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BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK
NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION PROGRAM

**WOODBIDGE AVENUE NPP DISTRICT
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
YEAR FOUR UPDATE**

Prepared January 30, 2025

Adopted February , 2025



BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK
NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION PROGRAM

**WOODBIDGE AVENUE NPP DISTRICT
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
YEAR FOUR UPDATE**

Prepared by:

Borough of Highland Park

in partnership with the

NPP Stakeholder Engagement Team

221 South Fifth Avenue

Highland Park, NJ 08904

with assistance from:

LRK, Inc.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Highland Park's NPP Stakeholder Engagement Team is made up of nine (9) individuals who are committed to the success of the Woodbridge Avenue commercial corridor and the adjacent residential neighborhood. The stakeholder team was formed during the application process in August 2021 and has continued to be a sounding board for all NPP ideas and initiatives. They also played an integral part in collecting essential feedback from residents and businesses in the NPP district and the Highland Park community-at-large regarding their vision for the Woodbridge Avenue NPP District.

The Borough would like to thank the following stakeholder team members for their continued commitment to this program:

- **Todd Craig** | District Resident
- **Chantel Figueroa** | Division Head, Real Estate, Middlesec Coun
- **Melissa Gordeuk** | District Resident
- **Matt Hale** | Borough Councilmember, Economic Development Committee
- **Rebecca Hersh** | Executive Director, Main Street Highland Park
- **John Marron** | District Resident & Arts Commission Representative
- **Christina Sharkey** | District Business Owner, Calico CPA
- **Marcia Shiffman** | Board Member, Main Street Highland Park
- **Grazina Strolia** | Historical Commission Representative

The Borough would also like to extend a special thank you to **New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy** and **DCA Commissioner, Jacquelyn A. Suárez** for providing this funding opportunity to Highland Park.

Additionally, special thanks to **Mayor Elsie Foster** and **Highland Park's Borough Council** for their vision in supporting Highland Park's NPP application and their approval of the resulting NPP plan.

NPP Coordinator

Rutuja Vartak, MCRP | Economic Development Coordinator / NPP Coordinator

Consultants

LRK Inc.

Chris S. Cosenza, AICP, PP, LEED AP

David Kim

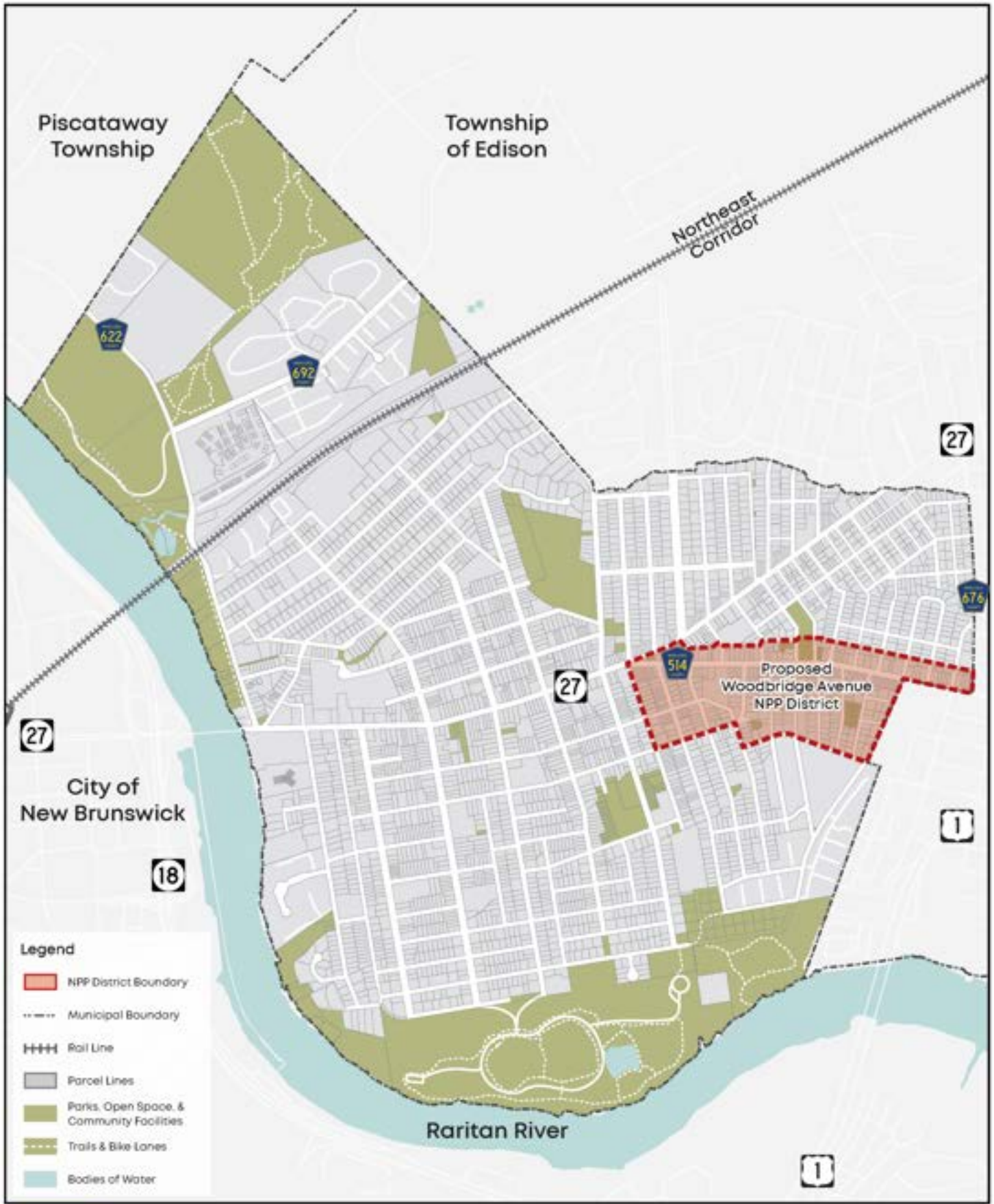
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INTRODUCTION



Overall Map

Woodbridge Avenue NPP District

Borough of Highland Park, Middlesex County, NJ

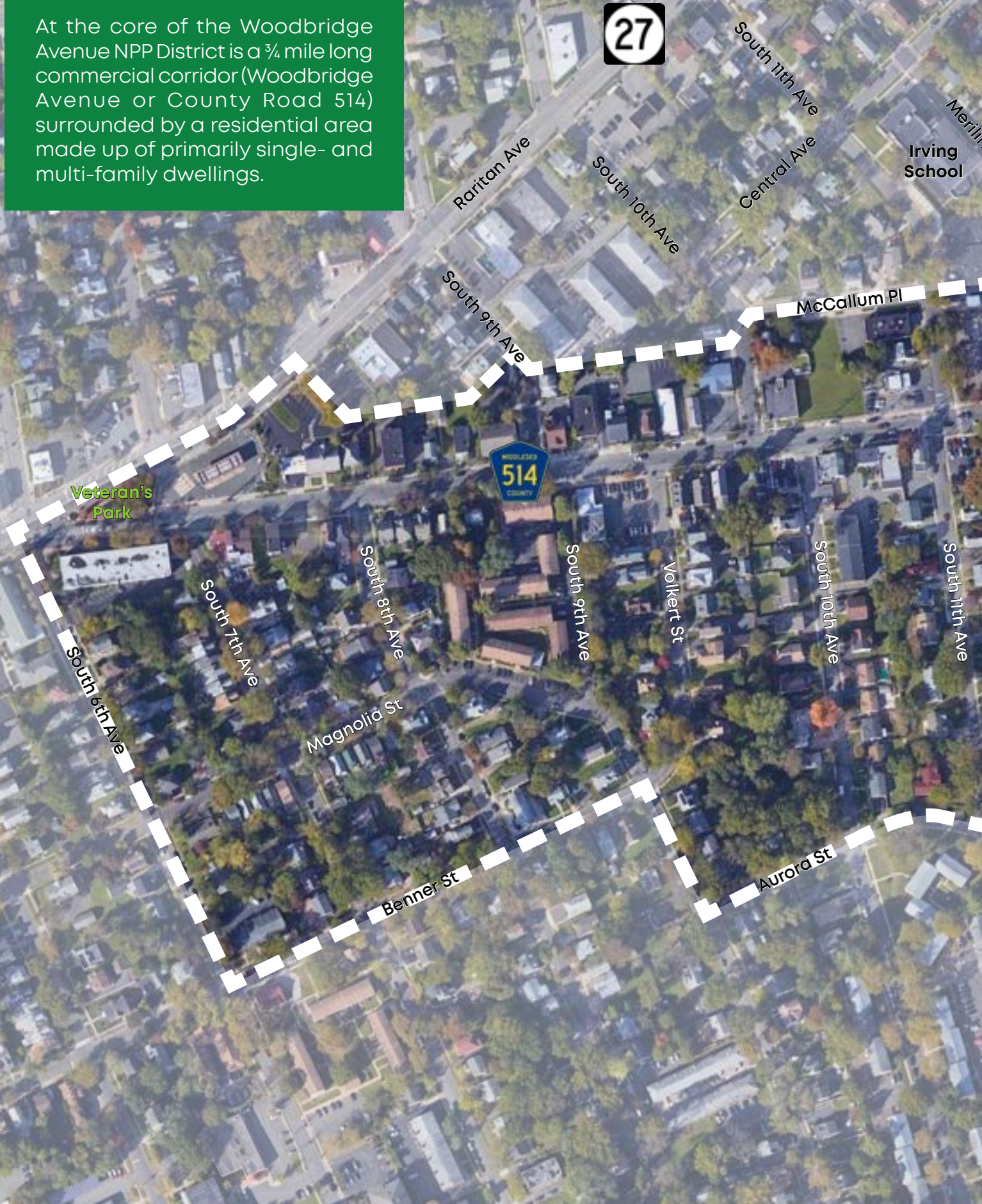




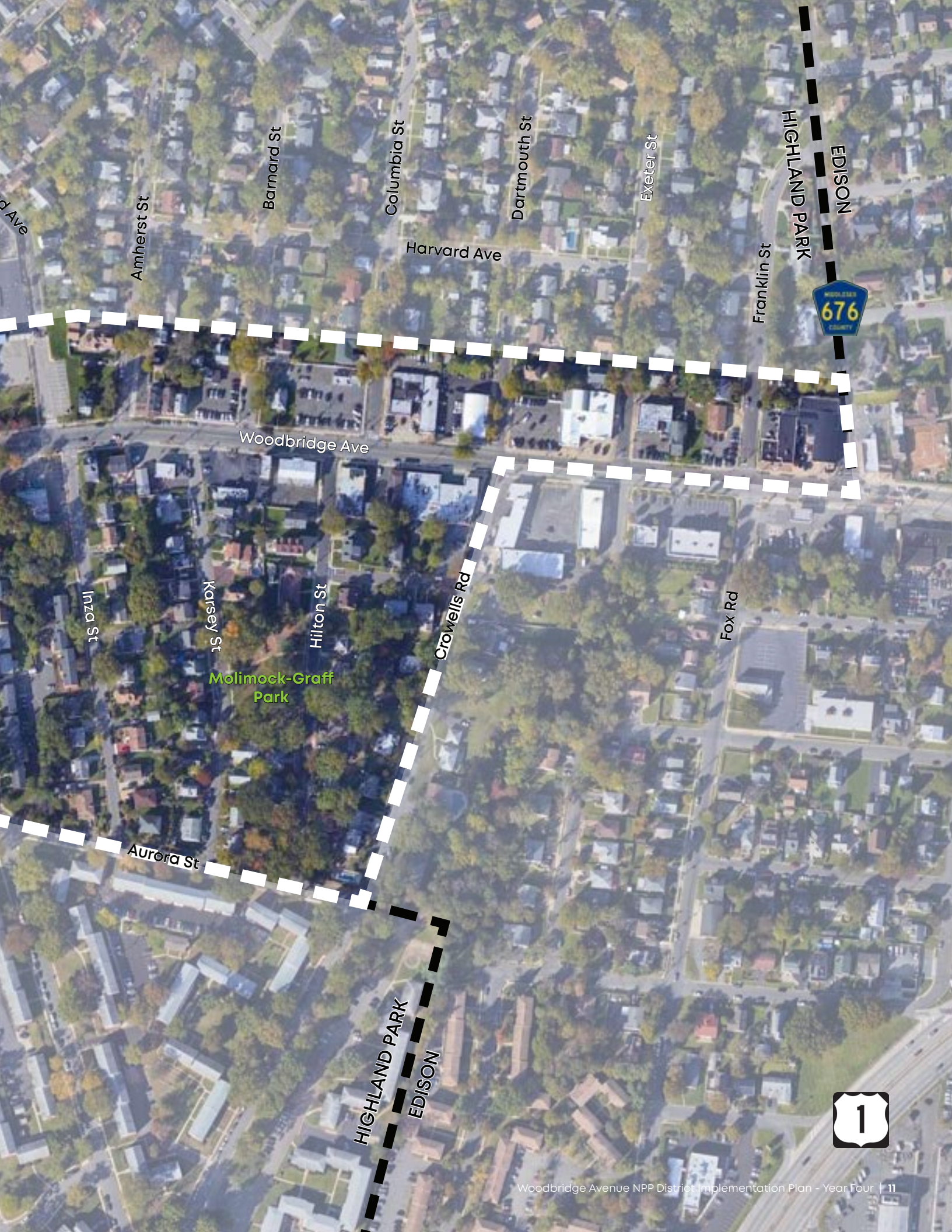
Neighborhood Map
 Woodbridge Avenue NPP District
 Borough of Highland Park, Middlesex County, NJ



At the core of the Woodbridge Avenue NPP District is a ¾ mile long commercial corridor (Woodbridge Avenue or County Road 514) surrounded by a residential area made up of primarily single- and multi-family dwellings.



Irving School



d Ave

Amherst St

Barnard St

Columbia St

Dartmouth St

Exeter St

Harvard Ave

Franklin St

HIGHLAND PARK

EDISON



Woodbridge Ave

Inza St

Karsey St

Hilton St

Crowells Rd

Fox Rd

Molimock-Graff Park

Aurora St

HIGHLAND PARK

EDISON







YEAR THREE (2024) ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In Year 3, the Woodbridge Avenue NPP Stakeholder Team made significant strides in revitalizing the corridor, implementing key improvements that enhanced both the visual appeal and vitality of the Woodbridge Avenue commercial district. Building on previous years' successes, we administered façade and technical assistance grants to three businesses, helping them enhance their storefronts and attract more customers. Additionally, we facilitated a grant for the installation of two new signs for Irving Primary School along Woodbridge Avenue, in partnership with the Highland Park School District and Irving PTO.

Our investment in beautification continued with the care of 30 planters along the corridor, and the installation of new trash cans, benches, and bike racks. Furthermore, we installed holiday snowflakes, brightening the corridor for the third consecutive year.

We continued our community engagement efforts by hosting a Business Mixer in December, connecting local business owners with resources from the NPP grant and state agencies such as NJEDA and NJBAC. We also explored the possibility of hosting an antique car show in the district, which, while being reconsidered for 2025, remains an exciting opportunity for the future.

Our efforts to enhance the district's visual appeal were further strengthened with the successful completion of the signage ordinance updates, adopted in 2024. These changes have simplified the process for business owners to navigate signage decisions and contributed to improving the overall aesthetic of the corridor. We are also in the process of redesigning the pole banners, working with a design firm to assess concepts and establish project timelines.

Additionally, we made significant progress in supporting local businesses by launching Highland Park's online marketplace platform through Beyond Main. We are actively assisting businesses in setting up their websites and business profiles to ensure a seamless transition to the digital marketplace. To support this transition further, we hosted technical assistance workshops to guide businesses through the platform. We also introduced a new tool, Placer AI, enabling us to leverage location analytics to better understand foot traffic patterns around local businesses.

2024 was another year of progress for the Woodbridge Avenue corridor, marked by continued enhancements, strengthened community connections, and ongoing support for local businesses. We look forward to the year ahead and the continued growth of our district.



Irving School: Before



Irving School: After



Highland Park Laundry: Before



Highland Park Laundry: After

LESSONS LEARNED & RESULTING CHANGES

In 2024, we adapted our approach to community engagement by shifting to more direct, door-to-door outreach for sharing grant information, registering businesses for the online marketplace, and inviting local stakeholders to events. This change allowed for more personalized interaction and greater outreach effectiveness, ensuring key information reached businesses and residents directly.

Due to the hiring of the NPP Coordinator in late October, most of the implementation items, including some of the planned beautification projects, were initiated later in the year. As a result, residential grants have been shifted to Year 4, and certain projects, such as the redesign of pole banners, are still in progress. We will therefore be simultaneously completing last year's projects while starting implementation on Year 4 goals.

Additionally, we are still awaiting the commencement of major roadwork along Woodbridge Avenue, on the Middlesex County roadway from Volkert St to Duclos Lane. This delay has impacted several planned improvements, including the planting of street trees along the commercial corridor, which will now be addressed after the roadwork is complete.

Moving forward, we will continue to adapt timelines and strategies to ensure the continued success of the Woodbridge Avenue revitalization efforts.



Woodbridge Avenue Business Mixer





YEAR FOUR (2025) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

2025 NEEDS, GOALS, STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Year 4 funds will focus on creating a balanced impact for businesses, residents, and visitors while prioritizing community engagement and creative placemaking. Efforts will center on enhancing the Woodbridge Avenue District's aesthetic and cultural appeal through public art installations, youth engagement, and improved amenities. Outreach will be intensified to expedite grant-funded projects and involve a diverse range of stakeholders in this year's grant program. A series of events and public art projects will be launched to highlight the district's heritage, draw in visitors, and strengthen community identity and pride. Our goals for Year 4 are as follows:

Our goals for Year 4 are as follows:

1. Launch a residential facade renovation grant program for exterior improvements, with a goal of recruiting at least half a dozen property owners to partake in the program.
2. Introduce new annual events to welcome visitors to the District, showcase businesses, and bring awareness to the NPP Program.
3. Enhance the district's aesthetic with murals, creative installations, and rotating art displays in vacant storefronts, fostering local engagement and pride.
4. Improve streetscape with upgraded seasonal lighting, additional planters, and street furniture, creating a more inviting environment.

ARTS & CULTURE

(\$15,000 NPP | \$15,000 TOTAL)

Special Events (\$8,000): Introduce new events such as an Antique Car Show and Woodbridge Avenue History Walk in partnership with community organizations to attract people to the Woodbridge Avenue District.

- Social Value

Public Art (\$7,000): Collaborate with local artists and community groups to create public art installations including murals, vacant storefront art displays to improve the district's vibrancy and foster community pride.

- Social Value
- Place Value

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

(\$25,000 NPP | \$10,500 BORO | \$35,500 TOTAL)

Commercial Façade Grants (\$25,000): Solicit Commercial Façade Grant applications from eligible businesses for improvements such as: paint, windows, awnings, signage, planters, grass, bollards, etc. Work with Main Street Highland Park Design Committee on review of applications.

- Place Value
- Economic Value

Marketing (\$10,500): Conduct a marketing study to identify strategies for attracting visitors and businesses to the district, enhancing the economic activity of the area.

- Economic Value

RESIDENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

(\$35,000 NPP | \$35,000 TOTAL)

Residential Facade Renovation Grants (\$35,000): Grants for exterior home improvements (stairs, doorways, porches, drainage/landscaping etc.) and sidewalk improvements. Matching requirement to be based on financial need.

- Place Value
- Economic Value

STREETSCAPE

(\$50,000 NPP | \$50,000 TOTAL)

Holiday Decoration (\$18,000): Purchase, storage, installation, and removal of 21 snowflakes for Woodbridge Avenue light poles.

- Place Value
- Economic Value

Planter Care (\$16,000): Plant materials, planting labor, and seasonal watering for 18 planters along commercial corridor. Includes professional design and layout of planters.

- Place Value
- Civic Value

Street Furniture (\$16,000): Install additional planters and other street furniture to improve sidewalks along the corridor and support pedestrian activity.

- Place Value

ADMINISTRATION

(\$14,500 BORO | \$14,500 TOTAL)

NPP Coordinator Stipend (\$9,500)

Planner Costs (\$5,000)

YEAR FOUR BUDGET

Activity	NPP Funding	Borough	OPM
Arts & Culture			
Special Events	\$8,000		
Public Art	\$7,000		
Business Development			
Facade Grants	\$25,000		
Marketing		\$10,500	
Residential Improvements			
Facade Renovation Grants	\$35,000		
Streetscape			
Holiday Decoration	\$18,000		
Planter Care	\$16,000		
Street Furniture	\$16,000		
Administration			
Salary: NPP Coordinator		\$9,500	
Salary: Planner		\$5,000	
	\$125,000	\$25,000	

