

Area in Need of Redevelopment Investigation Report

Prepared for:

**The Township of Neptune
Monmouth County, New Jersey**

November 2020 DRAFT

Prepared By:

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Continental Data Building Site Study Area in the Township of Neptune qualifies as an Area in Need of Redevelopment as defined by the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (NJSA 40:12A-1 et seq., herein referred to as LRHL), to realize a comprehensive program of redevelopment for the site along one of the Township's highway commercial corridors. Per the LRHL, an area must exhibit one or more certain characteristics to be deemed an Area in Need of Redevelopment. The Township Committee retained Leon S. Avakian, Inc. to investigate the conditions of the Continental Data Building Site Study Area (hereinafter the Study Area) pursuant to the criteria for redevelopment designation.

In addition to the criteria for designating an Area in Need of Redevelopment, the process for investigation and designation is stipulated in the LRHL. A redevelopment study begins with a resolution from the municipal governing body that authorizes the Planning Board to investigate the conditions of the defined study area. The Planning Board then passes a resolution stating whether the Board recommends designation based on the results of the investigation. The Governing Body ultimately decides whether to designate an Area in Need of Redevelopment, and if so designated, can pursue the preparation of a Redevelopment Plan.

Designating an Area in Need of Redevelopment permits a municipality or redevelopment entity to use all the powers of redevelopment, including eminent domain. This designation also permits municipalities to grant thirty-year tax abatements and exemptions that may encourage private property owners to rehabilitate and reinvest in their properties. Designation may be used in concert with other redevelopment projects and initiatives as part of a comprehensive redevelopment strategy.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATING AN AREA IN NEED OF REDEVELOPMENT

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5, an area may be designated in need of redevelopment if, after investigation, notice and hearing as provided in N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6, the governing body of the municipality concludes that the study area contains any of the following conditions:

- a. The generality of buildings are substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent, or possess any of such characteristics, or are so lacking in light, air, or space, as to be conducive to unwholesome living or working conditions.
- b. The discontinuance of the use of buildings previously used for commercial, manufacturing, or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such buildings; or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be untenable.
- c. Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, redevelopment agency or redevelopment entity, or unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years prior to adoption of the resolution, and that by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of the municipality, or topography, or nature of the soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital.
- d. Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these or other factors, are detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community.
- e. A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real properties therein or other similar conditions which impede land assemblage or discourage the undertaking of improvements, resulting in a stagnant and unproductive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare, which condition is presumed to be having a negative social or economic impact or otherwise being detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the surrounding area or the community in general.
- f. Areas, in excess of five contiguous acres, whereon buildings or improvements have been destroyed, consumed by fire, demolished or altered by the action of storm, fire, cyclone, tornado, earthquake or other casualty in such a way that the aggregate assessed value of the area has been materially depreciated.

- g. In any municipality in which an enterprise zone has been designated pursuant to the "New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zones Act," P.L.1983, c.303 (C.52:27H-60 et seq.) the execution of the actions prescribed in that act for the adoption by the municipality and approval by the New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zone Authority of the zone development plan for the area of the enterprise zone shall be considered sufficient for the determination that the area is in need of redevelopment pursuant to sections 5 and 6 of P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-5 and 40A:12A-6) for the purpose of granting tax exemptions within the enterprise zone district pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1991, c.431 (C.40A:20-1 et seq.) or the adoption of a tax abatement and exemption ordinance pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1991, c.441 (C.40A:21-1 et seq.). The municipality shall not utilize any other redevelopment powers within the urban enterprise zone unless the municipal governing body and planning board have also taken the actions and fulfilled the requirements prescribed in P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) for determining that the area is in need of redevelopment or an area in need of rehabilitation and the municipal governing body has adopted a redevelopment plan ordinance including the area of the enterprise zone.
- h. The designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.

This report and investigation are aimed only at determining whether the Study Area meets the statutory criteria to be identified as an Area in Need of Redevelopment.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

Area Description

The Study Area, shown in Map A herein, consists of Block 3903, Lots 12 and 13 (in tax records, these lots have been merged into a single lot known as Lot 12). The site is a corner lot, with approximately 1,950 feet of frontage on Route 66 and 1,270 feet of frontage on Green Grove Road. Route 66 is a heavily-trafficked highway commercial corridor leading to a Garden State Parkway entrance and an interchange with Route 33 connecting shore points with western Monmouth County. In general, development along Route 66 is characterized by large lot “Big Box” retail development, including stores like Home Depot and Walmart, shopping centers with multiple tenants, and highway-supportive uses such as a Wawa gas-station convenience store.

The lots are currently developed with two connected commercial office structures with associated parking in the eastern portion of the lots. The western extent of the lots is wooded and precluded from development by the presence of several environmentally sensitive features, including the Jumping Brook, a large area of wetlands, and threatened species habitat (see Map B).

As can be seen from the Existing Land Use map herein (Map C), a variety of land uses surround the Study Area. The Study area itself is classified as commercial use. West of Green Grove Road, the uses around the Study Area and across Route 66 are generally commercial or industrial in nature. Land use patterns are strikingly different east of Green Grove Road, across the street from the study area, where neighborhoods single-family homes are the predominate use on both sides of Route 66. The Green Grove school is located within one of the residential neighborhoods across Route 66. Township-owned vacant conservation land comprised of wetlands is located directly north of the Study Area.



Map A

Continental Data Building Study Area

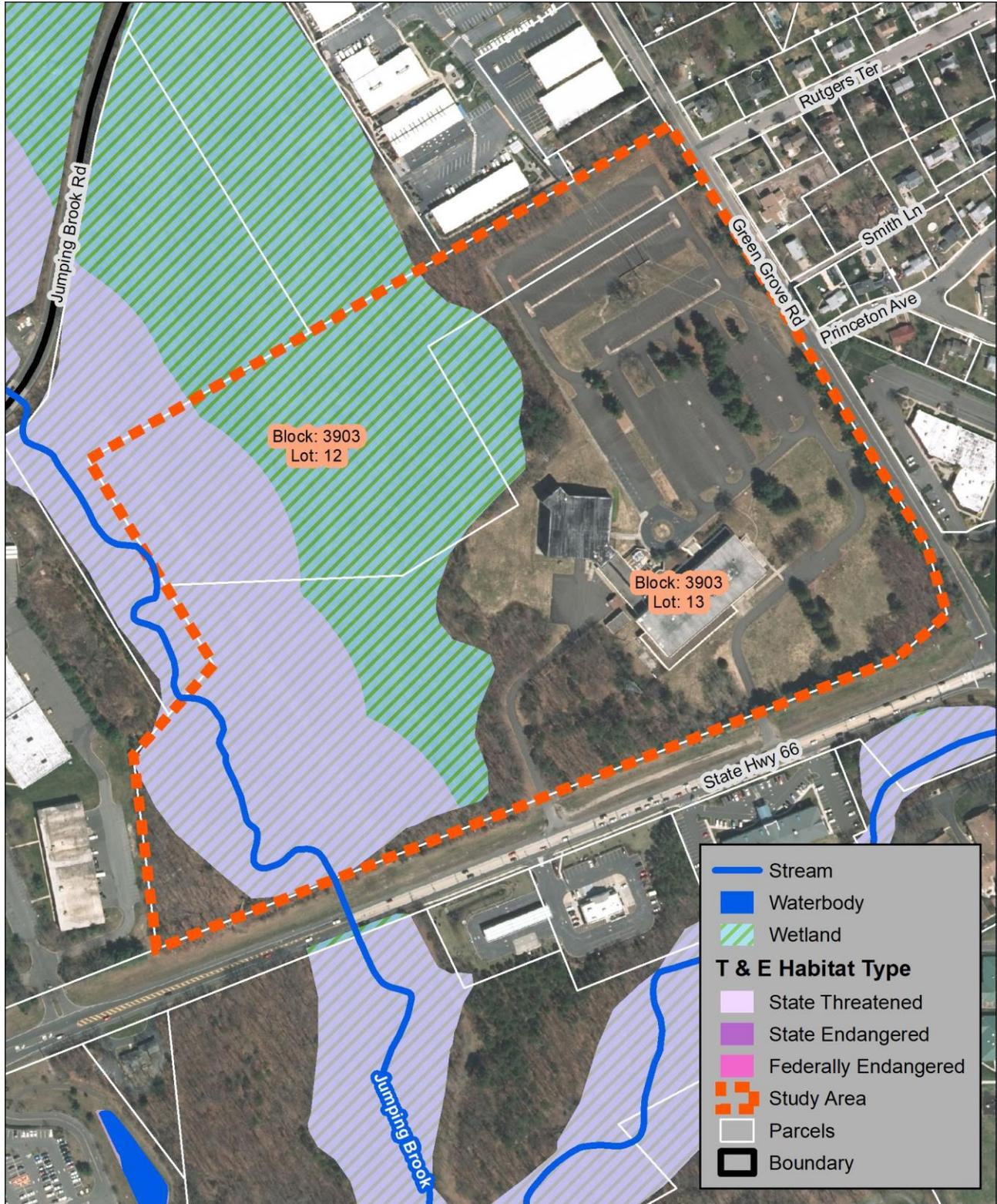
Neptune Township, NJ

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Consulting Engineers

Source: NJGIN Parcel Data

0 125 250 500 Feet

NORTH





NORTH

Map B

Study Area

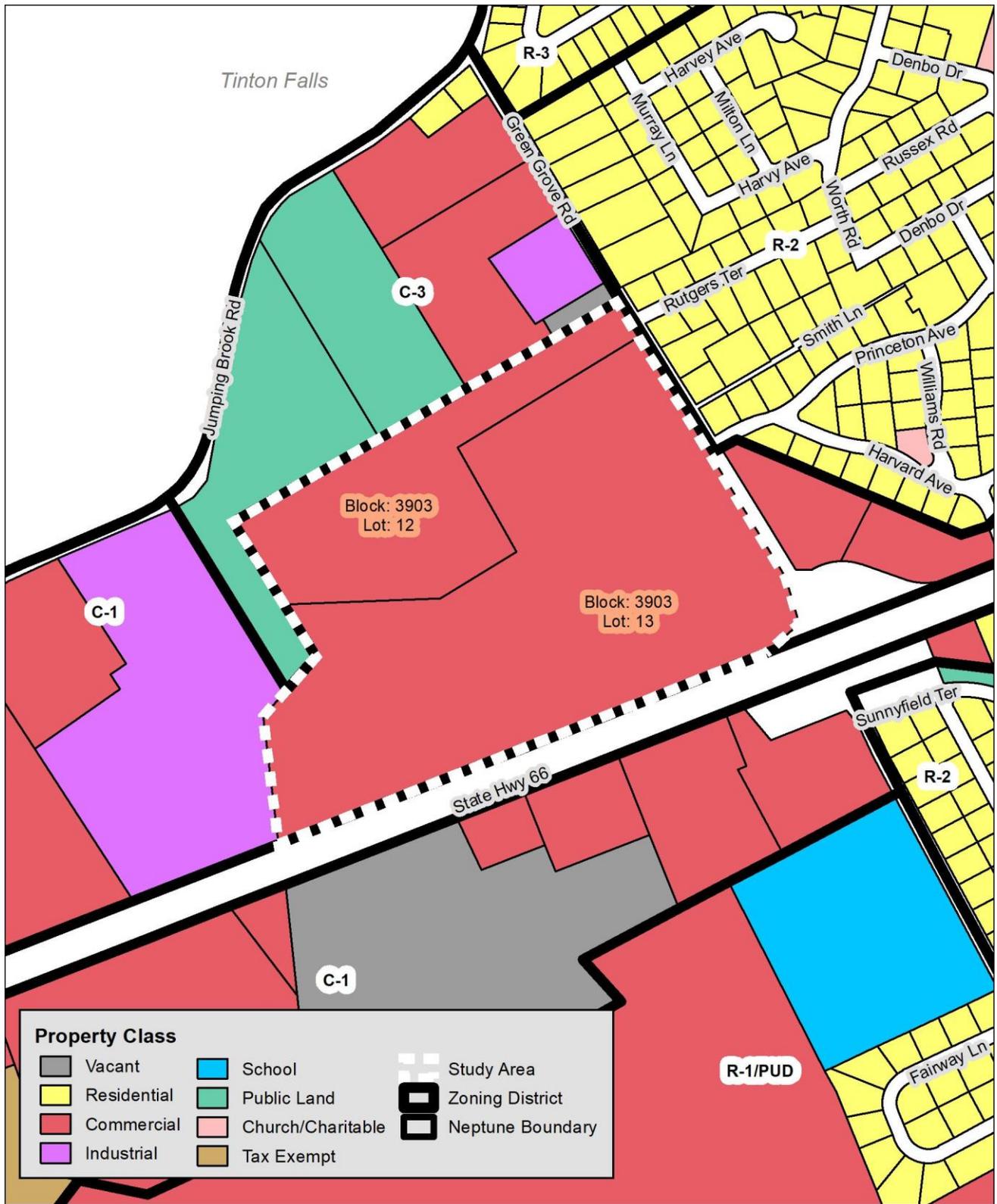
Environmental Conditions

Neptune Township, NJ

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Consulting Engineers

Source: NJGIN Parcel Data,
Wetlands NJDEP LULC (2012),
Landscape Project Data v 3.3





Property Class			
	Vacant		School
	Residential		Public Land
	Commercial		Church/Charitable
	Industrial		Tax Exempt
	Study Area		Zoning District
	Neptune Boundary		

NORTH

0 190 380 760 Feet

Map C

Existing Land Use Study Area & Vicinity

Neptune Township, NJ

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Source: NJGIN Parcel Data, Township Zoning Map.

Current Zoning

The Study Area is situated in the C-1 zoning district, which was most recently amended by ordinance No. 14-26 in July 2014. Its stated purpose is to provide “for business uses appropriate to the Route 66 Highway Corridor.” It permits a number of highway-commercial type of uses, including the following:

Auto-Oriented Uses

New Car and Other Motor Vehicle Dealers; Automotive Parts, Accessories and Tire Stores; Gasoline Stations with Convenience Stores; and Automotive Equipment Rental and Leasing.

Retail Sales

Furniture Stores; Electronics and Appliance Stores; Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers; Grocery Stores; Specialty Food Stores; Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores; Health and Personal Care Stores; Clothing Stores; Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, and Book Stores; Department Stores; Consumer Goods Rental; Other General Merchandise Stores; and Miscellaneous Store Retailers.

Professional Service

Banks; Real Estate; Publishing; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Management of Companies and Enterprises; and Administrative Services;

Personal Service

Personal Care Services; Personal and Household Goods Repair and Maintenance; Other Personal Services, (including Pet Care).

Hotels and Motels

Restaurants and Other Eating Places

Recreational Uses

Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries; Museums; Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers; Bowling Centers; and All other Amusement and Recreation Industries (including miniature golf).

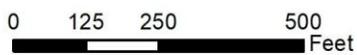
Education and Health Care

Technical and Trade Schools; Other Schools and Instruction; and Ambulatory Health Care Services (includes physician’s and dentist’s offices, outpatient care).

Public and Public Service

Community Food and Housing, Emergency and Other Relief Services; Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, and Professional Organizations; and Public Administration.

Permitted Conditional Uses include utility and telecommunications facilities. Accessory uses include those customary and incidental to principal uses, as well as parking for principal uses.



Map D
**Study Area
Current Zoning**
Neptune Township, NJ

LEON S. AVAKIAN, Inc.
Consulting Engineers

Source: NJGIN Parcel
Data, Township Zoning Map.

AREA EVALUATION FOR CONFORMITY WITH THE REDEVELOPMENT CRITERIA

Study Approach

An analysis of the Study Area's existing physical characteristics was conducted using tax records, aerial photography, physical inspection, and consultation of Township staff. A site visit was conducted in the afternoon of October 10, 2018 and then again October 20, 2020. The photographs collected during those site visits are provided for inspection in Appendix A of this report.

Study Findings

The Study Area qualifies as an Area in Need of Redevelopment based on criterion "b", which permits the designation of an area when sites which were formally occupied by active commercial, industrial, or manufacturing purposes has had its use discontinued, been abandoned, and been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair rendering the building untenable. Originally built in 1970, the property had been owned by AC I NEPTUNE LLC since at least 2007 and was sold to 3501 Rt 66 LLC on April 29, 2019. The building has been vacant for at least 15 years, during which time it has continually been assessed as a commercial property. A portion on the basement and first floor of one building was briefly occupied by the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) as a headquarters in the wake of Superstorm Sandy.

FEMA left the property in 2014, since which time the property has been vacant and falling in to greater and greater disrepair. As can be seen in the site visit photographs in Appendix A, there is significant damage to the property. Multiple windows are broken or completely absent, which has required boarding a substantial portion of the building. The open access to the structures permits ready entry, creating a safety hazard. The building has become the object of graffiti and is susceptible to whatever damage weather, time and individuals to the site would wish to perpetrate on it. Accessory structures are also falling into disrepair, evidenced by the vegetation growing through the previously improved and impervious parking lot. The lot is certainly an abandoned commercial structure that has been allowed to fall into such a state of disrepair as to be untenable.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Planning Board of the Township of Neptune adopt a Resolution recommending that the Township Committee designate the Continental Data Building Study Area as an Area in Need of Redevelopment based on findings consistent with criterion “b” set forth in NJSA 40:12A-12A-5, whereby designation is appropriate for areas where the discontinuance of the use of buildings previously used for commercial purposes and abandonment of such buildings has resulted in the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be untenable.

The site’s location at a significant transition area along Route 66, where land uses switch abruptly from neighborhood residential to large-lot commercial, makes careful attention to the development of this site a necessity. Establishing a use on site that both respects nearby environmentally sensitive features to the west and the safety and comfort of residences to the east in place of the current blighted structure is a priority that can be achieved through the Redevelopment process.

APPENDIX A:
IMAGES OF THE CONTINENTAL DATA BUILDING SITE
Taken October 10, 2018 and October 20, 2020



Damaged windows on the southern façade of the front building (wing).



Damaged windows on the southern façade of the front building (wing).



Damaged windows on the southern façade of the front building (entrance).



Damaged windows on the southern façade of the front building (wing).



Overgrowth and damaged/boarded windows on the eastern façade of the front building.



Overgrowth and damaged/boarded windows on the northern façade of the front building.



Overgrowth, and damaged/boarded windows, graffiti on the northern façade of the front building (entrance).



Overgrowth, and damaged windows on the northern façade of the front building (wing).



Overgrowth in the parking lot at the rear of the building.



Damage to the front façade of the rear building.