

***428 South Church Street
Area in Need of Rehabilitation Study***

**Moorestown Township
Burlington County**

June 7, 2023

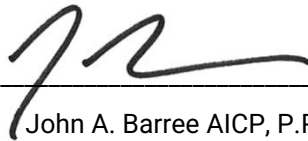
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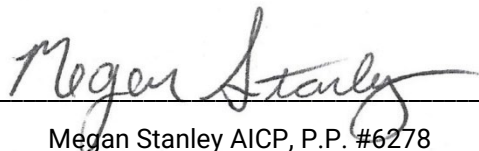
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The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12.



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INTRODUCTION

The Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL) at *N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-14* provides a statutory basis by which a set of properties can be designated an area in need of rehabilitation.

The Mayor and Council of the Township of Moorestown authorized the preparation of an area in need of rehabilitation study for 428 South Church Street, shown on the Township Tax Map as Block 3401, Lot 36 (the "Area"). The property is currently developed with a former residential use, which is currently vacant, as well as a detached barn.

The Rehabilitation Study is the first phase of a potential multi-step planning process. The Study establishes the factual basis for the declaration of an area in need of rehabilitation. The Study does not create a plan for the area but sets the stage for a future comprehensive planning process.

An area in need of rehabilitation is similar to an area in need of redevelopment in that it permits the preparation and adoption of a redevelopment plan. However, it is different in two important ways: the power of eminent domain, or condemnation, is not authorized by an area in need of rehabilitation, and long-term tax exemptions cannot be offered.

REHABILITATION AREA REQUIREMENTS

A delineated area may be determined to be in need of rehabilitation if the governing body of the municipality determines by resolution that a program of rehabilitation, as defined in section 3 of P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-3), may be expected to prevent further deterioration and promote the overall development of the community.

Rehabilitation is defined by the LRHL as, "an undertaking, by means of extensive repair, reconstruction or renovation of existing structures with or without the introduction of new construction or the enlargement of existing structures in an area determined to be in need of rehabilitation or redevelopment, to eliminate substandard structural or housing conditions and arrest the deterioration of that area."

Under the Local Redevelopment Housing Law an Area may be declared an "area in need of rehabilitation" if it meets one of the following criteria (NJSA 40A:12A-14a):

1. A significant portion of structures therein are in a deteriorated or substandard condition;
2. More than half of the housing stock in the delineated area is at least 50 years old;
3. There is a pattern of vacancy, abandonment or underutilization of properties in the area;
4. There is a persistent arrearage of property tax payments on properties in the area;
5. Environmental contamination is discouraging improvements and investment in properties in the area; or

6. A majority of the water and sewer infrastructure in the delineated area is at least 50 years old and is in need of repair or substantial maintenance.

Under the statute (NJSA 40A:12A-14a), "where warranted by consideration of the overall conditions and requirements of the community, a finding of need for rehabilitation may extend to the entire area of a municipality."

REHABILITATION AREA DESCRIPTION

The proposed Rehabilitation Area consists of Block 3401, Lot 36, which is located at 428 South Church Street. It is located at the northwest corner of the South Church Road and Fellowship Road intersection. The proposed Rehabilitation Area is located in the R2 Residential District and surrounded by similarly zoned parcels to the north, east, south and southwest. It is bordered to the northwest by the SRC-1 Specially Restricted Commercial District 1, which is along northbound Route 38. Uses bordering the proposed Rehabilitation Area include a professional office use to the north, Route 38 jughandle to the east, residential to the south and vacant land to the west.

Figure 1, on the following page, depicts an aerial of the proposed Rehabilitation Area and surrounding uses.



Figure 1 – 428 South Church Street Aerial Image

The site is a .81 acre property containing a 2,200 square foot residence which was constructed in 1871, as well as a large, detached barn. The site is accessed via an unpaved driveway and parking lot. A site visit was conducted on May 25, 2023. At the time, the property appeared to be vacant and is not currently being maintained.



Figure 2 – 428 South Church Street property



Figure 3– Vacant house with overgrown vegetation



Figure 4 – Accessory Barn Structure

ANALYSIS OF REHABILITATION CRITERIA

To qualify as an area in need of rehabilitation, the Area must meet one or more of the criteria set forth in the LRHL. The 428 South Church Street Study Area meets two of the six criteria.

AGE OF RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES

The residential structure located on the property was built in 1871, making it 152 years old. Despite the age of the residence, it has no historic significance and is not listed on the State or Federal Historic Registry.

PATTERN OF VACANCY, ABANDONMENT OR UNDERUTILIZATION OF PROPERTIES IN THE AREA

The property was sold on March 2, 2021, and has been vacant since. The site visit revealed that portions of the residential structure have been rehabilitated over that time since the property was sold in 2021; however, the work appears to be incomplete. The property was sold again on April 13, 2023, and remains vacant.

CONCLUSION

The Area meets two of the six criteria set forth in the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, and thereby qualifies as an “area in need of rehabilitation.” The existing residential structure is over 150 years old and is currently in substandard condition. The property’s history of prolonged vacancy over the last three years has caused the condition of the property to gradually decline. Therefore, designating the area as in need of rehabilitation will be beneficial as the Township looks to make this property viable again.