

**Environmental Focus Group Meeting - Resilient NJ**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**DATE:** August 24, 2021  
**TO:** All Meeting Attendees  
**FROM:** The Consultant Team  
**SUBJECT:** Resilient NJ - Atlantic County Coastal Communities (ACCR)- Environmental Focus Group Meeting

A meeting was held July 22, 2021 at 10 AM with the Environmental Focus Group Members to discuss the Resilient NJ Project. The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams. The following were in attendance:

Name	Organization
Jim Rutala	Ventnor Green Team
Shurlana Stewart	Pleasantville Green Team
Monica Coffey	Sustainable Margate
Brian Kempf	NJ Association of State Floodplain Management
Leah Yasencheck	NJ Future
Jonathan Carey	WSP
Alyssa Curran	WSP
Jaclyn Flor	ENGenuity Infrastructure
Amanda Schermond	ENGenuity Infrastructure

The following was discussed at the meeting:

1. Jaclyn Flor, ENGenuity, started the meeting with introductions of the participants. She went over the agenda, including the meeting objectives, key questions, project process and the discussion section of the agenda.
2. Jonathan Carey, WSP, went over the Resilient NJ Atlantic County Coast Region Project overall. He explained that the end goal is to formulate a plan that leads to implementation of specific actions. He went through the project timeline and what has happened to date on the Resilient-NJ Project. He also explained the crowd source mapping tool that that allows the public to leave comments. He explained where the consultant Team is in the process and how the focus groups will influence the Resiliency Plan.
3. Jaclyn Flor briefly explained the focus groups and their roles.
4. Jaclyn Flor opened the meeting to the participants to identify important assets that have the largest impact on the environment and ecology in the region.

5. Jim Rutala stated that tourism is the basis for the economy in the region so continuing to manage that industry is important. He said that the majority of the county's rateable base is on the barrier islands which is a big resource. He added that USACE has done a good job protecting the beaches and that now the back bays are most vulnerable. He said a combination of solutions are available to municipalities including bulkheads and other shore line projects and that he is waiting for the release of the back bay study and how that might affect barrier islands and mainland communities.
6. Jaclyn Flor presented a shore line map that identified different shoreline projects such as seawalls and jettys. She showed that the back bay study addresses both hard and soft shoreline projects.
7. Alyssa Curran, WSP, added that the USACE back bay draft report should be released in early August with public meeting occurring in early September.
8. Jaclyn Flor asked Shurlana Stewart, Pleasantville Green Team, what elements of the environment and ecology support the residents and make them want to stay.
9. Shurlana Stewart responded that the marine areas in Pleasantville are thriving and are still being developed and that the majority of eastern portion of City is low lying so protecting those areas is important.
10. Jaclyn Flor then asked Brian Kempf, NJ Association of State Floodplain Management, what he thinks is the most critical environmental and ecological asset. He said the dune system that keeps islands in place and mitigates wave damage is important. He also said that the back bay wetlands provide wave attenuation and habitat but also act to offset CO2 emissions and that proving the loss reduction benefit of the ecological assets is challenging.
11. Jaclyn Flor asked Monica Coffey, Sustainable Margate, to describe their critical assets. She responded that most have been addressed already. She added that marshes fill in for the loss of habitat for some shore species.
12. Jaclyn Flor moved the meeting to discuss past disasters and vulnerabilities. She asked Shurlana Stewart what were the challenges during past disasters that made the area vulnerable.
13. Shurlana Stewart responded that certain parts of Pleasantville are low lying and the bulkheads didn't hold up which caused more damage and flooding. She said power outages and residents not evacuating also added to the challenges and that the City considered getting residents involved with Blue Acres in order to help them sell their homes in flood hazard areas (mostly eastern portion of City).
14. Jaclyn Flor followed up by asking if Pleasantville experienced challenges with marine debris specifically with the marina.
15. Shurlana Stewart said there was a lot of debris washup in inland areas so there was cleanup that was necessary after the storm and that it was more so from debris from bay areas rather than from the boats.

16. Jaclyn Flor asked Monica Coffey to add to the discussion by describing Margate's vulnerabilities.
17. Monica Coffey responded that the bay side is still vulnerable and that a pump station was rehabilitated about 5 years ago in Ventnor Gardens area but she doesn't think it helped the area she resides. She added that flooding from the bay is a problem even from low-moderate strength storms. She said the flooding continues to worsen over time.
18. Jaclyn Flor asked during a major storm do the storm pumps work effectively? Monica Coffey replied that the pumps aren't enough to deal with the volume of water present and that sometimes it's difficult to access her neighborhood when flooding occurs.
19. Jaclyn Flor then asked Brian Kempf where vulnerabilities are located in the area that his organization aware of.
20. Brian Kempf explained that areas by inlets where wave action falls upon the marshes are very vulnerable as the marshes erode from the wave action. He said that in the bay areas, the wakes from passing boats erodes the shore line and that low lying area in marshes are converted to salt flats by sedimentation and sea level rise.
21. Jaclyn Flor then asked Leah Yasenckek, NJ Future, to describe the vulnerabilities her organization had identified.
22. Leah Yasenckek agreed with the other participants that increasing nuisance flooding is impacting residents' ability to safely access their homes. She said some streams and lagoons require constant maintenance and dredging. The marshes/bay area is very vulnerable as the marshes are a big line of defense against wave action and that after Sandy, a lot of residents weren't able to wade through the financing process for rebuilding their homes so they were sold to developers who constructed larger homes in their place. She added that as a result, now there are even more assets at risk.
23. Jaclyn Flor added that a lot of these new homes are second home owners who rent the property which affects community cohesion.
24. Leah Yasenckek added that communities with high proportion of second home owners have a hard time securing funding to fix their homes since it is not their primary residence which makes the community vulnerable.
25. Jaclyn Flor asked Jim Rutala if he has anything to add to the discussion. He went on to discuss actions that were taken after major storm events. He said that all the communities now apply for home elevation grants every year that has resulted in hundreds of properties being elevated. Jim Rutala added that the towns are also starting to look into replenishing the marshes/wetlands to protect the islands. He said another big issue is dredging and that since Sandy there hasn't been any major dredging projects in the region until this fall when a major dredging project will commence.
26. Jaclyn Flor moved the meeting forward to discuss planned/currently funded projects that will address vulnerabilities in the region and make the region more resilient. Jim Rutala described how Orsted and Atlantic Shores are building wind projects and facilities in AC that are major

operations. He said that this will be a benefit to the community similar to the opening of the casinos decades ago and that as a result, a lot of investment has been made in the area to support offshore wind projects as well as hydrogen projects. Jim Rutala added that this includes training facilities to train residents for better jobs and that a lot of residents care about the environment and want these green projects to continue.

27. Brian Kempf added that the community rating system is how communities consider resilience in an actionable way. He said that communities that didn't have incentive to fix flood challenges are now receiving the funding they need, so resources that focus on enhancing natural beneficial functions of floodplains is a good way to do the right thing.
28. Alyssa Curran asked participants if they have seen a wide spectrum of projects from larger scale projects to distributed scale projects.
29. Brian Kempf deferred to the local representatives and said he doesn't see a lot of acquisition. He said in terms of infrastructure policies from CRS, it is more challenging because a lot projects are out of the financial capabilities of a lot of communities.
30. Leah Yasenchek added that NJ Future ran into a lot of barriers to permitting with NJDEP for a project that was preventative and not reactionary. She said that hopefully NJDEP becomes more open to these kinds of projects.
31. Jim Rutala agreed and added that occurs often with restoration projects. He said the pandemic had significant impacts on the Jersey Coast as school age populations are increasing and more people work from home and live in the area year-round. He added that this may continue as these places are desirable to many people and that they have seen a transition from seasonal/rental properties to home ownership for second home and year-round residents which is changing the needs for the area.
32. Jaclyn Flor asked do these changes warrant a need for more parks/recreation facilities in the region? Jim Rutala said the towns recognize the need for more public space and that the pandemic certainly accelerated this trend.
33. Monica Coffey continued the discussion saying she believes policies that value trees are very important. She added that we need to preserve existing trees and that awareness about impervious surfaces and how they contribute to flooding needs to increase.
34. Leah Yasenchek added that a lot of communities have ordinances that regulate impervious surfaces however some consider some materials as pervious but they're really not. She said that this allows people to increase the number of impervious surfaces which can be addressed through planning mechanisms to encourage people to keep pervious material on their lot. Leah Yasenchek also agreed that trees need to be preserved and protected. She said that some communities are struggling to address the need for funding to remove and replace diseased trees and that small grants are not enough.
35. Jaclyn Flor discussed the next steps of the project then ended the meeting.

Action Items:

1. The second Environmental Focus Group meeting will be scheduled in the Fall 2021.

# Resilient NJ



Regional Planning for a Stronger New Jersey

## Environmental Focus Group Meeting

*Atlantic County Coastal Region  
Focus Group Meeting #1 - Teams  
07.22.2021*



# Agenda

- I. Introductions
- II. Project Overview
- III. Understanding Environmental & Ecological Assets that should be included in Analysis
- IV. Past Disasters- Where was the ACCR Environment and Ecology the most vulnerable
- V. Planned Projects/Policies that will have largest impact on ACCR Environment and Ecology
- VI. Next Steps



# I. Introductions

**The following were invited and may be in attendance, please introduce yourself, organization, and role in your organization:**

- *NJDEP & The Consultant Team*
- *The ACCR Environmental: a representative from each was invited:*
  - *Ventnor Green Team*
  - *Atlantic City Green Team*
  - *Linwood Green Team*
  - *Somers Point Green Team*
  - *Egg Harbor Township Green Team*
  - *Pleasantville Green Team*
  - *Sustainable Margate*
  - *NJ Association of State Floodplain Management*
  - *New Jersey Coastal Coalition*
  - *NJ Future*
  - *Sustainable Jersey*

# Meeting Objectives

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## Today, we are seeking answers to these key questions:

- *What are the critical assets in the Region that have the largest impact on the environment and the ecology of the ACCR region now and in the future?*
- *What aspects of the environment and ecology in the ACCR have been the most vulnerable in past disasters? What gaps remain in the aftermath of response and recovery?*
- *Are there any planned projects in the Region whether currently funded or in the planning stage that address these vulnerabilities?*
- *Are there any projects or policies that we should consider in this Region that would make the environment and ecology of the Region as a whole more resilient?*

## II. Overview

# Resilient NJ Project Area and Regional Team Members

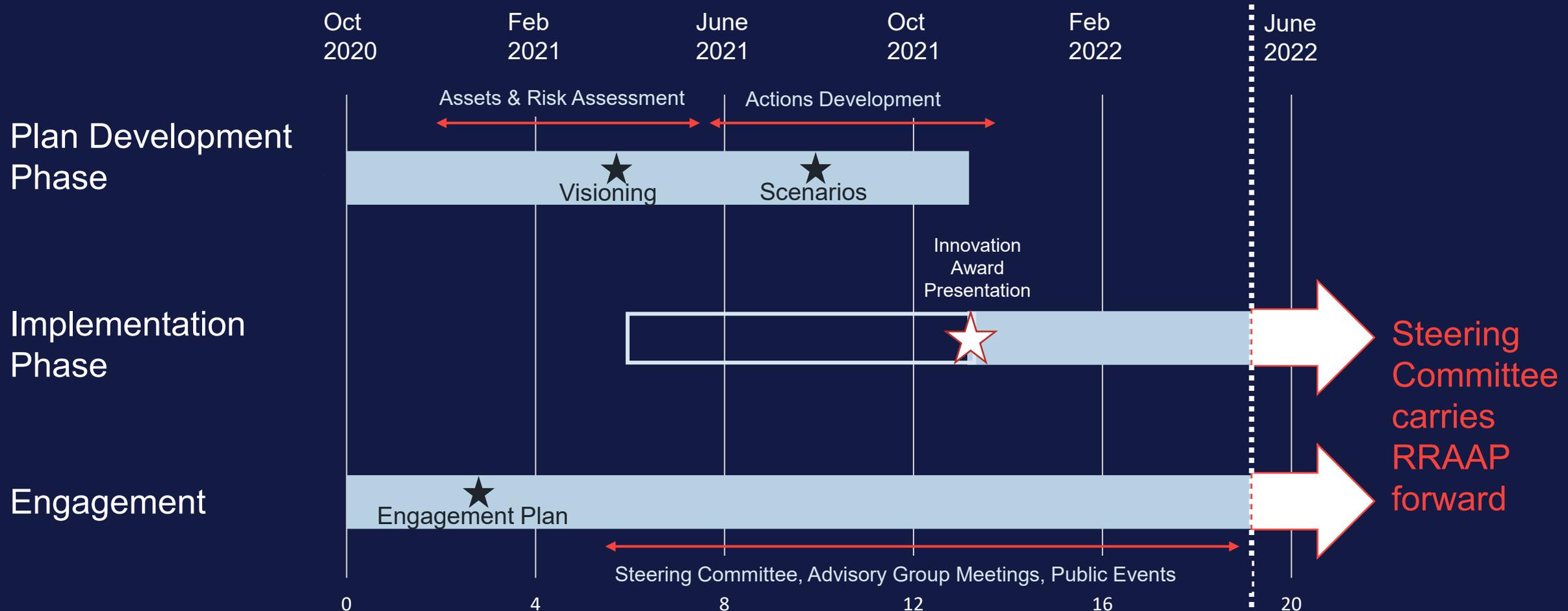


American Red Cross

PrepareNJ

# Overview

## *Key Milestones for Project Engagement*



May 31, 2022: HUD \$ Expiration

# Resilient NJ

## Progress Update & Next Steps



February  
2021



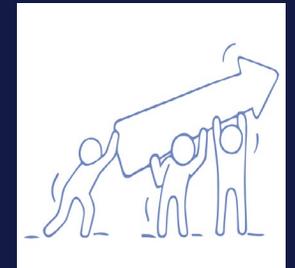
March  
2021



April  
2021



May  
2021



June & July  
2021

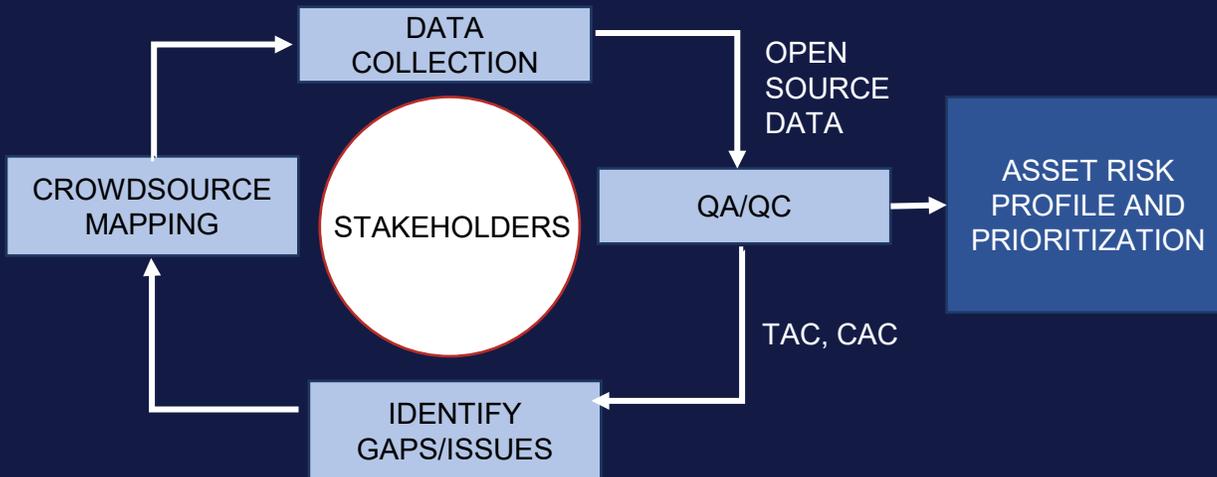


Updated asset maps	Focus group / resident advisory survey launched	CAC engagement, focus group outreach	Ongoing CAC/TAC and public engagement	Public Event/ Focus Groups
Resilient NJ inter-regional coordination	Planning Context review	Project visioning	Project visioning	Project visioning
Soft launched website	Project visioning	Vet risk assessment methods	Risk assessment & prioritization	Risk assessment & prioritization
CAC engagement	Asset collection / risk assessment	Lay groundwork for Scenarios development	Scenarios development	Scenarios development
Planning Context development				

# Crowdsourcing Mapping Tool for Public Comment

SC

## ➤ Process:



- Better estimate key risk areas, asset damage estimate for development of risk profile and asset prioritization
- Data collected by leveraging local knowledge will be integrated into existing asset database

<b>Transportation System</b> Airports and Heliports Bike Paths Roads and Highways Truck Routes Bus Routes and Bus Stops Marina and Boat Launch Rail line and Rail Stations Emergency Evacuation Routes	<b>Economic &amp; Cultural Assets</b> Casinos Major Employers Sports Tourism Place of worship Commercial Corridor Opportunity Zone Urban Enterprise Zone Fishing areas
<b>Key Infrastructure Assets</b> Govt. Facilities and Buildings Public Safety/Essential Services Places of Interest/Landmark Education Resident Services	<b>Utility Infrastructure</b> Power Generation facilities Wasterwater Treatment plant Recycle Facilities Sewer Serving Area ACUA Facilities
<b>Natural &amp; Cultural Environment</b> Beach Conservation Area Natural Areas Parks and Recreational Areas Wetlands Historic Sites Wildlife refuge	<b>Capital Projects</b> Vegetative Shoreline Vertical Bulkhead SAndy Beach Seawall and Jettys

Asset categories and database organization

# Overview

## *Resilient NJ Project*

### **Goal: locally-driven action plan.**

- a) Stakeholder involvement throughout project
- b) Ensure local needs and visions are collaboratively developed
- c) Ensure actions are best-fit to unique characteristics of neighborhoods
- d) Achieve coherent strategy across region and broader Resilient NJ program

#### **ENGAGEMENT PLAN**



**Steering  
Committee (SC)**



**Technical  
Advisory  
Committee (TAC)**



**Community  
Advisory  
Committee (CAC)**



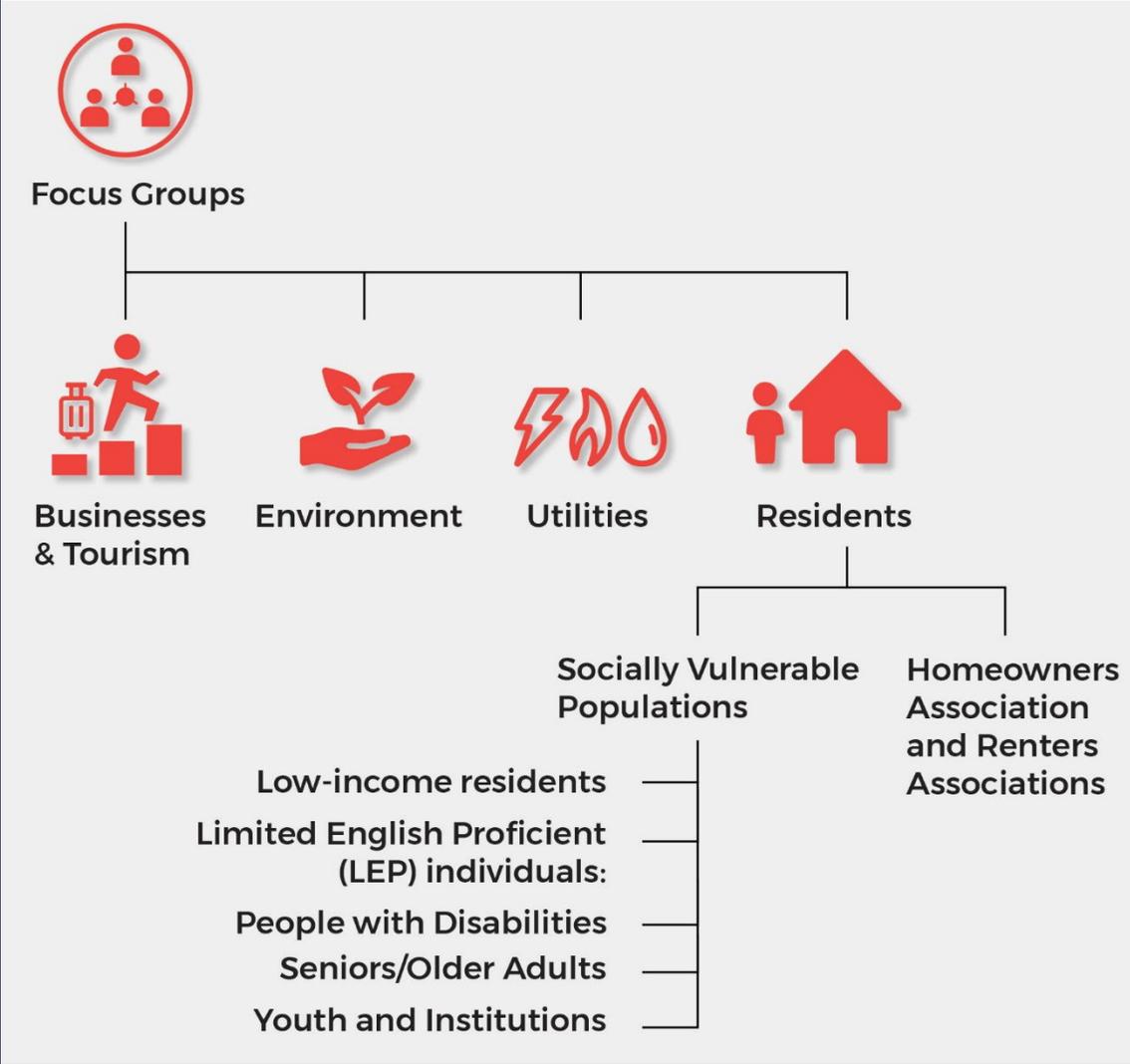
**Focus Groups (FG)**



You are in a  
Focus Group

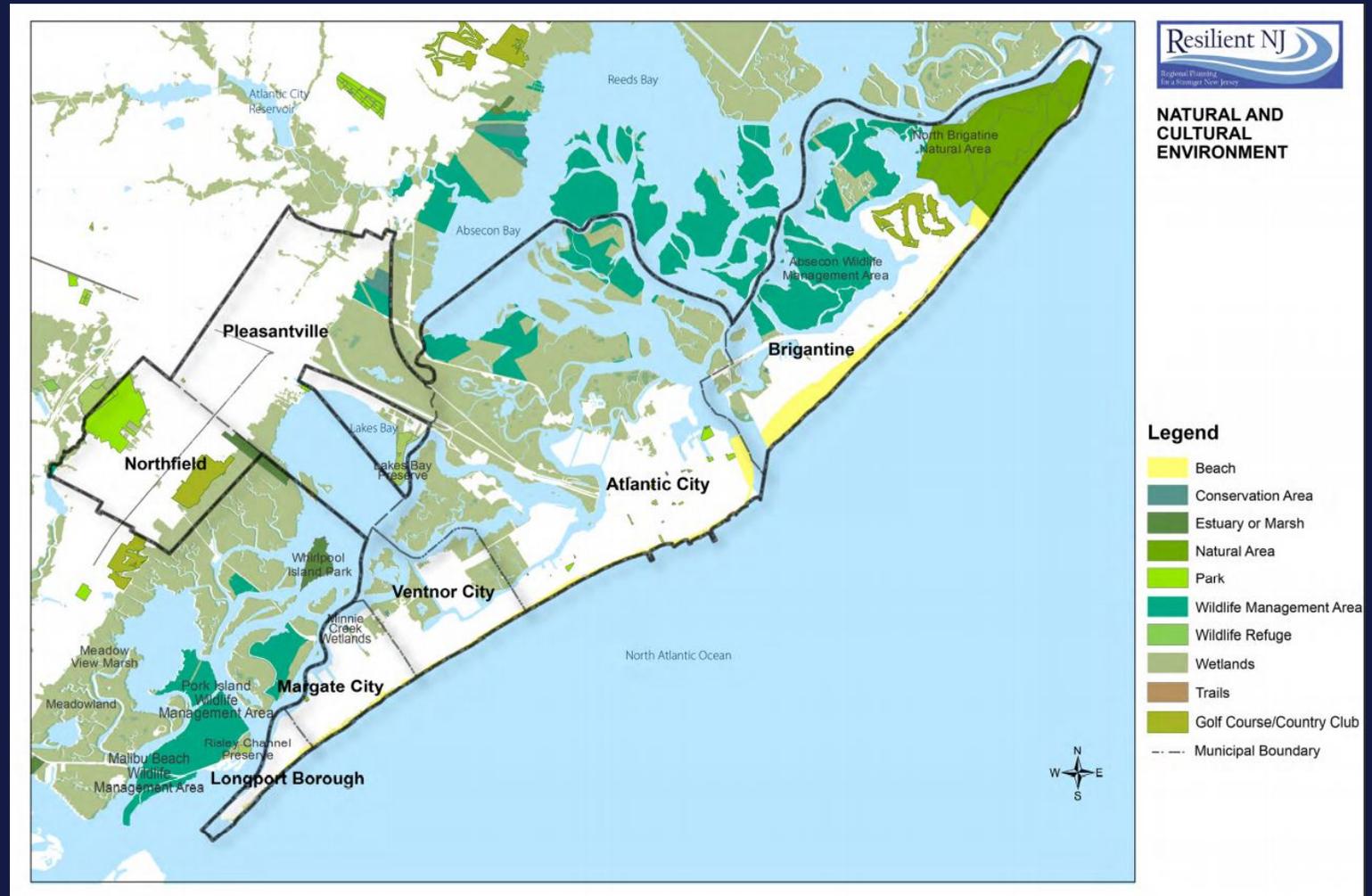
# Overview

## *Resilient NJ Project*



# III. Understanding Environmental & Ecological Assets that should be included in Analysis

What are the critical assets in the Region that have the largest impact on the environment and the ecology of the ACCR region now and in the future?



# IV. Past Disasters- Where was the ACCR Environment & Ecology the most vulnerable

What aspects of the environment and ecology in the ACCR have been the most vulnerable in past disasters? What gaps remain in the aftermath of response and recovery?



# V. Planned Projects/Policies for ACCR Environment & Ecology

Are there any planned projects in the Region whether currently funded or in the planning stage that address these vulnerabilities?

Are there any projects or policies that we should consider in this Region that would make the environment and ecology of the Region as a whole more resilient?



# VI. Next Steps

Thank you!

# Regional

## Regional Transportation

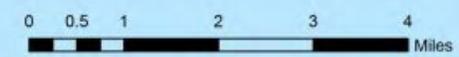


### REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION



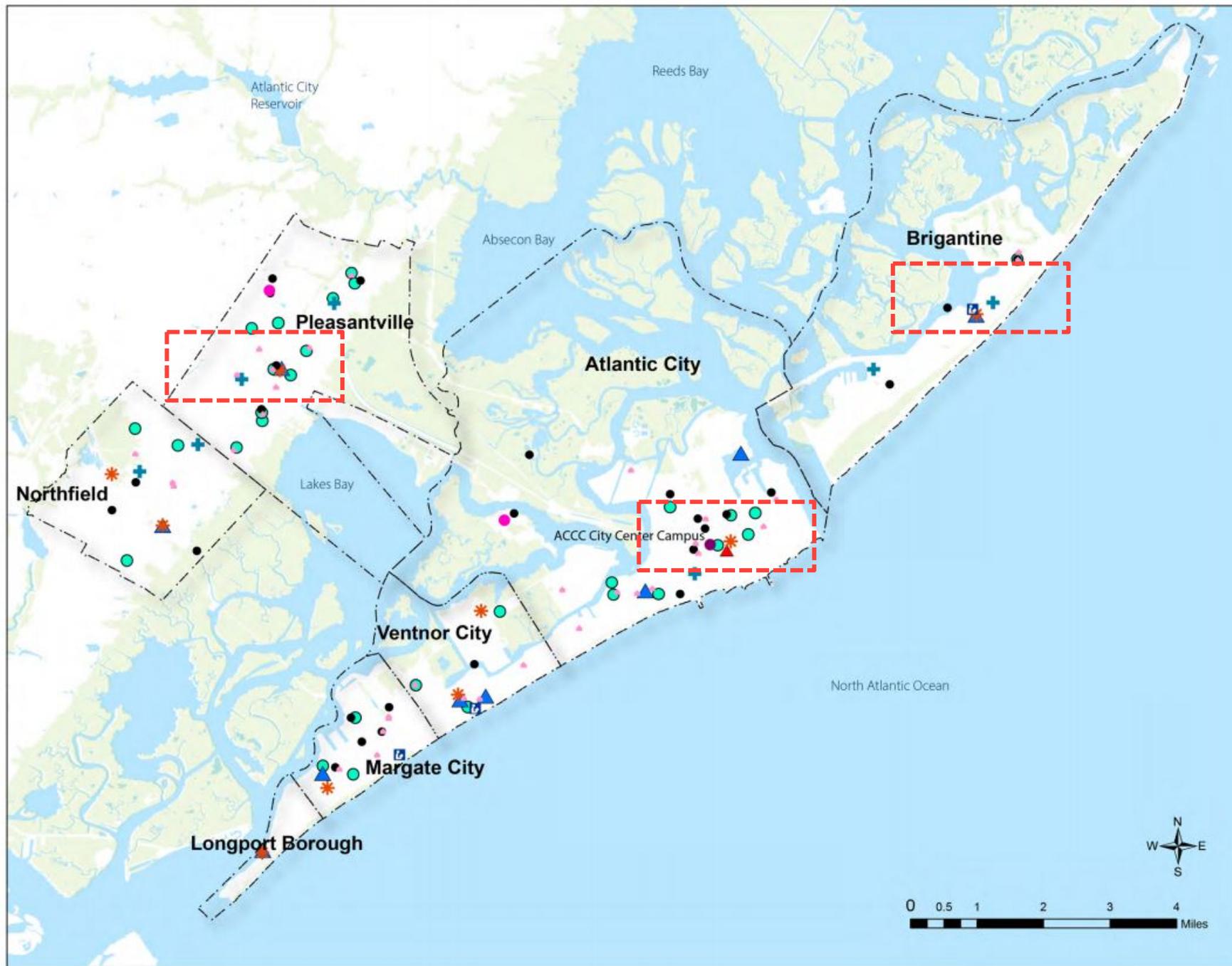
#### Legend

- Bike Path
- Bus Routes
- Jitney Routes
- Railway station
- Emergency Evacuation Routes
- Major Highways
- New Jersey Roads
- Passenger Rail Line
- Municipal Boundary
- Airport
- Heliport
- Marina (\*Shows both public and private marinas)
- Parking Garage
- Boat Launch
- Bus Terminal
- Key Bus Stops (Regional Private Bus Service (Greyhound))



# Regional

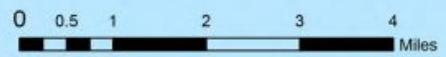
## Critical Facilities and Civic Infrastructure



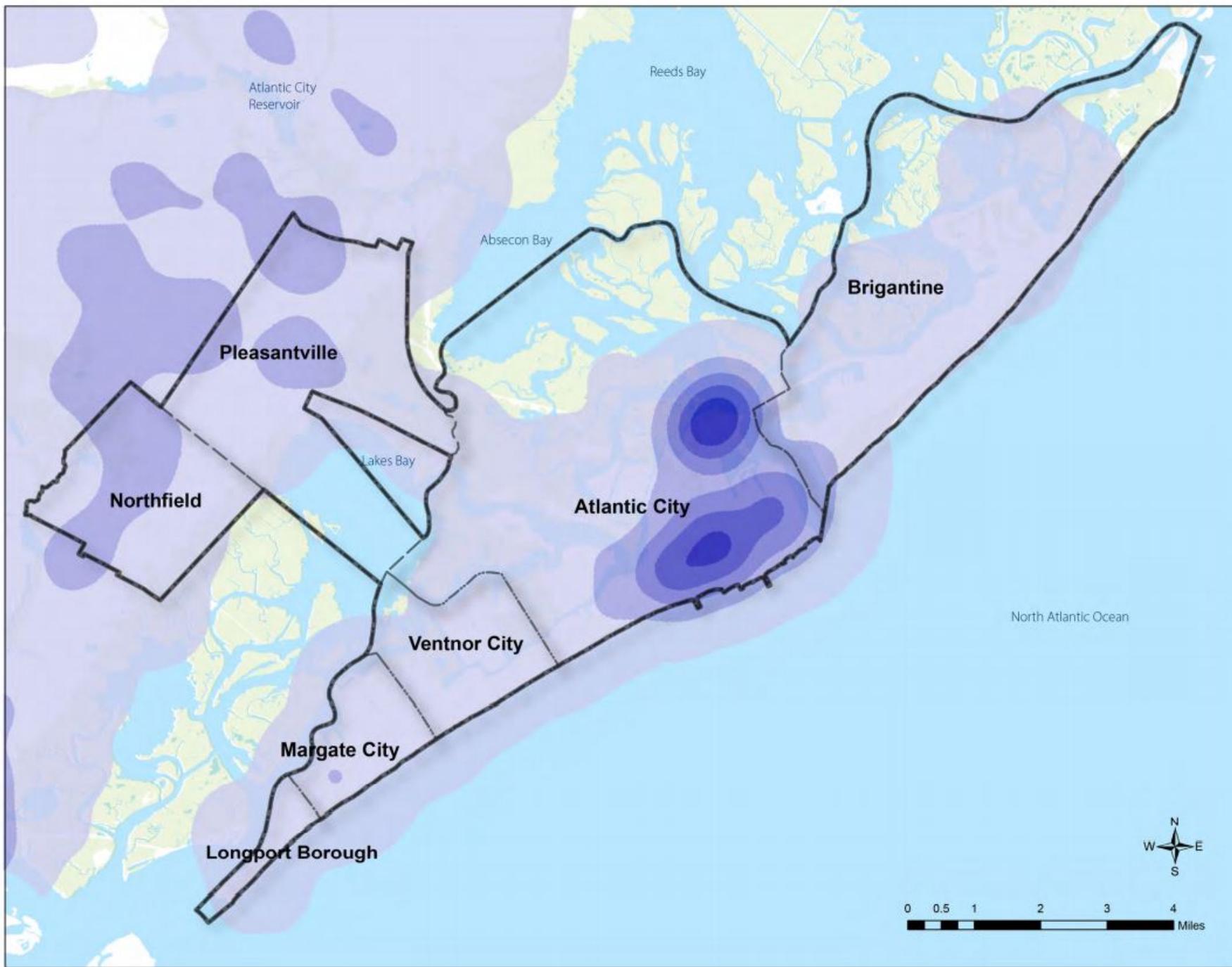
### KEY INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Legend

- Govt. Facilities and Buildings**
  - ▲ City Hall
- Public Safety/Essential Services**
  - ★ Fire Station
  - ▲ Police Department
  - + Health care
- Education**
  - College
  - High School
  - Primary & Secondary schools
  - 📖 Library
- Resident Services**
  - Child Care
  - National Shelter System
- Municipal Boundary



# Regional Employment Density



## EMPLOYMENT DENSITY

### Legend

Jobs/Sq.Mile

- 5 - 964
- 965 - 3844
- 3845 - 8644
- 8645 - 15364
- 15365 - 24004

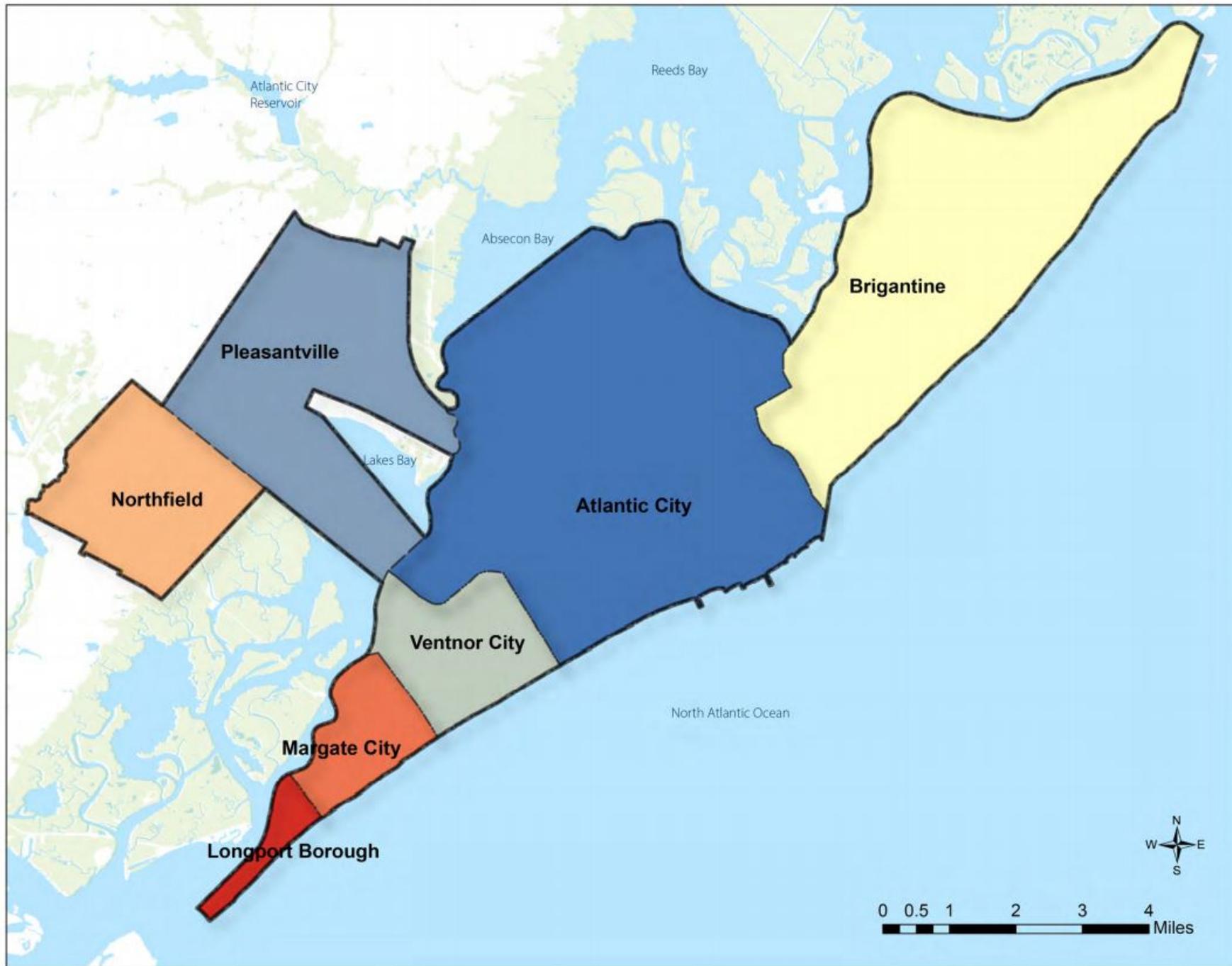


# Regional

## Median Household Income Change From 2010 - 2019



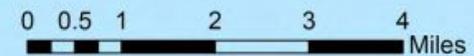
### MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME CHANGE FROM 2010 TO 2019



#### Legend

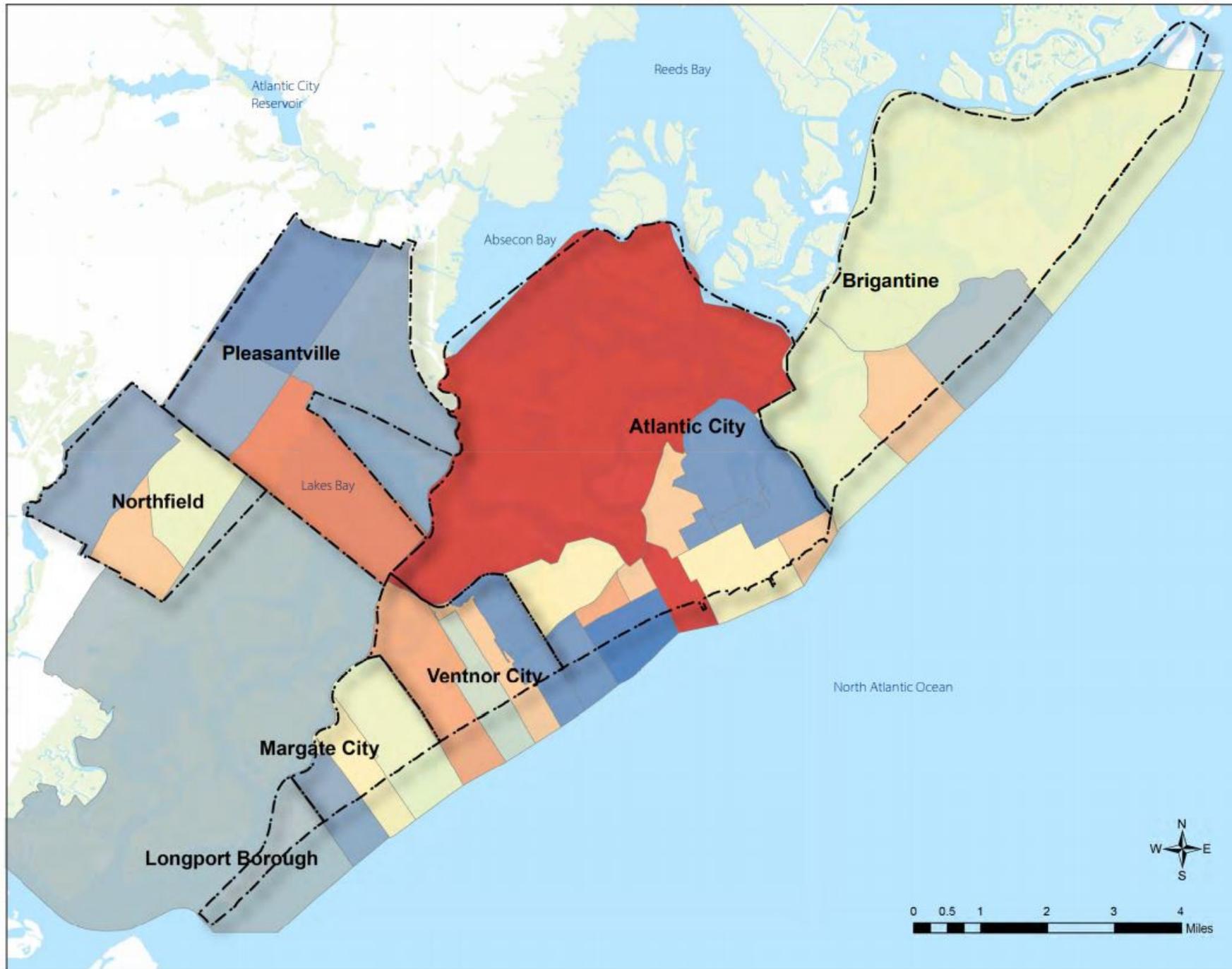
##### Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)

- 0.4
- 0.3 - 0.4
- 0.5 - 1.4
- 1.5 - 1.7
- 1.8 - 2.3
- 2.4 - 2.5
- 2.6 - 5.7

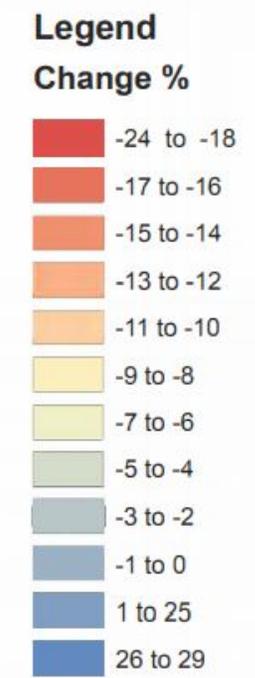


# Regional

## Population Change in Percentage from 2010 - 2019



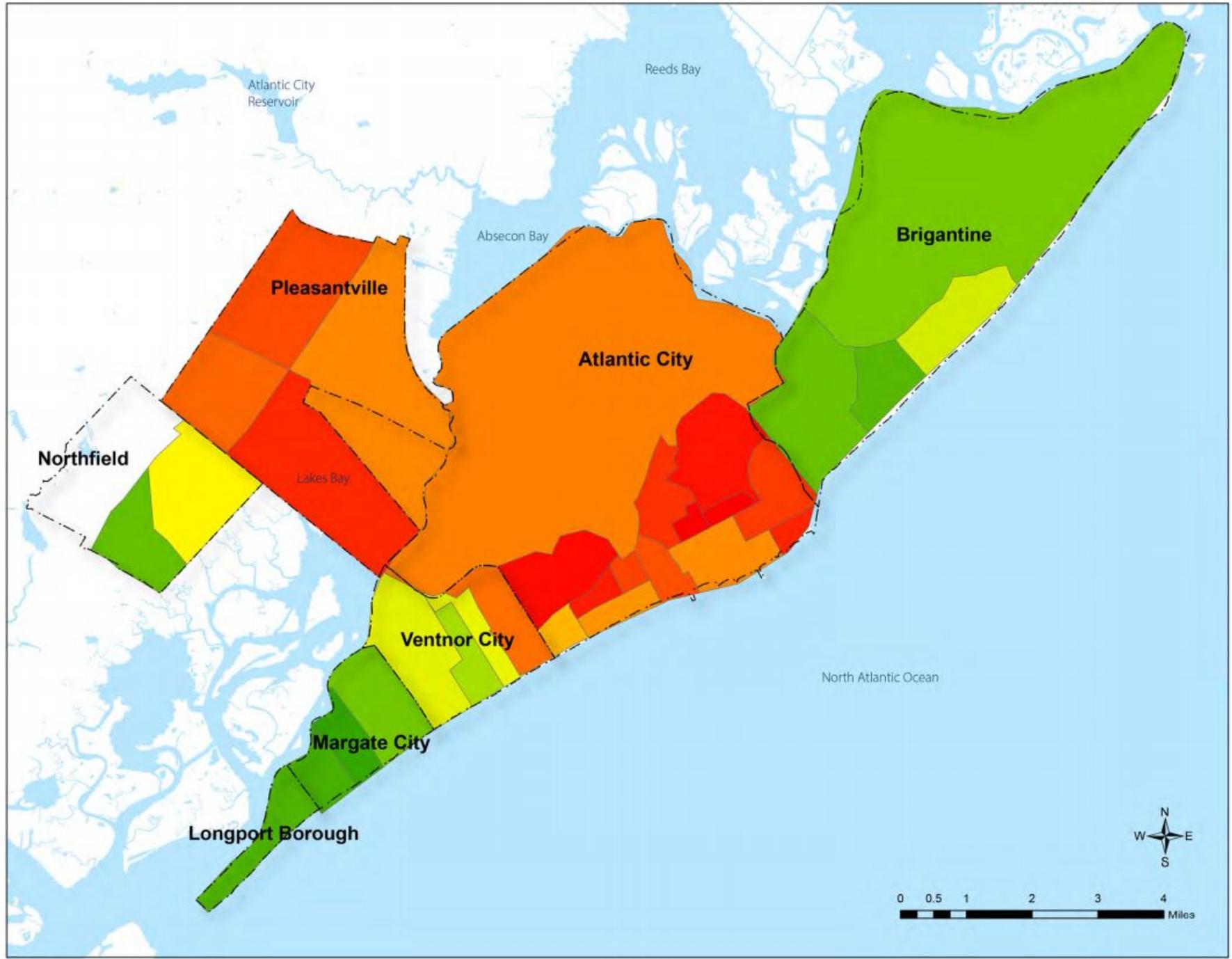
### POPULATION CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE FROM 2010 TO 2019



# Regional Socioeconomic Status



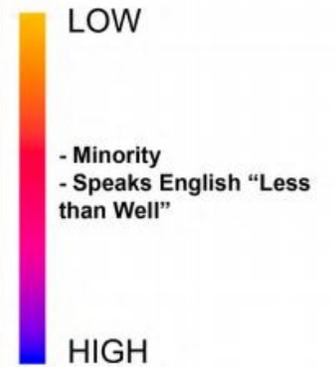
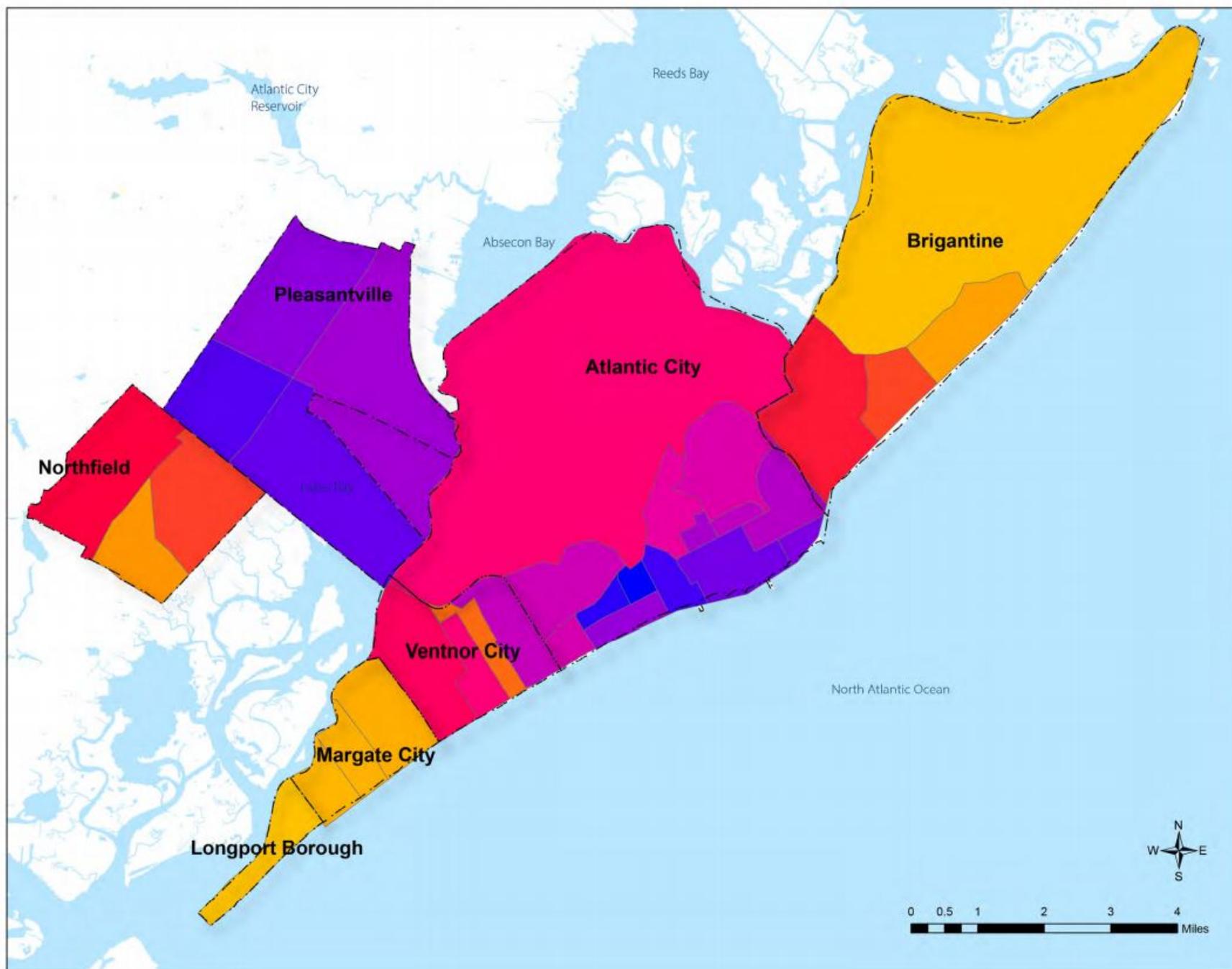
## SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



# Regional Minority Status and Language



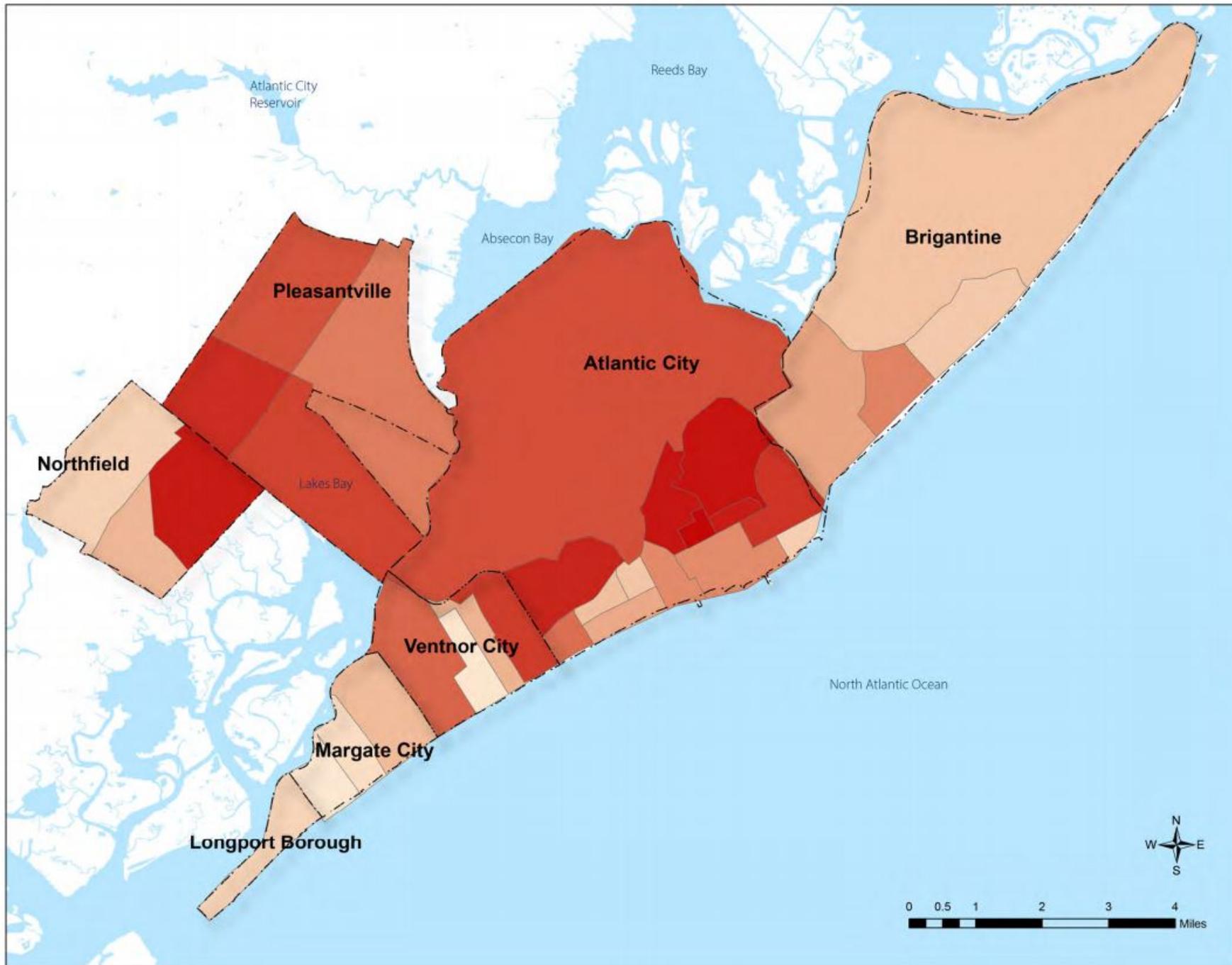
## MINORITY STATUS & LANGUAGE



# Regional Household Composition and Disability

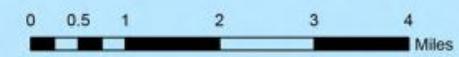
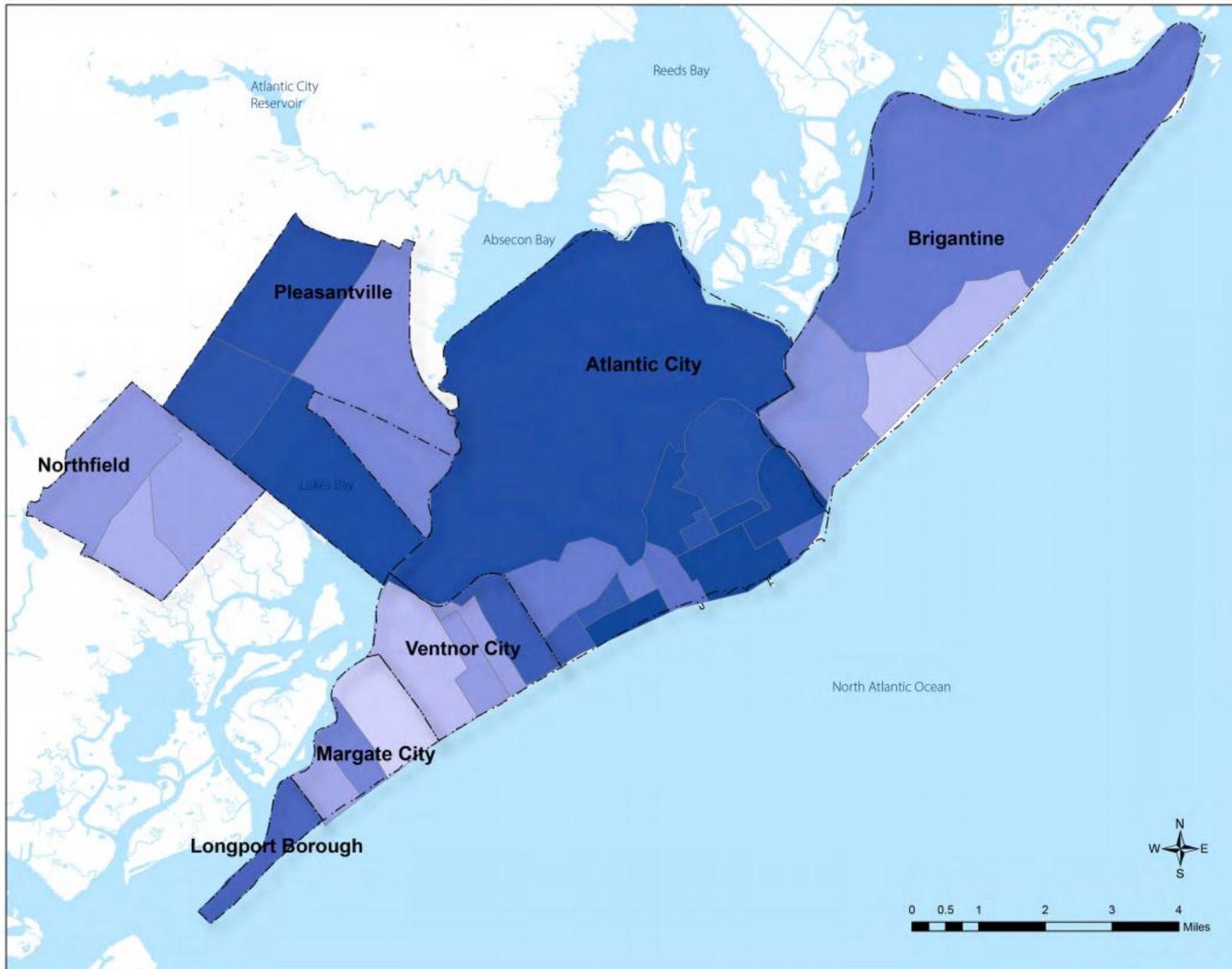


## HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION & DISABILITY

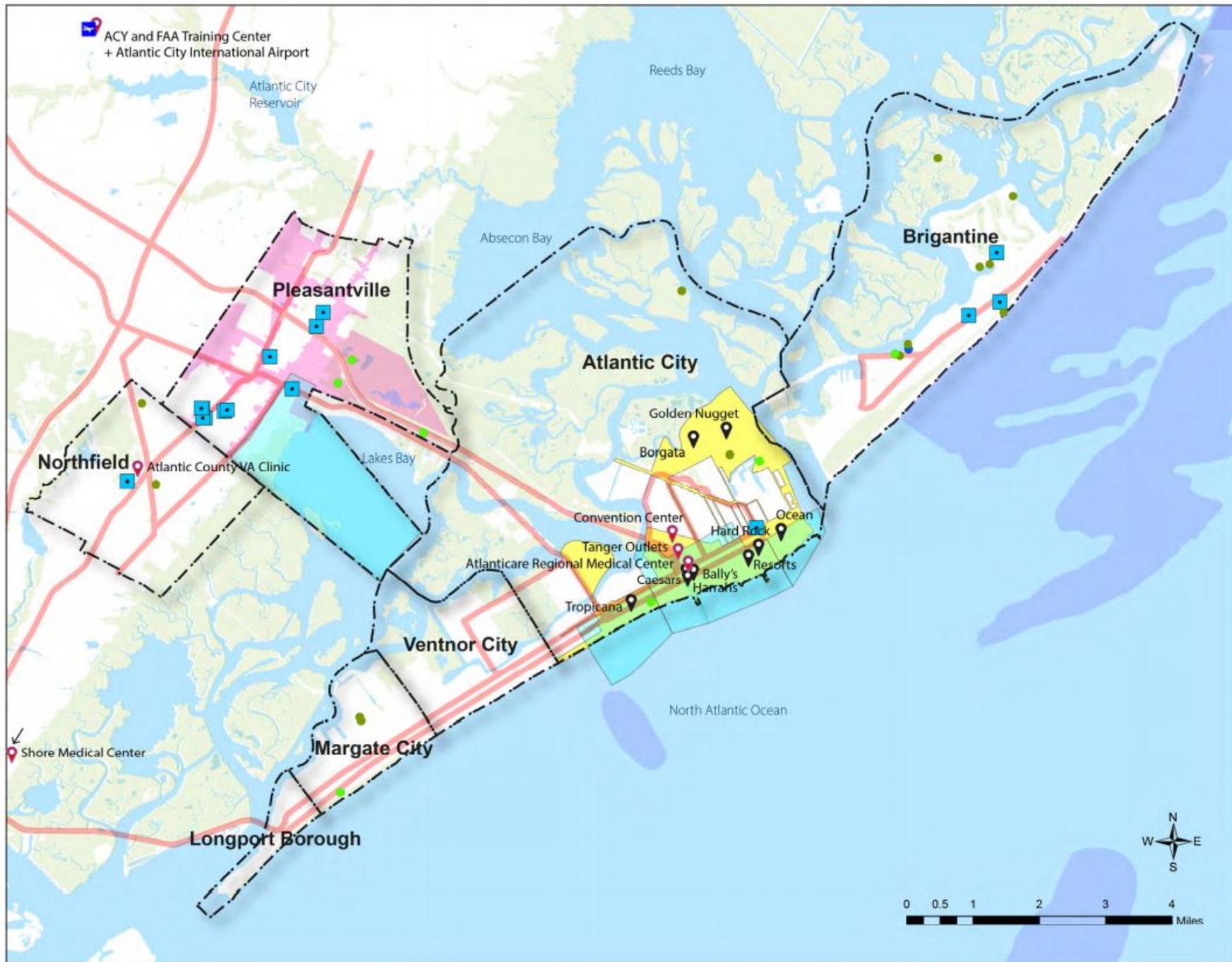


# Regional Housing Type and Transportation

## HOUSING TYPE & TRANSPORTATION



# Regional Economic Assets



## ECONOMIC ASSETS

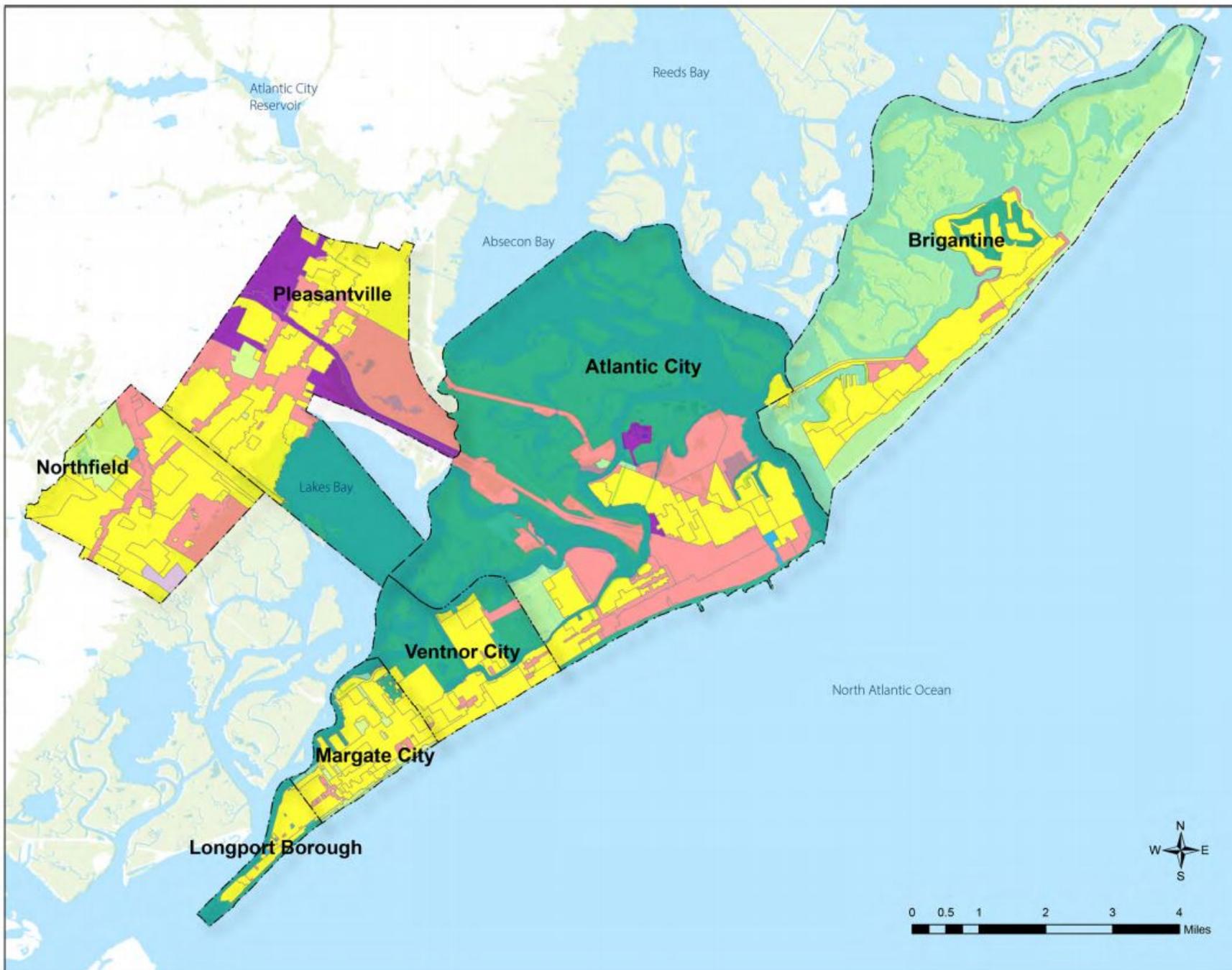
### Legend

- Casinos
- Major Employer
- Leisure
- Tourism
- Sports
- Urban Enterprise Zones (UEZ)
- Place of Worship
- Commercial Corridor
- Opportunity Zone  
Low-Income Community
- Commercial & Recreational  
Fishing Area
- Predominated Tourism  
Trade Area
- Municipal Boundary

# Regional Land Coverage



## LANDCOVER



## Legend

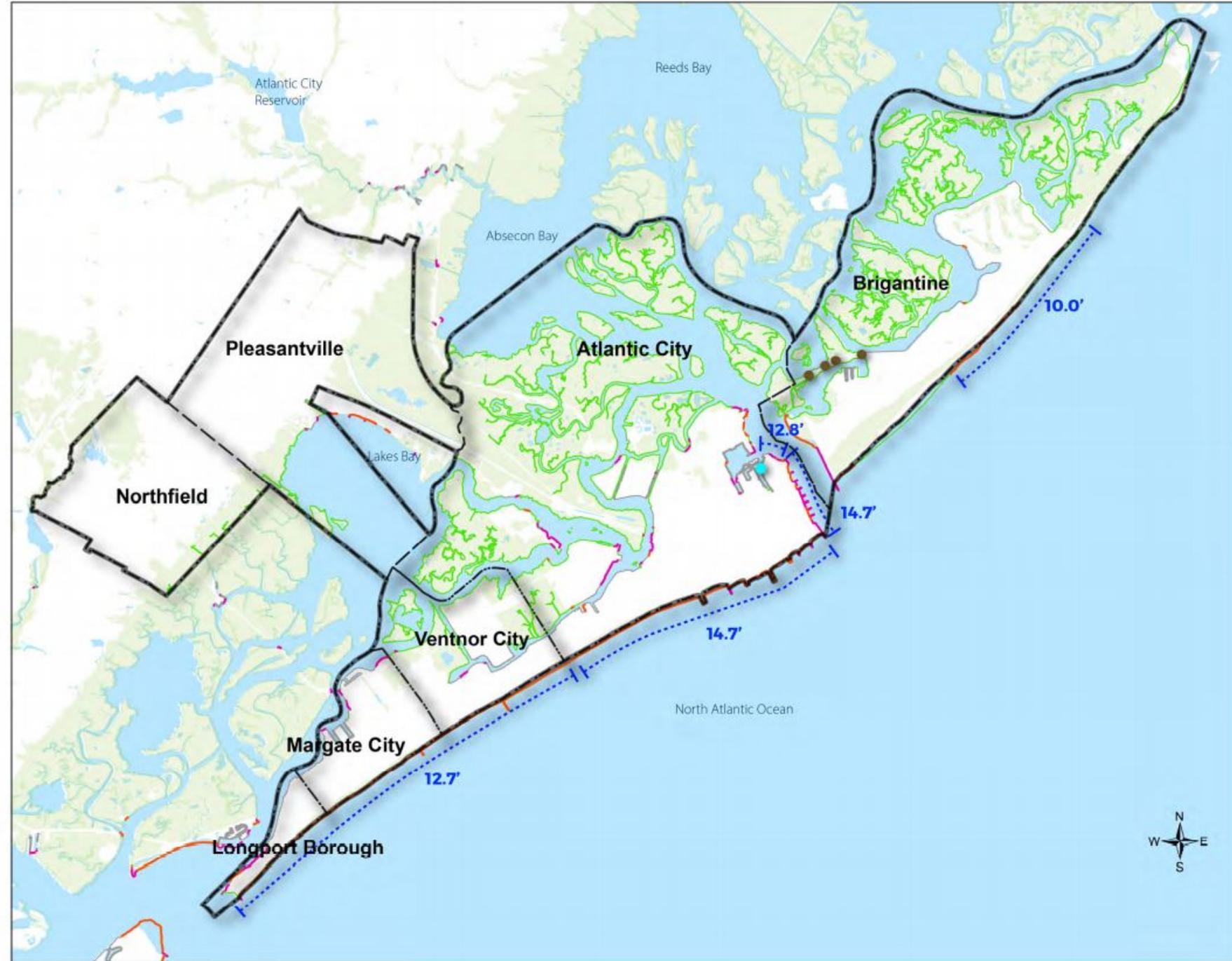
- COMMERCIAL
- CONSERVATION
- INDUSTRIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- PARK
- PRESERVATION
- RESIDENTIAL
- WETLANDS

# Regional

## Projects – Shoreline Type



### PROJECTS - SHORELINE TYPE

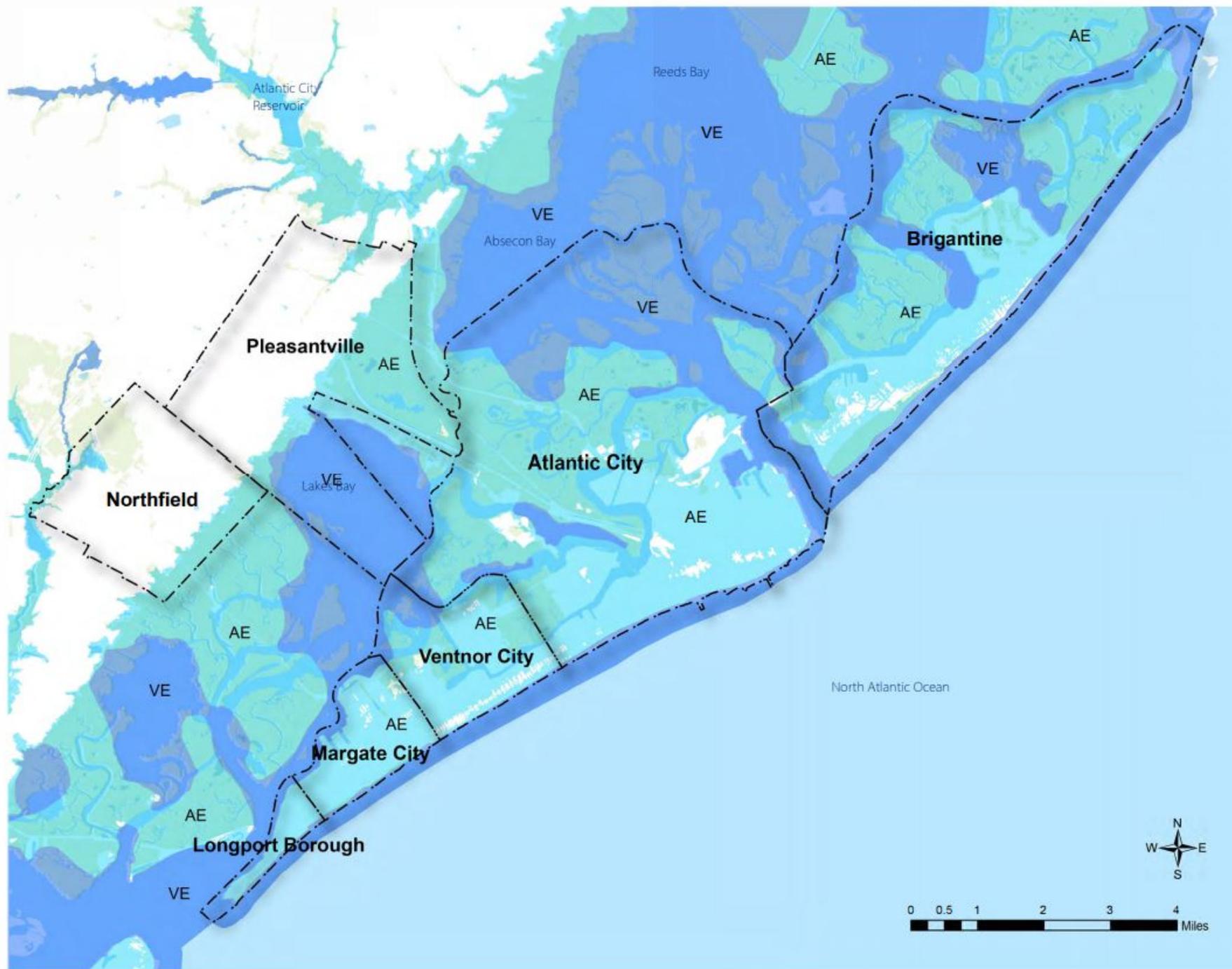


#### Legend

- Vegetative Shoreline
- Vertical Bulkhead
- Sandy Beach
- Seawalls and Jettys
- - - Municipal Boundary
- Atlantic-Brigantine Blvd Shoreline Stabilization Project Site
- Gardners Basin Living Shoreline Installation



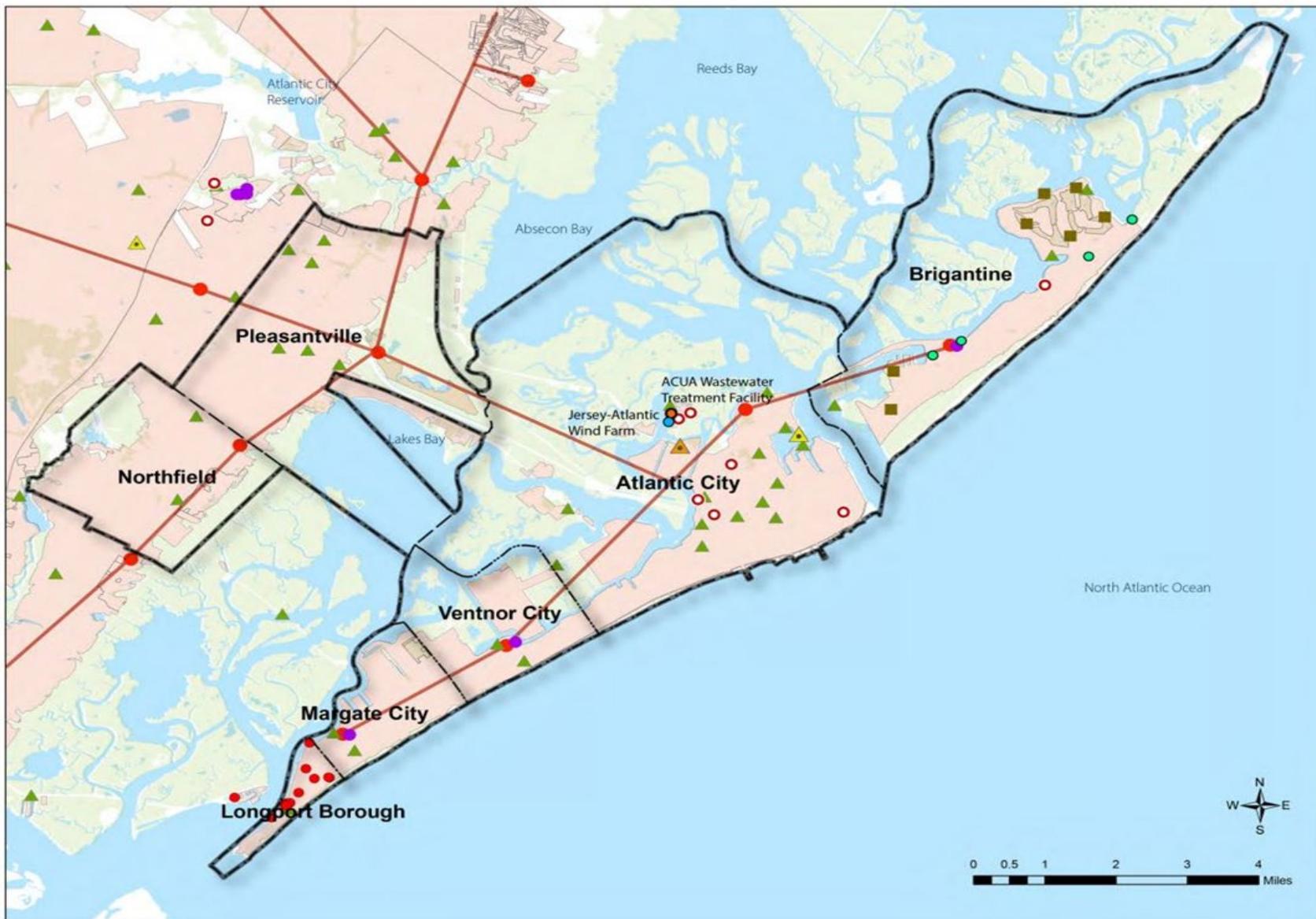
# Regional FEMA Flood Zones



AE  
VE



# Regional Utility Infrastructure



## UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

### Utilities

- WasteWater Treatment Plant
- Power Generation Facilities
- Recycle Facilities
- Sewer Serving Area
- Atlantic County Utility Authority
- Wind Farm
- Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Publicly Owned Treatment Work
- Federal Treatment Work
- Water Well
- Sewer lift Station
- Municipal Boundary

*Playgrounds, historic sites  
to be assessed at municipal  
scale*