review of existing commercial uses within Clinton and its market areas that may relate to the demand for commercial uses within the study area, as well as establishing the existing business mix within the Town.
- An assessment of housing characteristics, preferences, and supply projections within the Town and the market areas that directly influence the demand for housing, such as unit types, age cohorts, and household sizes.



- An evaluation of the existing commercial, retail, and residential development markets, including the impact of tourism and regional building patterns.
- A review of local organizations, committees, boards, initiatives that represent the Town's capacity to implement the SEDP.
- Finally, an analysis of opportunities and challenges within the residential, retail, and office sectors, including a contextual review of Clinton's unique status in association with local, regional, and national retail, commercial, and demographic trends.



## Retail and Service Base

The Town's retail and service areas are clustered around downtown and its immediate vicinity along Route 173. Main Street, Leigh Street, and Center Street function in this area as a traditional civic and business core area, where commercial uses consist almost entirely of small, local businesses. Further east along Route 173, regional and national brands supplement the mix of local small businesses. The blocks that comprise the traditional downtown are generally developed with historic one- to three-story commercial and mixed-use buildings. Per Town records, the average lot size for a commercial or mixed-use property in the downtown is  $\pm 5,800$  square feet, or 0.13 acres. Many structures fronting on East Main and Leigh Streets date to the 1870s or earlier; most structures to the west were rebuilt in the decades following the Great Fire of 1891.

To the east and west, Route 173 (Old Route 22) is functionally distinct from Main Street and the rest of the downtown core in terms of land use patterns, building scale, and pedestrian infrastructure. As described in the Existing Conditions Report. Development opportunities on the south side of the highway, east of downtown, are also constrained by adjacency to the Beaver Brook, which results in extremely shallow lots with a significant riparian buffer requirement.

**Left: Sunrise Rotary Club's Great Rubber Ducky Race, 2021; Right: Clinton Christmas Tree lighting, 2019. Photos: NJ Advance Media**



**In a small downtown like Clinton, there is unlikely to be one specific business or attraction that serves as a singular destination for a regional customer base. Rather, the overall fabric of the downtown should encourage visitors to spend several hours or more casually browsing stores, dining out, enjoying public space, and visiting the Town's museums and attractions.**

### Retail Mix

The downtown environment is characterized by small goods, gifts, convenience retail, business services, and restaurants. Property ownership is generally split between local owners and proprietors who own their buildings and regional landlords and/or management companies. Representative downtown retail and service categories include:

- Gifts, décor, jewelry (e.g., Heartstrings, Chameleon Blue, Made to Order)
- Limited-service food and beverage (e.g., Citispot Tea and Coffee, Ye Olde Sub Base, Designer Dawgs, JJ Scoops)
- Specialty food and beverage (e.g., Fourchette, Kilhaney's Pickles, Elite Meat)
- Personal care (e.g., Addison Leigh Studio, Le Salon Bleu, Tom Nails & Spa)
- Service retail (e.g., Greens and Beans, Clinton Bicycle Shop, Alchemist Custom Framing)
- Full-service restaurants (e.g., Dora, Clinton House, Pru Thai)





There are also a growing number of non-retail storefronts, including financial services and real estate offices. Non-retailers are often perceived as negatively impacting street activity and surrounding retail experience due to the lack of associated foot traffic and mismatched hours of operation. However, in a challenging retail environment, the alternative may be vacant storefronts.

Many of the existing downtown businesses reflect customer-oriented stores and services that are crucial to the vitality of a successful downtown: customers return over and over again for new specialty products, hair and beauty services, or simply to stop for lunch. Individual businesses thrive on repeat customers, who return several times a year to purchase gifts, check out new specialty wares, or try a new menu item. But in general, the downtown does not have any major retailers or restaurants that serve as wide regional draws. In several interviews, stakeholders reiterated their desire for retail and dining options that better aligned with the existing (and desired) customer base: namely, the young families and affluent suburbanites who drive downtown success throughout the state.

**Presently, downtown's activity is generally limited to daytime hours, with few shops or restaurants open past the early dinner hour. Many restaurants are open only for lunch - in part, related to the lack of liquor licenses available (see sidebar, next page).**

Retail categories are also limited, with an emphasis on decor, accessories, gifts and specialty foods but, for example, lacks a children's boutique, toy, or book store that might align with the family-friendly atmosphere that is otherwise cultivated by the Town.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

The Town's history and reputation has led to an established community of retailers, restaurants, and cultural institutions - and a destination for regional visitors, including for downtown events. Dickens' Days turns Clinton into a Victorian village each year on the weekend after Thanksgiving, with events like visits from Santa and a Christmas Parade extending through December as coordinated by the Clinton Guild, the Town's merchant association. The Red Mill dresses up for Halloween with their weeks-long Haunted Village attraction and hosts a Christmas Village in tandem with the Guild's events. Sidewalk sales and Rotary Club events like the Great Rubber Ducky Race round out the calendar year-round.



### The State of Liquor License Reform

**As has been well-documented, New Jersey's liquor license laws are among the most restrictive in the United States.** Plenary Retail Consumption License is required for any restaurant or bar to serve beer, wine, and spirits for consumption on their premises. Decades-old regulations limit this type of license by a municipality's population so that no more than one license is permitted per each 3,000 residents. Clinton, as a result, is permitted exactly one license (currently held by The Clinton House). **Downtowns throughout the State are disproportionately impacted by these restrictions due to their concentration of restaurants.** Even where licenses are available, they are scarce and often cost-prohibitive. Past proposals have included introducing a new license for only wine and beer, lifting the population restriction, and ensuring that existing license holders are compensated. At present, state advocacy groups such as the State League of Municipalities (under the leadership of Clinton Mayor Janice Kovach) and Downtown New Jersey are **prioritizing liquor license reform for economic development and equity for small businesses**, particularly in the wake of the pandemic.

### Regional Context

Clinton's commercial establishments benefit from its location as a hub within an affluent, educated, and rural-suburban region, where residents from the surrounding areas have the financial means to patronize specialty retailers and dine out, but options are limited. Clinton, and to a smaller extent High Bridge, are the only downtowns in the northern portion of the County. Flemington, the County seat, serves central Hunterdon County, while the "River Towns" of Stockton and Lambertville are further south, with easy access from I-295, US 202, and NJ-29.

These centers represent different points along a continuum with regards to size, residential and employment density, retail options, and regional draws. High Bridge attracts visitors based on its proximity to the head of the Columbia Trail, which is accessible directly from their Main Street (CR-513) and where the Borough provides a parking area in a municipal park. Lambertville, in particular, enjoys a symbiotic relationship with New Hope, Pennsylvania, another historic downtown known for its arts, antiques, and LGBTQ-friendly reputation.

Hunterdon County Economic Development's Hunterdon Main Streets initiative, established in 2020, highlights Clinton among six other downtown business districts throughout the County, including a colorful, informative website and collective branding materials (see graphic below).

### Hunterdon Main Streets Initiative

Image: Hunterdon County Economic Development



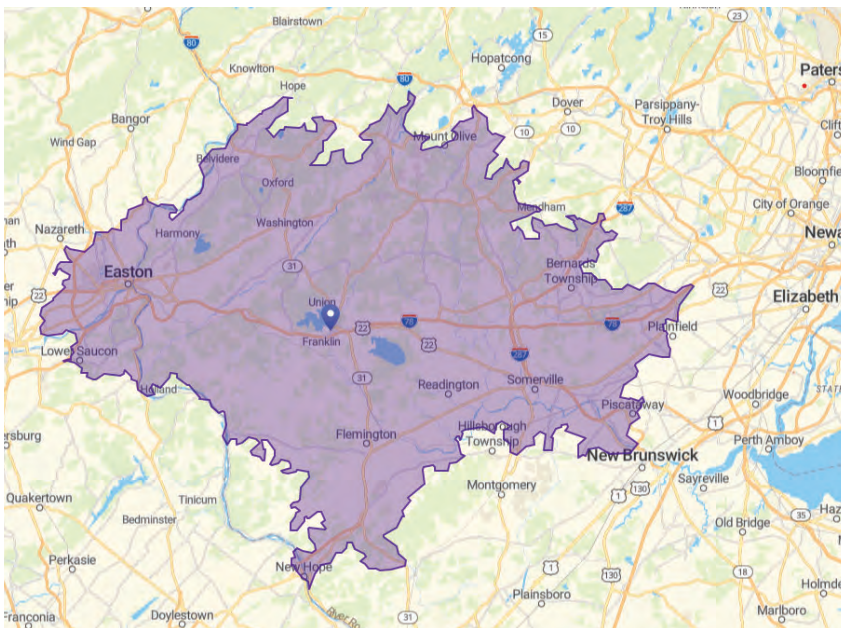
**While downtowns are destinations for their specialty dining, retail, and cultural options, much of the principal daily retail trade in the Town and the surrounding areas is concentrated in larger, car oriented shopping centers.**

Walmart Plaza, located just west of Town on Pittstown Road, contains ±270,000 square feet of leasable area and is anchored by Walmart, Shoprite and TJ Maxx. Further south, the County's highway retail is centered along the Route 31/Route 202 corridor in Flemington and Raritan Township, including Raritan Town Square (520,000 square feet), Flemington Marketplace (240,000 square feet), and Flemington Circle Shopping Center (225,000 square feet) and encompassing nearly every category of retailers: general merchandisers, discount, clothing, home improvement, et al. General regional retail supply and spending do not necessarily represent major sources of competition with the Town's retailers, but can provide a macro-scale overview of potential opportunities for infill sectors, as will be discussed in the next section.

## Retail Market Demand Analysis

Data was collected and analyzed at three levels when appropriate: the Town of Clinton; a primary market area defined by the boundaries of Hunterdon County; and a secondary market area encompassing the boundaries of a 30-minute drive time from the intersection of Main Street and Leigh Street downtown. Both market areas include the entirety of Hunterdon County; the secondary market additionally extends into large portions of Somerset, Morris and Warren Counties and small portions of Middlesex, Union, and Mercer Counties in New Jersey and Northampton, Lehigh and Bucks Counties in Pennsylvania.

This analysis leverages the Retail MarketPlace database produced by ESRI. The database attempts to quantify consumer demand and its relationship to existing retail supply in a given geographic area using information from the Census of Retail Trade and Monthly Retail Trade Surveys as conducted by the US Census Bureau and the national Consumer



**Left: Secondary Trade Area boundaries**

Expenditure Survey prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The resulting figures generally provide a macro-scale depiction of consumer spending and existing supply for large retail trade areas. This database is considered an industry standard for market analysis but cannot reflect the changes and challenges related to the pandemic. In addition, downtown retail often requires understanding the relationships between retailer needs, surrounding population, and available spaces; anticipated growth of the market area; and consideration of the uncertain future of physical retailers.

Per the most recently available data, the potential total retail demand from Town of Clinton households is approximately \$62 million per year. Table 5 provides a breakdown of demand for the Primary and Second Trade Areas as well. "Retail demand" includes all retail spending by households in the given area at all businesses, whether in Town, regionally, or online. "Supply" is calculated as the sum of all actual sales at retail businesses within the given area, to both residents and non-residents. The "retail gap" is supply subtracted from demand.

Applying this analysis to the Primary (Hunterdon County) and Secondary (30-Minute Drive Time) Trade Areas provides a better understanding of the regional retail marketplace, as shown in Table 4 below. Overall retail, food & beverage demand is approximately \$3.1 billion in the Primary Trade Area and \$11.3 billion in the Secondary Trade Area, of which \$300 million and \$1.1 billion are specific to food and drink. Particularly of note, Food & Drink, a category that includes restaurants, bars, caterers, and food trucks, shows exceptional opportunity across both Trade Areas.

In terms of specific retail categories, Retail MarketPlace data demonstrates that there are several notable opportunity gaps in the Primary and Secondary Trade Areas. The figures below represent the percentage of overall sales that is "leaking" out of the trade area.

**Primary Trade Area:**

- Florists, Stationery, Gift Stores: 63%
- Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores: 56%
- Furniture Stores & Home Furnishings: 62%
- Grocery & Specialty Foods: 42%

**Secondary Trade Area:**

- Shoes Stores, Jewelry, Leather Goods: 44%
- Book, Periodical and Music: 46%
- Home Furnishings: 53%

In broad strokes, this analysis shows that there may be targeted retail opportunities in the categories with a retail gap that fit the Town's available retail spaces. However, the national retail environment is rapidly changing, a decade-long trend that has been accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis. Nearly 40 large national retailers have filed for bankruptcy since February 2020, including many traditional department stores and mid-size mall retailers. Small business retailers struggled for over a year with regulatory changes due to the pandemic and subsequent loss of revenue.



	Retail Demand - Potential	Retail Supply - Sales	Retail Gap - % of Demand
	<b>Primary Trade Area</b>		
Total Retail Trade + Food & Drink	\$3,107,786,672	\$2,999,969,192	3.5%
Total Retail Trade	\$2,803,593,876	\$2,816,463,950	-0.5%
Total Food & Drink	\$304,192,796	\$183,505,242	39.7%
	<b>Secondary Trade Area</b>		
Total Retail Trade + Food & Drink	\$11,313,234,738	\$9,938,343,614	12.2%
Total Retail Trade	\$10,205,133,663	\$9,126,593,425	10.6%
Total Food & Drink	\$1,108,101,075	\$811,750,189	26.7%

**Table 1: Retail Supply and Demand, 2018**

**The Town's most likely downtown opportunities will be related to sustaining a mix of dining, specialty goods, and experiential retail that capitalizes on the Town's physical and historic assets, while meeting the needs of residents of all ages and capturing new regional visitors.**

For example, per ESRI, the Town is projected to have a population of nearly 750 children under 18 by 2025, up from approximately 625 as of 2020. While population projection is an inexact science, the Town's reputation with young families is well-established and growing. The Town's strategy should prioritize a downtown retail mix that caters to this demographic, including children's retailers, bookstores, and dining opportunities for both the entire family and young parents on their own.

### Points of Interest:

- A supply and demand analysis also cannot account for the growing proportion of spending lost to e-commerce. For certain categories – like electronics, clothing, general merchandise and home furnishings – e-commerce now accounts for ±10% of all sales nationwide. In this context, national retailers are likely to continue struggling through the COVID-19 recovery period, while entrepreneurs may have opportunities to procure discounted retail space regionally.
- The Town should continue to work with the County to provide identifiable, exciting connections between downtown and the Landsdown Trail. Addressing the lack of retail and pedestrian continuity in this area is not dependent on new buildings or major infrastructure improvements; rather, **signage and wayfinding can complement the downtown landscape and provide a context-sensitive gateway to welcome visitors and residents alike.**

- The Town's existing mix of service and retail also reflects changing preferences and business patterns. **Zoning within the Town should be reviewed to ensure that certain businesses are not excluded due to outdated or overly specific zoning.** The first quarter of 2020 represented the first time that the number of service-oriented establishments overtook traditional retailers in the United States. Service tenants, including restaurants, salons, and fitness centers, comprised 52.6% of retail tenants nationwide. **This pattern is likely to continue favoring businesses that provide in-person services that are not replaceable via online shopping.**
- Also within the service sector, **the Town should seek to cultivate and support a diverse array of restaurants, food markets, and shops that represent a variety of global cuisines.** This can be a unique driver for regional visitors, particularly with the relative lack of competition in Hunterdon County as compared to the rest of the state.
- Certain districts do not permit increasingly common uses seen in downtown settings that can add vibrancy and character to the area, such as fitness uses, medical offices, pharmacies, counter service food establishments, food markets, and flex spaces. When such uses are not permitted, a new tenant or owner would potentially have to seek a use variance, which can serve as an expensive deterrent to doing business in town.
- Downtown's many historic buildings are both a signature asset and a potential obstacle to economic growth. The age of many downtown buildings can be challenging for new tenants: they are smaller, require more maintenance and upkeep, and may not meet certain desirable specifications (i.e., ceiling height or storage areas). **As the Town looks to support ongoing economic development, a key balance will need to be struck between maintaining smaller footprints (and in turn, the area's historic character), and targeting locations for commercial space that will help attract visitors and nearby residents.**

## Residential Base and Housing Characteristics

**The Town has a relatively high proportion of rental housing and non-single-family dwellings as compared to the surrounding County. Generally, this reflects the form of the Town spanning the 1780s through the present: the downtown core, historic one-and two-family on the outskirts, post-war single-family subdivisions, and more recent garden apartments and townhomes.**

**Table 2: Occupied Housing Units by Tenure, 2019**

	Clinton	Hunterdon County
Owner-Occupied	67.3%	83.0%
Renter-Occupied	32.7%	17.0%
Occupied Housing Units	1,082	48,113

The Town specifically has a high proportion of two-to four-unit and multi-family buildings as compared to the surrounding County, with such structures comprising over 16.4% and 16.2% of the units in the Town, respectively, as compared to 7.5% and 8.6%, respectively.

In terms of larger multi-family structures, approximately 100 new dwelling units have been constructed in Clinton over the last 20 years, nearly entirely multi-family (i.e., Halstead Place and Twin Ponds). Another 120 new multi-family units have been approved as part of the mixed-use A&P Redevelopment Plan. The Town's approved Housing Element and Fair Share Plan and related settlement agreement contemplate more inclusionary multi-family dwelling units in the Fox Lumber and Global Ag Redevelopment Plan areas, as well as townhomes on the Moebus Tract.

Another defining characteristic of housing throughout the Town is the age of residential structures,

including single- and two-family homes and the upper-floor apartments near the downtown core. Per Census data, over 25% of the dwellings in the Town were constructed before 1939, but this does not capture the true historic nature of these homes, many of which were constructed pre-1890.

**The varied age of housing structures in Clinton provides existing and potential residents with a relatively diverse selection of housing, ranging from duplexes and smaller multi-family options to "starter" single-family homes and upscale, larger historic residences.**

The relative accessibility of Clinton's residential options as compared to the surrounding areas is demonstrated in that the median owner-occupied housing value is not drastically lower than the surrounding market areas, but approximately 69% percent of homes were valued between \$300,000 and \$500,000 in 2019, with fewer homes valued at higher or lower extremes than Hunterdon County as a whole. County-wide, 44% percent of homes were valued between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

Note that this analysis does not factor the recent housing market upswing during COVID-19, which saw housing values rise by 15 to 20% over the prior year; however, **similar increases were seen County- and State-wide and the overall pattern is expected to remain in place due to Clinton's unique setting and housing stock.**

## Market Analysis

Municipalities across the State have negotiated court-mandated affordable housing settlements since 2015. All municipalities, including the large Townships outside Clinton, are required to provide their fair share. However, the lack of sewer service in the surrounding area has limited multi-family growth that has otherwise been seen throughout



the State, for period of a durational adjustment if sewer service can be acquired. Meanwhile, the Town's (fully sewerer) plan includes up to four new multi-family projects. Given the semi-rural nature of Hunterdon County, these new developments are likely to absorb nearly all projected growth over the next 5 years and limit the market for new mid-scale multi-family projects.

The existing 16.4% of dwellings that are two- to four-unit dwellings take the form of both duplex/ two-family homes and upper-floor apartments in the downtown area. Many of these are examples of a building typology that is described as "Missing Middle Housing" in architecture and planning literature. **The "Missing Middle" refers to residential development in a walkable area that contains more than one unit, but is compatible with the height, scale and overall physical form of single-family residential homes.**

While this type of housing was once prevalent in towns nationwide, it is no longer common in new suburban development and is often discouraged in favor of detached single-family and large multi-family construction. It represents less than 8% of all units in Hunterdon County, despite the number of historic small towns in the area. Clinton's Land Use Ordinance permits two-family housing in the R-3 District, where they are most common, and apartments above the first floor in the C-1 Downtown Commercial District. Based on a review of Land Use Board minutes, these regulations appear to have been successful in maintaining the existing housing diversity in Town without imposing difficulties on residents and property owners. **Any future zoning regulations or Master Plans recommendations should continue to encourage and sustain diverse housing choices in Clinton.**

## Industrial and Office

### Industrial Base

**Since Clinton's origins as a mill town, the nature of private industry has continued to shift across New Jersey. Now, new industrial development overwhelmingly takes the form of warehouse and distribution centers serving the e-commerce industry.**

These buildings are often built on spec and can measure hundreds of thousands to millions of square feet in area and requires large tracts of land and easy highway access for truck traffic, as evidenced by warehouse clusters at the New Jersey Turnpike's Exits 8 and 13 and along I-287 in Middlesex County. To the west, Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley and Wilkes-Barre sub-region is seeing an even larger warehouse boom on former agricultural land along I-78 and I-81, with over 13 million square feet leased in 2020 alone. As land gets scarcer, the demand is pushing east into Warren County, with nearly 4 million square feet of warehouse development completed or underway at the former Ingersoll Rand campus in Phillipsburg and Lopatcong.

**Thus far, existing and proposed warehouses in Hunterdon County have been at a smaller scale than the mega-distribution centers to the west.**

Earlier this year Puleo International Inc., a family-owned manufacturer of artificial Christmas trees and holiday décor, received approval from the Town Land Use Board in connection with a proposal to construct a 100,000-square foot warehouse on Route 31 on the footprint of a previously approved office building. The Town's Industrial District was amended in 2021 to eliminate warehouses as a principal use, where it had previously been permitted on the Industrial Tract.

### Market Analysis

As noted in the Existing Conditions Report, the Town's only Industrial District is constrained by access and environmental issues due to its location between the river and I-78. As a result, there are essentially no further locations in Town that would allow for production, processing, light manufacturing, and food or beverage production. **The Town should consider evaluating possible locations where smaller-scale versions of these uses with strict performance controls may be appropriate.**

For example, creative industrial or flex facilities can provide an alternative to traditional office and industrial development by offering opportunities for fabrication, light manufacturing, artisan workshops, or high-tech entrepreneurs. Examples of such flex uses include custom furniture, woodworking, crafts production, robotics, or limited-scale food and beverage production. There are potential sites located along Old Route 22 and West Main Street where similar uses may be appropriate without impacting residential uses. However, certain fabrication uses may not be appropriate nor feasible in the Town given environmental constraints and surrounding uses, as well as current market conditions.

## Professional and Corporate Office

**Office properties in Clinton range from small-lot downtown mixed-use properties to car-oriented office buildings along state highways.**

There is not a significant corporate office footprint within the Town, and most signs point to a limited market for office space in the wider region. Within the Town, Unity Bancorp's headquarters and the adjacent multi-tenant Unity Concourse II building (professional/medical offices) each have approximately 20,000 square feet of space along Route 173. As of late 2021, Unity Concourse II was on offer for sale at \$187 per square foot, while advertising a 100% lease rate. Several smaller multi-tenant office buildings are located on the north side of Route 173, encompassing 4,000 to 10,000 square feet, and at the far west end of Town. Professional and medical office buildings are also located along Moebius Place, north of Route 31, and sporadically throughout the downtown and along West Main Street in converted single-family residences and in retail spaces, including lawyers, dentists, and insurance offices.

Regionally, larger office uses are located in Union Township to the west, most notably at Perryville Corporate Park, which includes the former Foster

Wheeler headquarters and Perryville III, totaling nearly 600,000 square feet of floor area. Perryville III, in particular, has attracted new tenants such as Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals and others in the life science sector. However, the former Merck campus in Readington - now owned by UNICOM, an international conglomerate - has remained largely vacant since the pharmaceutical company's departure. UNICOM's plans are uncertain as to the future of the campus, which includes nearly one million square feet of floor area and the capacity for thousands of employees.

The suburban office market across Central New Jersey has struggled for the past decade-plus, culminating with a precipitous increase in vacancy rates following the onset of COVID-19, when available office space surged as leases expired and companies reevaluated their facility needs. By some metrics, Hunterdon County and the I-78 West sub-market in particular had the highest vacancy rates in the State, maxing out at nearly 40 percent in the 3rd quarter of 2020. This metric may be artificially inflated due to the continued underuse of the Merck Campus, but the oversupply of office buildings in the area is well-documented.

**The Life Science sector - pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and medical devices - has long had a presence in the region, notably in neighboring Somerset and Morris Counties. The industry in New Jersey experienced numerous reorganizations and restructurings over the past decade, which led to closures and the relocation of positions out of state. However, employment in the sector has generally stabilized statewide since 2015 and grown over the past two years, driven by biotechnology and small and mid-tier establishments. New facilities are costly and require specialized lab space and automated production floors, but growth of this sector in the region can benefit Clinton even without building in Town. Life Science clusters tend towards highly educated areas and provide highly paid work; in 2019, the sector accounted for 2.2% of New Jersey employment but 5.3% of wages.**



## 21st CENTURY LIFE SCIENCES



## Market Analysis

Over the first quarters of 2021, recent upward movement in new leasing activity was noted thanks to motivated landlords, competitive rents, and the reemergence of the life science industry in Central New Jersey. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that office users may be interested in moving to suburban markets from urban cores. However, there is unlikely to be significant corporate office growth in Clinton. In addition to the lack of available land, Clinton and environs lacks a major institutional employer – like a county seat or major medical center – that can create high demand for office space. **Nonetheless, growing and promoting the Town's amenities – such as restaurants, walkability, and public access to open space – will help support existing offices and encourage new businesses, no matter how small, to consider the Town.**

Outside of the downtown core, **residential conversions can provide locations for small offices in transitional or former residential areas, while retaining the development patterns and building characteristics** that define the area. For example, the R-3 Zone permits home occupations (both major and minor, including up to two outside employees) as a conditional use for properties with frontage along West Main Street and Leigh Street, while requiring that the residential character shall not be changed.

**The Town's Economic Development Committee has publicized a clear start-up guide for new businesses through the Town's website.** Targeted at both brokers and tenants - both retail and office - the site provides Town facts and demographics, information about existing businesses, a clearing-house of available properties, and information as to permitting and approvals. This type of guidance regarding permitting, licenses, and Town business



can be invaluable for assisting small start-up companies once Clinton is on their radar. **The Town should continue this type of targeted, collaborative effort with the Hunterdon County Economic Development, the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce, and any other stakeholders interested in putting (and keeping) Clinton on the map as a notable place to grow a business.**

