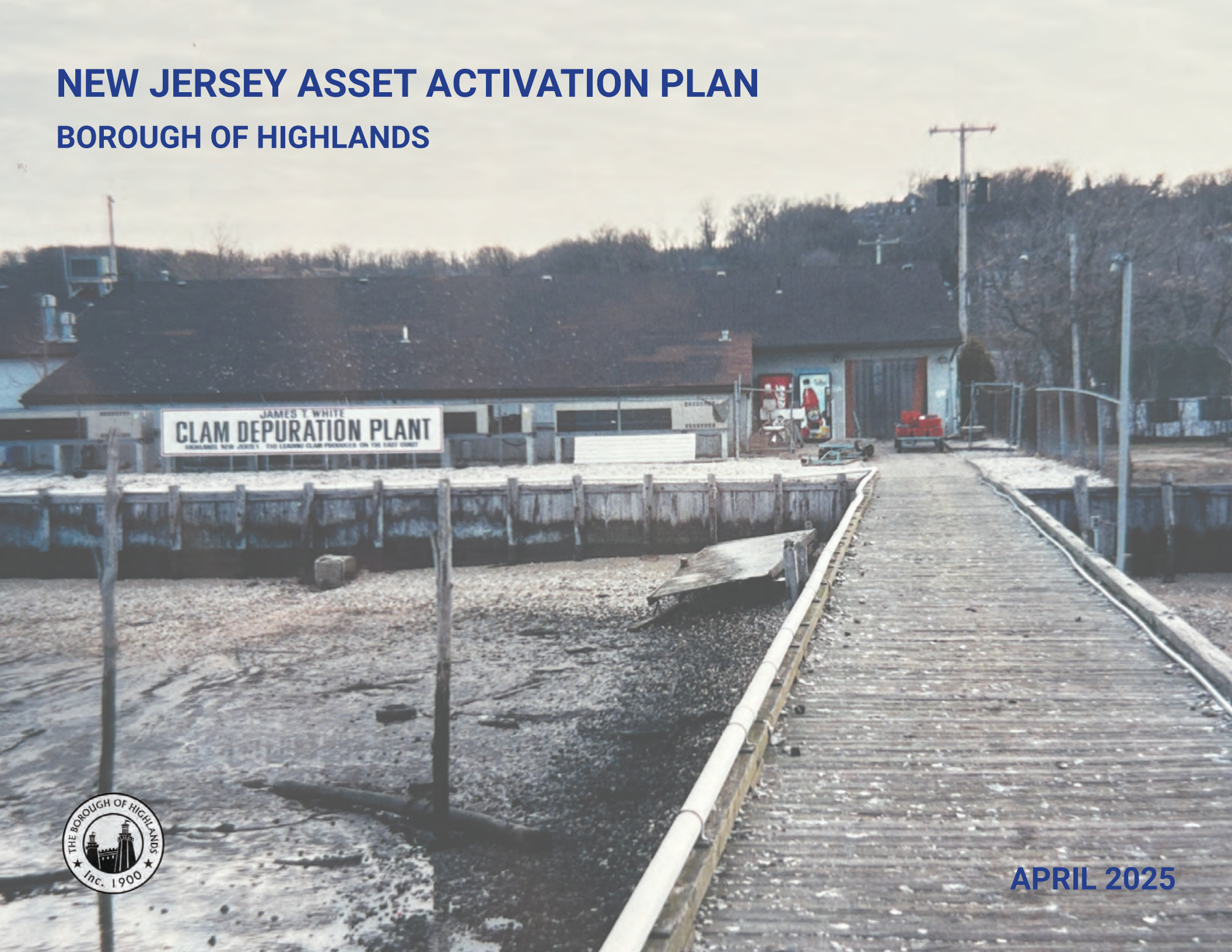
NEW JERSEY ASSET ACTIVATION PLAN

BOROUGH OF HIGHLANDS



APRIL 2025

NEW JERSEY ASSET ACTIVATION PLAN

Borough of Highlands, New Jersey

April 16, 2025

Prepared By:

Heyer, Gruel & Associates
Community Planning Consultants
236 Broad Street, Red Bank, NJ 07701
(732) 741-2900

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

Susan S. Gruel, P.P. #1955

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Borough of Highlands Council Members

Mayor Carolyn Broullon
Council President Jo-Anne Olszewski
Councilmember Donald Melnyk
Councilmember Karen Chelak
Councilmember Leo Cervantes

Clam Plant Steering Committee

Carolyn Broullon, Mayor
Jo-Anne Olszewski, Council President
Mike Muscillo, Borough Administrator
Kathleen Shaw, CRS Coordinator
Steve Winters, Construction Official
Luke Jenks, Local Clammer
Susan Gruel, Planner
Kevin McCarthy, HHRS
Carla Cefalo, HBP
Minka Sendich, NPS
Ann Petersen, NOAA
Diana Burich, NJ Sea Grant
Peter Rowe, NJ Sea Grant
Tim Dillingham, Littoral Society
Rutgers Bloustein
Tracey Mulvane, Monmouth University
Tracey Abby White, Brookdale Community College

Heyer, Gruel & Associates

Susan Gruel, PP
Megan Adam, Associate Planner
Gabrielle Thurm, Associate Planner

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Image Source: National Fisherman

INTRODUCTION

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The Borough of Highlands, New Jersey received an Asset Activation Grant from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) in September of 2024, to redesign the site of the Borough's James T. (JT) White Shellfish Plant to accommodate a more efficient depuration facility, as well as a new marine education/research center and a historical museum. Operating as one of the State's two active clam depuration facilities, the JT White Plant harvests clams and purifies them on-site, in accordance with State standards.

Maintaining the facility's operations preserves a critical site of maritime history in the Borough. Further, the introduction of an educational and research component to the site provides a designated space to highlight the heritage of clamming and conservation efforts within the Bayshore Region (spanning from the City of South Amboy to the Borough). The Plant's commitment to properly purifying clams from the Raritan and Sandy Hook Bays has attracted stakeholders and educational institutions who are dedicated to maintaining healthy coastal ecosystems. Collaborations between these entities will foster an increased public awareness and respect for marine life, and also create diverse workforce development opportunities for students and scientists.

The increased utilization of the site for public education and public access elevates the JT White Shellfish Plant's commitment to sustainable aquaculture. Further, it also complements the Borough's recent downtown redevelopment efforts along Bay Avenue, and long-term commitment to local businesses and operations. This Plan will establish the Plant as a unique regional destination, and offer connections to the industries of tourism, public recreation, and environmental sustainability.

Source: Northshore Magazine

SITE HISTORY

SITE HISTORY

Clamming in the Borough of Highlands began during the times of its first settlers, and continues to serve as a significant industry to this day. The clamming industry has thrived within the Raritan and Sandy Hook Bays for years due to a combination of factors, including water depth, temperature, salinity, and sediments. Borough records and accounts from the mid-20th century unveil that it was not uncommon for several generations of clammers to make their living and reside in Highlands.

The first depuration plant in the Borough opened in 1974, with a total of $50,000 of public money received by the lobbying efforts of the Baymen's Protective Association (BPA). The BPA, at the time, was a loose collective of North Jersey clammers. In addition to maintaining the Borough's clamming legacy, the BPA viewed the depuration operations as a solution to keep up with heightened health standards for shellfish distribution, and rising concerns over water pollution. The facility closed in the mid-1980s, when the required health standards could not be met.

A turnaround for the Highlands clamming industry occurred in the early 1990s, when James T. White, a clammer, teacher, and former Borough Mayor, received a $1.3 million grant from Port Authority of NY and NJ. The grant agreement, which was executed on July 25, 1991, stated that the site was to only operate as a public nonprofit clam depuration facility. The existing Plant opened three years later in 1994 on a Borough-owned parcel, after struggling with grant money management due to White's death.

Conflicts with private management during this time led the BPA to become a nonprofit organization in 1998. The BPA has overseen the operations of the JT White Shellfish Plant Inc. (its processing entity/management company) for the past 27 years. In turn, JT White Shellfish Plant Inc. sells its product to Certified Clam Corporation (the wholesaler), which sells to local restaurants and other wholesalers. The most recent lease agreement between the Borough and the BPA was renewed on December 21, 2016 (See Borough Ordinance 0-16-28). The lease agreement includes an initial term of 10 years, with options to renew for three (3) additional terms of five (5) years each (i.e., maximum term of lease of 25 years).

Source: National Fisherman

Source: National Fisherman

EXISTING CONDITIONS

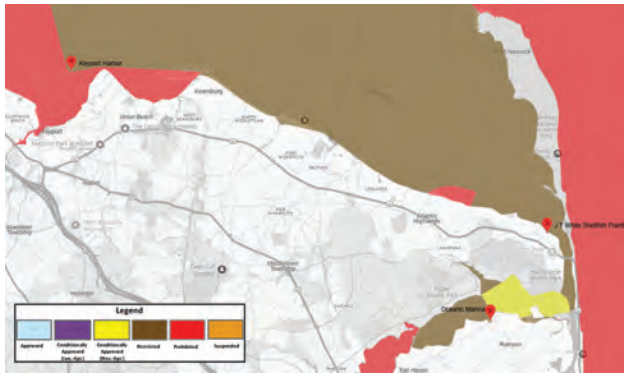
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Surrounding Waterways

The Borough of Highlands is uniquely situated along the Sandy Hook and Raritan Bays (part of the New York-New Jersey Estuary), as well as the Shrewsbury River. The Borough is historically known as a waterfront community with famous seafood restaurants and scenic views of the New York City Skyline and Atlantic Ocean. Additional assets include its local business partnership, proximity to the State Route 36 corridor and the Sandy Hook Gateway National Recreation Area, and nearby access to the beaches, parks, and walking/biking paths (including the Monmouth County Park System's Henry Hudson Trail). The Borough offers direct ferry access into Manhattan, creating an additional appeal for commuters. The Borough's Navesink Twin Lights, a non-operational lighthouse and museum, is listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2006.

Due to water quality, the surrounding Raritan and Sandy Hook Bays are classified by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) as either "Restricted" (highlighted in brown on the following map) or "Prohibited" (highlighted in red) areas for the harvest of shellfish. The harvest of shellfish for human consumption is not permitted in "Prohibited" waters. However, clams may be harvested for human consumption from "Restricted" waters, only when authorized by an issued permit in accordance with N.J.A.C 7:12-9. This section requires these clams to undergo purification prior to sale for human consumption.

The JT White Plant clammers periodically work in areas described as "Conditionally Approved Areas," (highlighted in yellow) which are described by the NJDEP as: "waters which are in the closed status from May 1 through October 31 and are in the open status from November 1 through April 30, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:12-4.1(a)." The following map describes clamming restrictions within the waters surrounding the JT White Plant, and throughout its route from the Oceanic Marina to Keyport Harbor.



Shellfish Growing Water Classification Chart (Data provided by the NJDEP, 2022)

Existing Site Development

The JT White Shellfish Plant is located at 76 5th Street in the Borough and includes Lots 1 and 1.01 of Block 67, and Lots 15 and 15.01 of Block 66. The collective land area outside of the riparian grants is approximately 0.9 acres. The property includes 109.4 feet of frontage along the east side of 5th Street and 401 feet of frontage along the south side of Cedar Street. Both 5th Street (30 feet wide) and Cedar Street (20 feet wide) are one-way public rights-of-way. Further, a row of street parking spaces has been created along the east side of 5th Street.

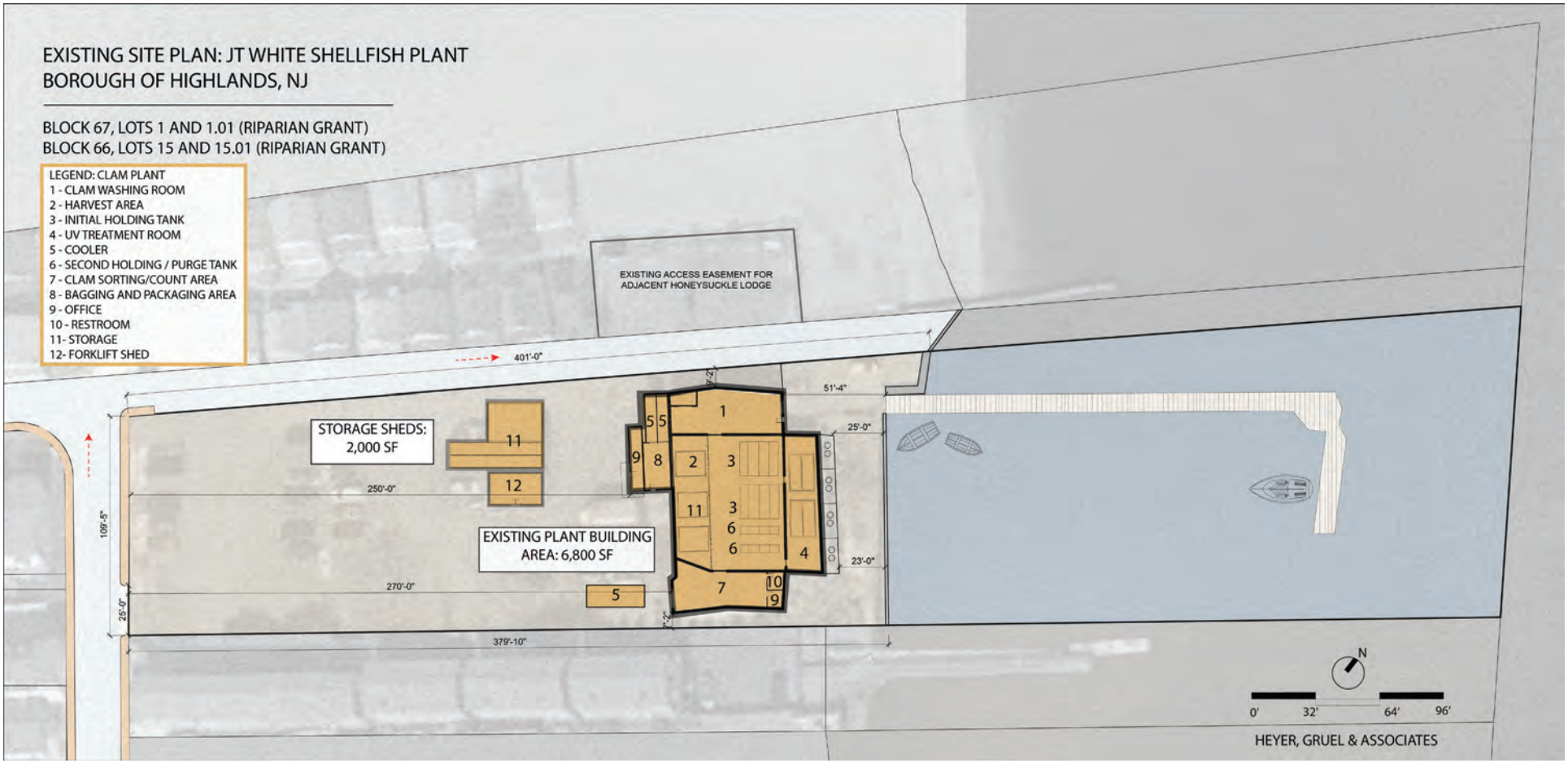
The site is currently developed with the one-story clam depuration facility (with a footprint of approximately 6,800 square feet), as well as a dock and bulkhead along the shoreline. A large gravel parking area accommodates employee vehicles and the Plant's three (3) box trucks. Presently, many staff offices are located within an exterior trailer, and supplies are located within several scattered out buildings throughout the site. Several commercial-grade refrigerated coolers line the dock area and parking lot. Ultimately, the Plant is in need of infrastructural and electrical upgrades, and a new bulkhead. The out buildings make operations less efficient, and a large portion of the site is underutilized. This Plan envisions the implementation of these necessary upgrades and additional public-oriented site improvements.

Zoning

The lots on Block 67 are located within the Borough's WC-2 Waterfront Commercial Zone, while the lots on Block 66 are located within the WT-C Waterfront Commercial Transition Zone. The blocks directly south of the Plant and north of Bay Avenue are zoned for single-family residential use and are almost entirely developed with residences. South of the single-family residential zone, along Bay Avenue, is the Borough's Central Business District (CBD).

The CBD has been the focus of the Borough's redevelopment efforts in recent years, and an amended redevelopment plan was adopted on September 18, 2024. The CBD Redevelopment Plan envisions a walkable, vibrant Bay Avenue corridor with strong connections to the broader Borough community, neighboring municipalities, and the entire Bayshore region. Further, the redevelopment efforts aim to attract additional public and private investment. The Plant is located approximately three blocks from Bay Ave.

Site Aerial Map



Existing Site

Plant Annual Monitoring Data

The JT White Plant's depuration operations promote sustainable practices within the shellfish industry and maintain clamming in the Borough, thus presenting a heightened potential to attract local collaborations and investment. Annual monitoring reports from the Plant state that there is an average yearly harvest of between 20 and 25 million clams, with net sales around $1 million per year. Between 35 and 45 clammers work on the site, with an additional 25 employees working within the plant itself (e.g. operating machines, packaging, shipping, administration). The following table outlines annual monitoring report data for the JT White Plant between 2020 and 2024, including total clams harvested and number of employees.

Plant Annual Monitoring Report Data (2020-2024)						
Clam Types						
	2024	*2023*	*2022*	*2021*	*2020*	*Totals*
Little Neck	*13,458,786*	*11,904,463*	*6,131,804*	*11,358,791*	*12,446,163*	*55,300,007*
Top Neck	*5,553,596*	*6,208,884*	*3,547,257*	*6,569,206*	*4,263,848*	*26,142,791*
Cherry	*2,911,859*	*2,605,368*	*7,775,007*	*2,722,295*	*1,917,886*	*17,932,415*
Chowder	*1,046,272*	*1,134,384*	*3,736,916*	*919,443*	*728,168*	*7,565,183*
Total	*22,970,513*	*21,853,099*	*21,190,984*	*21,569,735*	*19,356,065*	*106,940,396*
Employee Information						
						Average
Working BPA Clammers	*46*	*47*	*42*	*52*	*45*	*47*
Working Street Clammers	*9*	*8*	*11*	*9*	*5*	*8*

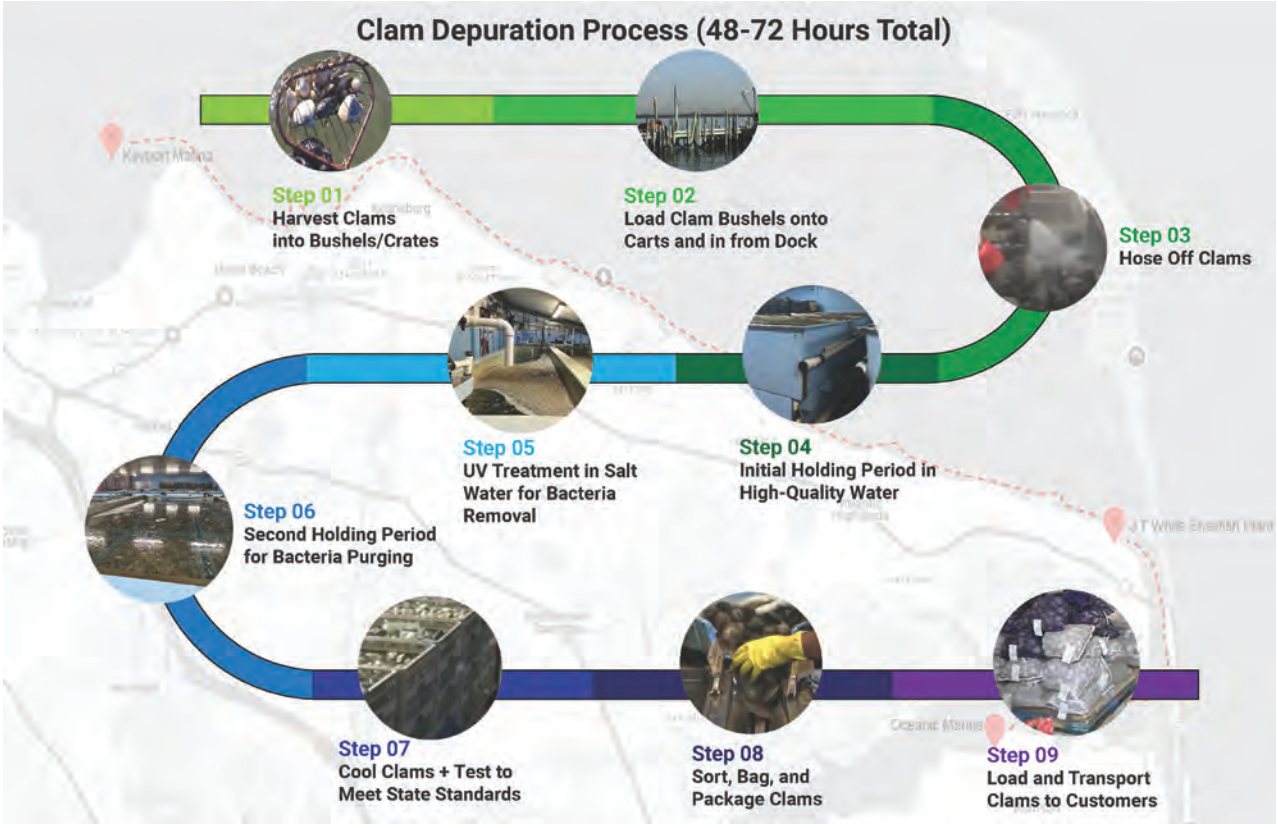
CLAM DEPURATION PROCESS

CLAM DEPURATION PROCESS

According to N.J.A.C. 8:13-2.1, "depuration" is defined as the "process of reducing the pathogenic organisms that may be present in shellstock by using a controlled aquatic environment as the treatment process." As reiterated by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, effective depuration requires the shellfish to be properly handled during harvest and pre-depuration transport and storage. It also requires proper design and operation of the depuration systems to meet the requirements identified above for removal and separation of contaminants.

The operations of a depuration plant are tightly regulated by the NJDEP and the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services. The purpose of the regulations is to prevent the spread of disease, as hard clams, if not properly purified, can pose a significant health risk upon consumption. The regulations that pertain to the construction and operations of a depuration plant include US FDA's HACCP (USFDA 21 CFR 123); Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) requirements; and N.J.S.A. 8:21.

The entire clam depuration process (i.e., from harvesting to total purification) at the JT White Plant takes between 48 and 72 hours. The Plant monitors the oxygen content, pH, and temperatures of the water in its tanks, which must meet the standards of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the State's Department of Health and Division of Fish and Wildlife. The Plant operates 24 hours a day, sending a constant stream of data through closed-circuit cameras to the State. Each day, a private lab tests the Plant's depurated clams, according to State-established testing methods. The following diagram outlines the clam depuration process at the JT White Plant.

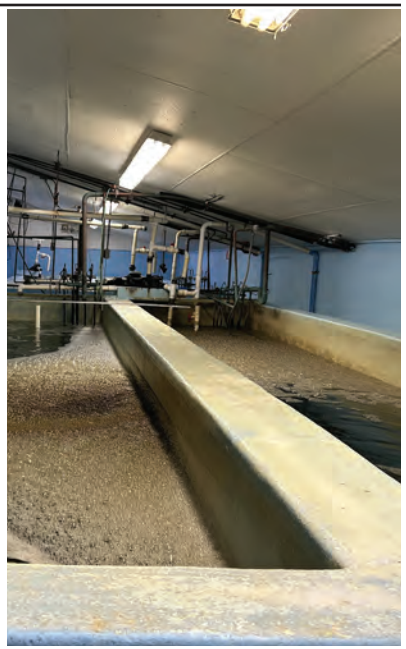


Clam Depuration Process

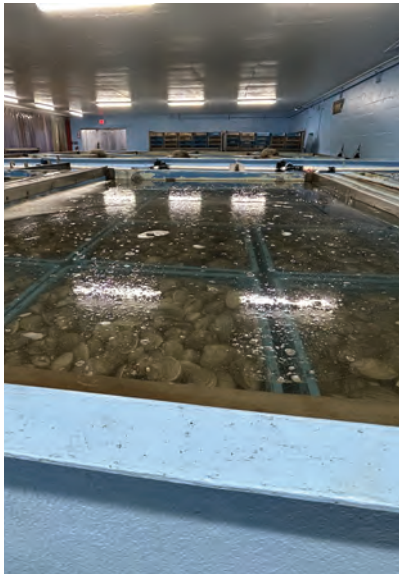
The Plant currently operates with two (2) full depuration systems, which includes a total of eight (8) holding tanks, four (4) UV treatment tanks, and eight (8) post-UV treatment purging tanks which store stacked crates of clams. Each depuration system has a holding capacity of around 200 bushels. Depending on the size of the clam, between 150 and 800 clams can fit in one bushel. However, the Plant is limited to processing a maximum of 240 bushels of clams per day, per State requirements (N.J.A.C 8:13-2.17) and the conditions outlined in its lease with the Borough.

Step 1 - Post-Catch Cleaning

Step 2 - Initial Clam Storage



Step 3 - UV Treatment



Step 4 - Post UV - Clam Purge

Step 5 - Approval & Packaging

Step 6 - Loading & Transport

Image Source: Fun New Jersey

PUBLIC OUTREACH

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Extensive public outreach has been implemented, to gain additional input on the proposed site development. These efforts include the establishment of a Clam Plant Steering Committee. The Committee consists of local clammers, Borough officials, and representatives from the Highlands Business Partnership, local educational institutions (Henry Hudson Regional School, Rutgers University, Monmouth University, Brookdale Community College), and agencies working to preserve and promote wise use of marine ecosystems (NOAA, NJ Sea Grant Consortium, American Littoral Society). Additional efforts include a meeting with the Steering Committee and a public outreach meeting at the Borough Municipal Building.

Clam Plant Steering Committee Meeting

A virtual meeting with the Clam Plant Steering Committee took place on January 23, 2025. All those in attendance were supportive of the project, and reiterated its potential to foster economic and educational growth within the Borough, and eventually into the Bayshore region. Creating a separate building for the educational facility/maritime museum was agreed upon, particularly to avoid interrupting operations of the JT White Plant. Creating new offices for the JT White staff within the education center was discussed and supported, as was the necessity for the new building to be ADA compliant.

Also discussed at the Steering Committee meeting was the site's ability to create workforce development opportunities; its proximity to Henry Hudson Regional School, MAST High School, and several marine educational institutions along Sandy Hook encourage such potential. Further, the development of the site was reinforced as complementary to the envisioned activities within the Borough's Bay Avenue CBD. Utilizing wayfinding signage along this corridor could create connections to both the JT White Plant and Henry Hudson Trail's Popamora Point. See Appendix A for meeting minutes.

Borough of Highlands
Administrative Offices
151 Navesink Avenue, Highlands, NJ 07732
Phone: 732-872-1224
Fax: 732-872-0670

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., the Borough of Highlands will hold and conduct an in-person Public Discussion at the Municipal Building, 151 Navesink Avenue, Highlands, New Jersey 07732, to discuss the concept design and feasibility study for the Clam Depuration Plant located on Fifth Street as part of its New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant award.

Learn how clams are purified! Learn about the clammers, the plant and its history. Please join us for a public discussion on this amazing industry that is right in our backyard and what its possibilities can be for the future.

Public Outreach Meeting

A public outreach meeting was held at the Highlands Borough Municipal Building on February 5, 2025. The public discussion and brainstorming session covered topics including participants' favorite aspects of museums, the incorporation of interactive components into museum education, important considerations for the new education center, and envisioned visitor takeaways. See Appendix B for the public outreach meeting flier.

Those in attendance value museums, particularly their historical components and ability to engage people of all ages. Opportunities for hands-on learning and interactive features were agreed upon as a way to enhance one's educational experience. Such features include screens/videos, pamphlets, posters, and QR codes with links to additional information.

The public discussion reiterated the unique history of both the JT White Plant and the legacy of clamming in the Borough. Therefore, the suggestions were made to create clammer interview videos and segments of the depuration process. The information presented at the on-site education center would not only discuss the importance of estuaries and sustainable aquaculture but also reiterate the value of the Plant's high-quality depuration operations.

Long-term visioning for the site offered at the public outreach meeting included utilizing the education center for academic classes, creating programs that inspire visitors to eat local clams and take a boat out on the water, handing out clam-based recipes, and establishing a designated drop-off point on the site to recycle clam shells.

Envisioned takeaways for visitors to the educational center included understanding the different types of clams, and how clams from the JT White Plant are fresh and depurated sustainably. Further, the education center would underscore the ongoing efforts made by the State and Highlands clammers to work together to regulate the clam population. See Appendix C for minutes from the Public Outreach Meeting.

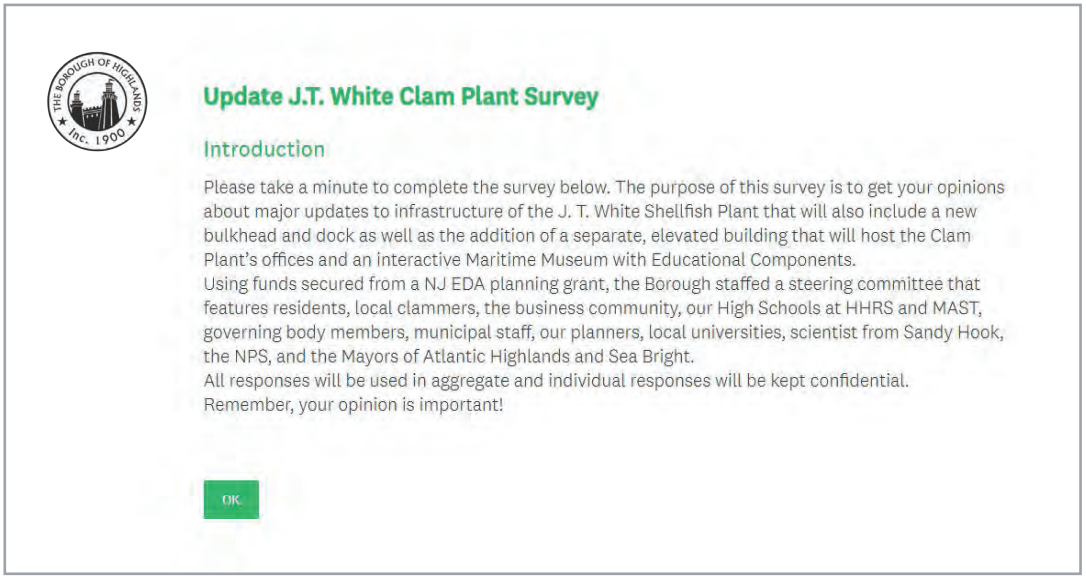
Did you miss the Clam Plant Public Discussion? No worries, you can watch it on our You Tube channel. Go to minute mark 5:30 - 59:30 here: **https://youtu.be/iGrrTMyB1lY**

Also please participate in our online survey here: **https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ClamPlant**

Or scan here:

Public Survey

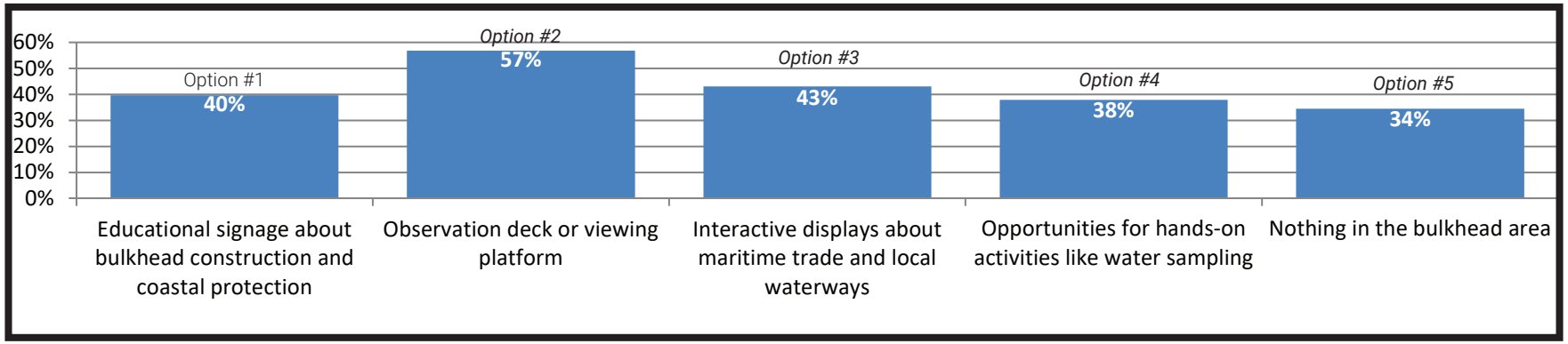
Subsequent to the public outreach meeting, a survey related to the proposed development at the JT White Plant was posted on the Borough Public Notices webpage, as well as its Facebook, Instagram, and X accounts (see Appendix D). A total of 85 respondents answered Question #1 of the survey, 67 respondents answered Questions #2-17, and 27 answered the open-ended Question #18. The key takeaways are outlined below:



JT White Clam Plant Public Survey Responses		
Question	**Prompt**	**Summary of Responses**
1	Which of the following best describes your relationship to Highlands?	• Over 70% of respondents live or work in the Borough. • The remaining respondents are mostly visitors.
2	How familiar are you with our JT White Shellfish Plant?	• Almost half (~47%) of respondents are "very familiar" with the JT White Plant. • **Around 31% of respondents were "not familiar at all."**
3	How interested are you in visiting the J T White Shellfish Plant with an interactive maritime museum that included an educational component?	• A majority of respondents were either "somewhat" or "very interested" in adding an educational museum component to the site (~60%).

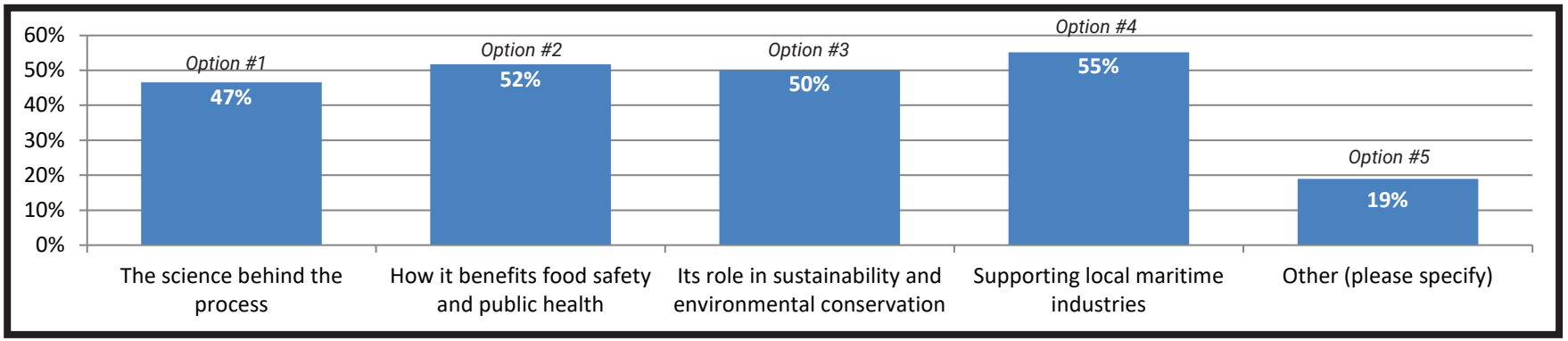
Question	Prompt	Summary of Responses
4	How appealing would the modernized building for clam depuration operations with a separate elevated building for exhibits and educational programs be to you?	• The response selected the most for this question was "very appealing" (35% of respondents), followed by "not appealing at all" (26% of respondents). • Over 20% of respondents would find the creation of the new building "somewhat appealing."
5	How important is it to replace the bulkhead as part of the new J T White Shellfish Plant area's design? (Rate on a scale of 1 = Not important to 5 = Very important)	• The weighted average response to this question was 3.29, indicating replacing the bulkhead was generally "important" to respondents.
6	What features should the bulkhead area include? (Select all that apply)	• Respondents were given the following options: 1. Educational signage about bulkhead construction and coastal protection 2. Observation deck or viewing platform 3. Interactive displays about maritime trade and local waterways 4. Opportunities for hands-on activities like water sampling 5. Nothing in the bulkhead area • **The option with the most votes was Option #2 (57% of respondents).** • **The remaining options were selected with a similar distribution and by at least 20 respondents.**

Preferred Bulkhead Features



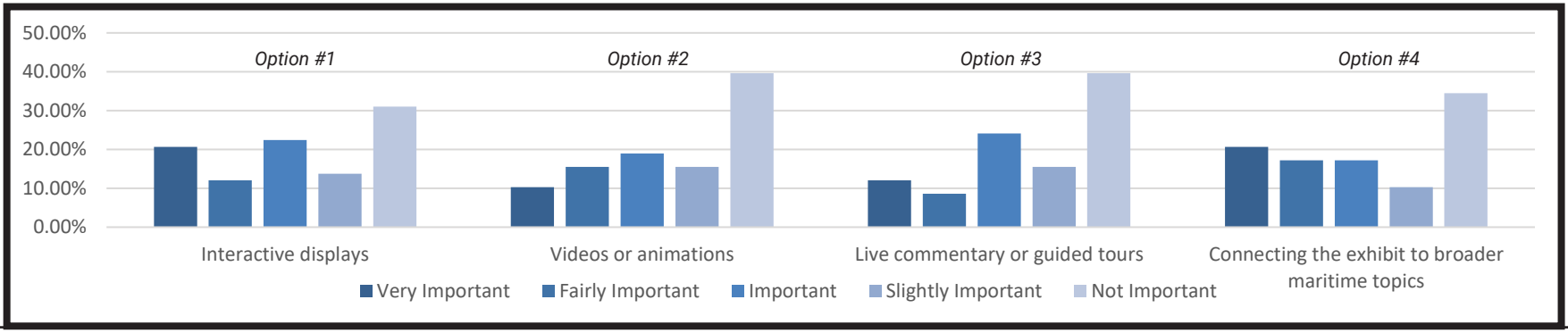
Question	Prompt	**Summary of Responses**
7	How would you feel about exhibits that explain the environmental and community impacts of bulkheads and waterfront structures?	The response selected the most for this question was "very interested" (31% of respondents), followed by "not interested at all" (26% of respondents). Over 17% of respondents would find the creation of the new building "somewhat appealing."
8	How interested would you be in viewing a live clam depuration process and wholesale operation through a glass wall in the building?	• Nearly 60% of respondents were either "somewhat" or "very interested" in the ability to witness the depuration process firsthand. • Around 22% of respondents were "not interested at all.
9	What aspects of the depuration process interest you most? (Select all that apply)	• Respondents were given the following options: 1. The science behind the process 2. How it benefits food safety and public health 3. Its role in sustainability and environmental conservation 4. Supporting local maritime industries 5. Other • **The four options were selected fairly consistently, each receiving a vote from between 45% and 55% of respondents.** • **From the "Other" responses, a majority of comments listed "none".** • **One "Other" response also mentioned the site's context adjacent to a residential neighborhood.**

Interests in the Clam Depuration Process



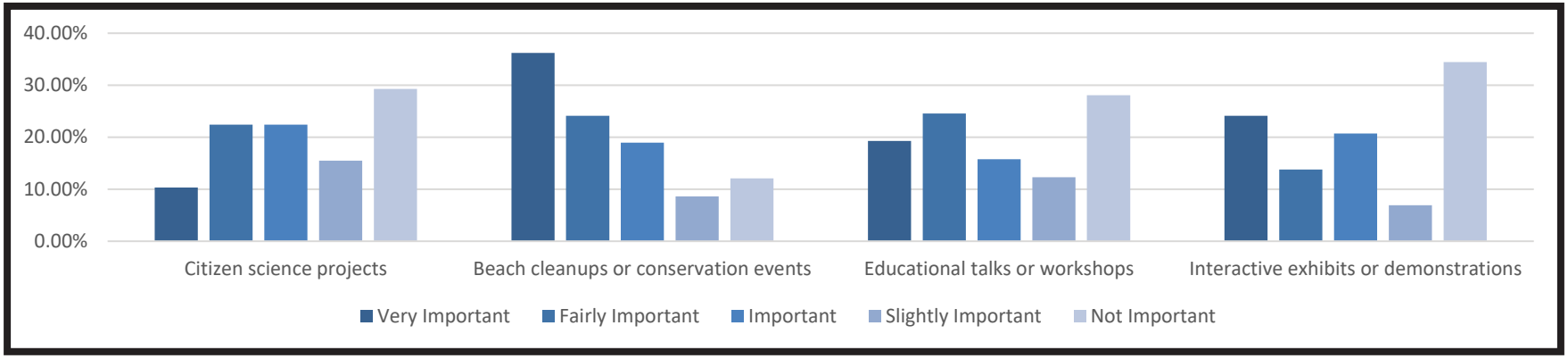
Question	Prompt	**Summary of Responses**
10	How important are the following features for the clam depuration exhibit? (Rate each on a scale of Not important to Very important)	• Respondents were given the following options: 1. Interactive displays explaining the process 2. Videos or animations showing close-up views 3. Live commentary or guided tours 4. Connecting the exhibit to broader maritime topics (e.g., aquaculture, coastal ecosystems) • **The two options with the highest weighted averages were Options #1 and #4.**
11	How valuable would you find partnerships with local organizations (e.g., NOAA, NJ Sea Grant Consortium, American Littoral Society, National Park Service) in enhancing the museum's educational content?	• The weighted average response to this question was 3.31, indicating replacing the local partnerships were overall "valuable" to respondents.
12	How valuable would you find partnerships with local educational facilities (e.g., Henry Hudson Regional School, Marine Academy of Science and Technology, Brookdale Community College, Monmouth University, Rutgers University) in enhancing the museum's educational content?	• The weighted average response to this question was 3.4, indicating replacing the educational partnerships were overall "valuable" to respondents.

Desired Exhibit Features



Question	Prompt	**Summary of Responses**
13	Which types of programming from partner organizations would interest you? (Select all that apply)	• Respondents were given the following options: 1. Citizen science projects 2. Beach cleanups or conservation events 3. Educational talks or workshops 4. Interactive exhibits or demonstrations 5. Other • Of the four options, Options #2 (78%) and #3 (52%) were most popular among respondents. • From the "Other" responses, a majority of comments listed "none". • Some "Other" response included coordinating meet and greet interviews with maritime industry workers.
14	How important are the following features for your experience? (Rate each on a scale of Not Important to Very Important)	• **Respondents were asked to rank the four options from Question #13.** • **Beach cleanups received the most votes as either "fairly" or "very" important (60% of respondents).** • For both the "citizen science projects" and "interactive exhibits or demonstrations" options, the "not important" response was selected the most.
15	How do you prefer to interact with museum exhibits?	• Nearly 70% of respondents voted for a mix of both self-guided experiences and guided tours.

Ideal Site Experiences



Question	Prompt	**Summary of Responses**
16	What emotions or thoughts would you like to take away after visiting? (Select all that apply)	• Respondents were given the following options: 1. Curiosity and inspiration about maritime topics 2. A better understanding of sustainability and conservation 3. A stronger connection to local maritime industries and history 4. A sense of fun and entertainment 5. Other • **Of the four options, Options #3 (60%) and #2 (55%) were most popular among respondents.** • **Some "Other" response included coordinating meet and greet interviews with maritime industry workers.**
17	Would you recommend the J. T. White Shellfish Plant and museum with these features to friends or family?	• Nearly 60% of respondents would either "definitely" or "probably" recommend the Plant and museum to others. • Approximately 9% of respondents were "neutral" to recommend the site.
18	What additional features or exhibits would make this museum more appealing to you?	• Respondents suggested the following: Virtual tours/livestream depuration footage, light food options, Highlands-based events, and even a chance to go clamming.

Takeaway Emotions

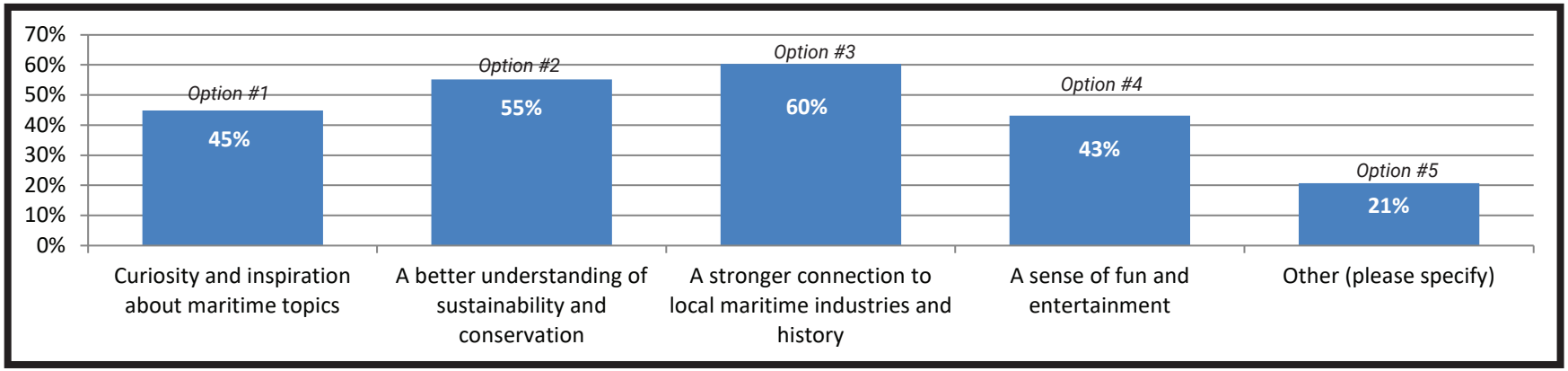


Image Source: Downeast Institute

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

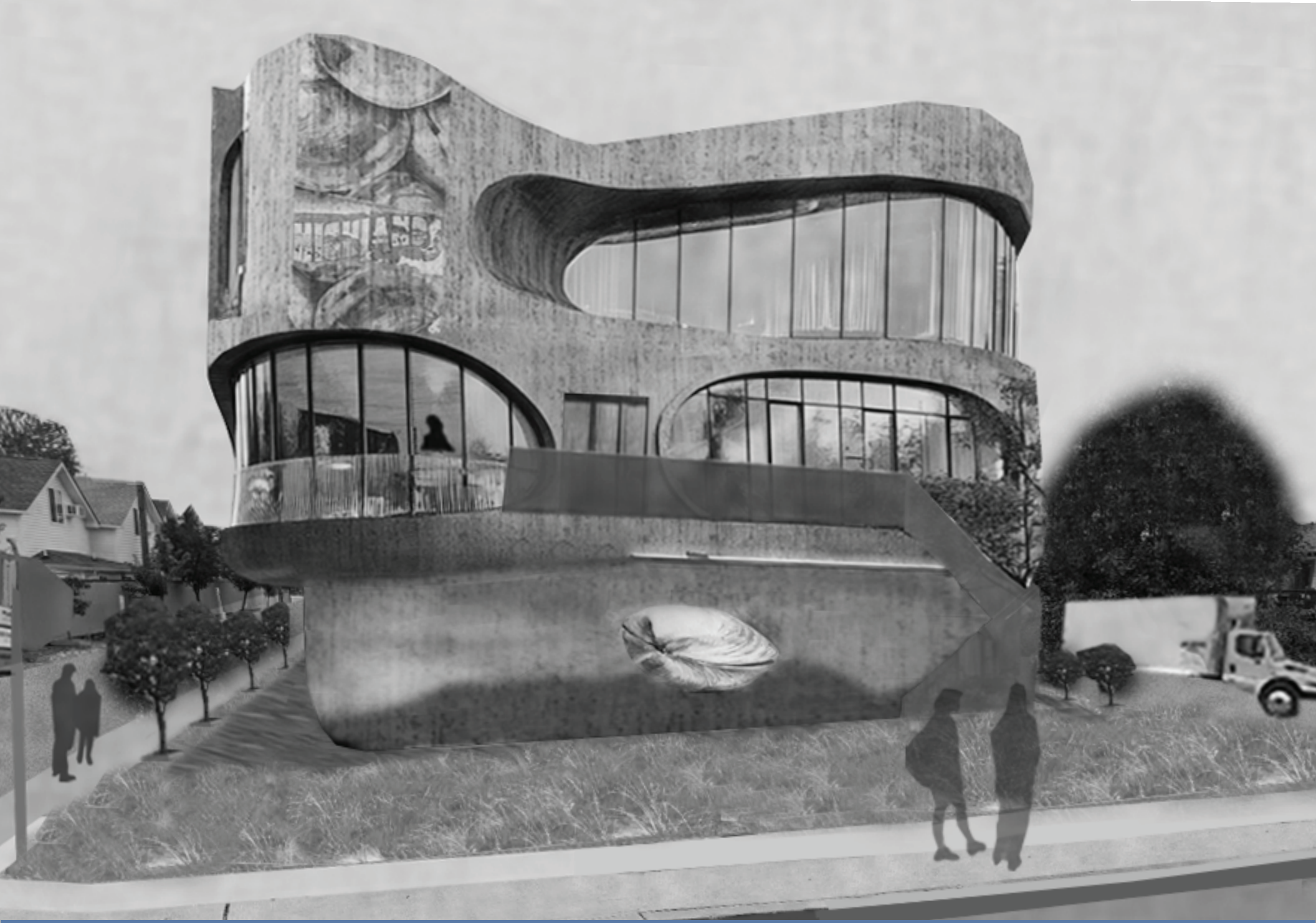
This section of the Plan states general goals and objectives for the future development of the site. Inspired by research and public outreach, the goals and objectives identified are intended to support the sustainable operations and values of the Borough's Baymen and clamming industry, while optimizing the site's unique potential for public education and expanded connections.

The proposed development supports more efficient processes at the Plant, without hindering its full-time operations. Further, the addition of a separate education center / maritime museum will enhance tourism and expand visitors' perspectives on the legacy of clamming in the Borough, and how the Plant has worked for decades to maintain a healthy Raritan Bay.

- **Goal 1: Establish More Efficient Clam Depuration Operations**
  - *Objective 1.1: Provide Needed Upgrades to the Existing Plant*
  - *Objective 1.2: Maintain Depuration Operations within One Space*
- **Goal 2: Preserve the Legacy of the JT White Plant and Clamming in Highlands Borough**
  - *Objective 2.1: Expand the Plant and Construct a New Facility for Educational Uses and a Maritime Museum*
  - *Objective 2.2: Expand the Plant's Connections to Local Residents and Regional Tourists*
  - *Objective 2.3: Establish the JT White Plant as an Indispensable Local Business*

Source: National Fisherman

Source: Barnegat Oyster Collective



CONCEPT DESIGN & PROPOSED SITE IMPROVEMENTS

CONCEPT DESIGN & PROPOSED SITE IMPROVEMENTS

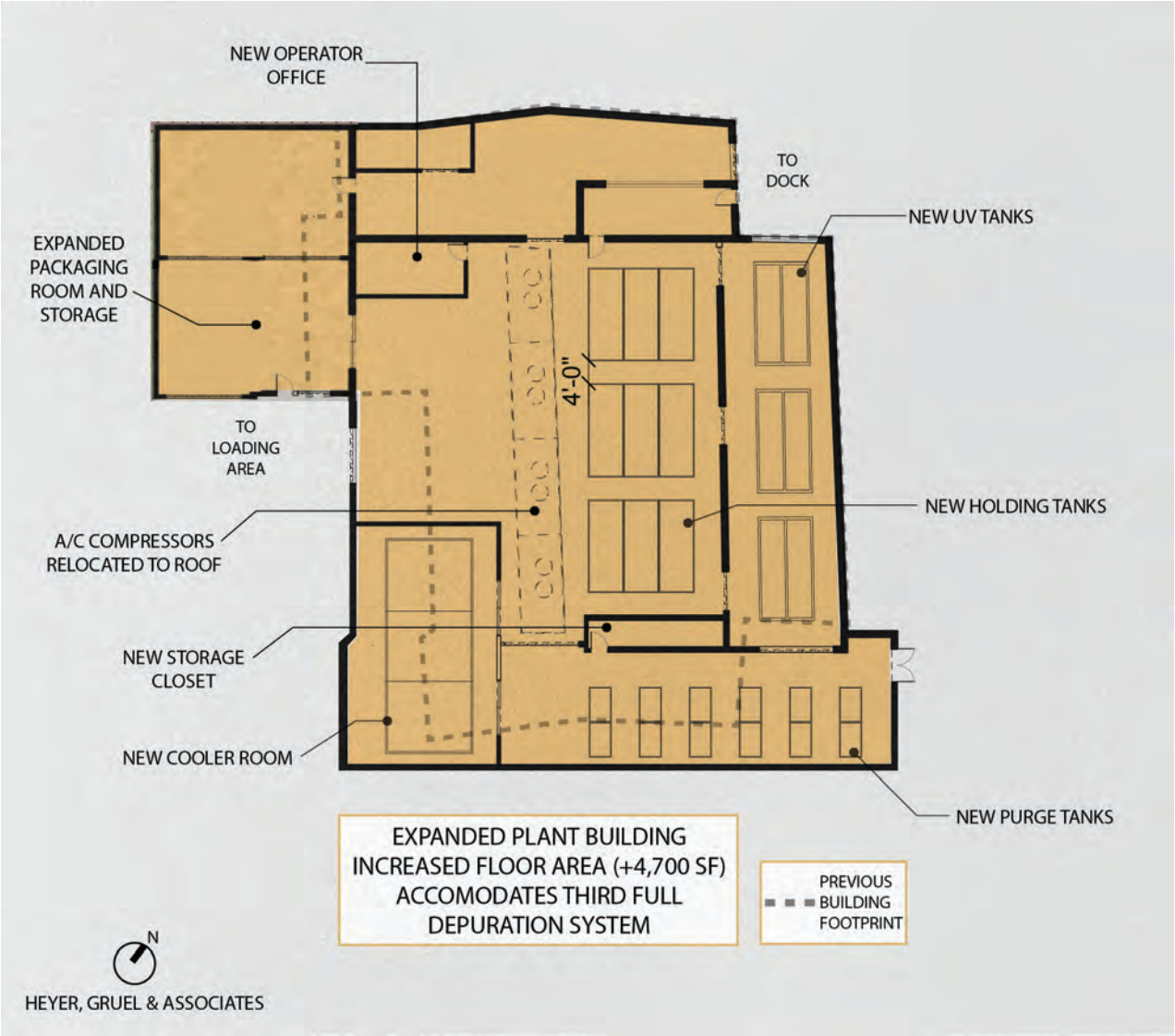
The proposed site improvements include renovating and expanding the existing single-story, 6,800-square-foot clam depuration plant, and constructing a new education/research center/maritime museum building on the site.

Depuration Plant Upgrades

The plant building currently accommodates two (2) full depuration systems, and includes distinct spaces for the washing, holding, UV treatment, sorting, counting, and bagging of the harvested clams.

The proposed plant expansion maintains the building at one story but increases the footprint from 6,800 square feet to approximately 11,500 square feet. This 4,700-square-foot expansion will accommodate a third depuration system within the building; further, it will create a designated cooler room, an expanded packaging room, and additional storage. The plant operator's office will remain in the depuration plant building but be relocated to a different section of the building. The additional employee offices will be relocated to the new education center building.

This expansion of the plant building will maintain the current area of the dock and not alter the existing circulation of freshly caught clams into the facility.



Proposed Site Expansion

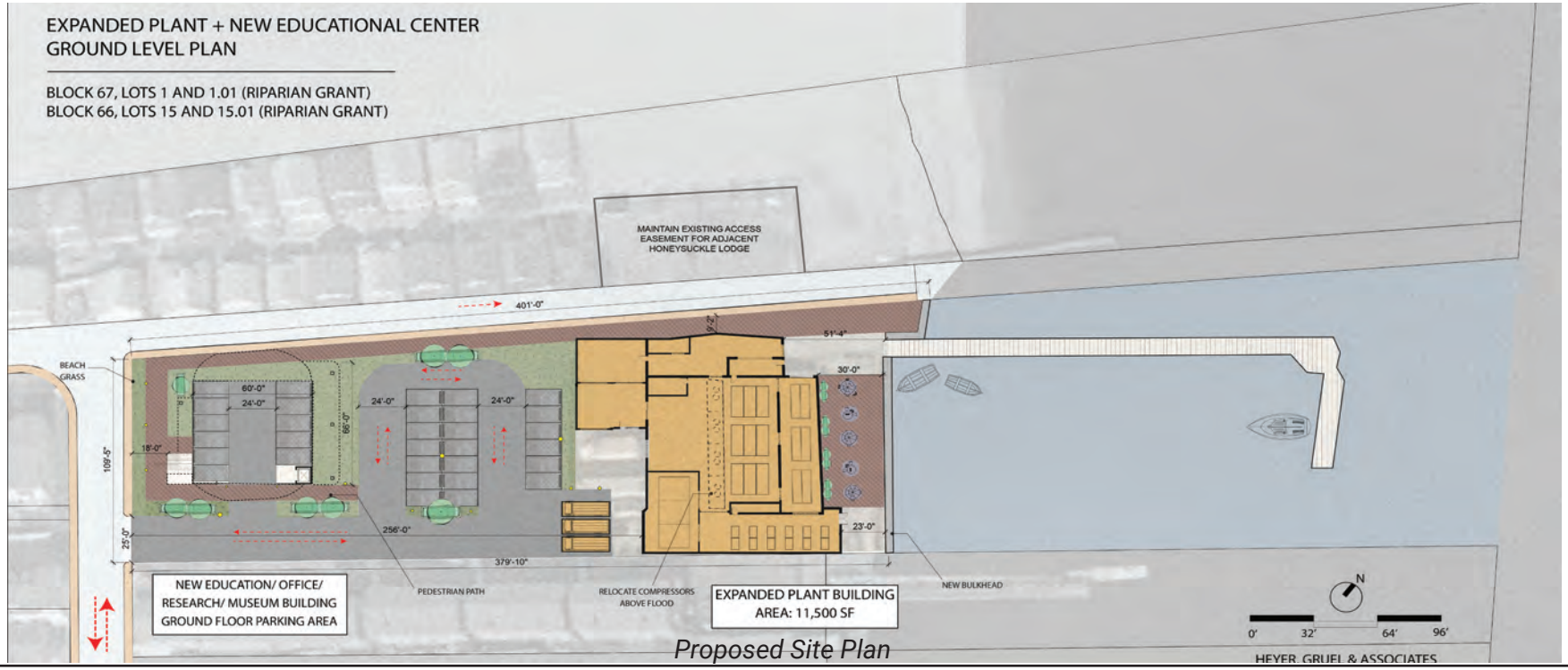
Proposed Site Improvements

The proposed site improvements are centered upon the construction of a new two-story, ADA-accessible educational/research center and museum in the western corner of the site. This new standalone structure will be raised above the design flood elevation. Beneath the raised building will be 11 parking spaces at the ground level and an elevator and stairs that provide access to the first and second levels of the new building.

It is anticipated that the raised first level will include a shared space for the BPA offices and the maritime museum. This level will measure approximately 4,800 square feet in area.

The second level of the new building is planned to contain the educational/research facilities. This level will be lined with historical displays and offer various educational resources related to the JT White Plant, clamming, and ongoing conservation efforts in the Raritan Bay. A section of the second level is proposed to be dedicated to live depuration demonstrations. Visitor balconies overlooking the Plant building and docks will be located on both levels. The potential of a third level should be explored.

Additional site improvements include landscaping along the lot's street frontages and creating more on-site parking spaces. Driveway aisles will be configured to accommodate two-way traffic to/from 5th Street, and a separate parking area will be created for the Plant's box trucks. An additional 20 parking spaces will be created on the site, thus accommodating a total of 31 parking spaces including the spaces underneath the new building.



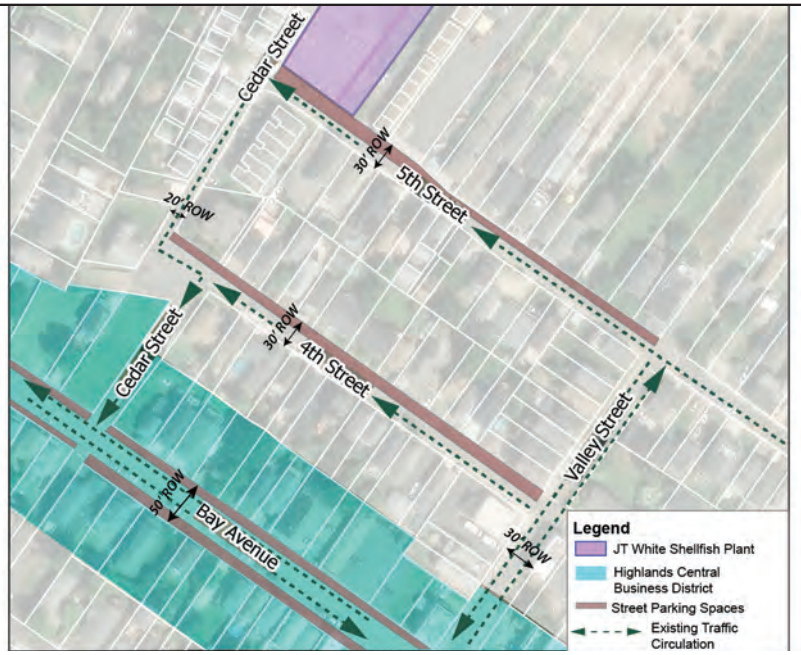
Proposed Site Plan

Site Rendering

Traffic Circulation

To access the JT White Plant site from Bay Avenue, current traffic patterns circulate vehicles along Valley Street, then to Fifth Street. Exiting back to Bay Avenue involves looping around the entire block first and traveling along Cedar Street.

This Plan envisions the alteration of the traffic flow along both 5th Street and Cedar Street. Establishing 5th Street as a two-way roadway would support the increased traffic to the site for the educational center. Further, reversing the redirection of traffic along Cedar Street will support the flow of both pedestrians and vehicles to the Plant directly from Bay Avenue. This reconfiguration would support the creation of a public "gateway" lot between the CBD and JT White Plant site.

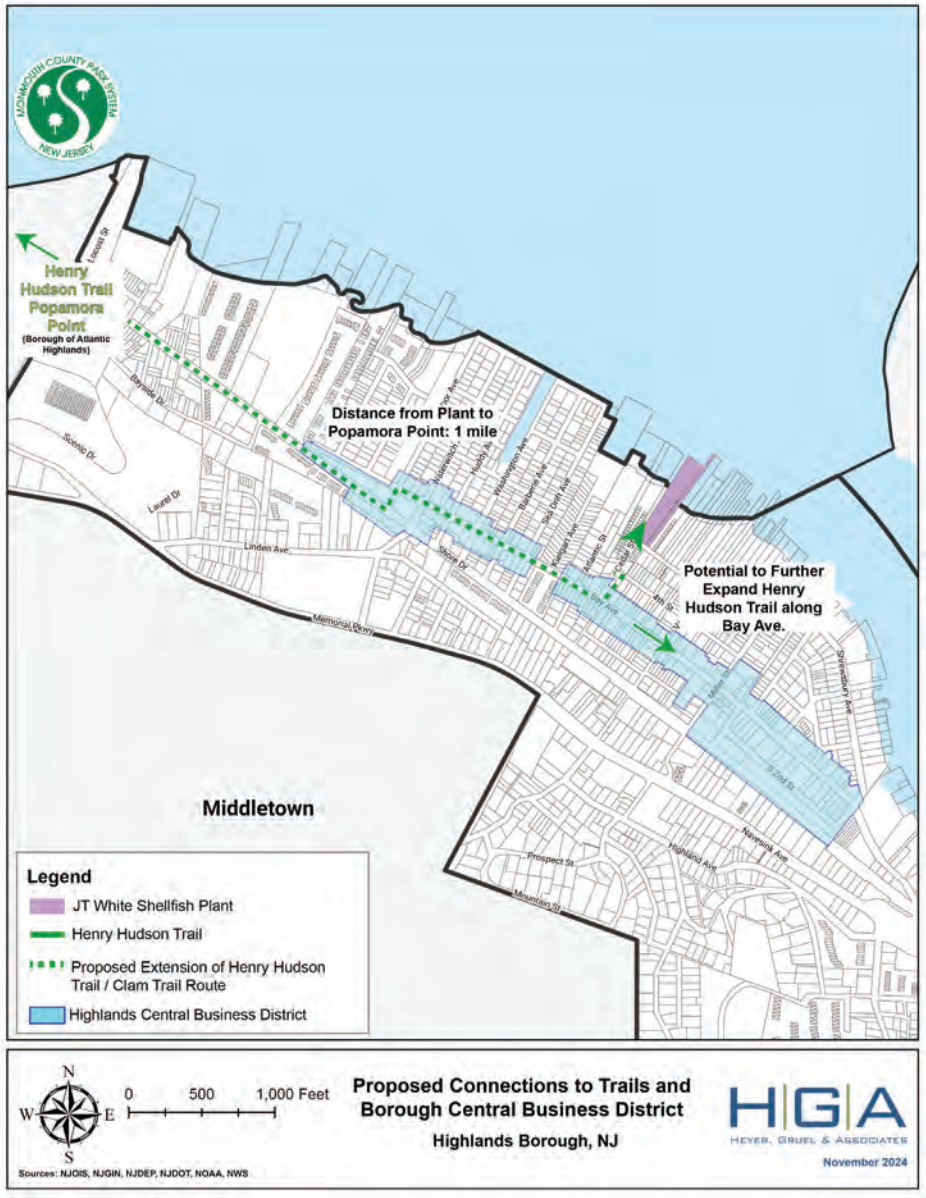


Existing Block Circulation Map

Proposed Block Circulation Map

The gateway would function as a public space and include features related to a "Highlands Borough Clam Trail." Long Beach Island in New Jersey has its own "Clam Trail," which consists of designated spots with clam statues and interesting facts about the Barnegat Bay Watershed (includes Barnegat Bay, Manahawkin Bay and Little Egg Harbor Bay). The Long Beach Island Clam Trail is sponsored by ReClam the Bay, a local, non-profit organization that promotes environmental involvement and constructive education. This organization grows and maintains millions of baby clams and oysters in the Barnegat Bay Watershed.

The dual function of the Long Beach Island Clam Trail to promote environmental stewardship and increase tourism in the area serves as a strong precedent for the site and surrounding blocks. A potential Highlands Borough Clam Trail could connect to additional regional trails and monuments, such as the Henry Hudson Trail.



Map of Proposed Borough Connections

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

This Plan envisions a more efficient clam depuration plant, in tandem with a new on-site educational/maritime museum facility that will attract a wide range of visitors to the site. The strategies included in the following Implementation Matrix address development at several scales, including within the JT White Plant, the new educational/museum facility, the Borough's downtown CBD, and the Bayshore Region. The objectives are categorized into three (3) timeframes: short term (1-2 years), medium term (3-5 years), and long term (5+ years).

Source: Edible Jersey

Goal 1: Establish More Efficient Clam Depuration Operations		
Objective 1.1: Provide Needed Upgrades to the Existing Plant		
	Responsible Organization(s)	**Timeframe**
1.1.1 – Upgrade dock and bulkhead.	Borough of Highlands + BPA	Short
1.1.2 – Upgrade the building's electrical systems.	Borough of Highlands + BPA	Short
1.1.3 – Upgrade refrigerated units.	Borough of Highlands + BPA	Short
1.1.4 – Upgrade A/C condensers nearing the end of their life cycle.	Borough of Highlands + BPA	Short
1.1.5 – Create a distinct clam cooling room (not just behind curtains).	Borough of Highlands + BPA	Short
Objective 1.2: Maintain Depuration Operations within One Space		
	Responsible Organization(s)	**Timeframe**
1.2.1 – Eliminate all out buildings on the site.	Borough of Highlands + BPA	Medium
1.2.2 – Expand the existing building to accommodate additional storage and a third depuration system.	Borough of Highlands + BPA	Medium

Goal 2: Preserve the Legacy of the JT White Plant and Clamming in Highlands Borough		
Objective 2.1: Expand the Plant and Construct a New Facility for Educational Uses		
	Responsible Organization(s)	**Timeframe**
2.1.1 – Create an on-site educational center for the public and local students centered around clam depuration and clamming in the Region.	Borough of Highlands + Local Educational Institutions (Henry Hudson Regional School, Rutgers University, Monmouth University, Brookdale Community College) + Marine Agencies (NOAA, NJ Sea Grant Consortium, American Littoral Society)	Medium
2.1.2 – Create opportunities and programs for economic and workforce development (clamming industry, marine sciences, environmental conservation).	BPA + Local Educational Institutions + Marine Agencies	Short
Objective 2.2: Expand the Plant's Connections to Local Residents and Regional Tourists		
	Responsible Organization(s)	**Timeframe**
2.2.1. – Create an interactive maritime museum that utilizes various media.	Borough of Highlands + BPA	Medium
2.2.2 – Involve the public and local students in establishing content for the museum (e.g., videos, clammer interviews, old records, etc.).	Borough of Highlands + Local Educational Institutions	Short
2.2.3 – Create connections from the site to Bay Avenue's Central Business District and the Henry Hudson Trail (e.g., walking trail/tours)	Borough of Highlands + Monmouth County	Medium
2.2.4 – Create a clam shell recycling drop-off at the site.	Borough of Highlands + Monmouth County	Short
Objective 2.3: Establish the JT White Plant as an Indispensable Local Business		
	Responsible Organization(s)	**Timeframe**
2.3.1 – Create a webpage for the JT White Plant on the main Borough website.	Borough of Highlands	Short
2.3.2 – Create a designated feature (e.g., booth, food truck) for the JT White Shellfish Plant at the Borough's Annual Clam Fest.	Borough of Highlands	Short
2.3.3 – Foster collaborations between the JT White Plant and the Highlands Business Partnership organization.	Borough of Highlands + Highlands Business Partnership	Short

Image Source: Reluctant Gourmet

GRANT FUNDING

GRANT FUNDING

National Level

U.S. Department of Treasury

State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI)

Overview

The State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) is a nearly $10 billion program to support small businesses and entrepreneurship in communities across the United States by providing capital and technical assistance to promote small business stability, growth, and success.

SSBCI is designed to catalyze private capital in the form of loans to and investments in small businesses, especially in historically underserved communities and among entrepreneurs who may have otherwise lacked the support needed to pursue their business ambitions. SSBCI support can be transformative in a range of industries, including small manufacturing, supply chain, and other sectors promoting key national priorities.

Program Design

SSBCI includes two programs: the Capital Program and the Technical Assistance (TA) Grant Program. Under the Capital Program, participating jurisdictions implement credit and equity/venture capital programs to provide capital to small businesses. Under the TA Grant Program, Treasury supports programs that provide legal, accounting, or financial advisory services to qualifying small businesses.

Eligable Applicants

- Small businesses within all U.S. States and the District of Columbia

State Level

New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA)

The Small Business Improvement Grant

Overview

The Small Business Improvement Grant provides reimbursement for costs associated with making building improvements or purchasing new furniture, fixtures and equipment. A total of $60 million of Main Street Recovery Finance Program funding will be utilized to capitalize the Small Business Improvement Grant. The minimum project cost is $5,000.

Eligable Applicants

- Small businesses and nonprofits; and
- Applicant must rent or own facility being improved.

NJ Capital Access Fund

Overview

Developed by the NJEDA, the NJ Capital Access Fund provides working capital with fixed interest rates and flexible spending guidelines. Flexible loan spending includes payroll, supplies, rent, utilities, marketing and advertising, and other business expenses.

Elilgable Applicants

- Operate in the state of New Jersey; and
- Have fewer than 50 employees; and
- Have an annual revenue of $10 million or less; and
- Have been in business for at least one year prior to the date of application; and
- Demonstrate the ability to repay the loan through cash flow.

Bond Financing

Overview

Through the federally authorized Bond Financing Program, the NJEDA issues conduit tax-exempt private activity bonds, the proceeds of which are used to provide financing.

Taxable bonds are available for a wide variety of businesses, such as manufacturing, commercial, warehouse, and distribution, etc. Taxable bonds offer similar flexibility in structuring rates and terms but are not subject to the restrictions placed on tax-exempt financing under the IRC.

Elilgable Applicants

- Creditworthy manufacturing companies; or
- 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations; or
- Exempt facilities in New Jersey.

Intended Uses
- Capital improvements and expansions.
- Land and building acquisitions, new construction and renovations, and equipment purchases.
- Projects owned and operated for local, county and state government bodies.

Driect Loans

Overview
New Jersey businesses in need of financing and committed to job creation/retention may be eligible for direct loans through EDA when financing is not available under other EDA financing programs.

Elilgable Applicants
- Businesses must commit to the retention and/or creation of one new full-time job for every $65,000 of NJEDA exposure within 2 years; and
- 1.1x debt service coverage ratio; 1.0x debt service coverage for non-profits; and
- Must be able to provide fixed assets (e.g. real property and machinery/equipment).

Cultural Arts Facilities Expansion Program – CAFÉ

Overview
The Cultural Arts Facilities Expansion (CAFE) Program provides tax credits to incentivize broad scale capital projects for arts and cultural venues in New Jersey. The CAFE program focuses on development and rehabilitation of cultural arts facilities as a key component of the state's economy.

Eligable Applicants
- Cultural arts institutions which will have ownership or lease space in a cultural arts facility and are open to the public.
  - Cultural arts institution may include government entities, not-for-profits whose primary mission is arts and culture, or a for-profit business receiving a federal or state rehabilitation tax credit.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)

Community-Based Art Grant Program

Overview
The New Jersey DEP Coastal Management Program (CMP), in partnership with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and with funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), has created a Community-Based Arts Grant Program to help coastal communities learn more about climate impacts in their community. The Grant Program provides an opportunity for municipalities to host to artwork that brings together community organizations, members, and local artists.

This program partners the New Jersey Coastal Management Program (CMP) with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (Arts Council) and is made possible in part with funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)'s Enhancement Program Projects of Special Merit (PSM) program.

Eligible Applicants
- Incorporated in the State of New Jersey as a non-profit corporation or be a unit of government, college or university; or
- Be tax-exempt by determination of the Internal Revenue Service in accordance with Sections 501(c)3 or (c)4; and
- Be an organization in "good standing," with the State of New Jersey; and
- Have established programs that occur in and are impactful to communities within New Jersey's coastal zone.

New Jersey Infrastructure Bank

NJ Resilience Bank Financing Program

Overview

The Community Hazard Assistance Mitigation Program ("CHAMP") resides within the Resilience Infrastructure Bank of the I-Bank, an independent State Financing Authority responsible for providing and administering low interest rate loans to qualified New Jersey municipalities, counties, agencies, instrumentalities and other eligible entities in New Jersey for the purpose of financing hazard mitigation and resilience projects pursuant to the State Hazard Mitigation Plan ("State HMP") and the Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation ("STORM") Act.

More information can be found at: https://www.njib.gov/njrib.

Visit NJ

Cooperative Marketing Grant

Overview

The Cooperative Marketing Grant Program is a collaboration between the New Jersey Department of State, Division of Travel & Tourism and the New Jersey travel industry, whose goal is to promote New Jersey as a premier travel destination. Funding will be provided to promote and market specific tourism opportunities in New Jersey. More information can be found at https://visitnj.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/CMP-Handbook-2024.pdf.

Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Grant

Overview

A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) serves to promote and market tourism of a destination in our State as their primary function. A destination can be a single city, a group of municipalities or a defined region.

More information can be found at: https://visitnj.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/DMO-Handbook-2024.pdf.

Appendix A: Mayor’s Comments

BOROUGH OF HIGHLANDS

J.T. WHITE RESEARCH REPORT

151 Navesink Avenue, Highlands NJ 07732
Wednesday, April 16, 2025, at 7:00 PM

Background and Objectives:
The discussion guide and survey questions were sourced from suggestions made from the Borough Council, Planner, Residents and Staff. Using the Focus Group and Survey results, the goal is to aid in understanding Highlands Stakeholders' input to craft an inclusive and encompassing redesign to the current Clam Plant and future new mixed-use office and maritime museum.

Data Collection:
All respondents were a combination of clammers, scientists, educators, residents, businesses and visitors.

The Focus Group consisted of approximately 20 people. Logistically, the Group convened in-person at the 2/5/25 Borough Council Meeting and lasted for approximately one hour.

The quantitative survey consisted of 18 questions. Logistically, a survey was created for interviewing online as well as a data entry module for paper surveys. The survey's duration was an average of 8 minutes, and the completion rate was 70%. The survey was promoted at the 2/5/25 Council Meeting, paper copies were available at the Borough Office, Community Center and distributed to the Housing Authority, posted on Borough website landing page, Borough website Survey page and Public Notices page, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts, all to encourage a good response. Study period for this report was February 5, 2025, through 4/7/25.

Demographics: According to the 2020 US Census, Highlands has a population of 4,621. Using a **90%** confidence level and being prepared to accept a margin of error of **±12%**, we present the following results.
From the US Census 2020:

- Median Household Income = $90,082
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher = 53.70%
- Total Housing Units = 2,931
- Median Age = 40.4

Action Standard: This research will be used to provide the Borough Grant Writer, Engineer and the Council with data that reflects what Highlands Stakeholders thoughts and ideas are regarding what should be in the to the current Clam Plant and future new mixed-use office and maritime museum.

Qualitative Report

Mayor's Introduction

- The proposed site development includes upgrades to the existing JT White Depuration Plant building and the construction of a new public education center on the same lot.
    - Expanding on-site parking and designing the new building to be handicapped accessible.
    - The proposed new elevated building would house the offices of the Plant on the first floor and the Maritime Museum on the third Floor.
    - This would reconfigure the space to remove the many trailers and other outbuildings, therefore beautifying as well as increasing parking on the lot.
- The proposal will support more efficient operations at the Plant and bring visitors to the site, expanding their perspectives on:
    - The legacy of the clamming industry in Highlands.
    - The importance of maintaining a healthy and resilient Raritan Bay.
        - The ongoing efforts taken by the Baymen Protection's Association (BPA) and employees at JT White Plant to make this a reality.
- Public educational opportunities include:
    - Viewing operations through a glass window from the outside of the plant building
    - Various media within the education center (screens, artifacts, area for live demonstrations)
- A Highlands Borough maritime museum concept been around for years – this site offers potential to realize such a vision.
- The current grant from the State Economic Development Authority (EDA) focuses on concept design, proposed site improvements, and planning recommendations
    - Can pave the way for future grants (e.g., tourism, implementation)
- The project's steering committee includes clammers, Borough officials, local educational institutions (Henry Hudson Regional School, Rutgers University, Monmouth University, Brookdale Community College), local agencies working to preserve and promote wise use of marine ecosystems (NOAA, NJ Sea Grant Consortium, American Littoral Society)

Public Discussion and Brainstorming Session

Favorite Aspects of Museums

- History
- Opportunities for hands-on learning
- Learning about topics or processes we can take for granted (e.g., where our food comes from)
- Ability to tour sites with family and kids

Interactive Museum Discussion

- Audience appreciated and is interested in the concept of a museum space with interactive exhibits
    - Great examples of such an experience include the Baymen's Museum in Tuckerton, NJ (maritime history) and Harley Davidson Museum (ability to see how the bikes are built firsthand)
- All agree interactive components would enhance educational experience
- Videos by the HHRS Digital Video Club with Clammers telling their tales as well as them on the water, bringing in the clams and the entire step by step process.

Components to Consider for New On-Site Education Center

- The new education center will be designed to not hinder any operations of the existing full-time depuration plant.
    - The new building will include additional storage space and offices for JT White Plant employees
    - A future clammers-only meeting will be held to further discuss [held on 3/10]
- Classrooms/open spaces within the center should be big enough for demonstrations (e.g., using clamming rake, how mollusks purify the water, explaining how to achieve sustainability through living shorelines, touch tank)
- Various media should be utilized, including screens/videos, pamphlets, posters, ability for visitors to scan a QR code and learn more about relevant topics (e.g., history, clam depuration process, how shellfish purify themselves, Highlands Borough, etc.)
- Continuously replay videos showing clammer interviews and the depuration process
- Create opportunities and programs for economic and workforce development (clamming industry, marine sciences, environmental conservation)
- Present educational information in a way that:
    - Is cohesive, but can be absorbed by people of all ages
    - Discusses the importance of estuaries and sustainable aquaculture
    - Prioritizes education above any economic benefits
    - Reiterates value and quality of Plant's depuration operations
        - Clams need to be purged due to water conditions in the Raritan Bay, which have improved significantly in recent years.
            - Clamming helps with this
            - Cite information from toxicology experts and department of water monitoring without being too technical/easy to digest
        - Every clam is purified to a high and safe quality at the Plant
            - "We've done it right" spotlight this fact
        - Maintaining the local depuration plant is a great asset to the Borough

- Long-term visioning includes:
    - Utilizing the education center for academic classes
        - Elementary, secondary, and higher education
        - Lessons in history, English, art, science
    - Creating a connection from the center/plant site to Bay Avenue's Central Business District (Redevelopment Plan for this district amended in August 2024)
        - Walking trail/tours
    - Creating programs that inspire visitors to eat local clams and take a boat out on the water
    - Handing out clam-based recipes
    - Establishing a designated drop-off point on the site for local Highlanders to recycle clam shells
    - "Roar on the River" Event, add a clammer race (Highlands Business Partnership)

Envisioned Visitor Takeaways from New Highlands Education Center/Plant Site

- The clams from the JT White Plant are some of the freshest foods you can find
- The clams are sustainable
- Ongoing efforts have been made by the State and Highlands clammers/BPA to work together to regulate clam population
- An understanding of the different types of clams
- A working waterfront continues to be an economic driver in Highlands

Additional Input from the Public Meeting

- Clamming is a vital part of Highlands heritage
    - The educational facility should commend and honor JT White (included in the "ABCs of Highlands" book, as the letter "W")
- "We're proud of our clean clams"
- Include a picnic area, maybe by the bulkhead for folks that visit
- Include a gift shop at the museum
- The educational center can help create:
    - "More respect for our waterways"
    - A "real asset for education"
    - A space to demonstrate the inherent health values of the depuration process
        - JT White is paving the way for Raritan Bay clammers
- There was support to create a website eventually and market the project site
    - Give JT White Plant a page Borough website site
- Processing approximately 100,000 clams per day is a large and impressive undertaking

Quantitative Report: A total of **85** respondents answered Q1 and **67** answered Q2-17 and 27 answered the open end at Q18 "What additional features or exhibits would make this museum more appealing to you?"

The biggest takeaways from this survey are as follows:

1. **30%** of respondents are "Not at all familiar" with the Clam Plant.
2. The overwhelming answer to "What features should the bulkhead area include" was *Observation deck or viewing platform* **[61%]**. Other standouts were *Interactive displays about maritime trade and local waterways* **[45%]**, *Educational signage about bulkhead construction and coastal protection* **[42%],** and *Opportunities for hands-on activities like water sampling* **[37%].**
3. Regarding future programming at the proposed Museum, the standout was *Beach cleanups or conservation events* **[75%]**, followed by *educational talks or workshops* **[54%]**, *Citizen science projects* **[46%]** and *Interactive exhibits or demonstrations* **[43%]**.

Qualitative and Quantitative Conclusions and Recommendations:

The recommendation from these conclusions is to incorporate the Stakeholders' ideas presented here into the redesign and addition to the J.T. White Clam Plant.
Specifically, the following ideas should be included:

- Include a glass wall or live video feed to view the depuration process.
- Coordinate meet and greet/interviews with maritime industry workers.
- The importance to be transparent about the need for depuration [poor water quality].
- Depuration provides a safe and essential process for utilizing a sustainable marine resource.
- Connecting the exhibit to broader maritime topics (e.g., aquaculture, coastal ecosystems)
- Interactive displays explaining the process
- Videos or animations showing close-up views
- Live commentary or guided tours
- Encourage partnerships with local organizations (e.g., NOAA, NJ Sea Grant Consortium, American Littoral Society, National Park Service) in enhancing the museum's educational content.
- Encourage partnerships with local educational facilities (e.g., Henry Hudson Regional School, Marine Academy of Science and Technology, Brookdale Community College, Monmouth University, Rutgers University) to enhance the museum's educational content.
- A better understanding of sustainability and conservation with a stronger connection to local maritime industries and history

Appendix B: Clam Plant Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

HEYER, GRUEL & ASSOCIATES
COMMUNITY PLANNING CONSULTANTS

TO: Mayor Carolyn Broullon

CC: Mike Muscillo, Borough Administrator

FROM: Susan Gruel, PP
Megan Adam, Associate Planner

RE: Clam Plant Steering Committee: Meeting Minutes from 1/23/25

DATE: January 27, 2025

- Attendees: American Littoral Society, NOAA, NJ Sea Grant Institute, Monmouth U Coastal Association, clammers themselves (Luke Jenks, Caleb Dean (young clammer, family history)), Principal of Henry Hudson School, Monmouth County Park service, Borough floodplain manager, aquaculture specialists, Borough representatives
    - All very supportive of project, can see it having a significant impact
    - Mayor reminded attendees of scope of grant, at the planning stage
- Mayor reiterated needed upgrades, and that the plant cannot afford to shut down operations
    - Need for separate building – everyone agreed
    - Upgrade infrastructure, dock, bulkhead, upgrades for electrical, etc.
    - The Construction official reinforced need to eliminate existing outbuildings on the site
- Components relevant to drawings
    - Make new building ADA compliant
    - Potential for Plexiglass partition: install a viewing window outside building (can't risk liabilities with internal tours)
- Highlands history: this spans the entire Bayshore region (South Amboy to Highlands)
- Need to connect existing facility and new education center to downtown
    - Maximize economic components
- Mayor reiterated that next round of grants could be for tourism and/ or implementation.
- Creating a Clam Trail along Henry Hudson greenway was mentioned
    - Potential of partnering with other municipalities (Keyport and Sea Bright)
- Similar Programming in State to our project (research further)

  - Museum in Keyport – clamming and oyster
  - Barnegat Bay Clam Trail (The Clam Trail | Reclam the Bay (RCTB))
  - Baymens Museum – Tuckerton
- Henry Hudson trail overseen by Monmouth County Parks (project stakeholder)
- Workforce development opportunities for students (internships should be prioritized within the educational component)
- Good time to showcase Plant products: Highlands Clam Fest and St. Patrick's Day
- Initial Suggestions
  - Educational placards and wayfinding signs (larger trail idea, history)
  - In addition to clamming history, the museum should also include history on the restoration and conservation of the Raritan Bay
  - Add updated offices for the JT Plant
  - Consider natural shorefront near the dock
  - Restoration around the waterfront – placards, even a place for people to sit
  - Henry Hudson HS to videotape depuration process as a way to promote this history to region, also to inform students of career opportunities
  - Judy Weiss book on Sandy Hook Bay?

Appendix C: Clam Plant Public Outreach Meeting Announcement

Borough of Highlands
Administrative Offices
151 Navesink Avenue, Highlands, NJ 07732
Phone: 732-872-1224
Fax: 732-872-0670

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., the Borough of Highlands will hold and conduct an in-person Public Discussion at the Municipal Building, 151 Navesink Avenue, Highlands, New Jersey 07732, to discuss the concept design and feasibility study for the Clam Depuration Plant located on Fifth Street as part of its New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant award.

Learn how clams are purified! Learn about the clammers, the plant and its history. Please join us for a public discussion on this amazing industry that is right in our back yard and what its possibilities can be for the future.

Appendix D: Clam Plant Public Outreach Meeting Minutes

TO: Mayor Carolyn Broullon

CC: Mike Muscillo, Borough Administrator

FROM: Susan Gruel, PP
Megan Adam, Associate Planner

RE: Clam Plant Public Outreach Meeting Minutes from 2/5/25

DATE: February 7, 2025

Mayor's Introduction

- The proposed site development includes upgrades to the existing JT White Depuration Plant building and the construction of a new public education center on the same lot.
    - Expanding on-site parking and designing the new building to be accessible
- The proposal will support more efficient operations at the Plant and bring visitors to the site, expanding their perspectives on:
    - The legacy of the clamming industry in Highlands
    - The importance of maintaining a healthy and resilient Raritan Bay
        - The ongoing efforts taken by the Baymen Protection's Association (BPA) and employees at JT White Plant to make this a reality
- Public educational opportunities include:
    - Viewing operations through a glass window from the outside of the plant building
    - Various media within the education center (screens, artifacts, area for live demonstrations)
- A Highlands Borough maritime museum concept been around for years – this site offers potential to realize such a vision.
- The current grant from the State Economic Development Authority (EDA) focuses on concept design, proposed site improvements, and planning recommendations
    - Can pave the way for future grants (e.g., tourism, implementation)
- The project's steering committee includes clammers, Borough officials, local educational institutions (Henry Hudson Regional School, Rutgers University, Monmouth University, Brookdale Community College), local agencies working to preserve and promote wise use of marine ecosystems (NOAA, NJ Sea Grant Consortium, American Littoral Society)

Public Discussion and Brainstorming Session

Favorite Aspects of Museums

- History
- Opportunities for hands-on learning
- Learning about topics or processes we can take for granted (e.g., where our food comes from)
- Ability to tour sites with family and kids

Interactive Museum Discussion

- Audience appreciated and is interested in the concept of a museum space with interactive exhibits
    - Great examples of such an experience include the Baymen's Museum in Tuckerton, NJ (maritime history) and Harley Davidson Museum (ability to see how the bikes are built firsthand)
- All agree interactive components would enhance educational experience

Components to Consider for New On-Site Education Center

- The new education center will be designed to not hinder any operations of the existing full-time depuration plant.
    - The new building will include additional storage space and offices for JT White Plant employees
    - A future clammers-only meeting will be held to further discuss
- Classrooms/open spaces within the center should be big enough for demonstrations (e.g., clamming rake)
- Various media should be utilized, including screens/videos, pamphlets, posters, ability for visitors to scan a QR code and learn more about relevant topics (e.g., history, clam depuration process, how shellfish purify themselves, Highlands Borough, etc.)
- Continuously replay videos showing clammer interviews and the depuration process
- Create opportunities and programs for workforce development (clamming industry, marine sciences, environmental conservation)
- Present educational information in a way that:
    - Is cohesive, but can be absorbed by people of all ages
    - Discusses the importance of estuaries and sustainable aquaculture
    - Prioritizes education above any economic benefits
    - Reiterates value and quality of Plant's depuration operations
        - Clams need to be purged due to water conditions in the Raritan Bay, which have improved significantly in recent years.
            - Clamming helps with this
            - Cite information from toxicology experts and department of water monitoring
        - Every clam is purified to a high and safe quality at the Plant
            - "We've done it right"
        - Maintaining the local depuration plant is a great asset to the Borough
- Long-term visioning includes:
    - Utilizing the education center for academic classes
        - Elementary, secondary, and higher education
        - Lessons in history, English, art, science
    - Creating a connection from the center/plant site to Bay Avenue's Central Business District (Redevelopment Plan for this district amended in August 2024)
        - Walking trail/tours
    - Creating programs that inspire visitors to eat local clams and take a boat out on the water
    - Handing out clam-based recipes

  - Establishing a designated drop-off point on the site for local Highlanders to recycle clam shells
  - "Roar on the River" clammer race (Highlands Business Partnership)

Envisioned Visitor Takeaways from New Highlands Education Center/Plant Site

- The clams from the JT White Plant are some of the freshest food you can find
- The clams are sustainable
- Ongoing efforts have been made by the State and Highlands clammers/BPA to work together to regulate clam population
- An understanding of the different types of clams
- A working waterfront continues to be an economic driver in Highlands

Additional Input from the Public Meeting

- Clamming is a vital part of Highlands heritage
  - The educational facility should commend and honor JT White (included in the "ABCs of Highlands" book, as the letter "W")
- "We're proud of our clean clams"
- The educational center can help create:
  - "More respect for our waterways"
  - A "real asset for education"
  - A space to demonstrate the inherent health values of the depuration process
    - JT White is paving the way for Raritan Bay clammers
- There was support to create a website eventually and market the project site
  - Give JT White Plant a page Borough website site
- Processing around 100,000 clams/day is a large and impressive undertaking

Appendix E: Clam Plant Public Web Survey

Update J.T. White Clam Plant Survey

Introduction

Please take a minute to complete the survey below. The purpose of this survey is to get your opinions about major updates to infrastructure of the J. T. White Shellfish Plant that will also include a new bulkhead and dock as well as the addition of a separate, elevated building that will host the Clam Plant's offices and an interactive Maritime Museum with Educational Components.

Using funds secured from a NJ EDA planning grant, the Borough staffed a steering committee that features residents, local clammers, the business community, our High Schools at HHRS and MAST, governing body members, municipal staff, our planners, local universities, scientist from Sandy Hook, the NPS, and the Mayors of Atlantic Highlands and Sea Bright.

All responses will be used in aggregate and individual responses will be kept confidential.

Remember, your opinion is important!

* 1. Which of the following best describes your relationship to Highlands?

- ◯ I live or work in Highlands
- ◯ I used to live work in Highlands
- ◯ I visit Highlands
- ◯ None of the above

* 2. How familiar are you with our J T White Shellfish Plant?

- ◯ Very familiar
- ◯ Somewhat familiar
- ◯ Not familiar at all

* 3. How interested are you in visiting the J T White Shellfish Plant with an interactive maritime museum that included an educational component?

- ◯ Very interested
- ◯ Somewhat interested
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Not very interested
- ◯ Not interested at all

* 4. How appealing would the modernized building for clam depuration operations with a separate elevated building for exhibits and educational programs be to you?

- ◯ Very appealing
- ◯ Somewhat appealing
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Not very appealing
- ◯ Not appealing at all

* 5. How important is it to replace the bulkhead as part of the new J T White Shellfish Plant area's design? (Rate on a scale of 1 = Not important to 5 = Very important)

Not Important	Slightly Important	Important	Slightly Important	Very Important
☆	☆	☆	☆	☆

* 6. What features should the bulkhead area include? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Educational signage about bulkhead construction and coastal protection
- ☐ Observation deck or viewing platform
- ☐ Interactive displays about maritime trade and local waterways
- ☐ Opportunities for hands-on activities like water sampling
- ☐ Nothing in the bulkhead area

* 7. How would you feel about exhibits that explain the environmental and community impacts of bulkheads and waterfront structures?

- ◯ Very interested
- ◯ Somewhat interested
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Not very interested
- ◯ Not interested at all

* 8. How interested would you be in viewing a live clam depuration process and wholesale operation through a glass wall in the building?

- ◯ Very interested
- ◯ Somewhat interested
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Not very interested
- ◯ Not interested at all

* 9. What aspects of the depuration process interest you most? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] The science behind the process
- [ ] How it benefits food safety and public health
- [ ] Its role in sustainability and environmental conservation
- [ ] Supporting local maritime industries
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 10. How important are the following features for the clam depuration exhibit? (Rate each on a scale of Not important to Very important)

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
Interactive displays explaining the process	○	○	○	○	○
Videos or animations showing close-up views	○	○	○	○	○
Live commentary or guided tours	○	○	○	○	○
Connecting the exhibit to broader maritime topics (e.g., aquaculture, coastal ecosystems)	○	○	○	○	○

* 11. How valuable would you find partnerships with local organizations (e.g., NOAA, NJ Sea Grant Consortium, American Littoral Society, National Park Service) in enhancing the museum's educational content?

Not Valuable				Very Valuable
○	○	○	○	○

* 12. How valuable would you find partnerships with local educational facilities (e.g., Henry Hudson Regional School, Marine Academy of Science and Technology, Brookdale Community College, Monmouth University, Rutgers University) in enhancing the museum's educational content?

Not Valuable — Very Valuable

* 13. Which types of programming from partner organizations would interest you? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] Citizen science projects
- [ ] Beach cleanups or conservation events
- [ ] Educational talks or workshops
- [ ] Interactive exhibits or demonstrations
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 14. How important are the following features for your experience? (Rate each on a scale of 1 = Not Important to 5 = Very Important)

	1 Not Important	2	3	4	5 Very Important
Citizen science projects	○	○	○	○	○
Beach cleanups or conservation events	○	○	○	○	○
Educational talks or workshops	○	○	○	○	○
Interactive exhibits or demonstrations	○	○	○	○	○

* 15. How do you prefer to interact with museum exhibits?

- ○ Self-guided experiences
- ○ Guided tours
- ○ A mix of both

* 16. What emotions or thoughts would you like to take away after visiting? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] Curiosity and inspiration about maritime topics
- [ ] A better understanding of sustainability and conservation
- [ ] A stronger connection to local maritime industries and history
- [ ] A sense of fun and entertainment
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 17. Would you recommend the J. T. White Shellfish Plant and museum with these features to friends or family?

- ◯ Definitely
- ◯ Probably
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Probably not
- ◯ Definitely not

18. What additional features or exhibits would make this museum more appealing to you?