

Searching for Paths to a Sustainable Urban Waterfront Community: Weehawken and Perth Amboy, New Jersey

Michael R. Greenberg

Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, USA

Location in the New York-New Jersey metropolis of over 20 million people limits what small urban governments can do when changing regional and national conditions destabilize their economic and social status. Weehawken (0.78 square miles) and Perth Amboy (4.6 square miles), have responded to deindustrialization and increasing suburbanization by (1) negotiating with business to facilitate developer earnings while preserving some but not all previous community priorities; (2) decisively responding to environmental threats; and (3) maintaining communications with their residents and state government. Both are on paths to sustainable waterfront redevelopment, yet with more obstacles to face.

Keywords: climate change, community engagement, economic imperative, environmental remediation, urban redevelopment

Introduction

This essay focuses on the last century of history of two small waterfront governments in urban New Jersey—Weehawken and Perth Amboy—in the United States. Our goal was to look for evidence that small local governments have been trying to adapt to changing conditions that they can only partly control in order to create more sustainable conditions. The choice of small local governments assumes that they are good laboratories for government innovation because small local governments should have more direct contact with their stakeholders and be less committed to bureaucratic management that constrains innovations than their larger city counterparts. Small cities and towns can experiment with different options and find workarounds that large governments cannot devise and/or use (Kumar & Stenberg, 2022; Bell & Mark, 2009; Dahl & Tufte, 1973; Fonseca, 2021; Gendzwill & Ulrik, 2020; Grossman & Mallach, 2021; Hoffmann-Martinot & Sellers, 2005; McDonnell, 2020; Ocejo, Kosta, & Mann, 2020; Ofori-Amoah, 2007; Rondinelli, 1983; Trounstein, 2009). These authors do not insist that smaller cities are better sources of innovations than are larger cities and state governments; however, they suggest that smaller cities often find useful solutions that are not found in big city politics.

The paper focuses on local governments with waterfront because innovations are essential to address two contemporary challenges. One is the factories that once employed their fathers and grandfathers and paid their health insurance closed and have become eyesores that cost a great deal to remediate, thereby discouraging investors. In the worst cases, they undermine entire neighborhoods (Hollander, 2009). Second, waterfront communities also are increasingly prone to destructive coastal storms and flooding (Climate Central, 2025). What

Michael R. Greenberg, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, USA. ORCID-0000-0002-2576-9794.

choices have waterfront communities along the U.S. Atlantic Ocean water front been making in the face of these two challenges?

Weehawken and Perth Amboy, New Jersey, are across the river from New York City. Both have ferry service to lower Manhattan. Dwarfed in size by resource-rich New York City and by larger and politically active cities in New Jersey such as Newark, Jersey City, and Trenton, actions taken by these small urban places can be easily overlooked, in essence, be invisible, except to their residents. The historical steps they have taken were expected to reveal agendas and governance in communities that can bring people together and pit people and neighborhoods against one another.

A caveat is that dozens of other small local governments with waterfronts within a one-hour automobile trip of these two could have been studied. The author deliberately picked these two because a great deal of historical information is available via public records, the media, and other publicly available sources. In addition, the author worked with local officials and/or businesses in both locales more than two decades ago. His focus as an expert in these places was on protecting human health and safety. He did not play a role in directing local resources; hence, this is not history that he significantly influenced. But the kind of access he had allows insights that are not to be found in the written record. Koeber (2013) recognizes the advantage of introducing personal information, noting that users need to provide the local context and their role. The final preliminary note is that the paper concentrates on the transition from the post-industrial landscape during the last century, especially post-1980. The author also briefly touches on earlier history as context and as the source for cultural/historical based redevelopment.

The contributions of this paper are to describe and analyze local responses in these two jurisdictions to threats and opportunities that began more than a century ago. After presenting the two case studies, the paper compares the responses of the two small local governments to those of their neighbors in order to separate the responses into local ones versus those that common to the region.

Weehawken, New Jersey: Conflicting Local Visions and Realities of the Future

Weehawken is part of New Jersey's "gold coast" so-named because of unobstructed views across the Hudson River of New York City's skyscraper landscape about one mile to the east Figure 1. The 1.48 square mile township (3.82 km²) has only 0.78 square miles of land. Land is at a premium in Weehawken. During the late 19th and early 20th century, Weehawken became a location where people invested in homes on top of the 300-foot high (91 meters) Palisades rock formation to see the views of New York City to the east. The gray area that heads from the southwest to the northeast on the map marks the location of the Palisades. To the east of the Palisades lies the narrow band of former marshland that has been the focus of development in Weehawken that is the focus of this paper. The area on top of the Palisades to the west has tightly packed suburban single family homes with some enjoying spectacular views of New York City to the east. The area below the Palisades and adjacent to the Hudson River was covered with wetlands and was less conducive to development in much of Weehawken's history.

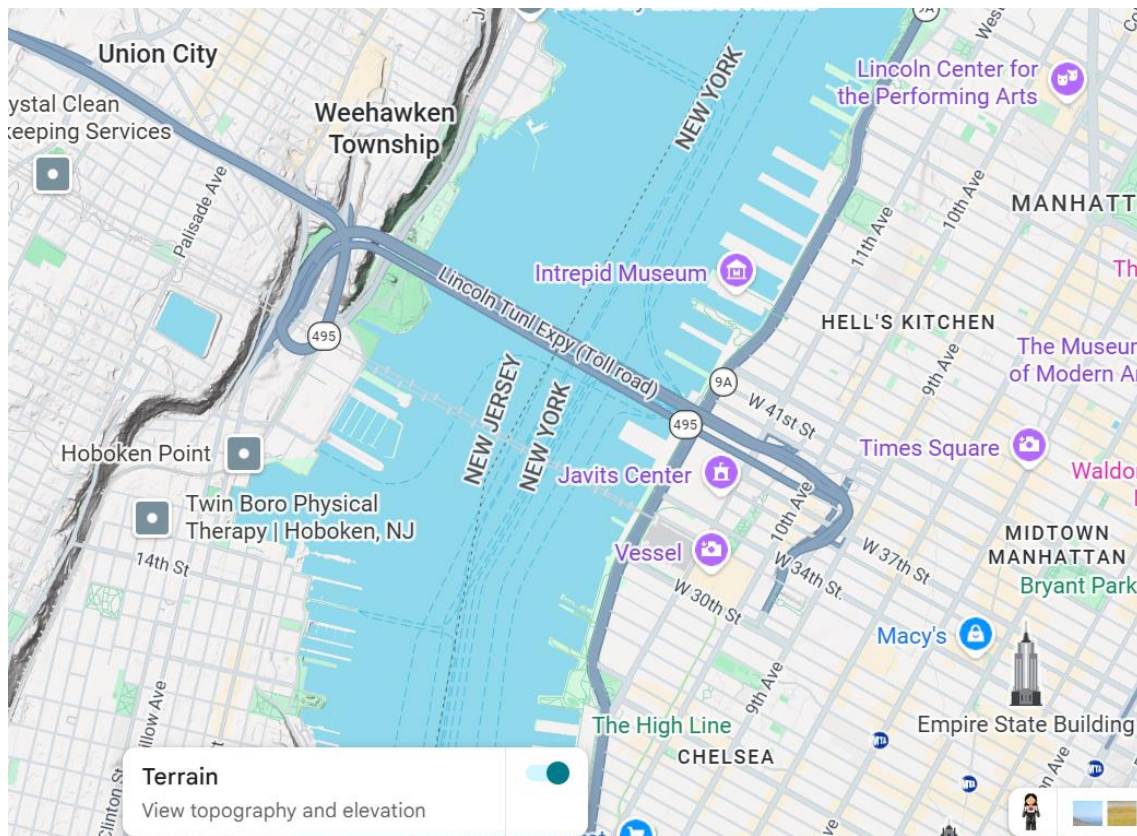


Figure 1. Weehawken and Western Manhattan. Source: Google Maps.

With developable land scarce and the town initially against building massive high rise structures that would have obstructed views, Weehawken's population peaked at 14,830 in 1950 and fell back to 12,564 in 2010. Private investors were willing to commit to reusing the wetlands adjacent to the Hudson River, for example, an area that was the largest banana import facility in the United States became NY Waterway's Weehawken Port Imperial Ferry Terminal, opened in 2006. Wetlands were only part of the limitation near the Hudson River. Some of the land presented a serious environmental health handicap.

Chromate Contamination

Three chromite ore processing plants in neighboring communities deposited waste materials at 160 sites, including Weehawken and other local jurisdictions. The New Jersey State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reported that waste began to be deposited in 1905 and did not end until 1971 (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, n.d.; Rothman, 2009). The waste was used in building foundations, construction of roads and berms, filling in wetlands, building sewer lines and for other uses, including in Weehawken. Contamination threatened not only Weehawken but adjacent communities in Hudson County. In other words, the waste was widespread and could not be overlooked.

Environmental health concerns focused on hexavalent chromium (Cr(VI)) which is a known carcinogen and leading to health risks through inhalation and ingestion. The NJDEP and the Chromium Cleanup Partnership formed in 2009 and was charged with overseeing remediation under court supervision. Residential units were placed on areas without contamination. In some cases, clean fill replaced excavated contaminated fill. Underground barriers and pumping systems were constructed. Impervious caps were built over the waste deposits

to prevent dust from escaping into the air and to block leaching into local groundwaters. In Weehawken, where land was already extraordinarily valuable, a soccer field with an impermeable barrier was built to control releases and polyethylene barriers were installed to prevent migration.

The author was a consultant for a short time and observed the willingness of investors to commit to environmental health expert recommendations because the economic benefit to the residential and commercial developers was so great that costly remediation was feasible. Redevelopment along the river involved numerous technical experts and substantial expenditures. Monitoring continues at some sites because engineered barriers can fail. Weehawken's local government, the State of New Jersey, the federal government, and the private developers cooperated in developing and implementing these remedies.

In addition to the chromate contamination issue, the northern half of the park site was located within the easement area for the 1.5-mile long Lincoln Tunnel which funnels about 120,000 vehicles per day (Sheidlower, 2021) between Manhattan and Weehawken (see more about the Lincoln Tunnel below). Fill was restricted above the tunnel. Also, the site drainage was affected by the reality that it the development directly drains into the Hudson River, and hence special efforts were taken to avoid contaminating the Hudson River (PS&S, 2026).

While the design to protect people and water against toxic material received considerable attention from the local and state governments, and community members, the author believes that the Weehawken government's decision to permit substantial private residential development along the waterfront has become more important in the long run. A major debate has occurred between those who favor reserving much of the open space along the Hudson River for public use with only limited space for suburban-like low density housing (Fund for a Better Waterfront, 2020) and those who want much higher density redevelopment. In 1998, community residents formed Friends of the Weehawken Waterfront. Their planning consultant laid out a street plan for public use and some suburban housing. In contrast, Developer Hartz Mountain had purchased over 50 acres of land, and they called for much less public land and much more private land, including high rise structures rather than suburban-like housing. Friends of the Weehawken Waterfront made their plan public and have litigated against the developers' plan.

The town government has supported the developers' plan with some restrictions on height, which has been a long-standing public priority. In 2020, the community group contended that their proposals were consistent with the planning literature that showed that building neighborhoods with medium density, local shopping made healthy walkable neighborhoods. Hartz Mountain maintained that their plan was within the law and would make housing available for a diverse group of residents. The debate is ongoing. In 2025, Fund for a Better Waterfront (2025) challenged another Hartz Mountain development project in Weehawken. These ongoing legal challenges demonstrate the roles played by zoning, environmental regulations, and court interpretations of procedural fairness in waterfront development. Even when a permit is issued, disputes around these processes can lead to extended legal disputes.

The views of the parties are clearly documented; the debate articulates two different views of future use. Rental fees along the Hudson River in mid-2026, reach well over \$10,000 per month and condominiums sell for well over \$1 million. Inland to the west rents are \$2,000-\$3,000 a month. In short, the controversial and heavily debated decision to open up the former marshlands to dense development is the most interesting set of ongoing decisions shaping Weehawken's effort to build a sustainable economic and social future.

Recognizing Early Local History

It is also true that Weehawken was a place where significant historical events occurred before the United States became a nation, but these seem understated in the local policy mix because of the ongoing controversies in the township. The township's historical record dates back at least to 1609, when Henry Hudson stopped at Weehawken. The cliffs of Weehawken were a place where the patriots monitored British troop movements in New York during the American Revolutionary War. Views from the cliffs are nothing short of spectacular. One historical event that has been remembered is dueling. The most famous was the duel between Alexander Hamilton, first Secretary of the Treasury, and Aaron Burr, then Vice President of the United States, which took place on July 11, 1804. It was re-enacted on 2004 (July 11). While it is recognized by the local population, telling the early Colonial period history is not the main focus of town governance.

Ferry service is another historical practice associated with Weehawken. Ferry service began between Weehawken and Greenwich Village in Manhattan in 1700. The last ferry between Weehawken and Greenwich Village from this site was in 1959, that is, 259 years of continuous ferry service. This does not imply that historical events and culture have been ignored. Weehawken has invested in historical/cultural assets. For example, the original town hall has been converted into a local history museum. In May 2026 the town of Weehawken broke ground on a \$25 million performing arts center which will be housed inside a mixed-use development. Weehawken celebrates its history, but the controversy around visions for Weehawken seem dominant.

Lincoln Tunnel: First Major Intrusion and an Ongoing Issue

The redevelopment of Weehawken's marshlands is not the first major land use decision that it has faced. Weehawken has been through major changes that arguably exceed the current one. In the late 19th century Weehawken had a population of 1,900 and much of it was concentrated on the hills where large estates, theaters, hotels, casinos built to promote recreation and tourism in Weehawken began to be replaced by more modest residential-oriented land uses. In 1930, the population was almost 15,000 and it declined until the new developments occurred in what once were the riverside marshlands. The 1930s brought a major challenge in the form of the Lincoln Tunnel Helix connecting Manhattan to Weehawken. Looking at the Lincoln Tunnel's eight-lane circular descent in a 270-degree circle to the Art Deco tunnel toll plaza and the massive ventilations towers is an exercise in experiencing dense automobile culture. Figure 2 shows the road leading from the west with a steep descent to the three tunnel entrances.

The political history of the Lincoln Tunnel is an interesting as its steep angled path through Weehawken. The State of New Jersey markedly expanded its highways system between 1930 and 1950. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey were able to acquire land along the Palisades in Weehawken and used it to connect Manhattan to newly developing New Jersey suburbs. Community input was limited, that is, the author found few historical documents. The story behind the imposition of the Lincoln Tunnel Helix on Weehawken is now entering a new chapter that began with plans one hundred years ago. On June 25, 2026 while the original draft of this article was being prepared, the Port Authority reported that the tunnel will need to be replaced during the next decade and \$640 million was set aside to keep it viable until it could be replaced (Higgs, 2026). The project developers have had several public meetings with Weehawken residents about the need to replace the tunnel (Heinis, 2018). It would be fair to characterize the citizen views as highly skeptical of a century old idea that situates a highway that drops 180 feet (55 meters) on a 270-degree angle on what basically is an elevated spiral bridge.

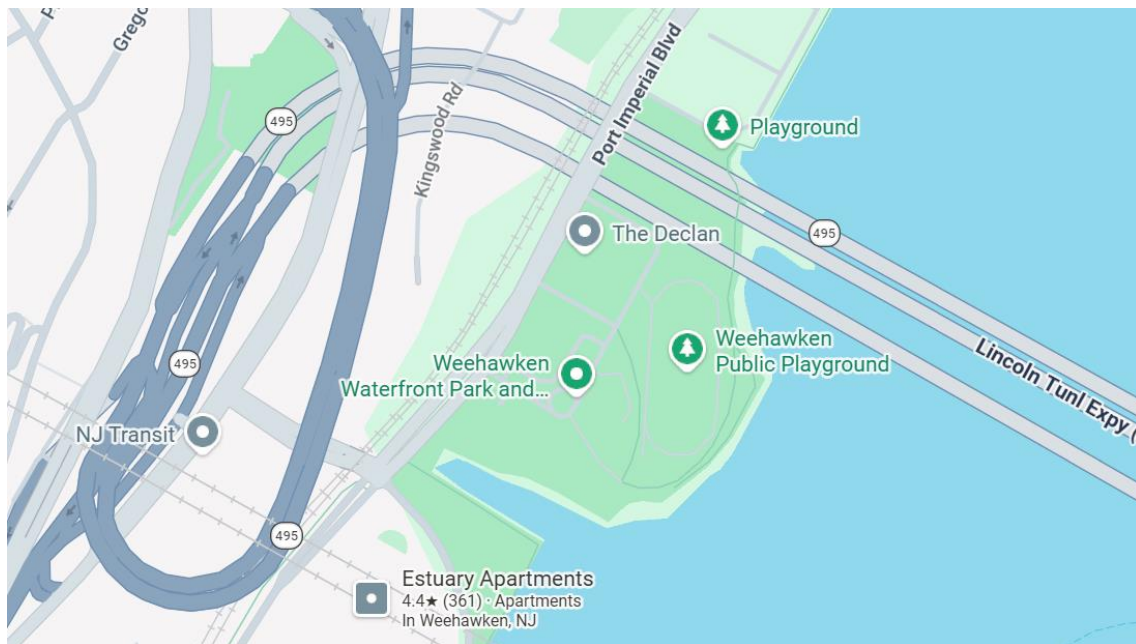


Figure 2. Lincoln Tunnel Helix. Source: Google Maps.

In short, for over a century, Weehawken, a township with less than one-square mile of land, has been forced to deal with large land use and environmental challenges and it has shown an ability to adjust to circumstances and make decisions that allow it to shift to a sustainable if not its most desired position. Clearly, Weehawken has committed to an altered version of what existed a century ago when the wetlands area adjacent to the Hudson river was commercial/industrial and nearly all the people lived in traditional small suburban housing on top of the Palisades. A trip to the top of the Palisades continues to offer an amazing view of the area between the George Washington Bridge to the north and the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge to the south. However, the spectacular view contrasts with the ongoing challenges of the Lincoln Tunnel Helix, the challenges presented by the chromate contamination, and the discomfort and opportunity presented by reorienting the Hudson river shoreline to host affluent people in high rise rental and condominiums. These issues will not resolve anytime soon. Complacency is not an option in Weehawken.

Perth Amboy, New Jersey: Remaking and Industrial Revolution City

Perth Amboy, New Jersey is located at the mouth of the Raritan Bay, which drains into the Atlantic Ocean (Figure 3). Located across the Arthur Kill Waterway from New York City's Richmond county, 30 miles from the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan, and about a 35-minute drive from Weehawken, by the 18th century, Perth Amboy became a place where wood products and textiles were produced and sold across the New York-New Jersey region (Janulis, 2017). Perth Amboy sits on top of deep clay beds, and hence the city became major brick manufacturing center and producer of architectural terra cotta (Cook, 1978). Indeed, ships returning to England from Perth Amboy carried bricks as ballast. The industrial revolution took hold in Perth Amboy, including a foundry and iron producing plants, chemical, paper and food producing plants all built on the waterfront. Chemical plants, paper mills, and a steel mill all located in Perth Amboy. A petroleum refinery (converted to asphalt production) followed, as did a minimill steel plant, an Anaconda Copper works, and dry dock for ship repair all located along the several miles long waterfront.

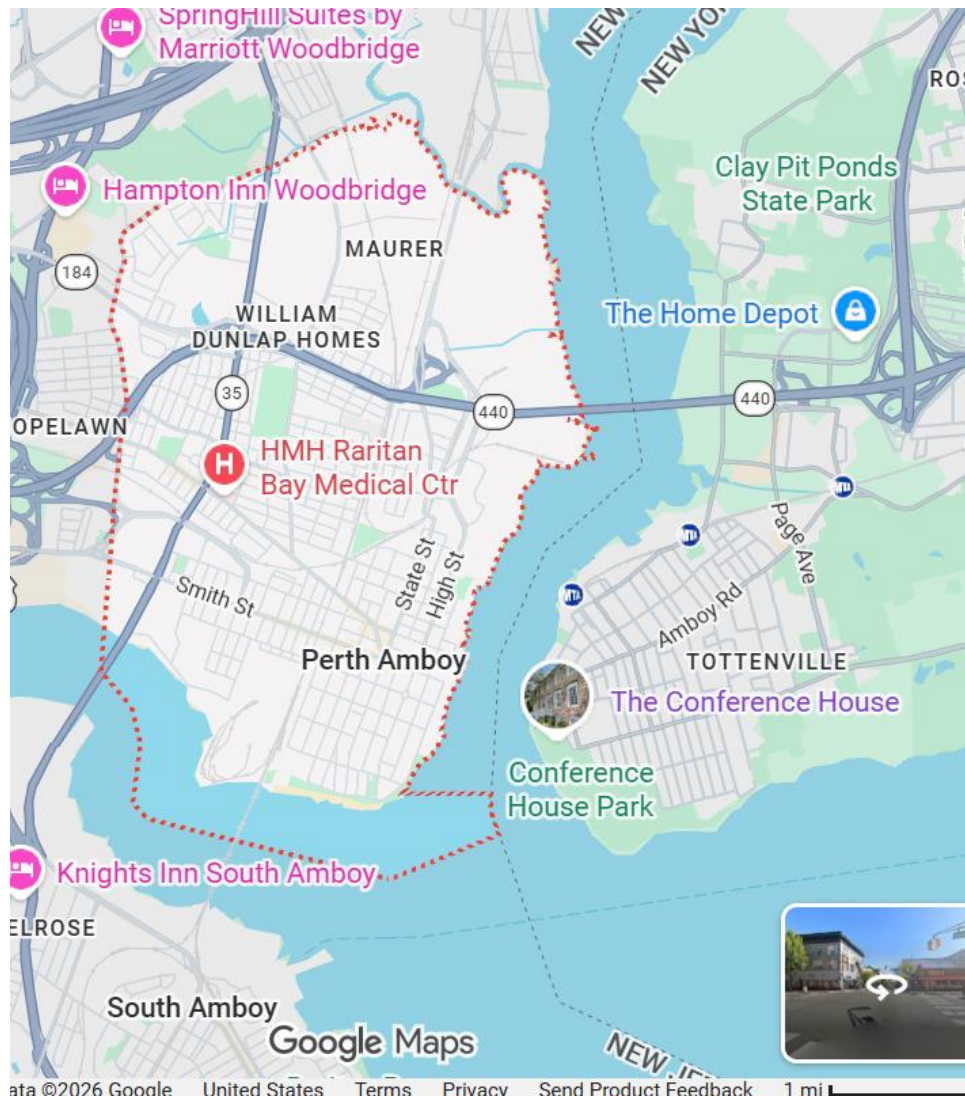


Figure 3. Perth Amboy and Environs. Source: Google Maps.

In 1930, Perth Amboy was already an industrial city and was growing with a population of over 43,000 in its 4.66 square mile (12.1 km²) land area. By the mid-1970s, however, Perth Amboy's industrial economic base became vulnerable to globalization. Low-cost products that were produced in Perth Amboy could be brought to the New York-New Jersey region at prices that could not be matched by local producers. Automation reduced the need for local labor. Many producers moved out of the U.S. and the country began to reorient to services. Manufacturing fell to numbers that really affected what the city could do to provide services. In 1963, Perth Amboy was one of 12 New Jersey local governments with over 10,000 manufacturing jobs. Its population 1960 was 38,000, and there were 122 manufacturing establishments in the city. Forty-seven percent of jobs in the city were in manufacturing. Only two of the other local governments with more than 10,000 manufacturing employees had a higher proportion of manufacturing jobs as part of their economies. Fast forward 40 years to 2002, and the census reports that the number of manufacturing establishments was 48 (down from 122) and its manufacturing jobs fell to 2,017 from over 10,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1967; 2007). In essence, it lost all of its large manufacturing facilities. The other 11 local governments also lost much of their manufacturing base, but Perth

Amboy because of its historical industrial base and lack of wholesaling, retailing and service jobs took a larger economic hit.

For context, U.S. manufacturing jobs were literally hemorrhaging by 1980. Manufacturing employment in the U.S. peaked at 19.6 million in 1979 (22% of nonfarm jobs). By the mid-1990s, after another manufacturing's recession the share of total nonfarm employment dropped to about 9%. In 1990, the U.S. government passed legislation that created a brownfields program that allowed stressed industrial cities to apply for federal grants to plan and redevelop their abandoned and contaminated industrial cities (Harris, 1984; Harris, K. for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020; Greenberg & Hollander, 2006).

Three Mayors Creating a New Reality

Perth Amboy began reshaping the industrial city in 1990. Newly elected mayor Joseph Vas, a native of the city who lived across the street from a chemical plant as a child, understood the threat to the city and began working on obtaining a brownfields grant from the federal government and building a new image for the city. Vas served as mayor from 1990 to June 2008. Vas became embroiled in a scandal and lost re-election for a fifth term (Adarlo, 2008). Wilda Diaz replaced him and Helmin Caba replaced her. The three have led Perth Amboy's redevelopment. Vas was the point person for cleaning up Perth Amboy's industrial environmental legacy, which included over 1,000 acres (4 km²), addressing the city's contaminated groundwater supply, and using recycled materials to rebuilding vulnerable infrastructure.

In 1997, Perth Amboy received its first U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields grant. While only worth \$200,000, it was the first and signature step needed to analyze the extent of contamination. Much of the former industrial land was vacant, and the mayor wanted to understand community preferences before committing the city. He participated in multiple discussions in every neighborhood to get public input. To support these efforts he hired an expert with an advanced degree in environmental science as a major advisor. One project, for example, was converting a Scrap Yard into the Raritan Riverside Park, which was an important signal to the community.

His administration engaged non local researchers. For example, Vas supported a study of 200 residents regarding their perceptions and preferences. The respondents, largely Hispanic, prioritized community, educational and recreational opportunities and affordable housing. They did not want remediated land converted to new industrial and commercial spaces (Greenberg & Lewis, 2000). At that time, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was trying to replace closed industries with new factories. The mayor used this information in his conversations with state and federal government officials to convince them that reindustrializing Perth Amboy would not be feasible and would antagonize residents. He was convinced that the city had to undergo a major redevelopment, and he worked to convince state and federal officials that his vision could be accomplished with their help.

Mayors Diaz, and Caba continued the effort to rebuild the city. Vas was the first Hispanic mayor of Perth Amboy. Wilda Diaz who beat Vas was the first Latina mayor and she served from 2008 to 2020. In 2021, she was replaced by Helmin Caba, among the first mayors from the Dominican Republic in the United States. While Vas's administration reset the city's objectives, Diaz and Caba have followed with similar aggressive policies. For example, in 2024, Perth Amboy, then with over an 80 percent Hispanic/Latino population, opened a new public high school at a cost of \$283.8 million, the largest school project supported by New Jersey School Development Authority (Jennings, 2024) (see more about education below).

City Planning

Stepping back from the mayors, Perth Amboy's redevelopment policies are guided by the Perth Amboy Redevelopment Agency (PARA), which was established in 1997 to coordinate city planning and implementation across designated areas in the city and across city departments. PARA has concentrated on creating policies that increase private investment, improve public infrastructure, create employment, and emphasize environmental protection.

Like Weehawken, Perth Amboy has a major residential development project—Sea Gate Waterfront—that was approved and drawn both praise and ire. The Sea Gate waterfront redevelopment project, was approved by the planning board in January 2026. The \$200 million project would create 602 market rate rental units in five buildings. It would include over 900 parking spaces, street improvements, a tree-lined esplanade a dog park, other public amenities, and remediate an almost 16-acre brownfield site. It would contribute \$1 million a year for affordable housing. Connecting to Perth Amboy's past, it will have a memorial to Thomas Mundy Peterson, the first African American to vote in Perth Amboy after the 15th Amendment (Gonzalez, 2024).

The city's ambition connects three policy initiatives: (1) environmental remediation of contaminated and/or underutilized land; (2) improvement in infrastructure and publicly accessible space; and (3) increasing jobs through these investments and by enhancing the public schools.

Perth Amboy's redevelopment is a series of targeted projects like Sea Gate, aimed at revitalizing underused land, improving public access, and boosting the local economy. A \$200 million or \$100 million project would not be particularly noteworthy in New York City but in a city with less than 5 square miles of land that represented a depleted industrial landscape it represents a major transition to a more sustainable urban future in this century (Fry, 2026).

In mid-2026 Perth Amboy had secured over \$1 billion in investments (Mooney, 2026). When the author served as a volunteer on the mayor's brownfield advisory group over a quarter century ago, the city had one of the country's oldest yacht clubs in operation. But the city's revenue stream was under severe distress. The waterfront had one clear asset, a ship repair dock that eventually was closed to make way for planned redevelopment. The city had to persuade investors, the state and federal governments that it wanted to walk away from its industrial history, and specifically from a refurbished drydock that some saw as a major asset.

In 2026, Perth Amboy's industrial waterfront has a museum, a ferry slip, an art gallery, a bandshell that hosts concerts, and a yacht club and marina site. The waterfront's remaining Victorian-era homes and redbrick promenade resembles a fishing village in sections.

The city has multiple grants ranging from Sea Gate to redoing the city's Department of Public Works facility and the area around the city's train station. One element of the city's plan has been sensitivity to climate vulnerability. Arguably, concern about environmental protection and climate change is part of the industrial legacy of Perth Amboy along with its position at the mouth of a bay directly connected to the Atlantic Ocean and coastal storms. Briefly, Perth Amboy's old, combined sewer system will be quickly overwhelmed by coastal storms. Some of the city's new projects incorporate rain gardens, rain barrels, and permeable asphalt surfaces. In addition to these specific tools, in 2026, Perth Amboy signed a five-year Environmental Partnership Agreement with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) that requires reducing greenhouse gas emissions, limiting urban sprawl, calling for water quality improvements and places considerable emphasis on brownfield redevelopment. The agreement fits with Perth Amboy's Sustainability Living Green initiative noted

above (NJDEP, 2001; 2024).

Summarizing, climate change is a key driver in Perth Amboy's redevelopment, influencing design standards, infrastructure choices, and partnerships. The city has embedded stormwater management, emissions reduction, and environmental remediation into its redevelopment framework, planning on redevelopment that is both economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

Perth Amboy's major land use plans, however, have been criticized by property owners whose land is being targeted for redevelopment. For example, an auto service dealer and a four-family home stand in the way of a large private warehouse. The planning board designated the two properties as "in need of redevelopment" and plan to use eminent domain to take these two properties as part of the plan for the 471,000 square foot warehouse, a plan that would also cleanup contaminated land and build public trails. The investment for this project is \$110 million. This is one of many urban redevelopment cases across the United States that pit property rights against community impact and involve offering tax abatements to attract investors (Mueller, 2025).

Income and Education Challenges

Perth Amboy has a socioeconomic status gap to close. The city's year 2024 median household income estimated by the American Community Survey was \$61,977. This compared to \$103,556 for the State of New Jersey (third highest in the United States), and \$111,549 for Middlesex, Perth Amboy's host county. Building through education is seen as a path to higher income. The high school graduation rate for Perth Amboy residents is reported as 86%-87%, which compares to the state rate of 91%. The average graduation rate for 4-year colleges is about 47% compared to 60% for state residents (complete a bachelor's degree within six years). In other words, Perth Amboy residents' average is slightly below the state average for both academic achievement methods and notably larger for income.

Perth Amboy is one of 31 former Abbott districts statewide that were created by the New Jersey Supreme Court in *Abbott v. Burke* which are now referred to as "SDA Districts". The state is required to cover all costs for school building and renovation projects in these districts under the supervision of the New Jersey Schools Development Authority. This has been a major political issue in the state, and Perth Amboy has benefited, as noted above, with a new \$283.8 million high school, the largest school project supported by New Jersey School Development Authority (Public School Review, 2026; Niche, 2026a).

Early History and Associated Challenges

There has been so much change in Perth Amboy during the last half century with much more to come that it is easy to ignore the city's early history. In 1683, Scottish settlers seeking religious freedom were recruited by Robert Barclay, the absentee governor of the Province of New Jersey. Perth Amboy was Province's capital from 1686 to 1776. The city's ferry slip was an important transportation point between New Jersey and New York City and in 1978 was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Perth Amboy's Raritan Yacht Club is one of the oldest yacht clubs in the United States. City Hall is thought to be the oldest municipal office still in use in the United States and constructed during the years 1713-1714. City Hall was the meeting place of the Provincial Assembly when it sat in East Jersey. The New Jersey General Assembly met to ratify the Bill of Rights on November 20, 1789, and was the first state to ratify it. Clearly, a good deal of early colonial and early American history is connected with Perth Amboy. While nearly all the industrial revolution industry is gone, many unique structures remain. For example, the Proprietary House, was the home of William Franklin, the last Royal Governor of New Jersey and son of Benjamin Franklin. The senior Franklin is one of the most important political

figures and technical innovators in U.S. history. Market Square, located across from City Hall, is a park that had been an outdoor marketplace during the Colonial era. Market Square includes a replica of the Liberty Bell, a statue of George Washington, and the Bill of Rights Arch, which commemorates the fact that New Jersey was the first state to ratify the Bill of Rights.

St. Peter's Church, which held its first service in 1685 was the first Episcopal congregation in New Jersey. The building displays a collection of stained-glass windows with religious scenes as well as early depictions of New Jersey receiving her charter and a meeting between William Franklin and his father, Benjamin Franklin.

Perth Amboy has always been an immigrant center. Now overwhelmingly a Hispanic/Latino city, it has hosted numerous immigrant populations from Austria, Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Italy, Russia, Austria, Ireland, came to work in industrial jobs before Hispanic/Latino populations became the majority. Perth Amboy's role in ethnic and racial history is spiked with controversy. Hennelly (2015) observes that it was New Jersey's primary inbound port for African slaves. In 1903, the Klu Klux Klan organized a meeting in the city. A group of 6,000 people attacked the organizers, breaking through police lines. Writers report that the 500 Klan members were lucky to escape with their lives (Staff, 1923; Rogouski, 2014). Perth Amboy's role in U.S. demographic history and the remaining structures and governance acts that took place in the city could be centerpieces of a local economy based on culture and history. However, for more than 40 years, the city has been emphasizing changing its economy and educational system. It has not stabilized to the point of focusing on celebrating its past.

Summarizing, Perth Amboy has been a laboratory for innovations in local governance, especially those that involve environmental health and migration. A quarter century ago, Cheslow (2001) labeled Perth Amboy as waterfront city planning to make a comeback. Antoinette (2004) added that Perth Amboy has adopted new urbanism to drive its revival. In 2012, Di Iunno (2012) praised the city for enjoying a renaissance, focusing on shopping and recreation facilities. This summary ends with two Perth Amboy focal points. The effort to upgrade the public school system is reflected in the new high school and shows the ability of city officials to work with the state officials who have requests from 31 school districts. The long standing and ongoing effort to replace industrial facilities along the Arthur Kill and Raritan Bay demonstrates the city's ability to work with private developers who are accustomed to profit maximizing efforts, state officials who emphasize environmental management and preparation for climate change, and local populations, many who do not trust the developers and state government. Law suits and negotiations that lead to a designs for housing, retail space, recreation, parks, marinas and a hotel are an impressive demonstration of strategic governance at the local government scale (Amaral, 2012).

Lessons Learned and Compared

Weehawken and Perth Amboy share several characteristics. They are part of one of the two first world megacities with at least 10 million residents (Tokyo was the other). The region of 22 counties has more than 20 million inhabitants. The New York-centered megaregion is a high density accumulation of wealth with access to multiple transportation systems and immediate access to the Atlantic Ocean. In 1960, Lichtenberg, Hoover, and Lerda (1960) reported that this region represented one-tenth of the nation's economic base. Yet the three economists warned the readers not to be complacent. The region's competitive advantage was not permanent. They urged the region to focus on higher end economic products and build on its position producing information and new ideas. It would also need to accommodate the spread of wealth across the region.

Over 60 years after Lichtenberg et al. report, Weehawken has become an affluent and convenient suburb occupied by commuters who enjoy living across the river from the heart of the region and have immediate access to recreation assets along the river. The old suburban parts of Weehawken remain coveted and the newer densely settled units near the river are favored by younger people. Perth Amboy is in the process of changing from a manufacturing hub for the region to a multi-ethnic center that hosts primarily Hispanic/Latino Americans with ambitious goals that embrace environmental protection and sustainability. As a resident of this region, the changes along the riverside in Weehawken are realistic and those in Perth Amboy are becoming more believable.

Both jurisdictions have taken three important governance steps:

1. Meeting the private economic imperative.
2. Adjusting to local environmental and political complexity.
3. Maintaining transparent communications.

Regarding the economic imperative, accumulated returns on investment drive redevelopment decisions. Ideas may come from bankers, developers, local officials, realtors, and many others. Their ideas become the grist for attorneys, architects, and planners to shape. Yet, without market appeal and initial funding, what might be a good redevelopment idea will fail an economic litmus test for private funding of waterfront projects (Hersh, 2017). For example, upfront financial support is needed to retain designers, triage among proposals, secure property, begin site preparation, and respond to initial challenges. All of these steps have been apparent in both localities, especially for the large and controversial residential projects.

State and the federal governments funding contribute to urban redevelopment. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has supported the remediation of thousands of contaminated sites (USEPA, 2021; 2025). Perth Amboy's first brownfield grant was one key step that the city needed to take in its planning to make it eligible for other grants, low interest loans, insurance and permits. The role played by the State of New Jersey in overseeing the chromate cleanup was critical. Without this activity, parts of the Weehawken redevelopment would not have proceeded because of the public health threat, that is, condos and rentals at \$5,000-20,000 a month in Weehawken were made possible by the developer's willingness to take the risk and the state's support for remediation.

Building around historical assets increases property values (Armitage & Irons, 2013; Capello, Cerisola, & Perucca, 2020; Vinod, Sarkar, & Roy, 2024; Zhang, 2025; Climate X Ltd., n.d.; Gouldson, Sudmant, Khreis, & Papargyropoulou, 2018; Keyes, 2025; Sharifi, 2021; Sudmant et al., 2017). Weehawken and Perth Amboy have clusters of landmarks, historic districts, and public spaces that appeal to both investors and residents. Neither local government, however, is focused on them. Indeed, many coastal cities and their counterparts along rivers obliterated historic sites to build highways and recreation facilities (Hurley, n.d.; Marshall, 2004), as they did in Weehawken when the Lincoln Tunnel Helix was built in Weehawken and Perth Amboy redesigned properties to build new schools that were funded by the state.

Engineered structures and policies to reduce the risk of climate impacts enhance property value. Perth Amboy's investment in its boardwalk, marina, and ethnic restaurants are clear enhancements, and its agreement with the state about a green agenda represents a strategic decision made to facilitate its local goals. Weehawken recognized the importance of controlling the chromate contamination that would have blocked its riverside efforts. Both local governments have demonstrated skill in responding to environmental threats to their projects.

Regarding communications, no one method of communication will work for all audiences. In these two communities translation for non-English speakers, as well as information distributed online or in paper form are

imperative. Outreach to community groups, neighbors, and non-project-affiliated business owners has been imperative (Burger, Greenberg, & Lowrie, 2022; Greenberg, 2022; Sandman, 1990).

The goal of local communication is to build trust in the plan and developers. The literature points to three kinds of trust: scientific, communication, and values (Earle, 2010; Lee, 2004; Pew, 1998; Poortinga & Pidgeon, 2003; 2004). For example, the scientific credibility of a project will be damaged if audience members identify an error in a project's design and be compounded by not immediately addressing it. A second trust issue is ability to communicate in a timely and comprehensible manner. Poor communications or delayed ones may confuse stakeholders and/or make them feel that their concerns are not being taken seriously. Value-related trust is the third source of trust-building and difficult to achieve. Developers need to be prepared to deal with the bluntly worded challenge that they are outsiders who do not live with the results. Early efforts to survey residents and allow community members to serve on advisory committees will help, but not avoid challenges. Providing resources to communities to retain experts, who are given access to the design and the designers may help. Implementing these suggestions can be costly in dollars and time. Yet some of these approaches in these case studies helped build trust.

Comparison: Nearby Local Governments and National Trends

Nearby Local Governments

Are the two case studies unique in the sense that we cannot find other cases like them? Five counties border on the Hudson River from the northern New Jersey state line to Middlesex in the south where Perth Amboy is located. There are 150 municipal governments in this area (cities, boroughs, towns, townships). The author examined those that had waterfronts. At the northern edge is Cliffside Park and the southern border in Perth Amboy located on Raritan Bay. The aerial distance between these two localities is 26.2 miles. However, the travel time is one hour. The author searched media records for indications of redevelopment in these areas and of evidence that the economic imperative was addressed, the local government adjusted to local environmental and political complexity, and tried to maintain transparent communications.

Four types of urban redevelopment along this waterfront route were found. Cliffside Park to Weehawken (Area 1) is marked by the construction of high density condos and apartments catering to commuters who rely on this region's dense network of trains, busses, ferries, and highways to facilitate commuting. Residents expect local shopping and recreational opportunities and major efforts to recruit commercial developers into funding these. Some evidence of public distress about building 25-story rental units was observed and some of sites have had environmental issues. However, none of the local governments in this area appears to have been as impacted by contamination as Weehawken.

Area 2 (south of Weehawken) is Jersey City and Hoboken. These two exemplify local governments that have been markedly affected by the destruction of the World Trade Center. Scores of business and business logistics firms and thousands of people moved from lower Manhattan to Jersey City to occupy newly constructed high rise buildings on the Hudson River. While the riverside has been heavily redeveloped, the spread has continued across Jersey City from east to west. The population in Jersey City peaked at 316-thousand in 1930, fell to 224-thousand in 1980, and has rose to 304-thousand in 2025. The redevelopment in Jersey City is intense and it continues with young people viewing it as a place to reside and as an affordable place for commuting to New York City. It is fair to say that planning board meetings in this city are extremely busy and can be contentious. Hoboken, much smaller, is equally desirable. Some of what has occurred in Jersey City is similar to Perth Amboy,

but the reality of the multiple direct connections to New York City makes Jersey City a place of unusual opportunity for developers and people looking for desirable residences outside of New York City. Niche (2026b) ranked Jersey City Number 11 in the nation in appeal to young professionals. Many billions of dollars private capital have gone into changing Jersey City's image from a declining old city to a great place to live and work, especially for recent college graduates. To get to this level of attraction, Jersey City has overcome environmental obstacles that seemed intractable for many years.

Newark and Elizabeth (Area 3) are west and south of Jersey City. In fact, they do not directly border on the ocean. They border on the Arthur Kill and Newark Bay. Both waterfronts shores are heavily industrialized, including Port Newark and Elizabeth (the largest container port on the U.S. east coast and the third largest cargo port in the United States). Area 3 also contains a major petroleum refinery, several electrical generating stations, sewage plants, Newark Airport, and other large industrial facilities. Major environmental threats mark this area. It is hard to imagine a time when these shorelines would be sufficiently controlled and desirable to warrant major investments in residential-commercial facilities. An illustration to ground this conclusion is based on the author's work in Newark. The lower Passaic river drains into Newark Bay and has been contaminated by multiple industrial facility discharges. For example, a company manufactured pesticides and agent orange along the Passaic River at mile 3. When the manufacturing process failed to produce the needed quality, it discharged the material into the river. The river is tidal at that location and therefore the toxic material from these discharges and other emissions have moved up and down the river with the tide. Many years after the facility was closed, and hundreds of millions were agreed to in the settlement, contamination remains, although a cap in the river at this site may help control the waste (NOAA, 2026). The overall cost is likely to be \$2 billion for the remediation and involves dozens of parties in the long litigation process. The first author's role involved estimating waterfront the damage, the costs of different cleanup scenarios, and the likelihood of them working.

The final cluster (Area 4) begins at Rahway and ends at Perth Amboy. Southern Woodbridge and northern Perth Amboy have a great deal in common, and have agreements for cooperation on both sides of their border. In short, three of the four clusters show evidence of meeting the economic imperative, adjusting to local environmental and political complexity, and maintaining transparent communications. The Newark-Elizabeth waterfront environment is not conducive to such massive reorientation.

Overall, compared to their northern neighbors, Perth Amboy is second only to Jersey City making the largest change by literally replacing an industrial landscape with a residential and light commercial one. Given its commitment to the Lincoln Tunnel and riverside development, Weehawken's shift to denser residential development is at the core of its sustainable vision, which has engendered considerable debate and willingness on the part of the city government to change its future.

National Trends in Small Urban Community Redevelopment

Across the United States, a growing literature reports a wide range of options have been pursued by small cities and towns. Foremost, many small urban localities have been building around tourism, the arts, including historic preservation, increasing walkability, concerts, and other attractions (Cahill, 2023; North Capitol Crossroads, 2025; NADO, 2026). Weehawken and Perth Amboy certainly have notable histories and cultural assets. However, with some important exceptions, their historical assets have been removed by the need for remediation and by globalization of manufacturing. They are addressing what they see as a housing gap in the larger New York-New Jersey region and relying on mass transit, far more than their national counterparts.

Conclusions

Marshall's book *Prisoner of Geography* (2015) examines how local geography steers geopolitics at the international scale in directions that exclude some choices but leaves opportunities to maneuver within a set of choices. These two small New Jersey localities demonstrate Marshall's ideas at the local political scale.

Weehawken and Perth Amboy are two places that have been trying to find sustainable niches in a wealthy, massive, and multi-cultural metropolis. Both have demonstrated agility in trying to find tailored solutions that fit their circumstances. This means turning contaminated and obsolete land uses into residential and commercial uses for strategically targeted populations and commercial enterprises, adding waterfront access for the public, including history and cultural assets, to create new neighborhoods and increasing the tax base to stabilize the local revenues. It also means using cultural history as context but not trying to recreate nostalgia. Arguably, the two local governments could have moved faster on some issues and waited for more evidence before making choices. However, with the caveat that the author is not a resident of these places, it is fair to conclude that there was no inevitable geographically determined sustainable status for these two communities, rather there are options that they have been creating and scrutinizing for decades.

References

- Adarlo, S. (May 14, 2008). Perth Amboy mayor Joseph Vas loses race in stunning reset. *Star Ledger*. Retrieved from https://www.nj.com/news/2008.05/perth_amboy_mayor-vas_loses.html
- Amaral, B. (December 5, 2012). Perth Amboy residents accuse Landings at Harborside developer of fraud, neglect. *Home New Tribune*. Retrieved from https://www.nj.com/middlesex/2012/12/perth_amboy_residents_accuse_1.html
- Antoinette, M. (April 18, 2004). In the Region/New Jersey; "New Urbanism" is driving a big waterfront project. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/4/18/realestate/in-the-region-new-urban-is-driving-a-big-waterfronts-projects.html>
- Armitage, L., & Irons, J. (2013). The values of built heritage. *Property Management*, 31(3), 246-259. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1108/02637471311321487>
- Bell, D., & Mark, J. (2009). Small cities? Towards a research agenda. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33(3), 683-699. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2009.00886.x>
- Burger, J., Greenberg, M., & Lowrie, K. (Eds.). (2022). Communication during crises and chronic exposures. *Special Issue, Risks Analysis*, 42(11), 2345-2606.
- Cahill, E. (July 24, 2023). Smart growth in small towns and rural communities. Retrieved from <https://www.aspenccsg.org/resources/smart-growth-in-small-towns-and-rural-communities/>
- Capello, R., Cerisola, S., & Perucca, G. (2020). Cultural heritage, creativity, and local development: A scientific research program. In S. Della Torre, S. Cattaneo, C. Lenzi, and A. Zanelli (Eds.), *Regeneration of the built environment from a circular economy perspective* (pp. 11-19). London: Springer International Publishing. Retrieved https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33256-3_2
- Cheslow, J. (2001, December 2). If you're thinking of living in Perth Amboy; a waterfront city planning a comeback. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/02/realestate/if-you-are-thinking--living-in-perth-amboy-waterfront-city-planning-comeback.html>
- Climate X Ltd. (n.d.). *Climate change & real estate investment: How risk impacts property value*. Retrieved May 26, 2026, from <https://www.climate-x.com/articles/industry/how-risk-impacts-property-value>
- Climate Central. (2025). *Coastal flood risk across the U.S.* Retrieved from https://assets.ctfassets.net/cxgxtg8r5d/1MbLA4rrFhhrIE8WLUG6JG/2e41d8695ee76f6a2a600adb312a1e86/FINAL__Exposure_Analysis_Report.docx.pdf (accessed on June 25, 2025)
- Cook, G. (1978). Geological survey of New Jersey, 1878. Report of the clay deposits of Woodbridge, South Amboy and other places of New Jersey, together with their uses for fire brick, pottery, etc. Retrieved from <https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/njgws/enviro/oldpubs/clay-deposits-1878.pdf>
- Dahl, R., & Tufte, E. (1973). *Size and democracy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Di Ionno, M. (July 2012). Once down and out, Perth Amboy is enjoying a renaissance. Retrieved from https://www.nj.com/njv_mark_diionno/2012/07/perth_amboy_a_faded_city_of_in.html
- Earle, T. (2010). Trust in risk management: A model-based review of empirical research. *Risk Anal. Off. Publ. Soc. Risk Anal.*, 30(4), 541-574. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1539-6924.2010.01398.x>
- Fonseca, A. (2021). Finding the secondary or overlooked city? Some methodological reflections from a postcolonial urban scholar. In S. Neves Alves and A. Ruszczuk Hanna (Eds.), *Theorising from the overlooked city* (pp. 26-33). Durham: Durham University.
- Fry, C. (January 26, 2026). Perth Amboy fully approves \$200 million sea gate development. Retrieved from <https://jerseydigs.com/sea-gate-development-perth-amboy-approved/>
- Fund for a Better Waterfront. (August 29, 2025). FBW legal brief challenges Weehawken ordinance that paved way for massive development at Hoboken border. Retrieved from <https://betterwaterfront.org/fbw-legal-brief-challenges-weehawken-ordinance-that-paved-way-for-massive-development-at-hoboken-border/>
- Fund for a Better Waterfront. (June 19, 2020). Latest Lincoln Harbor Project approved by Weehawken Planning Board, disregards good planning. Retrieved from <https://betterwaterfront.org/latest-lincoln-harbor-project-approved-by-weehawken-planning-board-disregards-good-planing>
- Gendźwił, A., & Ulrik, K. (2020). Mind the gap, please! Pinpointing the influence of municipal size on local electoral participation. *Local Government Studies*, 47(1), 11-30. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2020.1777107>
- Gonzalez, J. (February 2, 2024). Thomas Mundy Peterson, first African American man to cast a ballot. *Library of Congress Blogs*. Retrieved from blogs.loc.gov/law/2024/02/thomas-mundy-peterson-first-african-american-man-to-cast-a-ballot/
- Gouldson, A., Sudmant, A. H., Khreis, H., & Papargyropoulou, E. (2018). The economic and social benefits of low-carbon cities: A systematic review of the evidence. *Coalition for Urban Transitions*. Retrieved from <https://urbantransitions.global/en/publication/the-economic-and-social-benefits-of-low-carbon-cities-a-systematic-review-of-the-evidence/>
- Greenberg, M. (2022). Strategies to be prepared for a risk communication crisis. *Special Issue, Risks Analysis*, 42(11), 2354-2367.
- Greenberg, M., & Lewis, M. (2000). Brownfields redevelopment, preferences, and public involvement: a case study of an ethnically mixed neighborhood. *Urban Studies*, 37(13), 2501-2514.
- Greenberg, M., & Hollander, J. (2006). The EPA's brownfield pilot program as a worthwhile federalist environmental innovation. *American Journal of Public Health*, 96(2), 277-281.
- Grossmann, K., & Mallach, A. (2021). The small city in the urban system: Complex pathways of growth and decline. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 103(3), 169-175. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2021.1953280>
- Harris, K. for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Forty years of falling manufacturing employment. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-9/forty-years-of-falling-manufacturing-employment.htm
- Harris, C. (1984). The magnitude of job loss from plant closings and the generation of replacement jobs: Some recent evidence. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Deindustrialization: Restructuring the Economy*, 475, 15-27.
- Hennelly, R. (2015). Secret history of a northern slave state: How slavery was written into New Jersey's DNA. Retrieved from https://www.salon.com/2015/07/29/secret_history_of_a_northern_slave_state_how_slavery_was_written_into_new_jerseys_dna/
- Heinsis, J. (June 29, 2018). Port authority officials, Weehawken residents meet to discuss \$1.1B Lincoln Tunnel rehab. Retrieved from <https://www.hudsoncountyview.com/port-authority-officials-weehawken-residents-meet-to-discuss-1-1b-lincoln-tunnel-rehab/>
- Hersh, B. (Ed.). (2017). *Urban redevelopment: A North American reader*. London: Routledge. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315767314>
- Higgs, L. (2026, June 25). Lincoln Tunnel Helix rehab project aims to extend 90-year-old elevated highway's lifespan. Retrieved from <https://www.nj.com/news/2026/06/lincoln-tunnel-helix-rehab-project-aims-to-extend-90-year-old-elevated-highways-lifespan.html>
- Hoffmann-Martinot, V., & Sellers, J. (2005). *Metropolitanization and political change*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- Hollander, J. (2009). *Polluted & dangerous: America's worst abandoned properties and what can be done about them*. Burlington: University of Vermont Press.
- Hurley, A. (n.d.). Narrating the urban waterfront: The role of public history in community revitalization. Retrieved May 26, 2026, from <https://online.ucpress.edu/tph/article/28/4/19/88631/Narrating-the-Urban-Waterfront-The-Role-of-Public>
- Janulis, C. J. (2017). A walk through Perth Amboy's industrial memory. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/doi:10.7282/T3NS0XRZ>

- Jennings, R. (2024). N.J. is opening one of its most massive high schools ever. Here's a sneak peek inside. *NJ.com*. Retrieved from www.nj.com/education/2024/08/nj-is-opening-one-of-its-most-massive-high-schools-ever-heres-a-sneak-peek-inside.html
- Keyes, B. J. (June 16, 2025). Housing, climate risk, and insurance. *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/reporter/2025number2/housing-climate-risk-and-insurance>
- Koeber, D. (2013). Truth, memory, selectivity: Understanding historical work by writing personal histories. *Composition Studies*, 41(1), 51-69. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43501831>
- Kumar, T., & Stenberg, M. (2022). Why political scientists should study smaller cities. *Urban Affairs Review*, 59(6). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874221124610>
- Lee, H. (2004). The role of competence-based trust and organizational identification in continuous improvement. *J. Manag. Psychol.*, 19(6), 623-639. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940410551525>
- Lichtenberg, R, Hoover, E., & Lerdau, L. (1960). *One-tenth of a nation: National forces in the economic growth of the New York Region*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Marshall, T. (2015). *Prisoner of geography*. NY: Scribner.
- Marshall, R. (Ed.) (2004). *Waterfronts in post-industrial cities*. Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203166895>
- Martinez, B. (February 17, 2024). JF35—Jersey Avenue apartments. *EB5 Capital*. Retrieved from <https://www.eb5capital.com/project/jersey-avenue-apartments/>
- McDonnell, J. (2020). Municipality size, political efficacy and political participation: A systematic review. *Local Government Studies*, 46(3), 331-350. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2019.1600510>
- Mooney, J. (April 18, 2026). Perth Amboy redevelopment draws \$1B private investment TAP IP LLC. Retrieved from <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/raritan-bay/sections/redevelopment/articles/perth-amboy-redevelopment-draws-1b-private-investment>
- Mueller, K. (April 15, 2025). N.J. families desperately fighting town to save business, home. They're our "American Dream". Retrieved from <https://www.nj.com/middlesex/2025/04/nj-families-desperately-fighting-town-to-save-business-home-theyre-our-american-dream.html>
- NADO. (2026). Vibrant rural communities case studies series. Retrieved from <https://www.nado.org/vibrant-rural-communities-case-study-series/>
- NJDEP. (June 25, 2001). News releases. Perth Amboy signs environmental partnership with DEP. City enters into 5-year agreement to meet goals. Retrieved from https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/01_0078/
- NJDEP. (July 26, 2024). NJDEP | News releases. DEP receives \$72 million from NOAA to advance climate resilience projects across multiple New Jersey counties (24/P030). Retrieved from https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/24_0030/
- NJDEP. (n.d.). Hudson County chromate project. Retrieved from <https://dep.nj.gov/srp/chromium/>
- Niche, Inc. (2026a). Perth Amboy high school. Retrieved from <https://www.niche.com/k12/perth-amboy-high-school-perth-amboy-nj/academics/>
- Niche, Inc. (2026b). 2026 best cities for young professional in America. Retrieved from <https://www.niche.com/places-to-live/search/best-cities-for-young-professionals/?msockid=05fc1cc57703641518360c0a768b6530>
- NOAA. (May 18, 2026). Lower Passaic river and greater Newark Bay, hazardous waste site | New Jersey, 1940s to present. Retrieved from <https://darrp.noaa.gov/hazardous-waste/lower-passaic-river-and-greater-newark-bay>
- North Capitol Crossroads. (2025). Small city redevelopment models—Revitalizing communities beyond major metros. Retrieved from <https://northcapitolcrossroads.com/small-city-redevelopment-models-revitalizing/>
- Ocejo, R., Kosta, E., & Mann, A. (2020). Centering small cities for urban sociology in the 21st century. *City & Community*, 19(1), 3-15. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12484>
- Ofori-Amoah, B. (2007). *Beyond the metropolis: Urban geography as if small cities mattered*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Pew Research Center. (1998). How Americans view government: Deconstructing trust. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/1998/03/10/how-americans-view-government/>
- Poortinga, W., & Pidgeon, N. (2003). Exploring the dimensionality of trust in risk regulation. *Risk Anal.*, 23(5), 961-972. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/1539-6924.00373>
- Poortinga, W., & Pidgeon, N. (2004). Trust, the asymmetry principle, and the role of prior beliefs. *Risk Anal.*, 24(6), 1475-1486.
- PS&S. (2026). Weehawken water front park. Retrieved from <https://www.psands.com/wwehawken-waterfront-park>

- Public School Review. (2026). Best Perth Amboy public high schools. Retrieved from <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/new-jersey/perth-amboy/high>
- Rogouski, S. (October 8, 2014). The battle of Perth Amboy (1923). Retrieved from <https://writerswithoutmoney.com/2014/10/08/the-battle-of-perth-amboy-1923/>
- Rondinelli, D. (1983). Towns and small cities in developing countries. *Geographical Review*, 73(4), 379-395. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.2307/214328>
- Rothman, C. (2009). N.J. and Pa. firm reach deal on Hudson County chromium cleanup. Retrieved from https://www.nj.com/news/2009/02/nj_and_pa_firm_reach_deal_on_c.html
- Sandman, P. (1990). *Getting to maybe: Some communications aspects of siting hazardous waste facilities*. RFF.
- Sharifi, A. (2021). Co-benefits and synergies between urban climate change mitigation and adaptation measures: A literature review. *Science of the Total Environment*, 750, 141642. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.141642>
- Sheidlower, N. (2021). Secrets of the Lincoln Tunnel. Retrieved from www.untappedcities.com/secrets-lincoln-tunnel-talk/
- Staff. (August 31, 1923). Perth Amboy mob in anti-clan riot. Scores are beaten. Crowd of 6,000 drive Ku Kluxers from hall, pummeling and stoning them. Police tear gas futile. Fire department attempts to halt assault, but rioters cut every line of hose. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytime.com/1923/08/31/archives/perth-amboy-mob-in-anti-clan-riot-scores-are-beaten-crowd-of-6,000.html>
- Sudmant, A., Gouldson, A., Colenbrander, S., Sullivan, R., McAnulla, F., & Kerr, N. (2017). Understanding the case for low-carbon investment through bottom-up assessments of city-scale opportunities. *Climate Policy*, 17(3), 299-313. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2015.1104498>
- Trounstine, J. (2009). All politics is local: The reemergence of the study of city politics. *Perspectives on Politics*, 7(3), 611-618. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592709990892>
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. (1967). *County and city data book: 1967*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2007). *County and city data book: 2007* (14th ed.). Washington, D.C.
- US EPA. (November 4, 2021). About brownfields. Overviews and fact sheets. Retrieved <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>
- US EPA. (November 24, 2025). FY 2026 brownfields multipurpose, assessment, and cleanup grant competition [announcements and schedules]. Retrieved from <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/fy-2026-brownfields-multipurpose-assessment-and-cleanup-grant-competition>
- Vinod, V., Sarkar, S., & Roy, S. (2024). An overview of key indicators and evaluation tools for assessing economic value of heritage towns: A literature review. *Journal of The Institution of Engineers (India): Series A*, 105(3), 783-791. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40030-024-00807-3>
- Zhang, Z. (2025). Toward understanding composite heritage through a historical ecology approach: Filling cultural gaps and strengthening legal systems in China's special economic zones. *Human Ecology*, 53(5), 1135-1146. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10745-025-00637-2>