

# First Generation Suburbs: Putting Principle into Practice

*An Assessment of Ten First Generation Communities  
in Camden and Gloucester Counties, New Jersey*





# **First Generation Suburbs: Putting Principle into Practice**

## ***An Assessment of Ten First Generation Communities in Camden and Gloucester Counties, New Jersey***

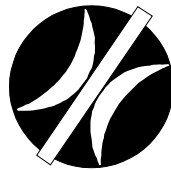
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
The Bourse Building - 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
111 South Independence Mall East  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106  
[www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)



October 2003

---

Created in 1965, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is an interstate, intercounty and intercity agency that provides continuing, comprehensive and coordinated planning to shape a vision for the future growth of the Delaware Valley region. The region includes Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties, as well as the City of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer counties in New Jersey. DVRPC provides technical assistance and services; conducts high priority studies that respond to the requests and demands of member state and local governments; fosters cooperation among various constituents to forge a consensus on diverse regional issues; determines and meets the needs of the private sector; and practices public outreach efforts to promote two-way communication and public awareness of regional issues and the Commission.



Our logo is adapted from the official DVRPC seal, and is designed as a stylized image of the Delaware Valley. The outer ring symbolizes the region as a whole, while the diagonal bar signifies the Delaware River. The two adjoining crescents represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey.

DVRPC is funded by a variety of funding sources including federal grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Pennsylvania and New Jersey departments of transportation, as well as by DVRPC's state and local member governments. The authors, however, are solely responsible for its findings and conclusions, which may not represent the official views or policies of the funding agencies.

## Table of Contents

---

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction and Background</b> .....	5
Study Purpose .....	5
Background Information .....	7
Assessing the Trends: Orfield's Z-Score Approach .....	8
New Jersey Metropatterns .....	10
Summary .....	11
<b>Chapter 2. Existing Conditions</b> .....	13
Population Characteristics .....	13
Housing Characteristics .....	21
Employment Characteristics .....	30
Land Use and Transportation .....	32
Municipal Tax Base and Service Provision .....	35
Summary .....	36
<b>Chapter 3. Opportunities, Challenges and Ongoing Revitalization Activities</b> .	41
Opportunities .....	41
Challenges .....	44
Ongoing Planning and Revitalization Activities .....	50
Conclusion .....	51
<b>Chapter 4. Goals, Objectives and Recommendations</b> .....	53
Goals and Objectives .....	53
Recommended Strategies and Policies .....	54
Region-wide Strategies .....	54
Intermunicipal Cooperation .....	59
Other Municipal and County Policies and Actions .....	60
Potential Resources .....	66
<b>Chapter 5. Possibilities for Redevelopment: Illustrations of Potential Design Alternatives</b> .....	69
Case Study #1: Potential Improvements on King Street, Gloucester City, NJ .....	69
Case Stud #2: Transforming a Greyfield: Redevelopment Alternative For the Woodbury Heights Plaza, Woodbury Heights, NJ .....	72
Summary .....	76

## List of Figures

---

A.	Population Change, 1940-2025: Camden County Study Area	17
B.	Population Change, 1940-2025: Gloucester County Study Area	17
C.	Minority Population as a Percentage of Total Population, 2000	19
D.	Vacancy Rates, 1990 to 2000	24
E.	Percent of the Housing Stock Built Prior to 1960 and 1940, Camden County	26
F.	Percent of the Housing Stock Built Prior to 1960 and 1940, Gloucester County	27
G.	Land Use, 1995	34
H.	The Woodbury Courthouse	41
I.	View from Westville to Philadelphia	42
J.	Neighborhood Park along Woodbury Creek	43
K.	Downtown Woodbury, New Jersey	44
L.	Traffic Congestion at the Brooklawn Circle	45
M.	A Future Vision for Downtown Westville	51
N.	King Street Today	71
O.	King Street Revisited	71
P.	The Woodbury Heights Plaza (Caldor Site)	72
Q.	A New Plan for the Woodbury Heights Plaza	74
R.	Transforming a Greyfield	75
S.	The Site After Demolition and Transformation	75

## List of Maps

---

1.	First Generation Suburbs Study Area	6
2.	Orfield's Z-Scores	9
3.	Population Change, 1990-2000	14
4.	Population Forecast, 2000-2025	16
5.	Median Household Income, 1999	22
6.	Building Permits Issued, 1990-1999	28
7.	Employment Forecast, 2000-2025	31
8.	Tax Base per Household, 2001	37
9.	Municipal Tax Rate, 2001	38

## Executive Summary

---

In December of 1998 the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) released a report entitled *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley*, which defined the economic disadvantages and financial challenges facing many of the region's older suburban communities. A second DVRPC report, *Putting Principles into Practice: An Assessment of the Six Municipalities that Comprise the William Penn School District*, provides a description and analysis of six communities in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Lessons learned from assessing overall demographic and economic trends in first generation suburbs can assist other local officials looking for ways to stabilize and revitalize their communities.

The term "first generation suburb" refers to the earliest group of townships and boroughs to develop outside of a region's urban core. While each of these communities has its own unique history, many have traveled similar paths, evolving from thriving, desirable places in the fifties and sixties to tired, declining communities by the eighties and nineties. Typically, as these municipalities lose both upper and middle class households and jobs, their tax base shrinks, the demand for social services increases, and the ability to finance local services (including schools) comes under pressure. Rapidly growing areas in the next ring of development offer larger homes on larger lots, negligible social problems, and comparatively low tax rates, attracting both people and businesses. Together, these processes perpetuate decentralization and produce fiscal and socioeconomic disparities between aging first generation suburbs and more affluent "outer ring" communities.

The current report looks at ten municipalities that together comprise four separate school districts located within two New Jersey counties. In Gloucester County, the study area includes the City of Woodbury (which has its own school district) as well as the four boroughs that comprise the Gateway Regional School District, including National Park, Westville, Woodbury Heights, and Wenonah. In Camden County, the study area includes two communities in the Gloucester City School District (Gloucester City and Brooklawn Borough) as well as three boroughs that make up the Audubon School District (Audubon, Audubon Park, and Mt. Ephraim). **The purpose of this study is to compile and analyze historic, demographic and economic information and to formulate potential revitalization strategies for the study area municipalities, in accordance with a shared vision for the future (where possible).**

The majority of these municipalities display characteristics common to many of the region's first generation suburbs, including population loss, an aging housing stock, a stagnant or declining tax base, and a relatively low median household income and housing sales price. The ten communities, however, are also relatively diverse. While most of the study area municipalities lost population between 1990 and 2000, for example, Brooklawn saw an increase in population. Employment change likewise varies, from an increase of 46% in Wenonah ( a gain of almost 350 employees) to a decrease of 13% in Woodbury Heights. The median income of the study area communities varies widely, ranging from a low of \$34,600 in Audubon Park to a high of over double that amount (\$71,600) in Wenonah.

Homeownership rates range from a high of more than 90% in Woodbury Heights to a low of less than 25% in Audubon Park, and the median value of owner-occupied units varies from a low of \$47,400 in renter-dominated Audubon Park to a high of \$161,600 in historical Wenonah.

Opportunities exist within the Camden and Gloucester study areas that can provide a foundation for community stabilization and revitalization. Strengths on which to build include the municipalities' sense of place, stable residential neighborhoods, historic character, and high rate of homeownership. Other assets include transportation access and existing water and sewer infrastructure systems. Woodbury's status as the government seat of Gloucester County has stabilized the City's employment base and supported a concentration of educated and high-income residents. Larger, well-constructed, and attractive homes in Wenonah and Woodbury Heights have retained their value and helped these towns to continue to attract and retain higher-income residents. Waterfront locations in Gloucester City, National Park and Westville, which offer opportunities for both economic development and recreation, can enhance the quality of life in the boroughs and should serve to attract new residents and potential developers.

The study area communities share a variety of fiscal, social, and economic challenges. Shared challenges include declining populations, limited undeveloped land, a high concentration of residential uses, an aging housing stock, and aging infrastructure systems. The boroughs of Wenonah and Woodbury Heights, however, have not experienced many of the problems common to first generation suburbs, and have solid tax bases, relatively high housing values, and attractive neighborhoods. Other municipalities, including Audubon, Mount Ephraim, and National Park, have not been as successful in dealing with change, but have never-the-less remained relatively stable. Still other study area municipalities, including Gloucester City, Woodbury City, Audubon Park, Brooklawn, and Westville, have shown significant indications of decline.

## **Recommendations**

Many of the problems facing the region's central cities and first generation suburbs, including municipalities in Camden and Gloucester County study areas, are the result of a continuing regional pattern of decentralization and disinvestment. While municipal officials can and should pursue local initiatives that help to mitigate specific problems facing their communities, long-term solutions and a reversal of the continuing loss of both people and jobs can best be accomplished through broader, cooperative regional approaches. Thus, the report recommends the implementation of **statewide, regional and county-wide planning and growth management strategies**, including targeting infrastructure investments and discretionary funds, to discourage continued development in the region's "outer ring" communities and encourage revitalization of the "inner ring".

Given the fiscal disparity that exists between the region's oldest communities and its more affluent outer ring municipalities, the report also recommends investigating **long-term alternatives to the property tax** as the primary means of financing local services,



especially education. Reforming the tax system would discourage individual municipalities from permitting tax-generating development regardless of its potential impact on neighboring communities or its corridor and region-wide benefits and costs. Alternatives to over-reliance on local property taxes include tax-base sharing and/or increasing the state's share of the cost of education. Advocates have also called for a Constitutional Convention, which would allow the citizens of the State to consider potential revisions to the State's Constitution related to the property tax system, outside of the political arena.

Finally, the report makes recommendations to municipal, county, and state officials with the goal of alleviating some of the problems experienced in the study area and facilitating community revitalization, including the following:

- **Municipal officials should participate in a multi-municipal coalition and work cooperatively with neighboring municipalities to increase the effectiveness of service delivery, reduce costs and increase their political clout.**
- Municipal officials should **review their local comprehensive plans and zoning regulations and revise them as necessary**, to support existing businesses, attract new employers, encourage in-fill development, preserve available open space, and enhance recreational opportunities. Plans and zoning ordinances should allow uses that are compatible with and complement existing uses, to assist in accomplishing the community's goals for economic and community development.
- Municipal officials should **review, revise as necessary and pro-actively enforce local property maintenance requirements**. Absentee landlords as well as the community's residents and business owners should be required to maintain their properties. Local officials should work with neighboring municipalities, striving for consistency between municipalities in terms of requirements and enforcement.
- Municipal officials should **respond aggressively to housing vacancies** as a part of their overall neighborhood revitalization plan, including boarding vacant units, seeking acquisition of vacant properties and, when appropriate, demolishing deteriorated vacant structures.
- In communities with a high percentage of rental units, including Audubon Park, Brooklawn, Westville, and Woodbury, municipal officials should implement or expand programs to **support the rehabilitation of renter-occupied units** as well as programs which assist renters in becoming homeowners.
- Municipal officials should **maintain and enhance the sidewalks and streets in their neighborhoods and undertake formal streetscape improvement programs as needed in their downtown areas**. Several communities, including Gloucester City, Woodbury and Westville, have implemented successful streetscape improvement programs which have enhanced their communities for residents and businesses alike. These programs should be part of a

comprehensive, overall strategy for revitalizing the entire municipality. Maintaining the neighborhoods can strengthen the residents' sense of community pride and encourage them to maintain their individual units.

- Municipal officials in Gloucester City, National Park and Westville should **develop a conceptual plan for the Delaware Riverfront** and pursue the redevelopment of available waterfront properties based on their community's vision, whether for commercial, industrial, or recreational uses.
- Municipal governments should work with the appropriate county agencies to **inventory and actively market vacant and abandoned structures and properties** within the study area, identifying the size, location, ownership, available information on previous uses, and potential for redevelopment.
- Municipal officials should continue to **seek loans to correct problems with aging infrastructure** systems, in cooperation with neighboring municipalities.
- County and municipal officials should **work together to identify necessary improvements to the highway network** and to seek potential funding sources for these improvements, including inclusion on DVRPC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or through other available sources. The City of Woodbury, for example, should continue to seek ways to **expand parking opportunities in the downtown**, to help make the City more attractive to prospective businesses.
- County and municipal officials and NJ Transit should **continue to work together to improve transit service throughout the study area**, focusing on improving access between residential neighborhoods and key employment centers as well as nearby educational and job training facilities, including the county community colleges, the Gloucester County Institute of Technology, and Rowan University.
- Municipal officials should **work with their county economic development departments and improvement authorities to identify and take advantage of all available economic development programs and incentives** offered through federal, state and county agencies as well as private foundations.
- Municipal officials should work with county officials to **identify and take advantage of all available county and state programs which support housing and neighborhood revitalization**.
- **Residents should actively participate in the decision-making process in their community and critically assess the consequences of actions affecting local government and the school districts.** Taxpayers should become aware of important local issues, raise questions, and actively participate in local Committee meetings, planning and zoning board hearings, and school board meetings.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

---

In December of 1998 the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) released a report entitled *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley*, which defined the economic disadvantages and financial challenges facing many of the region's older suburban communities. A second DVRPC report, *Putting Principles into Practice: An Assessment of the Six Municipalities that Comprise the William Penn School District*, provides a description and analysis of six first generation municipalities in Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

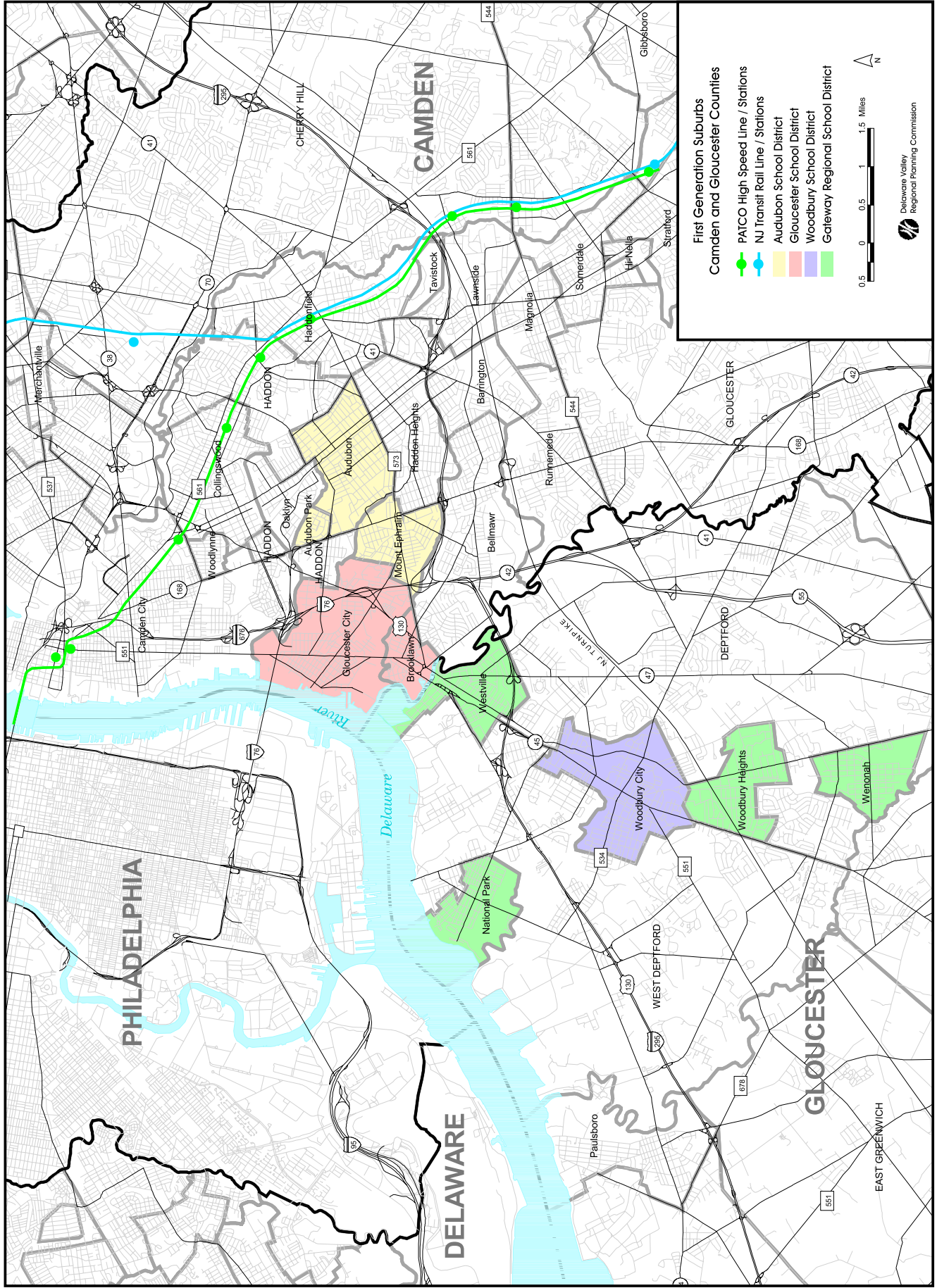
The term "first generation suburb" generally refers to the earliest group of townships and boroughs to develop outside of a region's urban core. While each of these communities has its own unique history, many have traveled similar paths, evolving from thriving, desirable places in the fifties and sixties to tired, declining townships and boroughs by the eighties and nineties. Lessons learned from assessing overall demographic and economic trends in these places can assist local officials looking for ways to stabilize and revitalize their communities. These lessons also demonstrate that municipal officials must be continually vigilant in responding to potentially negative trends that can transform a seemingly stable community into one facing the prospect of decline.

### Study Purpose

The current report looks at ten municipalities that together comprise four separate school districts located within two New Jersey counties. In Gloucester County, the study area includes the City of Woodbury (which has its own school district) as well as the four boroughs that form the Gateway Regional School District (National Park, Westville, Woodbury Heights, and Wenonah). Gateway is a regional middle and high school district; each of the four participating municipalities also administers their own local elementary school district. In Camden County, the study area includes two communities in the Gloucester City School District (Gloucester City and Brooklawn Borough) as well as three boroughs that make up the Audubon School District (Audubon, Audubon Park, and Mt. Ephraim). These municipalities are highlighted in **Map 1**. While school district boundaries were used as a means of defining the multi-municipal study area, it is not the intent of this report to analyze, discuss, or otherwise comment on the operations, administration, or quality of the districts themselves. This study was in part guided by a task force comprised of municipal and county officials and school district representatives

The purpose of this study is to compile and analyze demographic and economic information; to highlight ongoing revitalization initiatives which the communities are already undertaking; and to formulate potential revitalization strategies, including both region-wide alternatives and localized revitalization initiatives, in accordance with a shared vision for the future (where possible). While the majority of these municipalities share many characteristics that are typical of the region's other older first generation communities, two boroughs (Wenonah and Woodbury Heights) are somewhat atypical of first generation suburbs. These differences are highlighted and discussed in Chapter 2.

# Map 1 First Generation Suburbs Study Area



Like many other first generation suburbs, municipalities in the Camden and Gloucester County study area experienced very high growth during the 1940s and 1950s, from the suburban population boom that followed the end of World War II. The communities saw their populations peak around 1960 or 1970. Several of them served primarily as “bedroom communities,” with little employment, as their residents commuted to nearby major cities and employment centers. Many of the residents of National Park, for example, commuted daily by ferry to jobs at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. The exceptions are Gloucester City (which was home to several larger employers, related to its waterfront location) and Woodbury (which serves as the government seat of Gloucester County). In Audubon Park, the smallest of the ten communities, most of the housing units were constructed during the 1940's as barracks for military servicemen, and now house mainly low and moderate income families.

## **Background Information**

Discussions about metropolitan decentralization have traditionally focused on the effects of disinvestment in cities, suburban sprawl and the loss of open space and agricultural lands. Recently, however, more attention has been given to emerging patterns of decline in the nation's oldest suburbs. The Brookings Institute, for example, in a report titled *Valuing America's First Suburbs*, found that older “first suburbs” have a unique set of opportunities and challenges that differ from those of their neighboring central cities or growing suburbs.<sup>1</sup> The Delaware Valley's first generation suburbs include the region's oldest boroughs, which took root as early agricultural or industrial communities and are scattered across the region. Also included are the region's earliest suburban bedroom communities, which developed rapidly in the decades following World War II and are clustered around the cities of Philadelphia and Camden, extending along the region's major highways. Most of this region's first generation communities experienced most of their population and employment growth between the late 1940's and 1970.

More recently, however, many of these communities have experienced the same kind of decline experienced by the region's core cities prior to 1970. Many first generation communities now face fiscal and socio-economic challenges that until recently were perceived as exclusively urban problems, including population and job loss, aging of the housing stock and the population and stagnant or declining tax bases. As first generation suburbs lose middle-class households and jobs, their tax base shrinks, the demand for social services increases, and the ability to finance local services comes under stress. Rapidly growing areas in the next ring of development offer larger homes on larger lots, negligible social problems, and lower tax rates, attracting both people and jobs. Together, these processes perpetuate decentralization and produce economic disparities between aging first generation suburbs and more affluent outer-ring communities.

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert Puentes and Myron Orfield. 2002. *Valuing America's First Suburbs: A Policy Agenda for Older Suburbs in the Midwest*. Published by Brookings Institution Center for Urban and Metropolitan Policy.

## Assessing the Trends: Orfield's Z-Score Approach

Myron Orfield, a lawyer by training and also a four-term member of the Minnesota House of Representatives, is a nationally recognized expert on the development of and challenges facing first generation suburbs. Using basic mapping software, Orfield developed a series of maps to illustrate existing economic and demographic conditions at the municipal and school district level. In 1997, he completed *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*, which described the interrelationships between poverty in central cities, decentralized "sprawl" development in previously rural areas, and the economically distressed suburbs in between.

While his initial experience was with the Twin Cities region in Minnesota, it was clear to Orfield that fiscal disparities in older suburbs characterize metropolitan development across the country. Later in 1997, he applied his work to the Philadelphia region, at the request of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC). In his Philadelphia report (released in 1998), Orfield created a series of maps to illustrate social, economic and fiscal conditions in Southeast Pennsylvania. Composite scores known as "z-scores" were calculated for each municipality that take into account four different variables:

- tax base per household
- female-headed households as a percent of all households with children
- the percent of children under age five living below poverty
- median income.

These four factors were weighted equally and combined as one single z-score, which was then used to divide the 238 Southeastern Pennsylvania municipalities into four separate categories: the central city (Philadelphia), "affluent suburbs", "older cities and boroughs", and "middle income townships". Orfield's methodology was then replicated by DVRPC and applied to the 114 municipalities in the region's four Southern New Jersey counties. Municipalities receiving a positive score were classified as affluent suburbs, while those receiving a negative score were designated as either middle income townships or older cities/boroughs, depending on how they were legally incorporated.<sup>2</sup> **Map 2** illustrates the results of this analysis across the nine-county DVRPC region.

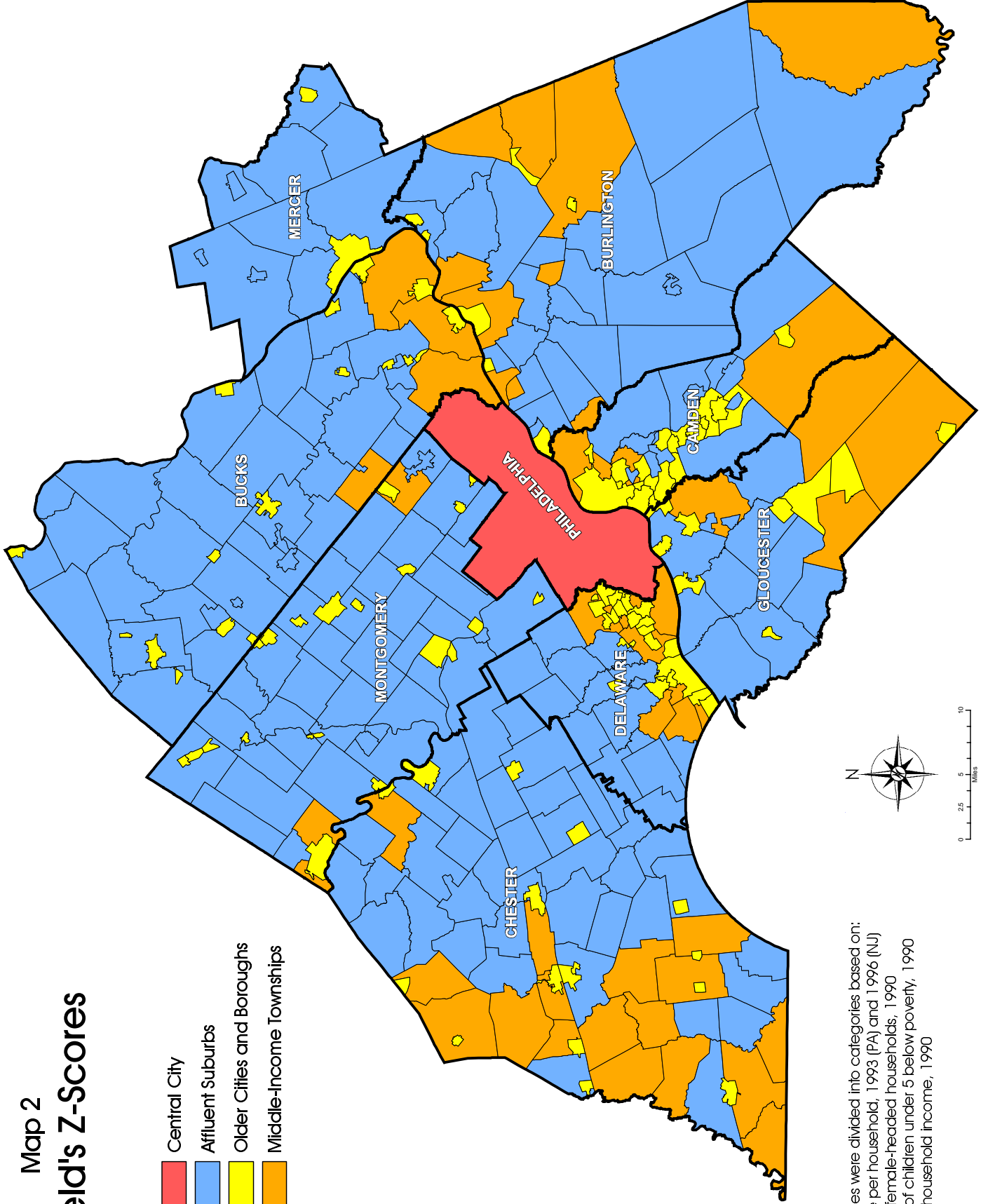
Based on the four variables listed above, the five study area municipalities in Camden County were all classified as "older cities and boroughs". In Gloucester County, three communities (Woodbury, National Park, and Westville) were classified as "older cities and boroughs", while two municipalities (Wenonah and Woodbury Heights) received a positive score and were therefore classified as "affluent suburbs". Some of the reasons for this difference in classification (including relatively high tax bases per household and median household income) are discussed in the following chapter on existing conditions.

---

<sup>2</sup> See *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley*, published by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, 1998.

# Map 2 Orfield's Z-Scores

- Central City
- Affluent Suburbs
- Older Cities and Boroughs
- Middle-Income Townships



Municipalities were divided into categories based on:

1. Tax base per household, 1993 (PA) and 1996 (NJ)
2. Percent female-headed households, 1990
3. Percent of children under 5 below poverty, 1990
4. Median household income, 1990

In addition to Orfield's methodology, DVRPC's report *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley* presents two additional methods for evaluating local conditions: one based on conditions within school districts, and another based on municipal dynamics. Applying these methodologies produced similar findings for the region. Under DVRPC's school district z-score methodology, which used the percent of students eligible for the free lunch program and population change to categorize the region's municipalities, all ten communities were classified in one of the two lowest quartiles. Under the Commission's municipal dynamics methodology, which considered population change, employment change and tax base per household, all of the communities except Wenonah fell into one of the two lowest quartiles.

### **New Jersey Metropatterns**

In 2002, Orfield applied a similar methodology to classify municipalities in the State of New Jersey. Using cluster analysis, Orfield identified eight separate community types: large cities, distressed communities, at-risk developed communities, at-risk rural communities, bedroom-developing communities, affluent communities, constrained communities and resort communities. The characteristics used to group New Jersey's communities included tax base per capita, growth in tax base per capita between 1993 and 2001; average age of the housing stock in 1990; the percentage of elementary students eligible for free lunches in 2000; population growth between 1990 and 2000; and the percent of the community's land that was developed in 1995.

Using this methodology, the ten study area municipalities were all classified as either distressed or at-risk communities. Distressed communities, including Woodbury, Brooklawn, and Gloucester City, are defined as relatively dense places with an older housing stock, below-average tax resources, recent population and employment losses, and increasing poverty rates. Smaller than the State's larger cities, these communities often find it difficult to finance the services needed by their residents. Larger cities have comparatively larger and more stable resource bases, and often have key resources such as large downtown business districts, educational institutions, art and cultural institutions, and a mix of upper and middle class residential neighborhoods. The lack of such resources in Orfield's "distressed" communities is compounded by the fact that smaller cities and boroughs are often eligible for significantly less state and federal aid than their larger counterparts.

At-risk communities (including all of the other seven study area communities) have stable or slightly increasing populations, relatively low poverty rates, and average tax rates. Many, however, have property tax bases that are already at or below the regional average and are growing more slowly than in their neighboring communities, which may make it difficult to meet the needs of their residents in the future. These communities are at-risk of falling victim to a cycle whereby their populations begin to decrease; declining populations depress housing prices; property tax bases begin to decline; and deteriorating social conditions related to unmet service needs make it even more difficult to attract and retain both businesses and residents, leading to accelerating population and job losses.



## Summary

The ten study area municipalities share many characteristics common to older first generation municipalities, as evidenced by their classifications under Myron Orfield's z-score approach and his "New Jersey Metropatterns" cluster analysis. Given these common characteristics, these communities also share many of the same challenges and problems identified by DVRPC through the Commission's previous research on first generation suburbs.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter 2 provides data specific to the study area municipalities for many of the variables used in these analyses. In doing so, the chapter also demonstrates that these communities are relatively diverse. Chapter 3 identifies opportunities for redevelopment and challenges that must be overcome in the study area, and Chapter 4 defines goals and objectives and recommends strategies for responding to common challenges while taking advantage of available opportunities.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents two case studies that illustrate potential responses to challenges commonly seen in first generation communities. The first illustrates the continued revitalization of King Street in Gloucester City, to provide increased residential opportunities, enhanced buffering between the street and adjacent industrial uses, and an enhanced visual environment. The second considers potential alternatives for redeveloping a classic "greyfield", the under-utilized Caldor shopping center in Woodbury Heights.

---

<sup>3</sup>See the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley Region* (December 1998) and *First Generation Suburbs: Putting Principle into Practice* (August 2000).



## Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

---

This chapter documents existing conditions in the ten municipalities that comprise the Camden and Gloucester County study area. The information provided has been gathered from various governmental information sources, most notably the United States Census Bureau. This chapter has been divided into five sections:

- The **population characteristics** section describes patterns of population change in the study area municipalities from the 1950's through 2025. It also examines population characteristics such as age, race, education, and income, and discusses the percent of students eligible for the federal reduced-price lunch program, as a surrogate measure of children in poverty.
- The **housing characteristics** section describes changes in the number of housing units, vacancy rates, and patterns of housing ownership. It also discusses the age of the housing stock, patterns of new residential construction, and average housing sales prices.
- The **employment characteristics** section describes changes in employment in the study area.
- The **land use and transportation** section examines land use in the study area and describes the area's transportation network.
- The **municipal tax base and service provision** section examines the municipal tax base per household, and discusses its causes and effects. This section also describes the property tax burden on homeowners in each study area municipality.

### A. Population Characteristics

#### Population Change

As is characteristic of many first generation suburbs, the population of the study area has declined since 1990, as detailed in **Tables 1(a) and 1(b)**. During the 1990s, population declined by 2% in the Camden County study area and by 5% in the Gloucester County study area. Most study area municipalities experienced slight population losses during this period. A notable exception was Brooklawn, which saw a 30% increase in its population (although this increase may actually reflect an undercount of the population in 1990 rather than a true increase in population). Population losses in Gloucester City, however, more than offset this population gain, with the City losing almost 1,200 residents during the 1990s. Meanwhile, Gloucester County grew steadily and Camden County grew slightly during the same period. **Map 3** illustrates population change from 1990 to 2000.

Population decline in the study area is projected to continue in the near future in most of the study area municipalities, as illustrated in Tables 1(a) and 1(b). According to DVRPC



**Table 1 (a): Population Change, 1990 to 2025: Camden County Study Area**

Municipality	Population			Change, 1990-2000		Change, 2000-25	
	1990	2000	2025	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
Audubon	9,205	9,182	7,730	-23	0%	-1,452	-16%
Audubon Park	1,150	1,102	820	-48	-4%	-282	-26%
Brooklawn	1,805	2,354	1,690	549	30%	-664	-28%
Gloucester City	12,649	11,484	9,110	-1,165	-9%	-2,374	-21%
Mount Ephraim	4,517	4,495	3,680	-22	0%	-815	-18%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>29,326</b>	<b>28,617</b>	<b>23,030</b>	<b>-709</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>-5,587</b>	<b>-20%</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>502,824</b>	<b>508,932</b>	<b>513,530</b>	<b>6,108</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>4,598</b>	<b>1%</b>

**Table 1 (b): Population Change, 1990 to 2025: Gloucester County Study Area**

Municipality	Population			Change, 1990-2000		Change, 2000-25	
	1990	2000	2025	Absolute	%	Absolute	%
National Park	3,413	3,205	3,130	-208	-6%	-75	-2%
Wenonah	2,331	2,317	2,440	-14	-1%	123	5%
Westville	4,573	4,500	4,640	-73	-2%	140	3%
Woodbury City	10,904	10,307	9,730	-597	-5%	-577	-6%
Woodbury Heights	3,392	2,988	2,870	-404	-12%	-118	-4%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>24,613</b>	<b>23,317</b>	<b>22,810</b>	<b>-1,296</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>-507</b>	<b>-2%</b>
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>360,569</b>	<b>389,579</b>	<b>480,545</b>	<b>29,010</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>90,966</b>	<b>23%</b>

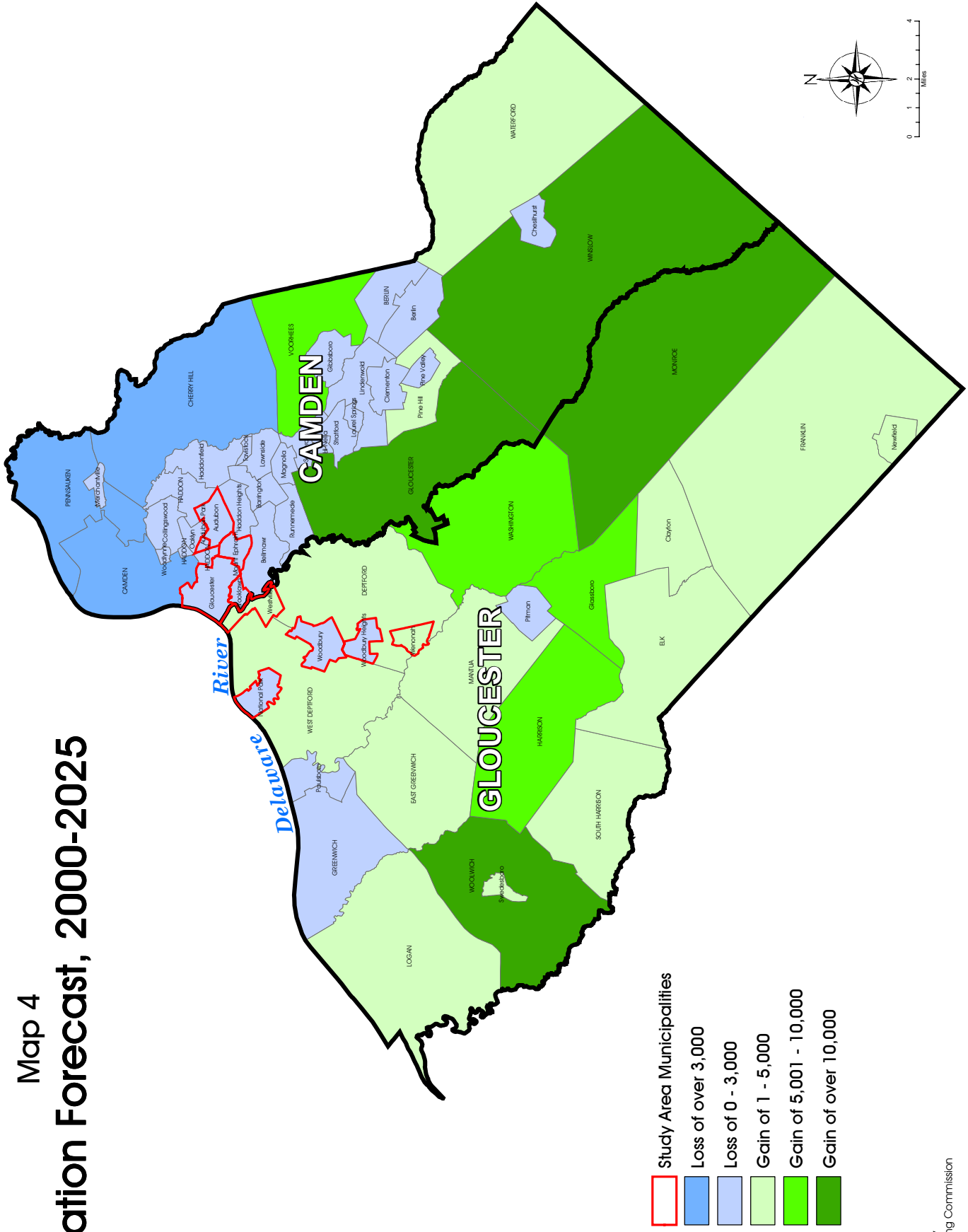
Source: United States Census Bureau, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

forecasts, the five municipalities in the Camden County study area will decline in population by over 5,500 people, or 20% of the current population, by 2025. Gloucester City alone is forecast to lose nearly 2,400 residents, and all five of the Camden County municipalities are expected to experience significant population losses, ranging from 16% to 28%.

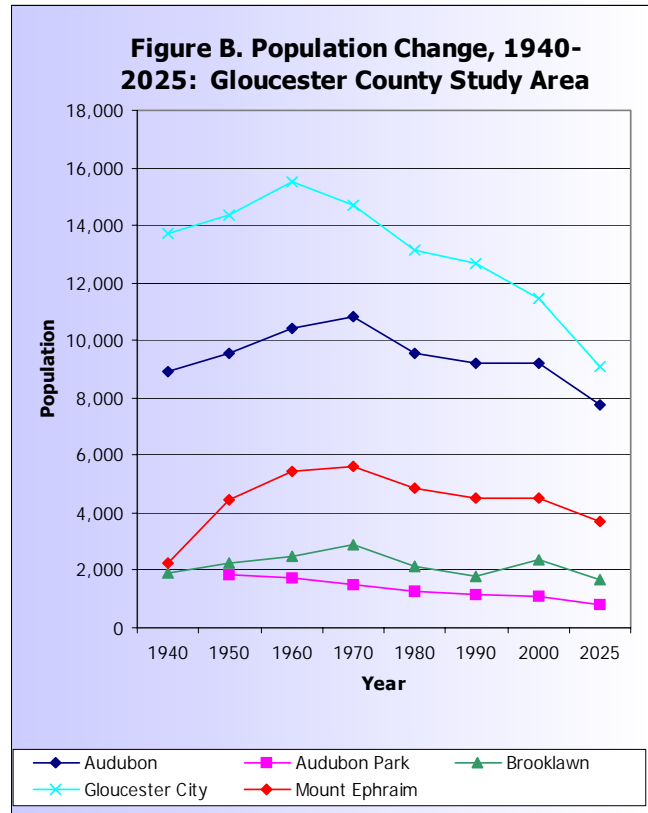
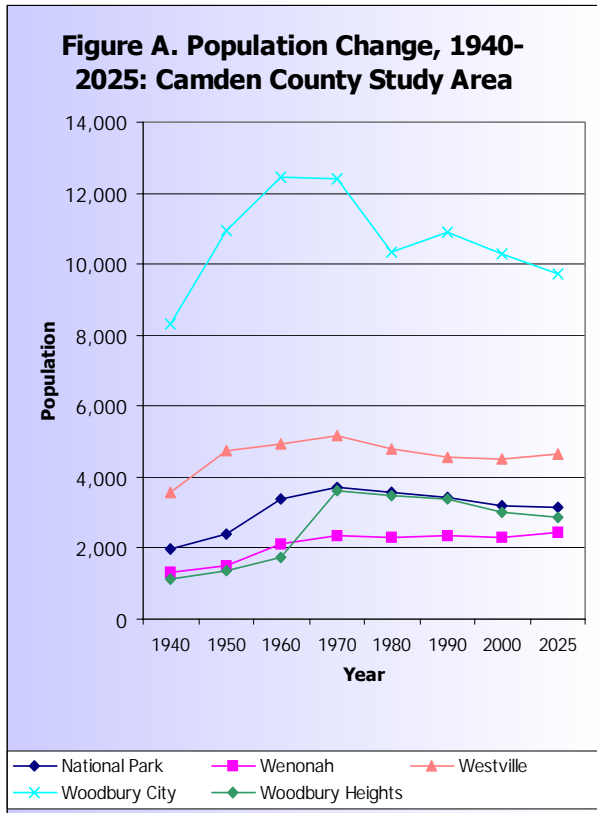
Gloucester County's five municipalities are forecast to decline in population by 2% by 2025. However, these forecasted population losses are not shared evenly by the five municipalities; most of the losses are projected to occur in Woodbury City, while Wenonah and Westville will experience slight population gains. Gloucester County is expected to grow significantly and Camden County to grow slightly between 2000 and 2025. Municipal population forecasts between 2000 and 2025 are illustrated in **Map 4**.

**Figures A** and **B** show population trends in the study area municipalities. Typical of many first generation suburbs communities, the population has been declining in most of the study area municipalities for decades. Most of the municipalities recorded their highest population levels in the 1970 census, with the exceptions of Gloucester City and Woodbury, which had slightly higher populations in 1960, and Audubon Park, which has lost population every decade since its incorporation in the 1940s. In some study area communities, current populations are at their lowest point in generations; half of the municipalities now have a lower population than they did in 1950.

# Map 4 Population Forecast, 2000-2025



- Study Area Municipalities
- Loss of over 3,000
- Loss of 0 - 3,000
- Gain of 1 - 5,000
- Gain of 5,001 - 10,000
- Gain of over 10,000



**Source:** United States Census Bureau (1940 through 2000); Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (forecasts through 2025)

## Age of the Population

The aging of the population, common in many first generation communities, creates a number of planning challenges. For example, an elderly population may be more dependent on public transportation than is the general population, since they have more limited access to automobiles. The elderly also have other needs for specialized services, particularly access to health care.

Residents of the five study area municipalities are slightly older than their respective county averages, as shown in **Tables 2(a)** and **2(b)**. In 2000, about 15% of the population of the study area municipalities in both counties was 65 or older, compared to 13% in Camden County and 12% in Gloucester County. Audubon Park and Mount Ephraim had especially high percentages of elderly residents, with about 18% of their population over 65. On the other end of the scale, only 13% of the population of Brooklawn, National Park, and Woodbury Heights was over the age of 65.

As shown in Tables 2(a) and 2(b), the elderly population grew by nearly 5,000 people (20%) in Gloucester County overall between 1990 and 2000, while increasing in Camden County by about 2,700 people (4%). In the study area communities, however, the number of residents over age 65 declined during the same period, by over 800 in the Camden

County communities (16%) and by over 200 in the Gloucester County municipalities (5%). This loss was not related simply to the overall loss of population of all ages; in seven of the ten study area municipalities, the proportion of elderly residents declined between 1990 and 2000. Audubon Park, for example, lost over one-third of its elderly population despite losing only 4% of its population overall. This loss resulted in the percentage of elderly residents in the Borough declining from 26% in 1990 to only 18% in 2000.

The study areas are fairly similar to their respective counties in the percentage of population that is 18 or younger, especially in Gloucester County (which in general is relatively younger than Camden County). Between 1990 and 2000, half of the study area municipalities experienced increases in the number of residents under 18 years of age. The greatest increase was in Brooklawn, which experienced a nearly 50% increase in this population group. However, these gains were offset by losses of younger population in Gloucester City and Woodbury City. Overall, the proportion of population under 18 in the study area remained fairly constant between 1990 and 2000.

### Racial Demographics

Many first generation suburbs have gone through a demographic transition, from a low percentage to a high percentage minority population. Some municipalities in the William

**Table 2 (a): Population Age, 1990 to 2000: Camden County Study Area**

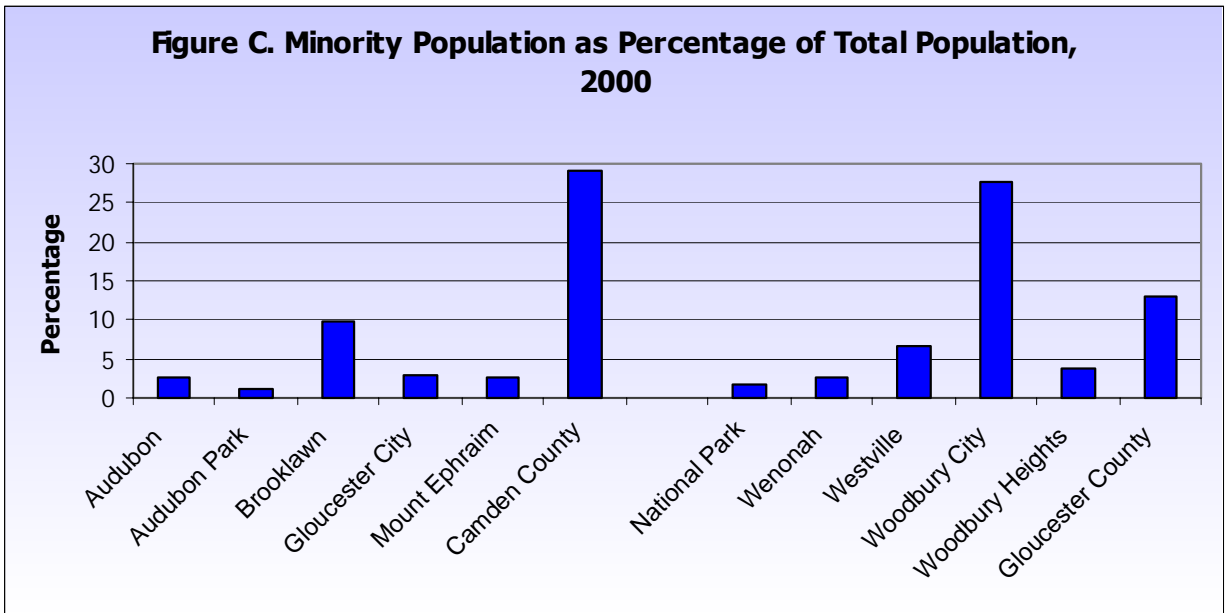
Municipality	18 Years and Younger				65 Years and Older			
	1990	2000	Change	%	1990	2000	Change,	%
Audubon	25%	25%	8	0%	18%	16%	-194	-12%
Audubon Park	16%	21%	49	26%	27%	18%	-103	-34%
Brooklawn	23%	26%	194	47%	20%	13%	-47	-13%
Gloucester City	28%	27%	-433	-12%	15%	14%	-347	-18%
Mount Ephraim	22%	22%	32	3%	20%	18%	-115	-13%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>-150</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>-806</b>	<b>-16%</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>2,043</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>4,966</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Table 2 (b): Population Age, 1990 to 2000: Gloucester County Study Area**

Municipality	18 and Younger				65 and Older			
	1990	2000	Change	%	1990	2000	Change	%
National Park	30%	26%	-172	-17%	11%	13%	42	12%
Wenonah	25%	26%	12	2%	12%	14%	41	15%
Westville	26%	25%	-75	-6%	16%	14%	-111	-15%
Woodbury City	26%	25%	-298	-10%	17%	17%	-184	-10%
Woodbury Heights	26%	26%	-112	-13%	11%	13%	17	4%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>-645</b>	<b>-10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>-195</b>	<b>-5%</b>
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>2,043</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>4,966</b>	<b>20%</b>

Source: United States Census Bureau, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission





**Source:** United States Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Penn School District in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, for example, have transitioned from majority white to majority non-white populations over just the last decade.<sup>4</sup> This transition has not yet occurred, however, in the Camden and Gloucester County study area municipalities. In the 2000 census, 97% in the population of the Camden County study area and 86% in the Gloucester County study area described themselves as white.

The single largest minority group in the study area was African-Americans, most of whom were residents of Woodbury City. African-Americans constituted about one-quarter of the population of Woodbury City in 2000. **Figure C** illustrates the non-white population as a percent of the total population in 2000 in the study area municipalities. Very few of the study area residents (about 3% overall in both counties) identified themselves as Hispanic during the 2000 census. About 5% of the population of Brooklawn described themselves as Hispanic in 2000, the highest percentage in the study area.

### **Educational Attainment**

**Tables 3(a)** and **3(b)** describe the highest educational level achieved by residents of the study area who were at least 25 years of age as of April 1, 2000. In general, residents of the study area are slightly less educated than in their counties overall. In the Camden County study area, for example, a higher percentage of residents have attained a high school diploma than in the County overall (43% compared to 32%), but fewer have gone on to attain a four-year Bachelors degree (11% compared to 16% County-wide). The

---

<sup>4</sup>Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, *Putting Principle into Practice: An Assessment of the William Penn School District*.

**Table 3 (a): Highest Education Level Attained: Camden County Study Area**

Municipality	Persons over 25 years of age				
	Some High School but no diploma	With a High School diploma	With an Associate degree	With a Bachelors degree	With an Advanced degree
Audubon	23%	38%	6%	19%	14%
Audubon Park	44%	47%	5%	3%	1%
Brooklawn	36%	52%	4%	4%	5%
Gloucester City	39%	46%	4%	6%	5%
Mount Ephraim	37%	44%	5%	10%	8%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>8%</b>

**Table 3 (b): Highest Education Level Attained: Gloucester County Area**

Municipality	Persons over 25 years of age				
	Some High School but no diploma	With a High School diploma	With an Associate degree	With a Bachelors degree	With an Advanced degree
National Park	41%	47%	5%	6%	1%
Wenonah	23%	27%	9%	26%	16%
Westville	42%	42%	7%	8%	1%
Woodbury City	38%	33%	7%	15%	7%
Woodbury Heights	37%	34%	6%	15%	8%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Gloucester</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>6%</b>

**Source:** United States Census Bureau, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

exception is the Borough of Audubon, where 33% of residents over 25 have attained either a Bachelors or a more advanced degree. Audubon also had the lowest percentage of adults who had not completed high school.

In the Gloucester County study area, educational attainment approximates the County's overall percentages, although the percentage who have never received even a high school diploma is slightly higher (38% as compared to 35% county-wide). Within the study area, however, there are more significant differences. In Wenonah, for example, 26% of the adult residents have attained a Bachelor's degree and an additional 16% have received a Masters or some other post-graduate degree. In both Westville and National Park, on the other hand, over 40% of the residents never completed high school, and over 40% more have received no more than a high school diploma.

### Median Income

**Tables 4(a)** and **4(b)** as well as **Map 5** illustrate 1999 median household income, which ranges from a high of over \$71,000 in Wenonah (3<sup>rd</sup> highest in Gloucester County) to less than \$35,000 in Audubon Park (third-to-last in Camden County). In Gloucester County, Westville, Woodbury City, and National Park were all in the bottom five municipalities in

**Table 4 (a): Income and Poverty: Camden County Study Area**

Municipality	Median Household Income			Per capita income, 1999	% families below poverty
	1989	1999	% change		
Audubon	\$36,900	\$49,250	33%	\$24,942	4.2%
Audubon Park	\$24,600	\$34,643	41%	\$16,926	9.0%
Brooklawn	\$31,400	\$39,600	26%	\$18,295	6.1%
Gloucester City	\$29,000	\$36,855	27%	\$16,912	7.7%
Mount Ephraim	\$35,600	\$44,824	26%	\$21,150	2.0%
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>\$36,200</b>	<b>\$48,097</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>\$22,354</b>	<b>8.1%</b>

**Table 4 (b): Income and Poverty: Gloucester County Area**

Municipality	Median Household Income			Per capita income, 1999	% families below poverty
	1989	1999	% change		
National Park	\$33,200	\$48,534	46%	\$18,048	6.5%
Wenonah	\$52,700	\$71,625	36%	\$34,116	2.0%
Westville	\$31,700	\$39,570	25%	\$18,747	7.4%
Woodbury City	\$29,000	\$41,827	44%	\$21,592	11.2%
Woodbury Heights	\$47,900	\$63,266	32%	\$24,001	2.4%
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>\$39,400</b>	<b>\$54,273</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>\$22,708</b>	<b>4.3%</b>

Source: United States Census Bureau, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

median household income in 1999. On a more positive note, the median household income grew as fast or faster than the County average in Audubon and Audubon Park in Camden County, and National Park and Woodbury in Gloucester County.

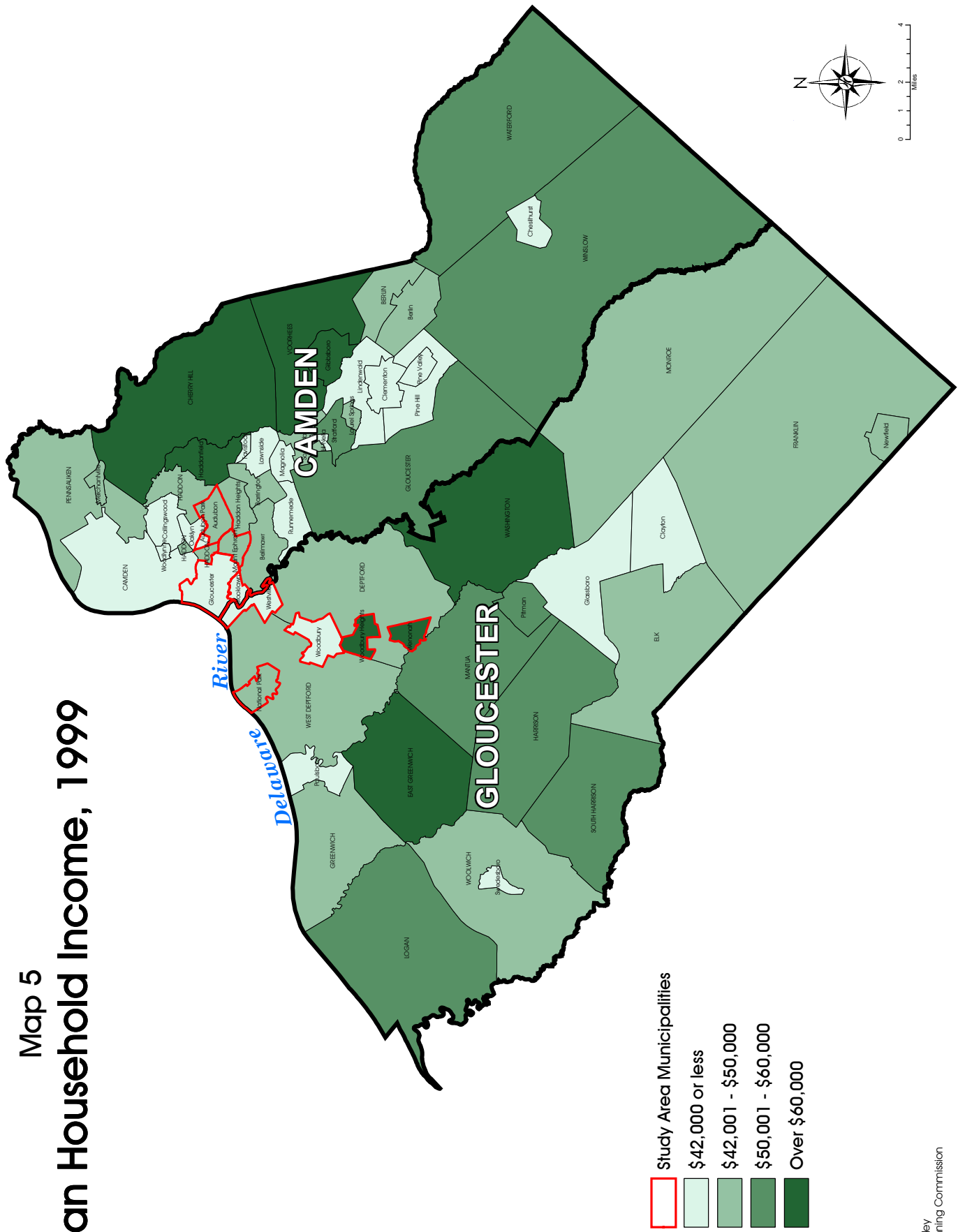
In Gloucester County, poverty is concentrated in Woodbury City and a few of the County's other older boroughs (including Paulsboro, Swedesboro, Glassboro, and Clayton). The percent of families living below poverty in Woodbury is second only to Paulsboro (where over 14% of all families live below poverty). At 7.4%, the percentage of families living in poverty in Westville is the 6<sup>th</sup> highest in Gloucester County. In Camden County, the percent of families living below poverty in Audubon Park exceeds even the County average (which is skewed by a very high percentage in Camden City), and Gloucester City also shows a relatively high concentration of poverty.

## **B. Housing Characteristics**

### **Change in Housing Units and Housing Vacancy**

Tables 5(a) and 5(b) illustrate the total number of housing units located in each of the study area municipalities in 2000 as compared to 1990. In general, the total number of housing units in the study area remained stable during the decade. Half of the study area municipalities gained housing units during the 1990s, most notably Brooklawn, which experienced an increase of 275 housing units during this decade (a 37% increase). This increase, however, may in fact be due to an error in counting rather than an actual

# Map 5 Median Household Income, 1999



**Table 5(a): Housing Units and Vacancy Rates, 1990 to 2000**

Municipality	Total Housing Units				Vacancy Rates	
	1990	2000	Change	As %	1990	2000
Audubon	3,756	3,813	57	2%	3.6%	3.7%
Audubon Park	512	499	-13	-3%	0.0%	0.6%
Brooklawn	750	1,025	275	37%	6.4%	6.2%
Gloucester City	4,934	4,604	-330	-7%	6.7%	8.5%
Mount Ephraim	1,844	1,881	37	2%	3.0%	3.3%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>11,796</b>	<b>11,822</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>190,145</b>	<b>199,679</b>	<b>9,534</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>

**Table 5(b): Housing Units and Vacancy Rates, 1990 to 2000.**

Municipality	Total Housing Units				Vacancy Rates	
	1990	2000	Change	As %	1990	2000
National Park	1,145	1,165	20	2%	3.1%	4.6%
Wenonah	837	860	23	3%	1.3%	1.9%
Westville	1,907	1,938	31	2%	3.8%	6.5%
Woodbury City	4,335	4,310	-25	-1%	4.2%	6.0%
Woodbury Heights	1,130	1,045	-85	-8%	2.0%	1.7%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>9,354</b>	<b>9,318</b>	<b>-36</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>82,459</b>	<b>95,054</b>	<b>12,595</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>

**Source:** United States Census Bureau, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

increase in units, given that only 12 residential building permits were issued during the decade in the Borough. During the same decade, Gloucester City lost 330 housing units. The number of housing units increased by about 5% in Camden county and by about 15% in Gloucester County in the 1990's.

A comparison of the housing data with population change shows that while population is declining in the study area, the number of housing units is remaining fairly stable. This trend is most likely caused in large part by decreasing household size, rather than out-migration. Across the United States, the average number of persons per household has dropped significantly during each Census for several decades.

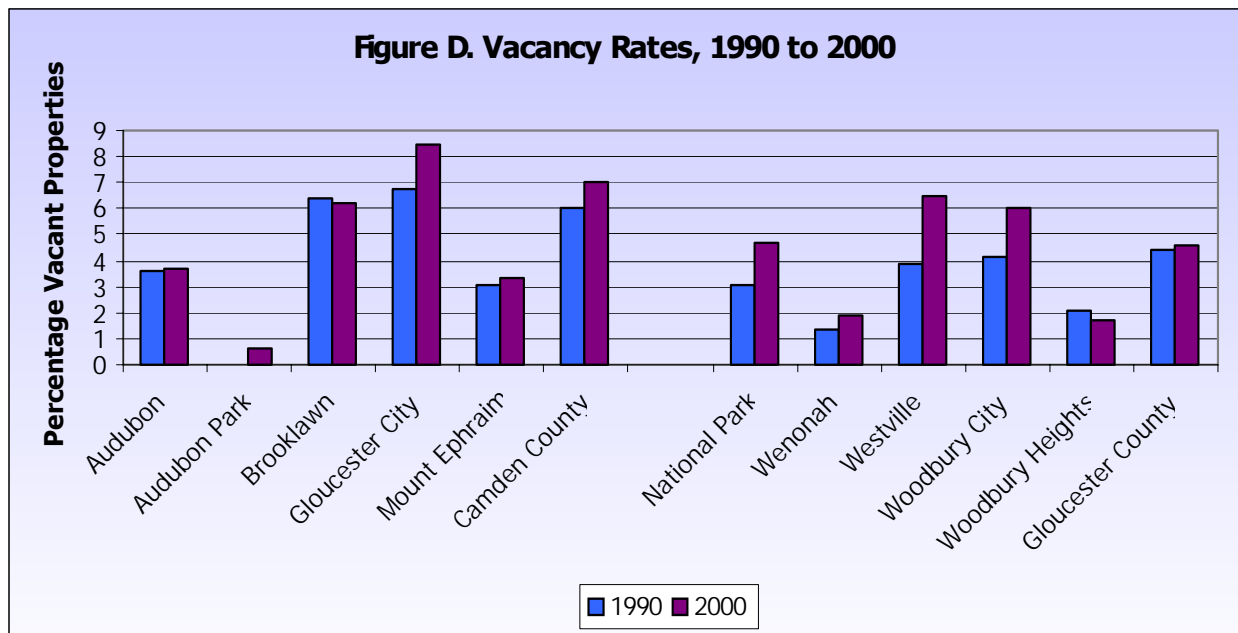
Tables 5(a) and 5(b) also indicate that vacancy rates in both County study areas increased during the 1990's. In Camden County, 2000 vacancy rates in all of the study area municipalities with the exception of Gloucester City were lower than those in the County as a whole (although the County's vacancy rate is skewed by the extremely high vacancy rate in Camden City). The vacancy rate in Gloucester City was 8.5% in 2000, followed by just over 6% in Brooklawn. In contrast, the vacancy rate was less than 1% in Audubon Park in 2000, among the lowest in Camden County. In Gloucester County, vacancy rates were higher in the City of Woodbury and the Borough of Westville than in the County overall, comparable to the County rate in National Park, and significantly lower than the County's overall rate in Wenonah and Woodbury Heights.

**Figure D** illustrates 1990 and 2000 vacancy rates in the study area municipalities and in the counties. Although the percentage varies, the vacancy rate increased in every municipality in the study area except Brooklawn (where it stayed about the same) and Wenonah (where it declined slightly).

### Housing Tenure

Many first generation suburbs experience a decline in the percentage of residents who own their homes, often replaced by renters. **Tables 6(a)** and **6(b)** provide homeownership rates in the study areas and the counties. In both Camden and Gloucester counties, the overall number of housing units in the study area remained stable and the number of owner-occupied housing units fell by only 2% between 1990 and 2000, resulting in little if any change in home ownership rates. The only study area municipality with a significant change in homeownership rate was Brooklawn, which saw its 1990 rate of 77% decline to only 62% in 2000. This decline, however, may be the result of an error in counting rather than a true decrease in homeownership, give the unexplained increase in total units during the decade.

In Camden County, the study area municipalities recorded similar rates of homeownership as the County as a whole in both 1990 and 2000. The only municipality which deviated significantly was Audubon Park, with a homeownership rate of only 24% (the lowest in the County). In Gloucester County, homeownership rates varied more significantly than in the Camden study area. Both Westville and Woodbury had rates which were lower than the County as a whole in both 1990 and 2000, while National Park, Woodbury Heights, and Wenonah had higher percentages of homeowners than the rest of the County.



**Source:** United States Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 decennial census.

**Table 6 (a): Owner Occupancy, 1990 to 2000: Camden County Study Area**

Municipality	Owner-Occupied Housing Units				Ownership Rates	
	1990	2000	Change	As %	1990	2000
Audubon	2,644	2,713	69	3%	73%	74%
Audubon Park	119	118	-1	-1%	23%	24%
Brooklawn	540	595	55	10%	77%	62%
Gloucester City	3,384	3,093	-291	-9%	74%	73%
Mount Ephraim	1,447	1,455	8	1%	81%	80%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>8,134</b>	<b>7,974</b>	<b>-160</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>124,704</b>	<b>130,043</b>	<b>5,339</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>70%</b>

**Table 6(b): Owner Occupancy, 1990 to 2000: Gloucester County Study Area**

Municipality	Owner-Occupied Housing Units				Ownership Rates	
	1990	2000	Change	As %	1990	2000
National Park	963	941	-22	-2%	87%	85%
Wenonah	728	750	22	3%	88%	89%
Westville	1,166	1,167	1	0%	64%	64%
Woodbury City	2,514	2,432	-82	-3%	61%	60%
Woodbury Heights	1,015	951	-64	-6%	92%	93%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>6,386</b>	<b>6,241</b>	<b>-145</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>61,788</b>	<b>72,516</b>	<b>10,728</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>80%</b>

**Source:** United States Census Bureau, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

The Borough of Woodbury Heights in particular (at 93%) has a very high percentage of homeowners, atypical of classic “first generation suburbs”.

### Age of the Housing Stock

The housing stock in the study area is some of the oldest housing in Camden and Gloucester Counties, as detailed in **Tables 7(a)** and **7(b)**. Nearly one-half of the housing in the Camden County study area and more than one-third of the housing in the Gloucester County study area was constructed prior to 1940, while in the counties as a whole, this percentage was considerably lower (19% and 14%, respectively). This concentration of older housing is especially prominent in Audubon and Gloucester City, where over one-half of the current housing stock was built prior to 1940, as well as Brooklawn and Wenonah. The housing stock in Audubon Park was almost entirely built before 1960, with most of this construction occurring during the 1940s. Even Woodbury Heights, relatively “young” compared to other study area communities, saw 45% of its housing stock constructed prior to 1960 and an additional 44% built before 1980.

Recently constructed housing is rare in the study area, with only 5% of the total housing in the Camden County study area and 8% in the Gloucester County study area built since 1980. Only Wenonah and Woodbury City saw 10% or more of their housing units constructed after 1980.

**Table 7(a): Age of the Housing Stock: Camden County Study Area**

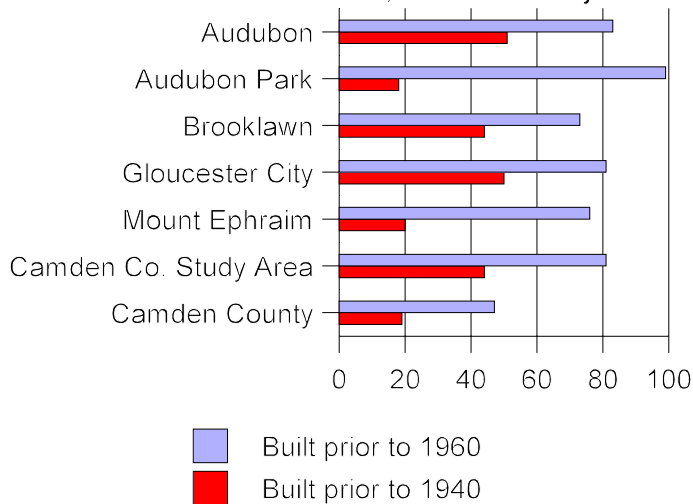
Municipality	Year Constructed, as % of Total			
	Since 1980	1960-1979	1940-1959	1939 or earlier
Audubon	6%	11%	32%	51%
Audubon Park	0%	1%	81%	18%
Brooklawn	2%	25%	29%	44%
Gloucester City	6%	12%	31%	50%
Mount Ephraim	5%	19%	56%	20%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>19%</b>

**Table 7(b): Age of the Housing Stock: Gloucester County Study Area**

Municipality	Year Constructed, as % of Total			
	Since 1980	1960-1979	1940-1959	1939 or earlier
National Park	9%	16%	45%	30%
Wenonah	11%	17%	27%	45%
Westville	4%	22%	39%	35%
Woodbury City	10%	15%	39%	36%
Woodbury Heights	7%	48%	27%	18%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>14%</b>

Source: United States Census Bureau, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Figure E: Percent of the Housing Stock Built Prior to 1960 and 1940, Camden County



Source: United States Census Bureau.

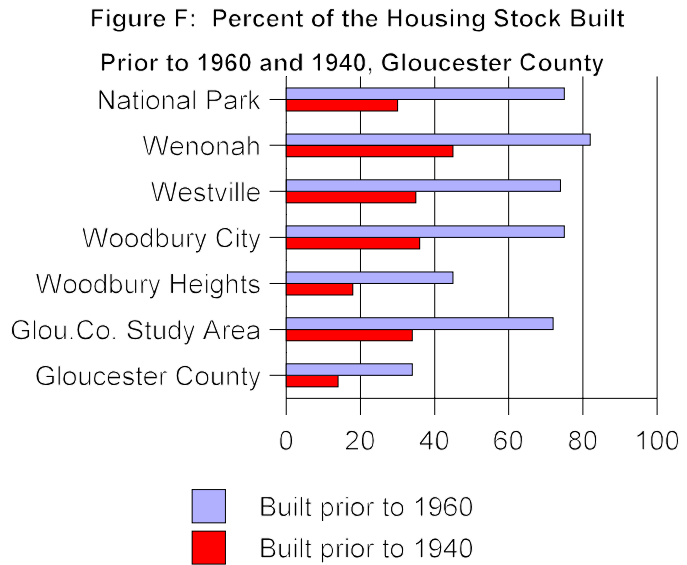
Figure E and Figure F illustrate the percent of the housing stock built prior to 1940 and 1960 in the Camden and Gloucester study areas. In the counties overall, a much higher percentage of the housing stock was built after 1960.

Slightly over one-half of the units in Camden County were constructed after 1960, compared to only 5% of the units in the County's five study area municipalities. The Borough of Audubon Park, for example, was almost completely built out by 1960, having realized 81% of its housing construction during the two previous decades alone. In contrast, 44% of

the Camden County study area's housing stock was constructed prior to 1940, compared to only 19% of the County's overall stock.



In Gloucester County overall, almost two-thirds of the housing units were built after 1960. Of the five study area municipalities, only Woodbury Heights comes even close to that percentage, with 55% of its stock constructed since that year. Over one-third of the housing stock in Gloucester County has been constructed since 1980, compared to only 8% of the units in the study area.



Source: United States Census Bureau

### New Residential Construction

Between 1990 and 1999, residential construction in the study area was very slow, as shown in **Tables 8(a)** and **8(b)**. **Map 6** illustrates the

number of residential building permits issued during the 1990s in Camden and Gloucester counties, by municipality. Over this decade, the Camden County municipalities issued a total of only 89 residential building permits, compared to nearly 11,000 issued in Camden County as a whole. The Gloucester County study area municipalities together issued only 145 building permits, compared to more than 12,000 issued in the County as a whole.

In Camden County, Audubon Park issued no building permits during the 1990s, and Brooklawn issued only six. In Gloucester County, Woodbury Heights issued the fewest, with only 13 permits issued during the decade. Mount Ephraim issued the highest number of building permits of the study area municipalities during the 1990s (42), followed closely by Woodbury City (with 39).

Similar trends in construction activity continued in the beginning of the current decade. The only study area municipality which has realized any significant residential construction activity since 2000 is Woodbury City, which saw a spike in permit activity in 2001 (with 94 issued). This increase was related to the construction of several senior citizen units as the first phase of the Woodbury Mews Senior Campus, an adaptive re-use project.

### Housing Values and Rents

Median housing values and rents in the study area vary widely, according to data from the United States Census Bureau. In Audubon Park, a municipality largely dominated by rental units, the median value of an owner-occupied unit was less than \$50,000, and values in Gloucester City and Brooklawn were less than \$80,000, lower than any other Camden County municipalities other than Camden City and Woodlynne Borough. According to a 2001 DVRPC report (*Homeownership: A Dream Still Vanishing*), Gloucester City was among the 25 most affordable municipalities in the region in 1998.



**Table 8(a): Building Permits Issued, 1990 to 1999: Camden County Study Area**

Municipality	Building Permits Issued						
	1990-91	1992-93	1994-95	1996-97	1998-99	1990-99	2000-01
Audubon	9	1	2	2	2	16	1
Audubon Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brooklawn	3	2	0	1	0	6	1
Gloucester City	0	7	7	6	5	25	3
Mount Ephraim	11	13	10	3	5	42	7
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>2,081</b>	<b>2,537</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>2,550</b>	<b>1,741</b>	<b>10,828</b>	<b>1,553</b>

**Table 8(b): Building Permits Issued, 1990 to 1999: Gloucester County Study Area**

Municipality	Building Permits Issued						
	1990-91	1992-93	1994-95	1996-97	1998-99	1990-99	2000-01
National Park	8	7	7	6	6	34	2
Wenonah	7	14	4	7	4	36	1
Westville	2	7	5	7	2	23	2
Woodbury City	10	6	7	12	4	39	94
Woodbury Heights	2	3	1	3	4	13	7
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>2,287</b>	<b>2,483</b>	<b>2,117</b>	<b>2,232</b>	<b>2,893</b>	<b>12,012</b>	<b>2,972</b>

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Median housing values and median gross rents are illustrated in **Table 9**. Of the five Camden County municipalities, Audubon had the highest median value, but at just over \$107,000, this figure is about average for the County and is fairly low from a regional perspective.

In Gloucester County, Westville, National Park, and Woodbury all had median housing values of less than \$100,000 in 1999, placing them among the County's most affordable communities; in fact, of the County's twenty-four municipalities, Westville and National Park placed 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, respectively, in housing values. In contrast, the median housing value in Wenonah was over \$160,000, placing it 4<sup>th</sup> in the County (behind only rapidly growing townships in the southwestern part of the County). With a median value of almost \$125,000, Woodbury Heights was also one of the County's more expensive communities in which to purchase a home.

Median gross rents (which include utility costs paid by the tenant) follow a similar pattern. Audubon Park, largely dominated by rental units and home to many low and moderate income families, had the lowest median rent of any of the ten municipalities, followed by the City of Woodbury. Not surprisingly, the boroughs with the lowest percentages of rental units (Wenonah, Woodbury Heights, and National Park) also had the highest median rents.

**Table 9: Median Housing Values and Median Gross Rent, 2000**

Municipality	Median housing value, 2000	Median Rent, 2000	Municipality	Median housing value, 2000	Median gross rent, 2000
Audubon	\$107,200	\$598	National Park	\$92,800	\$647
Audubon Park	\$47,400	\$474	Wenonah	\$161,600	\$665
Brooklawn	\$79,300	\$622	Westville	\$91,500	\$569
Gloucester City	\$79,500	\$625	Woodbury City	\$97,100	\$523
Mount Ephraim	\$94,000	\$542	Woodbury Heights	\$124,300	\$742
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>\$111,200</b>	<b>\$635</b>	<b>Gloucester Co.</b>	<b>\$120,100</b>	<b>\$645</b>

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing. “Median housing value” applies to owner-occupied units; “median rent” refers to the gross rent paid by tenants of renter-occupied units.

### **C. Employment Characteristics**

The number of employees in 2000 varies significantly within the study area municipalities, from a low of 327 in the Borough of National Park to a high of over 10,000 in Woodbury. Woodbury City contains by far the highest concentration of employment, primarily because of its function as the government seat of Gloucester County. Other major employers in Woodbury include Underwood Memorial Hospital and the National Guard. In the Camden County study area, there are significantly fewer large employers. The United States Post Office, one of the largest employers in Camden County, has a major distribution center just outside of the study area in Bellmawr, located south of Mount Ephraim.

Employment in the study area is illustrated in **Tables 10(a)** and **10(b)**, and forecasted employment change is illustrated in **Map 7**. In the Camden County municipalities, employment fell by 7% during the 1990s, and is projected to continue to decline by an additional 9% between 2000 and 2025. Employment in the Gloucester County study area decreased by 4% during the 1990s, and is forecasted to decline by a similar percentage between 2000 and 2025. During the same period, both Camden and Gloucester counties are projected to make considerable employment gains, with a forecasted increase of 15% in Camden County and 23% in Gloucester County.

Employment change varies considerably between the study area municipalities. Three of the ten municipalities gained jobs during the 1990s, with Woodbury gaining almost 500 jobs. In contrast, Audubon, Mount Ephraim, Westville, and Woodbury Heights lost significant employment during this decade. Between 2000 and 2025, only Brooklawn and Wenonah are projected to gain jobs, and Gloucester City, Westville, and Woodbury Heights are expected to experience significant losses.

In the Camden County municipalities, the study area has a lower employment-per-population ratio than Camden County as a whole. While the County averaged one job per 2.2 residents in 2000, the study area averaged only 1 job per 3.7 residents. By 2025, the study area’s ratio is predicted to improve slightly to 1 job per 3.3 residents, but remain well below Camden County averages. None of the Camden County municipalities function as major employment centers for the County or region.



**Table 10(a): Employment Change, 1990 to 2025: Camden County Study Area**

Municipality	Employment			Change, 1990-2000		Change, 2000-2025	
	1990	2000	2025	Absolute	As %	Absolute	As %
Audubon	2,317	2,009	1,829	-308	-13%	-180	-9%
Audubon Park	683	607	567	-76	-11%	-40	-7%
Brooklawn	950	1,052	1,112	102	11%	60	6%
Gloucester City	2,942	2,959	2,479	17	1%	-480	-16%
Mount Ephraim	1,332	1,054	994	-278	-21%	-60	-6%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>8,224</b>	<b>7,681</b>	<b>6,981</b>	<b>-543</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>-700</b>	<b>-9%</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>227,933</b>	<b>216,931</b>	<b>248,801</b>	<b>11,002</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>31,870</b>	<b>15%</b>

**Table 10(b): Employment Change, 1990 to 2025: Gloucester County Study Area**

Municipality	Employment			Change, 1990-2000		Change, 2000-2025	
	1990	2000	2025	Absolute	As %	Absolute	As %
National Park	374	327	327	-47	-13%	0	0%
Wenonah	751	675	1,225	-76	-10%	550	81%
Westville	2,906	2,547	2,047	-359	-12%	-500	-20%
Woodbury City	10,103	10,594	10,444	491	5%	-150	-1%
Woodbury Heights	2,115	1,479	1,179	-636	-30%	-300	-20%
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>16,249</b>	<b>15,622</b>	<b>15,222</b>	<b>-627</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-400</b>	<b>-3%</b>
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>86,079</b>	<b>99,467</b>	<b>122,417</b>	<b>13,388</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>22,950</b>	<b>23%</b>

**Source:** United States Census Bureau (1990), Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (2000 estimates (based on available 2000 Census data) and revised 2025 forecasts, as of September 1, 2003).

Despite the lack of employment growth in the Gloucester County study area, these municipalities are forecast to remain an important County employment center. With the exception of National Park, each of the study area municipalities has a higher ratio of employment to population than the County as a whole. While the County averaged one job per 3.9 residents in 2000, the study area contained one job per 1.5 residents. These ratios are expected to remain unchanged to 2025. The most important municipality, from an employment perspective, is the City of Woodbury, the County's government seat and home to Underwood Memorial Hospital. Woodbury had more jobs than residents in 2000 and contained more than 10% of the County's total employment.

#### ***D. Land Use and Transportation***

##### **Land Use Classifications, 1995**

**Tables 11(a) and 11(b)** describe land use in the ten study area communities and compare it to land use in Camden and Gloucester County overall. The communities are all relatively small, varying in size from 95 acres (less than a sixth of a square mile) in Audubon Park to over 1,400 acres (2.85 square miles) in Gloucester City. Given their histories as some of the region's first suburban "bedroom communities", many first generation suburbs are dominated by residential land uses. The municipalities in the Camden and Gloucester

study areas are no exception, with over 40% of the total land area in residential use. The proportion of residential land ranges from 70% in Audubon Park to 36% and 37% in Gloucester City and Brooklawn, respectively.

Manufacturing and commercial uses, which often bring high tax revenues, occupy 25% of the land area in Gloucester City, 24% in Brooklawn and 21% in Westville, but are nearly non-existent in Wenonah and Audubon Park. Other developed uses, such as transportation, utilities, or community services, are distributed fairly evenly among the municipalities. Overall, the study area is significantly more developed than either Camden or Gloucester County as a whole. Only 11% of the Camden County study area and 20% of the Gloucester County study area is undeveloped (that is, classified as agricultural, wooded, or vacant), and much of this land may have environmental constraints (such as flood plains or wetlands) that make it inappropriate for development. This in part explains the low number of residential development or other construction in the study area, especially when compared to the much higher proportion of undeveloped land in the County as a whole.

**Figure G** compares the percentage of vacant land and land in residential, commercial/manufacturing, or other developed uses in the combined Camden and Gloucester County study areas to the same percentages in Camden and Gloucester County overall. This figure reinforces the fact that the study area communities have significantly less land available for development than does either Camden or Gloucester County overall. Over 70% of the land in Gloucester and Camden counties combined was undeveloped as of 1995, compared to less than 16% in the combined study area.

## **Transportation Systems**

The major roads and transit systems that comprise the area's transportation network are illustrated on Map 1. Transportation has played an important role in the founding and development of these communities. The area's road network and public transit access will remain important assets for the future prosperity and quality of life of these municipalities.

Historically, all of the study area municipalities developed well before the automobile became the nation's dominant form of transportation. Passenger rail service originally linked many of the communities to the City of Philadelphia. Today, all of the municipalities are served by bus routes, although the level of service varies. The City of Woodbury, for example, acts as a hub for county bus service, with several different bus routes servicing the City that provide opportunities to transfer and access numerous regional locations, including express bus service to Philadelphia.

Public transit to and from the study area is currently limited to bus, although many residents who work in Philadelphia or Camden City take advantage of the nearby PATCO High Speed rail line. The rail line that parallels Route 45 through the Gloucester County study area, which currently carries only freight but originally provided passenger service, may represent an opportunity for the future expansion of rail transit in the area. In the

**Table 11(a): Land Use, 1995: Camden County Study Area**

Municipality	Land Use as % of Total, 1995				Total Land Area in Acres
	Residential	Manufacturing and Commercial	Other Developed	Undeveloped	
Audubon	57%	7%	31%	5%	947
Audubon Park	70%	5%	18%	7%	95
Brooklawn	37%	24%	22%	17%	297
Gloucester City	36%	25%	26%	13%	1,453
Mount Ephraim	50%	9%	26%	15%	560
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>3,353</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>139,899</b>

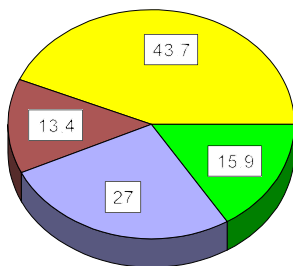
**Table 11(b): Land Use, 1995: Gloucester County Study Area**

Municipality	Land Use as % of Total, 1995				Total Land Area in Acres
	Residential	Manufacturing and Commercial	Other Developed	Undeveloped	
National Park	43%	7%	21%	28%	955
Wenonah	45%	2%	22%	32%	636
Westville	39%	21%	29%	12%	898
Woodbury City	43%	13%	31%	14%	1,342
Woodbury Heights	43%	9%	28%	20%	770
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>4,602</b>
<b>Gloucester County</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>215,653</b>

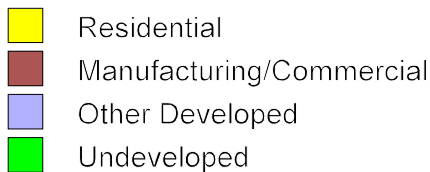
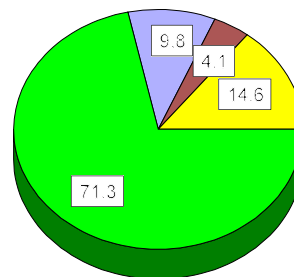
Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

**Figure G: Land Use, 1995**

Combined Land Area  
Camden and Gloucester County Study Areas



Total Land Area  
Camden and Gloucester Counties



Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, June, 2003.



mid-1990's, New Jersey Transit (NJT) considered reviving passenger service in the form of a light rail route along this line. At the time, NJT instead chose to develop light rail service through Burlington County, between Camden and Trenton. This light rail service, scheduled to begin operation in late 2003, is expected to assist in the revitalization of first generation communities such as Beverly, Riverside, and Roebling.

A number of major highways provide access to and from the study area, linking the municipalities to important employment and shopping destinations. These major highways include Interstate 295, the New Jersey Turnpike, Route 130, Route 55 and Route 30. Route 45 serves as the commercial center for many of the Gloucester County municipalities. In Gloucester City and nearby Camden County municipalities, Interstate 76 provides convenient access to Philadelphia, and all of the study area municipalities are within convenient proximity to several major bridge crossings into the City.

### ***E. Municipal Tax Base and Service Provision***

#### **Municipal Tax Base**

Many first generation suburbs have low tax bases per household, making it difficult to fund needed local services, including education. As **Tables 12(a)** and **12(b)** show, tax valuation per household is very low in many municipalities in the study area. Audubon Park has by far the lowest valuation per household in Camden County, and Brooklawn and Gloucester City are also among the lowest. In the Gloucester County study area, National Park and Westville have the lowest two valuations per household in the County, and Woodbury City is also very low.

In Camden County, none of the five study area municipalities met the County's average tax valuation per household, and in Gloucester County only Wenonah and Woodbury Heights exceeded the County tax base average. Many of the problems discussed earlier in this chapter contribute to these low tax bases. The lack of new development and low housing values are primarily responsible for tax base problems. The municipal tax base per household is illustrated on **Map 8**.

#### **Local Property Tax Rates**

Tables 12(a) and 12(b) also provide information on property tax rates per household, as reported in a 2002 series in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Tax rates in many older communities hampered by low tax bases and a lack of other sources of revenue are often high relative to more suburban areas. The highest property tax rate in either study area was in Audubon Park, with a 5.09% effective tax rate. This was the highest property tax rate in the entire region surveyed by the *Inquirer*, which includes eight counties (including Philadelphia). In the Gloucester County municipalities, the highest property tax rate was in Woodbury City, with a 3.5% rate (the highest rate in Gloucester County). The lowest tax rates in the study area, in Woodbury Heights and Gloucester City, were still high from a regional perspective. Local property tax rates are illustrated on **Map 9**.

**Table 12(a): Municipal Tax Base and Property Tax Rates: Camden County**

Municipality	Aggregate Assessed Valuation, 2001	Households, 2000	Valuation per Household	Property tax rate, 2001	Annual taxes on a \$100,000 home
Audubon	\$392,620,000	3,673	\$106,900	3.28%	\$3,180
Audubon Park	\$9,270,000	496	\$18,700	5.09%	\$5,090
Brooklawn	\$76,650,000	961	\$79,800	3.38%	\$3,379
Gloucester City	\$351,610,000	4,213	\$83,500	2.95%	\$2,950
Mount Ephraim	\$166,690,000	1,818	\$91,700	3.75%	\$3,750
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>\$961,770,000</b>	<b>11,161</b>	<b>\$89,300</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Camden County</b>	<b>\$21,545,560,000</b>	<b>185,744</b>	<b>\$116,000</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>

**Table 12(b): Municipal Tax Base and Property Tax Rates: Gloucester County**

Municipality	Aggregate Assessed Valuation, 2001	Households, 2000	Valuation per Household	Property tax rate, 2001	Annual taxes on a \$100,000 home
National Park	\$100,200,000	1,111	\$90,200	3.33%	\$3,330
Wenonah	\$143,220,000	844	\$169,700	2.97%	\$2,970
Westville	\$172,490,000	1,812	\$95,200	3.01%	\$3,010
Woodbury City	\$392,920,000	4,051	\$97,000	3.50%	\$3,500
Woodbury Heights	\$174,940,000	1,027	\$170,300	2.92%	\$2,920
<b>Study Area</b>	<b>\$983,780,000</b>	<b>8,845</b>	<b>\$111,200</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Gloucester Co.</b>	<b>\$13,286,710,000</b>	<b>90,717</b>	<b>\$146,500</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>

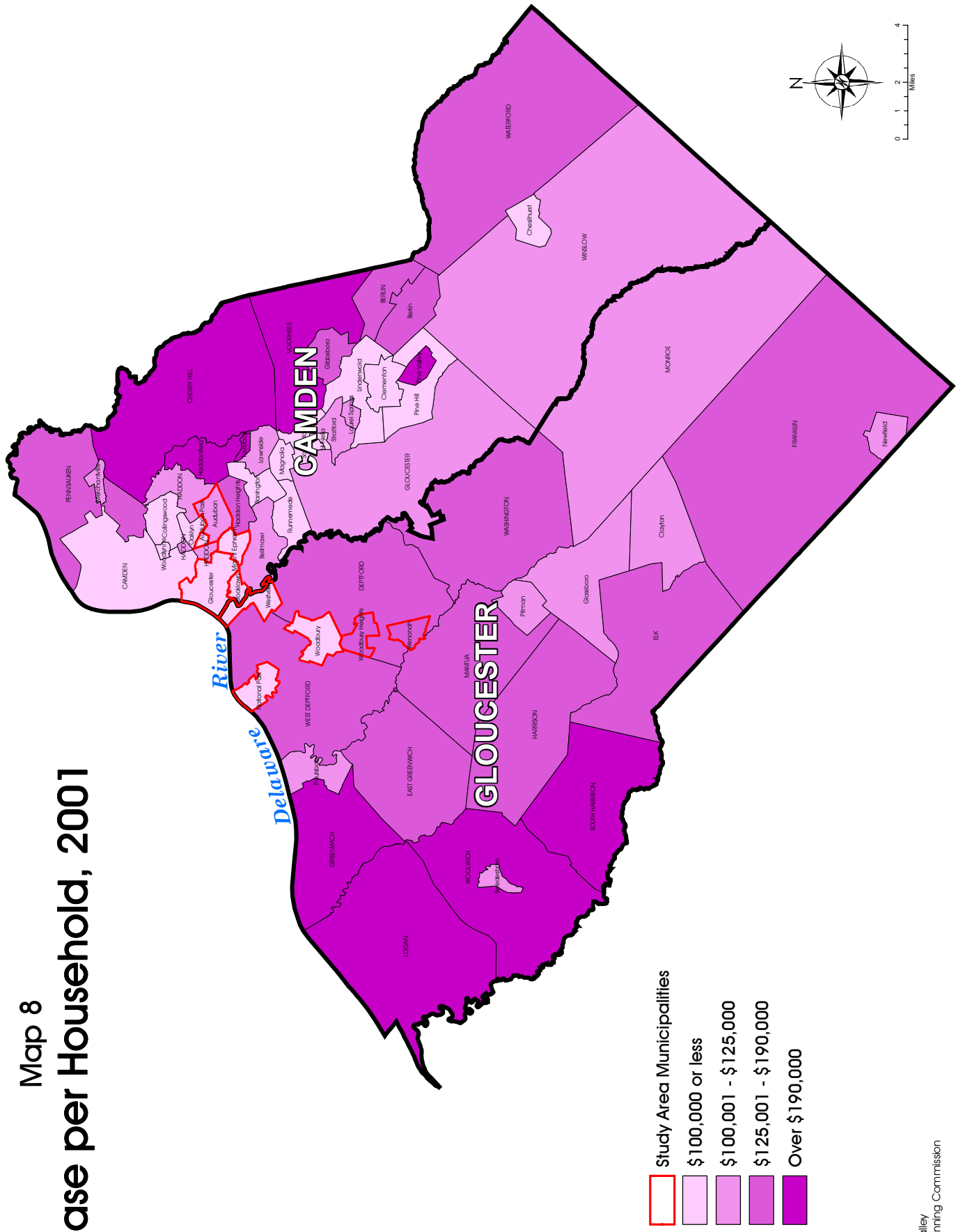
**Sources:** Philadelphia Inquirer, utilizing information from the New Jersey Department of Treasury; United States Census Bureau; Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Many first generation suburbs are faced with declining tax bases and increasing demand for services. In this situation, raising taxes is often the only option to avoid fiscal crisis. Unfortunately, high property taxes often exacerbate the decline that first generation suburbs are already experiencing. By making it more expensive to live in first generation suburbs than in comparable housing in newer suburbs, high property taxes effectively discourage new investment and encourage a continued loss of population and employment.

## Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that most of the ten study area municipalities display characteristics common to many of the region's first generation suburbs, including population loss, an aging housing stock, a stagnant or declining tax base, and a relatively low median household income and housing sales price. When compared with other municipalities in Camden and Gloucester County and throughout the Delaware Valley region, these communities are fairly similar to one another, as evidenced by the characterization of eight of the ten communities as "older cities and boroughs" under DVRPC's replication of Myron Orfield's composite "z-score" approach, and as "distressed" or "at-risk" communities under Orfield's New Jersey Metropatterns methodology.

# Map 8 Tax Base per Household, 2001





The ten communities, however, are also relatively diverse. While most of the study area municipalities lost population between 1990 and 2000, for example, the Borough of Brooklawn saw a significant increase in population. Employment change likewise varies, from an increase of 46% in Wenonah ( a gain of almost 350 employees) to a decrease of 13% in Woodbury Heights. The median income of the study area communities varies widely, from a low of \$34,600 in Audubon Park to a high of over double that amount (\$71,600) in Wenonah.

Homeownership rates range from a high of over 90% in Woodbury Heights to a low of less than 25% in Audubon Park, and the median value of owner-occupied units varies from a low of \$47,400 in renter-dominated Audubon Park to a high of \$161,600 in historical Wenonah. Given these differences, Wenonah and Woodbury Heights are clearly not characteristic of the typical “first generation suburb”, having escaped many of the challenges facing older communities. They do, however, share a school district with three other communities which are more typical of the classic older suburb. Revitalization of the study area as a whole and an improved quality of life for all of the study area’s residents will depend in large part on the ability of municipal officials to work together (across both municipal and county boundaries) to take advantage of each community’s strengths as they work to overcome the area’s common challenges.



## **Chapter 3: Opportunities, Challenges and Ongoing Revitalization Activities**

Chapter 2 documents existing conditions in the study area municipalities, describing population, housing, employment, land use, transportation and municipal tax base, and has compared these to county averages. Using this analysis as its base, this chapter considers existing opportunities for community revitalization and reinvestment and identifies challenges facing the study area. It also describes ongoing activities already underway in some of the communities as they work to resolve these challenges.

### **Opportunities**

Despite serious challenges facing first generation suburbs, these communities have numerous strengths that sometimes go unrecognized. Characteristics attributable to their historical development patterns present challenges to revitalization, including limited undeveloped land, a high concentration of residential uses, and an older housing stock than newer suburban communities. Many of these same features, however, can also be seen as assets to these communities.

Older communities, including those in the study areas, generally have denser development patterns than newer subdivisions, with grid street patterns, sidewalks and on-street parking. This creates a more attractive atmosphere for walking or bicycling, which can lead to a greater **sense of community** than is found in many more recent “cookie-cutter” suburban developments. The age of the housing stock in many of these communities can also create a distinctive **historic character**, if properly maintained. Many of the homes in these historic first generation suburbs are constructed better than newer, more expensive housing.

As the success of recent New Urbanist developments has shown, an historic, “small town” character is desirable to many people, and these features of first generation suburbs can be marketed to successfully attract new residents. The historic homes and small town atmosphere in Wenonah, for example, has enabled the Borough to attract and retain middle and upper income residents. Additionally, historic buildings such as the Rialto Theater in the City of Woodbury, built in 1880 and redeveloped in 1919 as the region’s first air-conditioned movie house, can also be attractive to prospective developers.



**Figure H. The Woodbury Courthouse**

Another asset in the Camden and Gloucester study areas is the **high percentage of homeowners** in most of the communities. Homeowners are often perceived, accurately or not, to have a higher stake in the vitality of the neighborhood than renters. Homeowners also tend to invest more in improving or maintaining their homes than do either renters or absentee landlords, meaning that homeownership rates can help to gauge future investment in an area. Many first generation suburbs have declining homeownership rates, and face challenges associated with a transient rental population base. In the study area, contrary to expectations, homeowners outnumbered renters by a two-to-one ratio, and the percentage of homeowners in the population was constant between 1990 and 2000. Homeownership rates were especially high in Mount Ephraim, National Park, Wenonah, and Woodbury Heights, exceeding 80% in each of these communities. The only community where renters out-number owners is Audubon Park.

Yet another asset of first generation suburbs is their **transportation network**, including **highway, freight rail and port access** as well as **access to public transit**. Many first generation communities were founded along transit lines (especially rail and trolley lines), before the automobile came to dominate transportation in the United States. This access to transit remains valuable. In the Camden and Gloucester County study areas, bus routes connect the municipalities directly to Philadelphia, and a rail line which passes through many of the towns provides an opportunity for the resumption of passenger train service in the future. As congestion on highways increases, and as the promotion of public transportation becomes a higher priority for federal and state governments, this access to transit will become a significant benefit to first generation communities.

In addition to transit, the study area is well-served by the region's highway network, with Route 130, Interstate 295, and the New Jersey Turnpike all within close proximity. These



**Figure I. View from Westville to Philadelphia illustrates the Borough's proximity to the City and access to the waterfront**

major highways provide access to nearby markets, employment and retail opportunities, and leisure destinations (such as Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, D.C., Atlantic City, the Pocono resort areas, and the New Jersey and Delaware beaches). The study areas' **proximity to Philadelphia** and access to other major cities is a significant advantage.

First generation suburbs also benefit from their existing **physical infrastructure**, with many of these communities having excess sewer, water, and stormwater capacity. If



these systems are properly maintained, this excess capacity can facilitate redevelopment in these older communities.

Other opportunities in the Camden and Gloucester study area are more location-specific, not shared by all first generation suburbs (or even all of the study area communities). Woodbury's status as the **government seat** of Gloucester County, for example, has stabilized the City's employment base, and has encouraged a concentration of educated and high-income



**Figure J. Neighborhood Park along Woodbury Creek**

residents employed by or associated with the County government. Larger, well-constructed and **attractive homes** in some older communities (particularly Wenonah and Woodbury Heights) have retained their value and helped these towns to continue to attract and retain higher-income residents.

**Waterfront locations** in Gloucester City, National Park and Westville have been an important part of their histories, can enhance the quality of life in the boroughs, and should serve to attract new residents and potential developers. In addition to the historical importance of these waterways to industries in the area, parks and open spaces along the Delaware River, Big Timber Creek, Hessian Creek, and Woodbury Creek provide quality **recreational resources** for the residents of the study area and the surrounding region. Red Bank Battlefield, for example, is a County-owned passive historical park located along the River in National Park which is currently visited by thousands of people annually. Gloucester City has recently expanded and improved Proprietor's Park, which includes a \$4.3 million marina, a river walkway and a fishing pier. Many of these active and passive recreational resources have the potential to be expanded and enhanced.

While first-generation communities typically have little if any land available for development, some of these communities are home to several sites that are prime candidates for redevelopment. The City of Woodbury, for example, has several **available vacant sites**, and officials in Gloucester City have inventoried numerous older industrial sites (including prime sites along the Delaware Riverfront) which, once remediated, provide **redevelopment opportunities**. Other redevelopment opportunities are scattered throughout the other study area municipalities as well. The nearly vacant Caldor Shopping Center, for example, located on Route 45 in Woodbury Heights, presents a unique opportunity for redevelopment. Whether the existing "big box" retail center is re-used as is or is demolished to make room for new development, this site offers the promise of expanding the borough's tax base.

## Challenges

Officials in first generation suburbs seeking to revitalize and redevelop their communities, however, face several challenges. The following discussion of challenges facing first generation suburbs is divided into three sections. The first of these identifies issues that stem directly from the study area's historical development patterns and are therefore shared by all of the study area's municipalities. The second set of challenges are typically found in most first generation suburbs, but are not shared equally by all of the communities in the Gloucester and Camden County study areas. Finally, a set of challenges stemming from current and past federal and state policies, which frequently fail to address the problems faced by first generation suburbs, are discussed.

### ***Challenges Related to Historical Development Patterns***

Several major challenges facing first generation suburbs are rooted in the historical development patterns of these communities. Many first generation suburbs, including those in the Camden and Gloucester County study area, experienced very high growth during the 1940s and 1950s, during the suburban population boom that followed the end of World War II. Most of the municipalities in the study area had their populations peak around 1960 or 1970, and were almost fully developed by this point. Many of them served (and continue to serve) primarily as "bedroom communities" for residents who commuted to nearby cities and major employment centers. The exception is Woodbury, which now contains more than 10% of Gloucester County's total employment.

These historical development patterns present major problems to the future of these communities. Because of their early development and their small size, there is ***limited undeveloped land*** in the study area municipalities. Only 11% of total land in the Camden



**Figure K. Downtown Woodbury**

County study area, and 20% in the Gloucester County study area, was undeveloped (classified as agricultural, wooded, or vacant) in 1995. These figures may even exaggerate the amount of developable land available, since much of this land cannot be developed due to environmental constraints such as flood plains, steep slopes, or poor soils. Available, developable land is often located on scattered small lots, making it difficult for potential developers to assemble a parcel that is big enough for any significant development.

Another result of the development patterns of first generation suburbs is a **high concentration of residential uses**. Nearly one-half of the total land in the study area municipalities was occupied by residences in 1995, a much higher percentage than in Camden or Gloucester County. Residential uses generate a significant demand for local services, and in many cases do not generate enough in tax revenue to meet the cost of these services. The predominance of residential uses also limits the potential for “positive” tax ratables, such as commercial and industrial uses, and can lead to conflicts in areas where the limited number of non-residential uses exist immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods.



Figure L. Traffic Congestion at the Brooklawn Circle

Many first generation suburbs are also characterized by an **older housing stock**. The study area municipalities have a considerably older housing stock than their counties as a whole. This suggests that housing rehabilitation or restoration may be necessary in some areas, and that other supporting infrastructure, like water and sewer systems, may also be aging and in need of repair. Also, as housing tastes continue to change, this concentration of older homes may limit the ability of the first generation suburbs to compete with more newly-developed suburban areas for prospective residents.

Another result of the historical development patterns of first generation suburbs is **aging infrastructure**. Given that these communities saw most of their development occur 40 to 50 years ago, infrastructure such as roads, water systems, and sewage facilities may be deteriorating and in need of maintenance or replacement. The rehabilitation of older facilities that have not been regularly maintained can be as expensive as the construction of new facilities in undeveloped areas, and is a significant challenge facing first generation suburbs. As farther out suburbs continue to increase in population, **traffic congestion** (including truck traffic) has also become a problem in many first generation communities, given their older roadway designs and the fact that many are situated between these growing suburban areas and primary destinations such as Philadelphia. With today's dominance of the automobile as the primary means of transportation, **limited parking** in older downtown areas has also hindered economic development efforts.

One challenge caused directly by the lack of developable land in the study area is **limited new residential construction**. During the 1990s, about 230 building permits were issued in all of the study area municipalities combined, only 1% of the total building permits issued

in Camden and Gloucester counties. This lack of new development limits the opportunity for population growth and precludes the possibility of municipalities gaining tax revenue from new development. The lack of new residences may limit the choices for prospective purchasers, since older housing units may or may not have the amenities that are most attractive in today's market.

Another issue that is shared by all of the study area municipalities is **population decline**. Nearly all of the study area municipalities lost population between 1990 and 2000, caused by the lack of residential development, the age and quality of the housing stock, and other factors (such as property taxes and proximity to employment). This population decline is caused by two main factors: shrinking household size and out-migration. In developed communities, some degree of population loss due to decreasing household size may be unavoidable. In five of the ten study area municipalities, housing units increased even as population fell. It may be very difficult for first generation suburbs to avoid this effect, as household sizes have been consistently decreasing throughout the United States for decades. A more critical type of population decline, which can quickly decimate communities and must be avoided, is out-migration.

### ***Challenges Shared by Some but not all Study Area Municipalities***

In many aspects, such as historical development, land use patterns, housing age, and general population decline, the municipalities in the study area are very similar. They differ, however, in several other very important characteristics. **Tables 11(a) and 11(b)** summarize some of the characteristics described in Chapter 2 of this report. Figures highlighted in **red** do not conform to general conclusions about first generation suburbs, and are not shared by all of the study areas' communities. As these tables illustrate, there are major differences between municipalities, with some having been able to avoid the problems that are characteristic to many first generation suburbs.

Two characteristics common to many first generation suburbs are **lower than average educational levels and low median incomes**. Often times, better educated and higher-income residents of first generation suburbs, who once lived in these communities and commuted to jobs in the central city, are among the first to leave for more distant suburbs. Other first generation suburbs are working-class from their founding, and have never had a large concentration of wealthy residents.

A recent report by the Brookings Institute, entitled *Valuing America's First Suburbs*, concludes that first generation suburbs are often home to low and moderate income working families who do not qualify for welfare or other government assistance. The wages of families, whose incomes are above the poverty line but lower than the nation's median, "have not kept pace with the rising costs of housing, child care, transportation and other necessities."

A glance at median incomes in the study areas shows that some, but not all, of the study area municipalities follow this national trend, and that there is great variation in median

**Table 11(a) . Selected Characteristics: Camden County Study Area**

Municipality	College Degree* 1999	Median Income 1999	Vacancy Rate 2000	Home-owners, 2000	Valuation per HH 2001	Property Tax 2001
Audubon	19%	\$49,250	3.7%	74%	\$106,900	3.18%
Audubon Park	4%	\$34,643	0.6%	24%	\$18,700	5.09%
Brooklawn	9%	\$39,600	6.2%	62%	\$79,800	3.38%
Gloucester City	11%	\$36,855	8.5%	73%	\$83,500	2.95%
Mount Ephraim	18%	\$44,824	3.3%	80%	\$91,700	3.75%

**Table 11(b) . Selected Characteristics: Gloucester County Study Area**

Municipality	College Degree* 1999	Median Income 1999	Vacancy Rate 2000	Home-owners, 2000	Valuation per HH 2001	Property Tax 2001
National Park	7%	\$48,534	4.6%	85%	\$90,200	3.33%
Wenonah	42%	\$71,625	1.9%	89%	\$169,700	2.97%
Westville	9%	\$39,570	6.5%	64%	\$95,200	3.01%
Woodbury City	22%	\$41,827	6.0%	60%	\$97,000	3.50%
Woodbury Heights	23%	\$63,266	1.7%	93%	\$170,300	2.92%

**Source:** United States Census Bureau, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. \* "College degree" refers to percentage of adults over 25 years of age having a minimum of a 4-year bachelor's degree.

income between municipalities. Wenonah and Woodbury Heights are among the wealthiest communities in Gloucester County, and, in fact, in the entire region. In contrast, other municipalities in the study area are at or below regional averages, some significantly so. In educational levels, similar trends prevail. In Woodbury, Woodbury Heights, and Wenonah, for example, over 20% of the adult residents have attained at least a four year college degree. Other communities, including National Park and Gloucester City, have historically been home to working class residents. Clearly, the municipalities in the study area have had a much different rate of success in enticing educated and wealthy inhabitants to stay, or in attracting new residents with higher incomes.

Other characteristics typical of first generation suburbs are likewise not shared equally by all study area municipalities. Many first generation suburbs have **high vacancy rates**, indicating that current families may be moving away and attracting new residents is difficult. Some of the study area communities follow this pattern, but others, like Wenonah, Woodbury Heights, and especially Audubon Park, have much lower vacancy rates than their county averages. In fact, among the Camden County study area municipalities, only Gloucester City had a higher vacancy rate than did Camden County as a whole (although Brooklawn was close). In the context of the earlier discussion of population loss and declining family size, this might indicate that many of these communities are not experiencing substantial out-migration.

Many first generation suburbs are also faced with **low tax bases**. Low tax bases place first generation suburbs at a distinct disadvantage in their ability to fund local services, including education. This problem is often caused by loss of employment and higher-income residents, as well as a **high percentage of non-taxable land uses** (such as government buildings). Tax bases in the study area are highly variable, but follow familiar patterns: very

high tax bases per household in Wenonah and Woodbury Heights, where incomes are high, and lower-than-average tax bases per household throughout the remainder of the study area.

The tax base per household cannot always be predicted based on the amount of land devoted to commercial and manufacturing uses (high tax generators) versus residential uses (lower tax generators). Although it has a significant percentage of land dedicated to non-residential uses, for example, the City of Woodbury has a relatively low tax base per household (given the concentration of tax-exempt uses). As the County's government seat, the City is home to numerous County office buildings (including the justice complex) that effectively render those properties unavailable for tax-generating purposes. Tax-exempt uses are common in many first generation communities, and, while offering significant employment opportunities as well as daytime consumers of services such as restaurants and retail stores, these uses occupy a significant percentage of available land while adding little if anything to the tax base.

Another explanation may be the **concentration of greyfields** (vacant or under-utilized malls or shopping centers) in first generation suburbs. Two recent reports by the Congress for the New Urbanism, *Greyfields into Goldfields* and *Greyfield Regional Mall Study*, discuss the problems faced by older shopping malls, which are often made obsolete by newer malls in high-growth areas. Despite their accessibility and the availability of infrastructure, older strip shopping centers and malls often become derelict, blight their surroundings, and sit vacant or underutilized for years due to a lack of reinvestment. Within the study area, greyfields are present in many of the municipalities, but are absent in places like Audubon Park and Wenonah, which have little commercial or industrial land.

Another common feature of first generation suburbs is **high property taxes**. Because of their low tax bases, many of these communities are forced to raise their property tax rates in order to fund necessary services. In Gloucester County, there is a noticeable difference between the tax rates of the study area municipalities and most of the County's more suburban townships. In Camden County, the tax rates of the study area municipalities are close to the County average, and property taxes in Gloucester City are low (probably because of their higher proportion of non-residential uses that are not tax-exempt, as opposed to the tax-exempt uses in Woodbury).

Generally, first generation suburbs are **heavily reliant on local financing**, since most do not have access to other sources of revenue. According to *Valuing America's First Suburbs*, by the Brookings Institution:

*...first generation suburbs generally lack the central cities' access to grants, capital, and flexible financing. These tools would help first generation suburbs invest in major commercial and residential redevelopment projects, repair and maintenance of infrastructure, and other neighborhood improvements. Most first suburbs do not meet the low-income targets to qualify for federal and state grants or loans for economic development. Effectively, first suburbs are penalized for not being in severe states of*

*decline, and are unable to receive resources for their infrastructure and communities until it's too late.* (p. 10)

Ultimately, the fiscal problems of first generation suburbs result in **declining service provision**. As tax revenue decreases and service needs increase, service quality inevitably decreases. This often affects school quality, crime prevention, maintenance of public infrastructure, and social services. In turn, rising tax rates and declining service quality leads to increased population and employment loss, especially among wealthy or educated residents, causing the tax base to decrease even more and continuing the cycle of disinvestment. However, in first generation suburbs that have managed to avoid the loss of their tax base, this cycle seems to have been avoided, at least for now.

### ***Challenges Related to Past and Current Federal and State Policies***

In addition to the challenges posed by their historical development patterns, many older suburbs face challenges associated with current and past federal and state policies which favor developing suburban communities and larger cities. Older first generation communities suburbs are in a “blind spot” of federal and state policies. The scope of this report does not include a full analysis of the effects of federal policies on first generation suburbs, but an analysis of this type was recently published by the Brookings Institution, entitled *Valuing America's First Suburbs*.

According to this report, first generation suburbs are often ignored by federal and state housing policies designed to support housing maintenance and redevelopment activities, since these policies are typically directed toward either large urban areas (in the form of HOPE VI and Community Development Block Grant programs) or the high-growth suburban periphery (in the form of mortgage assistance). A similar policy gap exists in welfare programs, which serve the poorest of the poor (usually living in the oldest central cities) but neglect many low-income working families (who often reside in the older, affordable housing stock found in first generation communities). Federal transportation funding patterns and continued mortgage assistance also serve to subsidize sprawl, encouraging and supporting continued out-migration of both people and jobs from first generation suburbs.

Additionally, the traditional over-reliance by most states (including New Jersey) on local property taxes as the primary source of school funding is inefficient and inequitable to older cities and first generation suburbs. The American Planning Association has concluded that “studies of school financing repeatedly point to the dramatic differences in the property tax base ... as the single most important contributor to the disparity in the amount of money spent per child on education in a community”.<sup>5</sup> While the debate over spending per pupil and educational outcomes is controversial, there is little disagreement that the present system creates significant disparities in the ability of school districts to fund local schools.

---

<sup>5</sup>American Planning Association, *Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook*, pp. 14-29.

Finally, first generation suburbs are typically small, primarily residential communities with little if any influence over county, state or federal legislative representatives. The lack of a unified political voice advocating for the needs of first generation suburbs have put these communities at a distinct disadvantage, when it comes to lobbying for changes to long-standing policies or competing for limited available resources.

### **Ongoing Planning and Revitalization Activities**

Many of the municipalities in the Camden and Gloucester County study area have been very proactive in responding to the challenges facing their communities, successfully utilizing available federal, state and county grant and loan programs for various community redevelopment activities. Continued and expanded participation in these programs can act as a catalyst for future community revitalization.

The City of Woodbury, for example, participates in New Jersey's Main Street Program and has implemented several other incentive programs, including a Neighborhood Preservation Program and a Homeownership Program. Westville Borough has designated a Downtown Preservation Area, adopted a Downtown Streetscape Plan, and provides grants and other incentives to business owners who improve the facades of their buildings. The Borough has also implemented an aggressive marketing strategy to promote existing businesses and attract new firms.

Through a pilot program funded by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, Gloucester City has produced a detailed inventory of brownfield sites within its boundaries, and is now actively marketing these sites to prospective developers. The City has also actively sought assistance from a number of available state programs for housing and community development activities. In April, for example, the City began construction of a new Early Childhood Learning Center as an extension to their Cold Springs Elementary School, utilizing over \$8 million from the State of New Jersey's School Construction program. Gloucester City has also received funding from DVRPC's Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) program for revitalization activities along the Broadway and Route 130 highway corridors<sup>6</sup>.

Several communities have utilized Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to meet community development objectives. Westville, for example, utilized County CDBG funds to develop and implement a streetscape plan in its downtown area, and used additional funds to demolish a deteriorated structure within its central business district for use as a parking lot. Other grant programs which the communities have already taken advantage of include the Small Cities Program and various programs available through

---

<sup>6</sup>The Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) Program is a competitive grant program which periodically provides funds directly to eligible municipalities to undertake locally-directed projects to improve their communities. For more information, visit DVRPC's website and see the current TCDI program guide and grant application forms.



the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (HMFA) and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), as well as the Department of Environmental protection's Green Acres Program.

Both Camden and Gloucester counties have applied for and received funds from the New Jersey Office of Smart Growth to undertake multi-municipal Smart Growth planning initiatives in several communities, including

those in the study area. The Camden County Improvement Authority, working with the Walter Rand Institute, is in the process of developing a new Long Range Plan for the County, and the Gloucester County Planning Department is likewise undertaking a multi-municipal planning effort.



**Figure M. Ongoing Revitalization Activities: A Future Vision for Downtown Westville (Triad Associates, 1999)**

Additionally, in 2000, Gloucester County's Department of Economic Development prepared and adopted the county-wide *Economic Development Action Plan for Gloucester County*, and also prepared a report entitled *Delaware River Waterfront Development and Redevelopment*, which looked at alternatives for redeveloping the waterfronts in six municipalities, including National Park and Westville. Continued and increased participation in these multi-municipal planning efforts offers perhaps the best opportunity for the study area municipalities to work together to resolve common challenges and take advantage of their available assets and opportunities.

## **Conclusions**

Opportunities exist within the Camden and Gloucester study areas that can provide a foundation for community stabilization and revitalization. Strengths on which to build include the municipalities' sense of place, stable residential neighborhoods, and historic character. Unlike many first generation suburbs, the study area also continues to show a high rate of homeownership. Other assets include transportation access and an existing physical infrastructure.

Woodbury's status as the government seat of Gloucester County has stabilized the City's employment base, and has supported a concentration of educated and high-income residents. Larger, well-constructed and attractive homes in some older communities (particularly Wenonah and Woodbury Heights) have retained their value and helped these

towns to continue to attract and retain higher-income residents. Waterfront locations in Gloucester City, National Park, and Westville, which offer opportunities for both economic development and recreation, have been an important to their histories, can enhance the quality of life in these communities, and should serve to attract new residents and potential developers.

The study area communities also share a variety of fiscal, social and economic challenges. Shared challenges (common to many first generation communities) include declining populations, limited undeveloped land, a high concentration of residential uses, an aging housing stock, and aging infrastructure systems.

This chapter has demonstrated, however, that while the study area communities share some characteristics common to many first generation communities, there are also significant differences between them. The boroughs of Wenonah and Woodbury Heights have not experienced many of the problems common to first generation suburbs, and have solid tax bases, relatively high housing values, and other characteristics that make them attractive neighborhoods. Other municipalities, including Audubon, Mount Ephraim, and National Park, have not been as successful in dealing with change, but have never-the-less remained relatively stable. Still other municipalities in the study area, including the older cities of Gloucester City and Woodbury City as well as Audubon Park, Brooklawn, and Westville, have shown significant indicators of decline.

Some surprising conclusions can be drawn from the existing conditions data. First, it does not appear that devoting a large amount of land to industrial or commercial uses, generally considered “good” tax ratables, necessarily leads to economic stability. The study area municipalities with the highest percentages of their land devoted to industrial or commercial uses were Brooklawn and Gloucester City in Camden County, and Westville and Woodbury City in Gloucester County. These municipalities shared other characteristics, as well - low median incomes, high vacancy rates, and low rates of homeownership. Additionally, the supposed tax benefits of attracting commercial and industrial uses were not evident. The tax base per household for each of these municipalities was lower than that in Audubon, Wenonah, or Woodbury Heights, which have considerably fewer industrial or commercial tax ratables.

This finding may lead to the conclusion that the “ratables chase”, or the desire of the political leaders of first generation suburbs to attract commercial and industrial uses, may be misguided. Attracting these uses may not significantly strengthen local economies at all, and may even lead to a deterioration of quality of life in other ways. For example, many abandoned or derelict shopping malls, the last generation’s “good” tax ratables, are now eyesores that detract from nearby property values and hinder redevelopment efforts. In reality, a more appropriate strategy for first generation suburbs, including most of those in the Camden and Gloucester County study areas, may be to accentuate their small-town, residential image, seeking to attract middle and higher income homeowners and retain and enhance their sense of community.

## **Chapter 4: Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations**

---

This chapter first defines general goals and objectives for the study area. It then identifies region-wide strategies that can assist in the revitalization of first generation suburbs throughout the region, including those in the Gloucester City and Woodbury school districts. These broad strategies are followed by more specific local initiatives that address individual goals.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The accomplishment of the following goals and objectives will in turn serve as a catalyst for continued community and economic development, and facilitate the retention of the existing population, the attraction of new residents (particularly middle-income families) and the deepening of community identity and pride.

***Goal 1: Strengthen the study area's existing neighborhoods and, by doing so, preserve and enhance currently stable neighborhoods, stem the loss of moderate and middle income families, and attract new residents to the community.***

- Rehabilitate and revitalize the existing housing stock (including rental units as well as owner-occupied units).
- Expand homeownership opportunities in the area.
- Expand recreational opportunities, including enhanced public access to the Delaware River waterfront.
- Expand and improve services available to the community's elderly.
- Expand and improve neighborhood community facilities.
- Preserve and revitalize historic features within the area's older neighborhoods.

***Goal 2: Improve the economy in the study area.***

- Attract new businesses to appropriate locations in the study area, including available waterfront locations in National Park and Gloucester City.
- Stabilize and retain the existing employment base.
- Encourage and support the adaptive re-use of vacant and currently under-utilized properties, such as the Caldor shopping center in Woodbury Heights and available brownfield sites in Gloucester City.
- Encourage and support the preservation and re-use of historic buildings.
- Expand access for the residents of the community to employment opportunities that pay at least a livable wage and offer long-term opportunities for advancement.

***Goal 3: Maintain and improve the community's infrastructure.***

- Improve and expand public transit service, including both the existing bus services and potential passenger rail service between the study area and major employment centers such as Philadelphia and Trenton.

- Maintain and improve the highway network, including intersection and roadway improvements as appropriate.
- Improve and enhance the bicycle and pedestrian environment within and between each of the study area communities.
- Maintain and improve the existing physical infrastructure, including water, sewer, communications and other utilities.

## **RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES AND POLICIES**

This section begins by identifying **region-wide strategies** for accomplishing the revitalization of first generation suburbs throughout the Delaware Valley, including supporting regional and county-wide planning initiatives and investigating alternatives to the existing property tax structure as the primary means of financing local services, including education. The section then continues with a discussion of the advantages of **cooperating with neighboring municipalities** to accomplish local objectives.

Although many economic and social problems (and their causes) in first generation communities are regional in scope, other challenges are unique to specific municipalities. In addition to region-wide strategies, municipal officials in the region's older suburban communities can and should pursue local initiatives to mitigate specific problems within their own boundaries. In the Camden and Gloucester County study areas, options are available to state, county and municipal officials, as well as school administrators, to alleviate some of the problems typical of first generation suburbs. This section concludes, therefore, by identifying a number of **municipal and county initiatives** which could be pursued by municipal officials in response to issues within their own communities.

### ***Region-wide Strategies***

Many of the problems facing the region's central cities and first generation suburbs, including municipalities in the Gloucester City, Audubon, Woodbury, and Gateway Regional school districts, are the result of a continuing regional pattern of decentralization and disinvestment. While municipal officials must pursue local initiatives that help to mitigate specific problems facing their communities, long-term solutions and a reversal of the continuing loss of both people and jobs can best be accomplished through broader regional approaches.

The region-wide strategies discussed below would facilitate the revitalization of first generation suburban communities throughout the Delaware Valley. These strategies include supporting the implementation of regional and county-wide land use and transportation plans and developing a viable alternative to local property taxes as a primary source of funding for local services, especially education.

- **Recommendation #1: Support the implementation of regional and county-wide planning and growth management strategies as a means of reducing the disparities between central cities, inner ring suburbs and outer ring suburbs.**

Land use and development decisions made by individual municipalities competing for tax ratables in order to fund local services have supported and encouraged sprawl and contributed significantly to the region's continuing pattern of decentralization. Regional approaches to planning and investment decision-making that advocate revitalization of the region's core cities and existing developed areas, such as the State of New Jersey's *State Development and Redevelopment Plan*, DVRPC's *Horizons 2025* long-range plan, and directed infrastructure investment policies, could improve conditions in first generation suburbs. Participation in county-wide planning and economic development efforts currently underway through the Camden County Improvement Authority, the Gloucester County Planning Department, and the Gloucester County Department of Economic Development provide opportunities for municipalities to work cooperatively with adjacent communities.

New Jersey's State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) advocates the redevelopment and revitalization of the state's cities and existing centers, concentrated growth in appropriate locations, and preservation of greenfields and natural resources. Goals advocated in the Plan include revitalizing the State's cities and towns; providing adequate and cost-efficient public facilities and services; providing affordable housing; and ensuring sound and integrated planning statewide. The State Plan is intended to serve as a guideline for state, regional, and local agencies, as they develop plans and regulations and make decisions regarding the expenditure of discretionary funds.

Under the SDRP, all of the municipalities in the study area are classified in the Metropolitan Planning Area (PA1), which include larger metropolitan areas as well as 19<sup>th</sup> century towns and post-war suburbs. The State's intent in these areas is to revitalize older towns, promote growth in compact form, stabilize older suburbs, and protect the character of existing stable communities. Through a statewide cross-acceptance process, the study area municipalities have already participated in shaping the existing State Plan; Gloucester City has applied for and formally been designated as a "Center" by the State Planning Commission. The SDRP is scheduled to be updated and revised (through another round of cross-acceptance) in 2004.

DVRPC's *Horizons 2025* is likewise based on a centers approach that promotes growth and investment in and around established communities ("centers") linked by transportation corridors. By linking transportation and land use planning, the 2025 Plan encourages new development in specified growth areas while supporting the revitalization of the region's core cities and older suburbs and the preservation of open space, farmland and environmentally sensitive areas. Many of *Horizon 2025's* recommended regional policies, including targeting future infrastructure investment to existing developed areas to discourage continued development in the region's "outer ring", would help to resolve challenges facing the region's first generation suburbs.

A regional policy of directed infrastructure investment, as advocated in DVRPC's *Horizons 2025*, would alleviate many of the problems faced by first generation communities. In 1995, DVRPC released a report entitled *Reinvesting in Cities: Transportation Improvements in Urban Areas*. That report recommended that the project selection criteria

for the regional transportation improvement program (TIP) be revised to assign higher priority to projects that encourage growth in identified centers and corridors, and to assign negative ratings to projects that encourage growth outside these areas. The report further recommended that transportation, water and sewer investment decisions be coordinated at all levels and integrated with adopted land use plans and environmental objectives.

The policies outlined in *Reinvesting in Cities* would clearly support the revitalization of first generation suburbs. The goal of these policies is to influence growth patterns by targeting funds to build roads and highways, extend water and sewer lines and expand utilities to areas where growth is desirable. Although the region's older suburbs generally have sufficient (if not excess) infrastructure capacity, many older communities are struggling to maintain and improve aging systems. A policy of directing infrastructure investment back into these areas would provide funds for maintenance and make these communities more attractive to developers. Simultaneously limiting investment in undeveloped "greenfield" areas would reduce sprawl and channel some of this growth back into the region's existing developed areas.

While DVRPC plays an important role in TIP programming, the Commission does not have direct control over any infrastructure investment decisions. Some examples of stronger regional decision making powers include the UNIGOV (in Indianapolis) and the Metropolitan Council in Minneapolis-St. Paul, where the regional government oversees sewer, transit, land use and airport decisions.<sup>7</sup>

- **Recommendation #2: Investigate long-term alternatives to the property tax as the primary means of financing local services, especially education.**

Implementation of an alternative to the existing property tax would discourage individual municipalities from pursuing tax-generating development, with no regard to its potential impacts on neighboring communities. Municipalities depend heavily on property taxes as their primary source of revenue for local services, including education. As of 1992, property taxes accounted for the greatest share of all local taxes, and more than half of all revenues received by townships.<sup>8</sup> Relying on the local property tax to fund local services, however, results in disparities in revenue-generating ability. The American Planning Association notes that "if two local governments have exactly the same population, but one has extensive commercial, office and industrial development and the other residential development with some commercial uses, the latter government will have to increase the property taxes to obtain the same revenue as the former".<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>See DVRPC's *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley Region*, Chapter 5, for additional information.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, page 81.

<sup>9</sup>American Planning Association, *Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook (Phase I)*, page 14-3.

Many of the region's oldest cities and boroughs have among the lowest tax bases per household in their respective counties. Unfortunately, many older communities also have relatively high concentrations of poverty, a higher incidence of social problems, and aging infrastructure. Since the only way to raise additional revenue to meet these needs is to increase the tax burden on residents who are already financially stressed, communities with the greatest needs are often, therefore, the same communities that find it most difficult to raise the necessary revenue to meet those needs.

Potential alternatives to the existing property tax include tax-base sharing (either district-wide, county-wide or region-wide); state-wide tax reform; increasing earned income taxes as an alternative revenue source; or increased "sin" taxes (on cigarettes or alcohol, for example). In New Jersey, however, increased "sin taxes" have already been tapped to alleviate other budgetary problems, to the point that New Jersey now has the highest tax on cigarettes in the country.

### **Tax Base Sharing as an Alternative**

Tax-base sharing advocates support reducing local reliance on the property tax by creating a new source of revenue generated from a regional or statewide pool. By definition, tax-base sharing is a system that combines some portion of the local tax bases of several communities into a regional or state-wide pool and redistributes the resulting revenue based on some pre-defined criteria other than total contributions to the pool. In New Jersey, for example, the 1968 *Hackensack Meadowlands Development and Redevelopment Act* established a fourteen-municipality district to ensure coordinated regional land use planning and to help attract private investment. These 14 municipalities practice joint planning and zoning as well as tax-base sharing to fund necessary services. In the Minneapolis-St. Paul region, municipalities receive a distribution of the tax base from a pool based on population and fiscal capacity, where fiscal capacity is defined as the per capita real property valuation relative to the rest of the region.

For first generation communities struggling to get by on stagnant or declining tax bases, tax base sharing would offer new opportunities to fund necessary local services. Tax base sharing also promotes fiscal equity by creating a regional funding source that could be used to address regional problems, including the concentration of poverty that characterizes most of the region's oldest cities and boroughs. Unfortunately, other more affluent communities who stand to contribute more in revenue than they will realize in return are generally quite vocal in their opposition to any tax-base sharing proposal.

### **Property Taxes and School Finance**

It has been estimated that in the 2001-2002 year, approximately 53.2% of the funding for elementary and secondary public school education in New Jersey came from local property taxes, and New Jersey currently has the highest per-capita property tax in the nation. Over reliance on local property taxes as the primary source of school funding is both inefficient and inequitable to older cities and first generation suburbs. While the debate over

spending per pupil and educational outcomes is controversial, there is little disagreement that the present system creates significant disparities in the ability of individual school districts to fund local schools.

Reliance on the property tax has also been criticized because real estate taxes do not automatically adjust with the ability of the taxpayer to pay, unlike other sources of tax revenue (such as wage and sales taxes). Senior citizens in particular are bearing an increasingly unfair share of the property tax burden, since their fixed sources of income do not keep pace with the growth of property taxes. This system therefore pits the needs of school age children against those of elderly home owners living on fixed incomes.

Several states have taken action to implement school finance reform measures. In Michigan, for example, the legislature passed "Proposal A" in 1993 as a means of reducing the reliance on property taxes to fund schools. Under Proposal A, the percentage funding for K-12 public education coming from property taxes was reduced from 60% to less than 32%, with the bulk of the increase in state funding generated through an increase of 2% in the state sales tax (from 4% to 6%). The new funding formula was designed to maintain the same level of total per pupil revenues available to each local school district that was available the previous year. While all districts were guaranteed an increase in funding each year, the state has attempted to address equity in per-pupil funding by providing those with the lowest revenue levels the greatest annual increases.

### **Current New Jersey Tax Reform Proposals**

Property tax reform has been debated in the State of New Jersey for several decades. A typical administrative response has been the creation of study commissions, beginning with the Tax Policy Committee of 1972 (known as the "Cahill Committee") through the State and Local Expenditure and Revenue Commission of 1988 (known as the "SLERP" Commission) to the more recent Property Tax Commission created by Governor Whitman in 1998. These Commissions have contributed to the ongoing dialogue regarding how to provide the most efficient and effective tax relief to property owners.

Major revisions to the existing tax structure in New Jersey, including any kind of tax-base sharing scenario, however, will require legislative action. Any alternative would likely, therefore, have to overcome significant political opposition, given that some constituents must of necessity contribute more in revenue than they will realize in return. Because of this anticipated political opposition and the fear of a resultant lack of action, many legislators and advocacy groups are now supporting the concept of holding a constitutional convention specifically focused on property tax reform. A Constitutional Convention would involve input from and consensus building amongst the State's residents regarding recommended changes to the State Constitution.

Senate Bill 478, sponsored by Senators Singer (R-Ocean) and Adler (D-Camden), provides for the convening of a State Constitutional Convention to consider reforming the State's system of property taxation. Another pending bill is Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 28, which proposes an amendment to the Constitution to prohibit the use of local real



property taxes or a Statewide real property tax for funding core curriculum content standards.

### ***Intermunicipal Cooperation***

- **Recommendation #3: The study area's municipalities should develop a multi-municipal coalition and implement intermunicipal strategies that increase the effectiveness of service delivery; increase efficiency (thereby reducing costs); and increase their political clout.**

There are 353 separate cities, townships, and boroughs in the nine-county Delaware Valley region, including 114 communities located within the boundaries of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties in New Jersey. Each of these separate communities exert their own local control and make independent decisions regarding land use within their boundaries. Home rule is and has long been held sacred by communities in the State of New Jersey. The desire for local control, however, often conflicts with other important goals, including improving local services without raising local taxes.

Many municipal officials now recognize the benefit of working together with their neighbors to address common problems and issues. Three key arguments in favor of cooperating include saving money, improving service delivery, and increasing political clout. Additionally, several available incentive programs (including DVRPC's Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) program and programs offered through the State of New Jersey) now give priority to applicants who are participating in an intermunicipal planning effort.

Cooperation is especially important in the case of first generation suburbs, which face social and economic problems uncharacteristic of more affluent developing communities but without the resources often available in the region's urban core. Without broad-based municipal coalitions, first generation suburbs have little influence on regional policies and trends that will in large part direct their future.

One means of improving service delivery and reducing cost is through the creation and expansion of **joint purchasing and service agreements**. These agreements can be forged between municipalities, between school districts or between one or more municipalities and the school district that services them. Cooperative agreements can be very informal, covering purchasing (such as office supplies) or services (property code enforcement, snow plowing, leaf removal or landscaping, for example). Cost savings can be realized by taking advantage of favorable economies of scale by buying in bulk, and cooperative agreements can also minimize the cost of advertising and preparing bid specifications.

Some sharing of municipal services is already being undertaken in the study area. The Gateway School District has implemented joint purchasing with all of its five associated elementary school districts, and informal joint purchasing and service sharing has been

undertaken by several municipalities within the Gloucester County study area. Woodbury Heights, for example, shares the services of a building code official with Woodbury, Westville and Wenonah, shares a tax assessor with Elk Township, and contracts with the City of Woodbury for trash collection.

Intermunicipal agreements are relatively easy to accomplish and are often done informally. Formal contracts between the parties, however, can spell out the terms of the agreement and minimize potential disputes over issues such as liability, responsibility for damaged equipment, and the availability of back-up equipment in case of equipment failure.

In addition to joint purchasing and service provision, **municipalities should coordinate municipal planning and zoning decision-making**. Given the region's heavy reliance on local property tax revenue to fund local services (including education), many communities feel compelled to maximize tax-generating uses in their communities, while discouraging or denying uses thought to increase local service costs. Local land use decision-making is therefore often done with little if any regard to the impacts of proposed development on neighboring communities. The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) allows municipalities to establish regional planning and/or zoning boards. As an alternative, communities should at a minimum allow adjacent municipalities to review development proposals which may impact their communities and consider their comments before making final land use decisions.

#### ***Other Municipal and County Policies and Actions***

- **Recommendation #4: Pursue local initiatives to mitigate specific problems within your own municipal boundaries.**

Increasing the level of cooperation between the communities that comprise the Gloucester City, Audubon, Gateway, and Woodbury school districts and joint participation in the planning and programming process offer perhaps the greatest potential for revitalizing these first generation municipalities. In addition to the region-wide strategies discussed above, however, municipal officials in the region's older suburban communities can and should pursue local initiatives to mitigate specific problems within their own boundaries. While their impacts may not be as far-reaching, localized strategies and initiatives are often more politically and logistically feasible than these broad, regional approaches, and are also more immediate in their effects.

Table 12 summarizes actions that should be undertaken by local officials in the Camden and Gloucester County study areas. Many of these initiatives are appropriate in most if not all of the study area municipalities, given their similar challenges. Table 12, however, identifies those actions which should be considered as being of higher priority for each of the communities. Actions which should be undertaken by the study area communities as well as the two counties and the State of New Jersey include the following:

- Municipal officials should **review their local comprehensive plans and zoning regulations and revise them as necessary**, to support existing businesses, attract new employers, support in-fill residential development where appropriate, and preserve available open space and recreational opportunities. Plans and zoning ordinances should allow uses that are compatible with and complement existing uses and assist in accomplishing the community's goals for economic and community development. Non-traditional housing alternatives, such as accessory apartments, shared housing, live-work housing, and residential conversions, should be considered in appropriate locations.
- Municipal officials should **review, revise as necessary, and pro-actively enforce local property maintenance requirements**. Absentee landlords as well as the community's residents and business owners should be required to maintain their properties. Public works crews should be utilized where necessary to clean and maintain the exteriors of properties where owners have neglected to do so, and these owners should be fined or have a tax lien placed against their property. Local officials should work with neighboring municipalities, striving for consistency between municipalities in terms of both the requirements and their enforcement.
- In four of the study area communities (Brooklawn, Gloucester City, Westville, and Woodbury), the housing vacancy rate in 2000 was over 5%. Housing vacancies in many first generation communities increase and eventually snowball, causing the decline of formerly thriving neighborhoods. Municipal officials should **respond aggressively to housing vacancies** as a part of their overall neighborhood revitalization plan, including boarding vacant units, seeking acquisition of vacant properties and, when appropriate, demolishing deteriorated vacant structures.
- In four of the study area communities (Audubon Park, Brooklawn, Westville, and Woodbury), over 30% of the households are occupied by renters. Municipal officials should consider implementing and expanding programs to support the **rehabilitation of renter-occupied units** as well as programs which assist renters in becoming homeowners.
- The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the Gloucester County Office of Housing and Community Development, the Camden County Office of Housing, and local non-profit groups should **increase the funds available for housing assistance for low and moderate income families**, to help homeowners and landlords rehabilitate and maintain their units and assist renters in becoming homeowners. Funding should be increased for programs that provide counseling in basic home repair and budgeting as well as for emergency mortgage assistance. The communities should in turn take full advantage of any available housing and neighborhood assistance programs.
- Municipal officials should **enhance and expand recreational opportunities** in their communities, working cooperatively with neighboring communities to ensure that

available resources (including facilities as well as funding and staffing) are used both effectively and efficiently. Expanding recreational opportunities, including enhancing public access to the study area's various waterfronts, will both improve the quality of life for existing residents and help to attract prospective families.

- Municipal officials should **maintain and enhance the sidewalks and streets in their neighborhoods and undertake formal streetscape improvement programs as needed in their downtown areas** (including street trees, sidewalk paving, attractive street lighting, and clearly delineated crosswalks), in cooperation with adjacent municipalities when possible. Several communities, including Gloucester City, Woodbury, and Westville, have implemented successful streetscape improvement programs in specific sections of their downtowns which have enhanced their communities for residents and businesses alike. These programs should be part of a comprehensive, overall strategy for revitalizing the entire municipality. Maintaining the neighborhoods can strengthen the residents' sense of community pride and encourage them to maintain their individual units.
- Municipal officials in Gloucester City, Westville, and National Park should **identify opportunities along their respective waterfronts** and pursue the development of those sites, based on the needs and desires of the community and the vision advanced in their local master plan. Redevelopment of the waterfront, whether for industrial, commercial or recreational uses, will be a critical part of the overall revitalization of these communities and the study area as a whole.
- Municipal officials should work their respective County Historical Societies and others to **identify, preserve, and enhance historic structures and features** within their communities. Historic buildings and features add to the character and "sense of place" in these older communities and can serve as a catalyst for economic revitalization.
- Municipal governments should work with the appropriate county agencies to **inventory and actively market vacant and abandoned buildings and properties** within the study area, determining the size, location, ownership, previous uses, and potential for redevelopment. Where appropriate, municipalities should exercise the power of eminent domain to obtain ownership of these properties and make them available for redevelopment. Officials in Gloucester City, for example, have inventoried available brownfield sites throughout the City and are actively marketing them to prospective developers. The community should develop a clear vision of the preferred uses for these sites (residential versus industrial, for example), to ensure that redevelopment occurs based on their desires, rather than the developers'.
- Municipal officials should continue to **seek loans to upgrade, repair and maintain aging sewer and water infrastructure** systems, in cooperation with neighboring municipalities whenever possible.

- County and municipal officials should **work together to identify necessary improvements to the highway network** and to seek potential funding sources for these improvements, including inclusion on DVRPC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or through other sources such as the Transportation Enhancements (TE) Program.
- The City of Woodbury should continue to seek ways to **expand parking opportunities in the downtown**, to help make the City more attractive to customers, prospective merchants and businesses.
- County and municipal officials and NJ Transit should **continue to work together to improve transit service throughout the study area**, focusing on improving access between residential neighborhoods and key employment centers as well as nearby educational and job training facilities such as the county colleges, the Gloucester County Institute of Technology, and Rowan University.
- Municipal officials should **work with their respective county economic development departments and improvement authorities to identify and take advantage of all available economic development programs and incentives** offered through federal, state and county agencies as well as private foundations.
- County, municipal, and school district officials as well as civic associations should **work together to actively market the area's strongest advantages**, utilizing available tools such as brochures, commercial media, or Internet sites. Several of the communities and the school districts have already created web sites which present their histories and inform residents and students of important events and other information. These sites should be expanded, individually and/or in cooperation with other municipalities and each County, to actively market the area's strengths and available opportunities to the outside world.

Other ideas for marketing the community as well as deepening community pride include advertising campaigns, work fairs, community days, community bulletin boards, or a district-wide publication. Several of the communities, including Woodbury, Wenonah, and Westville, already sponsor community days and other outdoor community events at various times throughout the year. Other communities should follow Woodbury's lead, for example, where events such as the annual fall Harvest Festival and summer Block Party have enhanced the City's sense of place and can assist in attracting prospective residents and employers.

- **Residents of the study area should actively participate in the decision-making process in their community and critically assess the consequences of actions affecting local government and the school districts.** Taxpayers should become aware of important local issues, raise questions as appropriate and actively participate in local Council meetings, planning and zoning board hearings and school board meetings.

**Table 12. Recommended Strategies for Municipal Officials**

	Audubon	Audubon Park	Brooklawn	Gloucester City	Mount Ephraim	National Park	Wenonah	Westville	Woodbury City	Woodbury Heights
Participate in intermunicipal initiatives, including joint purchasing and service provision.	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Review and revise local master plans and ordinances, coordinating with neighboring communities.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Revise and pro-actively enforce the local property maintenance code.	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
Respond aggressively to housing vacancies.			x	x				x	x	
Implement rental rehabilitation programs and programs to assist renters in becoming homeowners.		x	x					x	x	
Expand recreational opportunities.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Develop and implement a formal streetscape improvement plan for the central business district.				x		x	x	x	x	
Develop and adopt a conceptual plan for the waterfront and pursue the development of available waterfront properties.				x		x		x		

**Table 12 (continued). Recommended Strategies for Municipal Officials**

	Audubon	Audubon Park	Brooklawn	Gloucester City	Mount Ephraim	National Park	Wenonah	Westville	Woodbury City	Woodbury Heights
Identify and preserve historic structures and features.				x			x		x	
Inventory vacant and under-utilized structures and properties (including brownfields and greyfields) and develop a conceptual plan for their re-use.	x			x		x		x	x	x
Seek available funding to repair, upgrade, and maintain aging water and sewer infrastructure systems, in cooperation with adjacent municipalities.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Identify needs and seek funding for necessary highway and transit improvements.	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x
Expand parking opportunities in the downtown area.									x	
Identify and utilize all available county and state economic development incentive programs.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Identify and utilize all available county and state housing and neighborhood revitalization incentive programs.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

**Source:** Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, September 2003.

## Potential Resources

Financial resources and technical assistance for planning, community development, and economic development are available to the study area communities (individually or, preferably, as a unified coalition) through a number of different agencies and sources, including the Camden County Improvement Authority, the Camden County Planning Department, the Gloucester County Planning Department, and the Gloucester County Department of Economic Development.

Technical assistance is also available from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). Through its annual Work Program, DVRPC prepares detailed studies of certain identified corridors and areas as a part of its implementation of the region's Long Range Plan. In 2001, for example, DVRPC completed a traffic study which considered alternatives for eliminating the Brooklawn traffic circles,<sup>10</sup> and the Commission is currently working on a corridor study along Route 45, from Woodbury City to Mantua Township. Funding for local redevelopment efforts may also be available to eligible communities through the Commission's TCDI program (see page 50). Gloucester City, for example, is currently utilizing TCDI funds to undertake a revitalization study along the Broadway and Route 130 corridors.

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs can also provide technical assistance and financial resources through a host of programs designed to assist communities. Interested local officials should contact the Department and ask for a copy of their Programs Book, which is updated annually and provides invaluable descriptions and contact information for each program.<sup>11</sup> Included in the publication are descriptions of programs available through numerous state agencies and divisions, including:

- the Division of Housing and Community Resources;
- the Division of Local Government Services;
- the Office of Smart Growth;
- the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency;
- the New Jersey Historic Trust; and
- the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority.

Depending on the community's objectives, other state agencies may also be able to provide technical assistance and/or financial resources, including the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the New Jersey Commerce and Economic

---

<sup>10</sup>Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, *US 130: Brooklawn Circles Area Traffic Study*, May 2001.

<sup>11</sup> The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs can be contacted by calling (609) 292-6222, or via their website ([www.state.nj.us/dca](http://www.state.nj.us/dca)). The most recent version of the program book, entitled *people.places.progress*, was published in the Spring of 2003.



Growth Commission, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, and the New Jersey Department of Transportation. Several communities, for example, have utilized the Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres program to preserve open space and improve their recreational facilities. Westville Borough, for example, utilized Green Acres funds to purchase the parcels necessary to develop a planned passive recreational area along River Drive Park.



## **Chapter 5: Possibilities for Redevelopment: Illustrations of Potential Design Alternatives**

---

Chapter 4 identifies region-wide and localized strategies for revitalizing the first generation suburbs that comprise the Gloucester and Camden County study areas. This chapter illustrates potential approaches for addressing two problems which are common to many first generation communities. Case studies are presented which provide alternatives for redeveloping two specific sites, one in Camden County and another in Gloucester County.

The first case study illustrates the revitalization of an existing street in Gloucester City to provide increased residential opportunities, improved buffering between the street and its adjacent industrial use, and an enhanced visual environment, including a view of the Walt Whitman Bridge as a reminder of the area's proximity to the Delaware River. The second looks at alternatives for redeveloping a classic greyfield, the almost-vacant Woodbury Heights Plaza along Route 45 in Woodbury Heights.

### **Case Study #1: Potential Improvements on King Street in Gloucester City**

#### ***The Existing Site***

The waterfront area in Gloucester City has been rapidly revitalizing in recent years, with newly renovated residences, shops, and restaurants as well as a new streetscape along King Street. Proprietor's Park, at the corner of King Street and Jersey Avenue, for example, was recently improved, and the City has plans to improve and use the old Coast Guard base, which it currently leases to the Holt Corporation. The historic Millhouses, located on the west side of King Street, were originally built by a local mill owner in the 1840's. In 1997, utilizing funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, Gloucester City rehabilitated 17 historically significant but deteriorating units and constructed 12 new units. As a result of these activities, the area has become increasingly attractive as a place in which to live and to invest.

Gloucester City, however, is physically separated from one of its greatest assets - the Delaware River - by Holt's large shipping and trucking facility on Ellis Street. Although it is possible to see the Walt Whitman Bridge in the background, the dominant view in many places is of stacked storage and shipping containers. In addition, the area has limited links to the adjacent region, which may be a constraint to future economic growth. An open but landscaped parking lot, with approximately 55 spaces, has recently been built on King Street, between the fire house and the Mill Houses. Although this lot is useful at certain times for nearby businesses, it is seldom if ever used to its full capacity.

#### ***Intentions and Principles***

The continued revitalization of older first generation communities in New Jersey requires the creation of new opportunities for both residential and retail development. It also

requires the provision of sufficient (but not too much) parking and an overall visually attractive environment. Each community and each individual situation within those communities is different, but seven principles can be applied to each of them:

- Any available open land (including portions of large, under-utilized parking lots) should be considered for new development.
- New developments should include a mix of uses, such as residential and retail.
- New buildings should be at a scale and size that is compatible with the existing town fabric, especially if the community is already an attractive place.
- Adequate parking must be provided, but the parking areas should not dominate the appearance of the shopping and mixed-use areas.
- Landscaping and careful building placement should be used to screen views of valuable but unsightly properties, so that the quality of the downtown or shopping area is not compromised and remains attractive to residents and visitors.
- Streetscaping - street trees, sidewalk paving, attractive street lighting, and clearly delineated crosswalks - can greatly improve the shopping and living experience.
- Added linkages to the surrounding neighborhoods and region can be created through the addition of bikeways. Well-planned systems of bikeways have been shown to have significant economic impact on communities, especially if no additional roadway connections can be created. Bicyclists will stop and become shoppers, and biking activity in general adds liveliness and an overall positive quality to the nature of the town and the area.

### ***Alternative Development and Design***

As shown on the “King Street Revisited” illustration, a new row of residences similar in design to the existing Mill Houses has been developed on a portion of the existing parking lot. These residences will create a complete and tree-shaded residential place on that neighborhood block, add value and life to King Street, and help screen the view of the Holt shipping containers across Ellis Street. Since they are located in a revitalizing section of the community, these residences should include added amenities such as bay windows, balconies, and fireplaces, to make them attractive to prospective buyers.

The parking lot itself can be redesigned to include the same number of spaces as before by reducing the landscaped area somewhat and adding a brick screen wall with ornamental curves that would contain the otherwise open parking lot. Added trees here and on Ellis Street coupled with the new brick wall would completely screen the view of the shipping containers, while preserving the grand vista of the Walt Whitman Bridge overhead.

**Figure N: King Street Today**



**Figure O: King Street Revisited**



Small retail can also be included that would add life to that side of the street. A tall, lively architectural structure at the corner of the parking lot, for example, could be large enough to sell coffee, newspapers and the like. The end house at the corner of Hudson and King Streets could also include a shop on the ground floor, with an awning and a small sign.

King Street itself is wide enough to accommodate bikeways on either side of the street, which would add activity and connect the street, the nearby marina, and the entire waterfront area to the surrounding neighborhoods and region.

## Case Study #2: Transforming a Greyfield: Redevelopment Alternative for the Woodbury Heights Plaza, Woodbury Heights, New Jersey

### *The Existing Site*

This highway commercial property consists of a large empty retail space that once housed a Caldor Department Store, one other large anchor (first a grocery store, and later the Rickels Home Improvement Center), and two smaller commercial uses. The only existing business in the Plaza is a small pizzeria located at the building's northernmost end; the County Board of Elections is also leasing storage space in the building. The building is set far back from the highway behind an expansive parking lot, with no landscaping. The commercial property is surrounded by medium-sized single family suburban homes on modest lots. A small, recently-renovated bank building with a drive-up window is located on a separate parcel at one corner of the site, adjacent to Alliance Street.

Access to the site has always been difficult. Route 45 includes a grass center planting strip, and neither left turns out of the site to go south nor left turns into the site from southbound Route 45 are allowed. Traffic coming from the north must therefore pass the property and access it by using a jug-handle at the next traffic light. The only alternative site access encourages traffic to pass through the residential neighborhoods in order to reach the nearest signalized intersection.

**Figure P: The Woodbury Heights Plaza (Caldor Site), Woodbury Heights, New Jersey**



These older greyfield sites often represent the only large properties available for redevelopment in first generation suburbs. Some communities have been successful in attracting new big-box anchors; Walmart, for example, is redeveloping the old Black Horse Shopping Center along Route 30 in Audubon Borough. In Woodbury Heights, developers have submitted a preliminary proposal to re-use the existing Caldor site for another retail use (a grocery store). Whether the existing “big box” retail center is re-used as is or is demolished to make room for new development, this site offers the promise of expanding the borough’s tax base. This case study is presented as an alternative to re-using the existing building, instead envisioning what might be developed if the building were demolished and the entire property was redesigned. The underlying concept could be applied to any one of the numerous greyfield sites that litter older suburban communities throughout the Delaware Valley region.

### ***Intentions and Principles***

Abandoned and under-utilized strip-type highway retail sites are becoming increasingly common in New Jersey and across the United States. These greyfields reflect the possible destiny of similar suburban areas that have developed under the principals of suburban sprawl, fueled by the dominance of highways and the automobile. Four key principles for the rebuilding and transformation of such failed conditions are:

- Buildings should be located so they front on the highway, making the businesses the dominant visual feature rather than the parked cars.
- It should be possible and comfortable to walk or take public transportation to the development. This principle suggests that a handsomely landscaped front should be incorporated in a way which permits pleasant and attractive views of the businesses but also accommodates convenient driving on the roadway.
- Developments should include a mix of uses, to assure the continued vitality of the place. Large single-use developments have been the source of failure, and are incompatible with adjacent neighborhoods.
- In addition to providing a mix of uses, developments can be integrated into adjoining residential neighborhoods by landscaping and screening parking lots, designing buildings that appear similar in size and scale to other nearby uses, and routing various traffic patterns through the site in such a way that through movements on residential streets are avoided whenever possible.

### ***Alternative Development, Plan and Design***

As indicated on the site plan, three medium-sized office buildings (three stories each, with approximately 12,000 square feet per floor offering a combined total of about 100,000 square feet of space) are located at the front of the site facing Route 45. They are slightly set back from the highway, with a landscape that consists of clusters of high branching

deciduous trees plus grass, flowers, and shrubs. These buildings could contain a mix of professional uses (such as medical professionals, lawyers, accountants and consultants) similar to those that have been successful in other locations along the Route 45 corridor, despite similar difficulties with site access. Creating a mix of smaller, destination-oriented service uses will help to mitigate the access problems encountered in the past by larger, single-use retail outlets, which are far more reliant on attracting pass-by traffic.

Behind these office buildings are four separate parking lots, each contained by surrounding trees that give the impression of individual landscaped “rooms” and avoid the creation of large open black top areas. Automobile access to the lots and office buildings is via an internal driveway that links the two adjacent streets (Alliance and Moore Streets). The parking is therefore shielded from the adjacent neighborhoods, and driving access does not pass any residences. The site includes an entrance directly off of Route 45 which, with a small but distinct and memorable sign, acts as a symbolic gateway into the site. Smaller buildings are located at the back of the site which could contain a mix of uses: small and medium-sized offices, live/work units, or higher density residential units with in-home offices.

**Figure Q: A New Plan for the Woodbury Heights Plaza**





**Figure R: Transforming a Greyfield: the Woodbury Heights Plaza Today**



**Figure S: The Site After Demolition and Transformation**



These uses and buildings, which require only small shared parking areas and generate relatively little traffic, are compatible with the single-family residences behind them. A separate private driveway serves these buildings; leaving this driveway private will discourage pass-through traffic into the surrounding neighborhoods.

The design of the front landscape is shown to include a walkway that parallels Route 45, which will permit and encourage pedestrian activity between the various commercial uses in the area. Also shown is a pull-off lane and shelter for the New Jersey Transit bus route which already operates along the corridor, which will permit employees and clients to use public transportation.

The architecture of all of the buildings should have characteristics that evoke the residential scale of the nearby neighborhoods. Details include small overall dimensions, leaving no long, unrelieved walls; the general use of brick, similar to what was used on the renovated bank building on the corner; separated windows divided into smaller panes; sloped roofs; and other design elements, such as cupolas, skylights, and small bays.

## **Summary**

These two case studies illustrate what could be accomplished in older first generation communities despite the limited land available in many of these communities. Utilizing available land to its maximum potential, mixing uses, adhering to sensitive design principles, paying attention to views, and providing adequate (but not too much) parking can result in the addition of valuable ratables, jobs, and services while also complementing and enhancing existing residential neighborhoods and downtowns in these older communities.

The intent of this study is to provide local and county officials with a useful summary of area opportunities, challenges and recommended strategies to achieve change. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission hopes that a partnership of county and local officials, with the assistance of state and federal resources and guidance, will provide a catalyst that will result in an enhanced quality of life for current and future residents of the Camden and Gloucester County study areas.

**Title of Report:**     **The Future of First Generation Suburbs: Putting Principle into Practice**  
                              ***An Assessment of Ten First Generation Communities in Camden and Gloucester Counties, New Jersey***

---

**Publication No.:**   03028

**Date Published:**   March 2004

**Geographic Area Covered:**     National Park, Wenonah, Westville, Woodbury Heights and Woodbury City in Gloucester County, New Jersey; and Audubon, Audubon Park, Brooklawn, Gloucester City and Mt. Ephraim in Camden County, New Jersey.

**Key Words:**           “First Generation” suburbs, inner ring communities, z-score, regional tax-base sharing, intermunicipal cooperation, greyfields

**ABSTRACT:**

In December 1998 DVRPC released a report entitled *The Future of First Generation Suburbs in the Delaware Valley*, which defined the economic disadvantages facing older suburbs. The term “first generation suburb” generally refers to the earliest townships and boroughs to develop outside a region’s central city. A second report, published in August 2000, assessed six municipalities that comprise the William Penn School District in Delaware County, an area characteristic of the region’s first generation communities.

The current study documents demographic and socio-economic conditions in ten first generation communities in Camden and Gloucester counties; identifies the study area’s challenges and opportunities; and presents recommendations for revitalization, including broad regional strategies, intermunicipal cooperation and coalition building, and local initiatives. Two case studies are also presented which illustrate potential approaches for addressing problems common in first generation communities: revitalizing an existing residential street to enhance the visual environment and provide buffering between the street and adjacent industrial uses (King Street in Gloucester City) and the redevelopment of a greyfield (the Woodbury Heights Plaza in Woodbury Heights).

---

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor — The Bourse Building  
111 South Independence Mall East  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-2582

Phone:           215-592-1800  
Fax:             215-592-9125  
Internet:        www.dvrpc.org

Staff contact:   Mary E. Bell  
Direct phone:   215-238-2841  
E-mail:          mbell@dvrpc.org



**Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission**

**The Bourse Building  
111 South Independence Mall East  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-2582  
215.592.1800  
[www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)**



**Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission**

**The Bourse Building  
111 South Independence Mall East  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-2582  
215.592.1800  
[www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)**

DRAFT

# First Generation Suburbs: Putting Principle into Practice

*An Assessment of Ten First Generation Communities  
in Camden and Gloucester Counties, New Jersey*



Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission