

Business 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)- Business Focus Group Meeting

A meeting was held July 21, 2021 at 10 AM with the Business Focus Group Members to discuss the Resilient NJ Project. The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams. The following were in attendance:

Name	Organization
Lance Landgraf	Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA)
Lou Joyce	South Jersey Economic Development District
Joe Dougherty	Casino Association of NJ
Karen Worman	Caesars, Harrah's, and Tropicana
Joe Lodise	Caesars, Harrah's, and Tropicana
Michael Monty	Bally's
Hugh Turner	The Borgata
Joe Muskett	Ocean Casino
Brian Jackson	Stockton University
Vince Maione	Orsted
Kate Gibbs	Operating Engineers Local 825
Hillary Chebra	SJ Chamber of Commerce
Michael Chait	Greater AC Chamber of Commerce
Noel McGuire	Atlantic County Economic Alliance
Steve Mazur	Atlantic City International Airport (SJTA)
Jim Rutala	Regional Coordinator
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 Consultant team and meeting participants.
2. Jaclyn Flor then went over the agenda, including the meeting objectives, key questions, project process and the discussion section of the agenda.
3. Alyssa Curran, WSP, gave a high-level overview of the Resilient NJ Atlantic County Coast Region Project overall. Alyssa Curran explained that the end goal is to formulate a plan that leads to

implementation of specific actions. She went through the Key Milestones for the project and what has happened to date on the Resilient-NJ Project. Alyssa explained the plan development phase and the implementation phase. Alyssa explained what the Innovation Award was and how it could grant additional funding.

4. Alyssa Curran explained what the crowd source mapping tool was and that it allows the public to leave comments.
5. Alyssa Curran explained where the consultant Team is in the process and explained each of the groups taking part in the Engagement Plan and how each group will influence the Resiliency Plan.
6. Jaclyn Flor explained the importance of the Business Focus Group to the Region and then opened the meeting to the participants to identify critical assets in their area.
7. Lance Landgraf, CRDA, explained that access to the barrier islands is critical. He said that some businesses, during high tide, are forced to close due to lack of access caused by flooding and over the last 20 years, dune systems and other mitigation methods have been constructed which protects the oceanfront areas. He said that now, the back bay areas are the most vulnerable and that the economy won't be able to function without clear access throughout the municipalities.
8. Kate Gibbs, Operating Engineers Local 825, added that access to all infrastructure is important, not just the roadways (i.e., energy, water, transportation) and that the team should take into account new regulation policies from NJDEP and others to ensure proper access to infrastructure. Jaclyn Flor said that this will be discussed further in the Utility focus group meeting.
9. Kate Gibbs added that the region needs more access to affordable and reliable energy and needs to make sure there are layers of redundancy so residents aren't left without energy for extended periods of time like during Super Storm Sandy.
10. Jaclyn Flor asked Vince Maione from Orsted to describe assets that help/hurt businesses from becoming resilient. Vince Maione replied that access is imperative and utility asset resilience is important. He said that micro grids can help to alleviate the problems caused by power outages.
11. Jaclyn Flor then asked the casino representatives to explain how energy resiliency is important and to identify assets that should be included for analysis.
12. Hugh Turner, The Borgata, replied that while energy is important, it's not the biggest problem. He said access to the casinos is the biggest problem and that it's the vulnerability of the communities in the area to flood. He said in the past, access to flood prone communities is cut off due to safety reasons and that the barrier island economy isn't robust without visitor access. Hugh Turner said that the power grid of the casinos held up well during past storm events.
13. Jaclyn Flor asked if the airport has a role in growing/diversifying the economy and what assets are worth protecting.

14. Kate Gibbs, Operating Engineers Local 825, replied that transportation infrastructure in general is very important to the region since it is a tourism hub and that no community in the region can succeed without all forms of infrastructure being functional.
15. Jaclyn Flor asked the SJTA (South Jersey Transportation Authority) to explain what made the airport and the SJTA transportation assets vulnerable in past disasters and are there any gaps that remain with response and recovery.
16. Steve Mazur, SJTA, replied that one section of the expressway flooded in Pleasantville. He said other than that area of flooding, the airport was relatively unscathed by storm effects. Steve said the tunnel in Atlantic City that provides access to marine district casinos and Brigantine stays dry and that there are flood hazard areas at the airport but they are mainly at the roadway into the airport and that it hasn't flooded recently.
17. Jaclyn Flor asked the Focus Group to describe the less obvious vulnerabilities in the economy such as workforce accessibility/availability or threats to tourism during normal day-to-day operations as a result of major storm events. In addition, Jacklyn asked how small businesses are vulnerable.
18. Michael Chait, Greater AC Chamber of Commerce, replied that Atlantic City is very resilient when it comes to bringing visitors back. Michael said every few years an event causes tourism to dip (COVID, Hurricane Sandy, etc.) but visitors always come back. He said Atlantic City is a "drive-in" market so access to the city and between the neighboring municipalities in the region is critically important. Therefore, maintaining these access points is a priority to maintain tourism volume. It remains to be seen if new regulations from NJDEP and others will slow down economic development due to cost increases.
19. Jaclyn Flor asked what is unique about this region and, from an economic standpoint, what makes it vulnerable and what should be prioritized in terms of protecting it.
20. Lance Landgraf, CRDA, replied that when four casinos closed a few years ago, Atlantic County led the nation in foreclosures and that shows how much the region relies on Atlantic City. He said there has to be access to those jobs and the tourism industry (Route 30 Absecon Blvd, AC Expressway, Black horse Pike). Lance said a lot of homes in back bay area are row homes so they are virtually impossible to raise. Building bulkheads in the back bay is another priority.
21. Kate Gibbs, Operating Engineers Local 825, added the region needs more back bay dredging and that it is very difficult and expensive to raise certain homes, so in order to keep diversifying the economy, the Region needs local residents to be able to afford the homes and be able to work in the city and surrounding communities.
22. Lance Landgraf, CRDA, said if elevating isn't possible maybe there could be a combination of elevating and dredging.
23. Kate Gibbs added that she spoke to several home owners who either have to sell their home or put millions into it to renovate and lift it. She said we need to figure out a plan for these homeowners that does not involve forcing them out of the region.

24. Brian Jackson, Stockton University, explained that Stockton encourages their employees at the Atlantic City campus to live and work in the area. However, some of the barriers keeping this from happening including the cost of flood insurance and the concern for living on the barrier islands. He said that there is a need for more homeowners in AC and less renters to diversify tax base and that AC doesn't have the inventory to attract employees to live in the City due to flooding.
25. Jaclyn Flor asked if second home ownership is desirable and if there is a need for policies that will keep some areas purely full time residential.
26. Brian Jackson replied funding/grants that will encourage families to move to Atlantic City would be helpful and that a lot of the homes are not move-in ready so they need to be renovated or reconstructed.
27. Noel McGuire, Atlantic County Economic Alliance, explained the tourism/hospitality industry is the most vulnerable asset during natural disasters and that fifty to sixty percent (50-60%) of the economy relies on hospitality/tourism. Noel said the Atlantic County Economic Alliance is pushing for key infrastructure to diversify economy and build resiliency so the area isn't as impacted from natural events and that the ACEA can provide more information about these infrastructure plans.
28. Joe Dougherty, Casino Association of NJ, commented that the boardwalk is a very important economic element that is susceptible to storms. He said that the current condition of the boardwalk could be improved as it is more vulnerable now than when Super Storm Sandy occurred and that assistance is needed to renovate boardwalk. Joe said some parts of the boardwalk were under construction when Hurricane Sandy hit the region which contributed to economic losses.
29. Hilary Chebra, South Jersey Chamber of Commerce, added that diversifying the economy includes ensuring job training and retraining is available to the workforce for new jobs coming to the region.
30. Jaclyn Flor asked if there are any policies/projects currently funded in the region to address vulnerabilities and are there any policies/projects that would make the region more resilient.
31. Jim Rutala, Regional Coordinator, described a microgrid project in midtown that the City just received funding for. He said the grid will serve a hospital, some casinos, and Boardwalk Hall. He said this could be the first of many microgrids in the city.
32. Lance Landgraf, CRDA, explained that the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) had already done a study on the back bays in the region and Steven Roche with the United States Army Corps Of Engineers, USACE, should be contacted since they are in the process of doing a back bay bulkhead study. Jaclyn explained that the USACE has presented to the consultant team already and that data from that study can be shared with the focus group participants. She said the back bay study is a topic of interest that has garnered mixed reviews.
33. Joe Lodise, Caesars, Harrah's, and Tropicana, explained that workforce development is a critical issue in the area and the tourism industry. He said an aging workforce means there needs to be

a solution to bring new residents in. Joe said any policies around training and recruitment grants would be very helpful.

34. Brian Jackson explained Stockton has proposed building a coastal resiliency center in Atlantic County. He said in 2018/2019 Stockton received a grant to develop the proposal to be submitted to the State and that this proposal is at the top of Stockton's capital improvements list. Brian explained Stockton also has a coastal research center that monitors the shore line and makes assessments for local, state, and federal government.
35. Joe Lodise added that Caesars, Harrah's, and Tropicana are looking into solar energy to create more energy and sustainability in the market. He said the hope is to bring solar energy to their properties over the next two years.
36. Jaclyn Flor went over the next steps for the focus group and closed the meeting.

Action Items:

1. Send USACE study to Business Focus Group once released.
2. Next Focus Group Meeting will be Fall 2021.

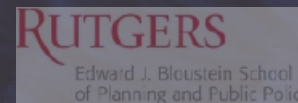
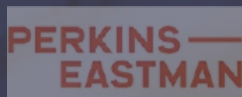
Resilient NJ



Regional Planning for a Stronger New Jersey

Business Focus Group Meeting

*Atlantic County Coastal Region
Focus Group Meeting #1 - Teams
07.21.2021*



Agenda

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



I. Introductions

- *NJDEP & The Consultant Team*
- *The ACCR Businesses and Tourism: a representative from each was invited:*
 - *CRDA*
 - *SJ Economic Development District*
 - *Casino Association of NJ*
 - *Representatives for the 9 Casinos*
 - *Caesars, Harrah's and Tropicana*
 - *Bally's*
 - *The Borgata*
 - *Resorts Casino*
 - *Hard Rock*
 - *Golden Nugget*
 - *Ocean Casino*
 - *AtlantiCare*
 - *Stockton University*
 - *Atlantic Cape Community College*
 - *Atlantic City International Airport (SJTA)*
 - *Orsted*
 - *EDF/Shell*
 - *Meet AC*
 - *Atlantic City Jitney Association*
 - *Operating engineers Local 825*
- *A representative from each Local Business Associations, Committees, and Chambers:*
 - *The Atlantic City Metropolitan Business and Citizens Association*
 - *Southern NJ Development Council*
 - *SJ Chamber of Commerce*
 - *Greater AC Chamber of Commerce*
 - *Somers Point Business Association*
 - *Margate Business Association*
 - *Atlantic County Economic Alliance*
 - *New Jersey Sustainable Business Council*
 - *Atlantic City Boardwalk Committee*
- *Reps for Small Business- (Real-estate, Tourism, Local Builders, Retail, Restaurant)*
 - *Long and Foster*
 - *Dilorenzo Realty*
 - *Legend Construction*
 - *C Alexander Building*
 - *David Nicholas Building*
 - *The Catch*

Meeting Objectives

Today, we are seeking answers to these key questions:

- *What are the critical assets in the Region that have the largest impact on businesses and the economy of the ACCR region now and in the future?*
- *What made your business (or businesses in the Region) 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 your economy of the Region as a whole more resilient?*

II. Overview

Resilient NJ Project Area and Regional Team Members

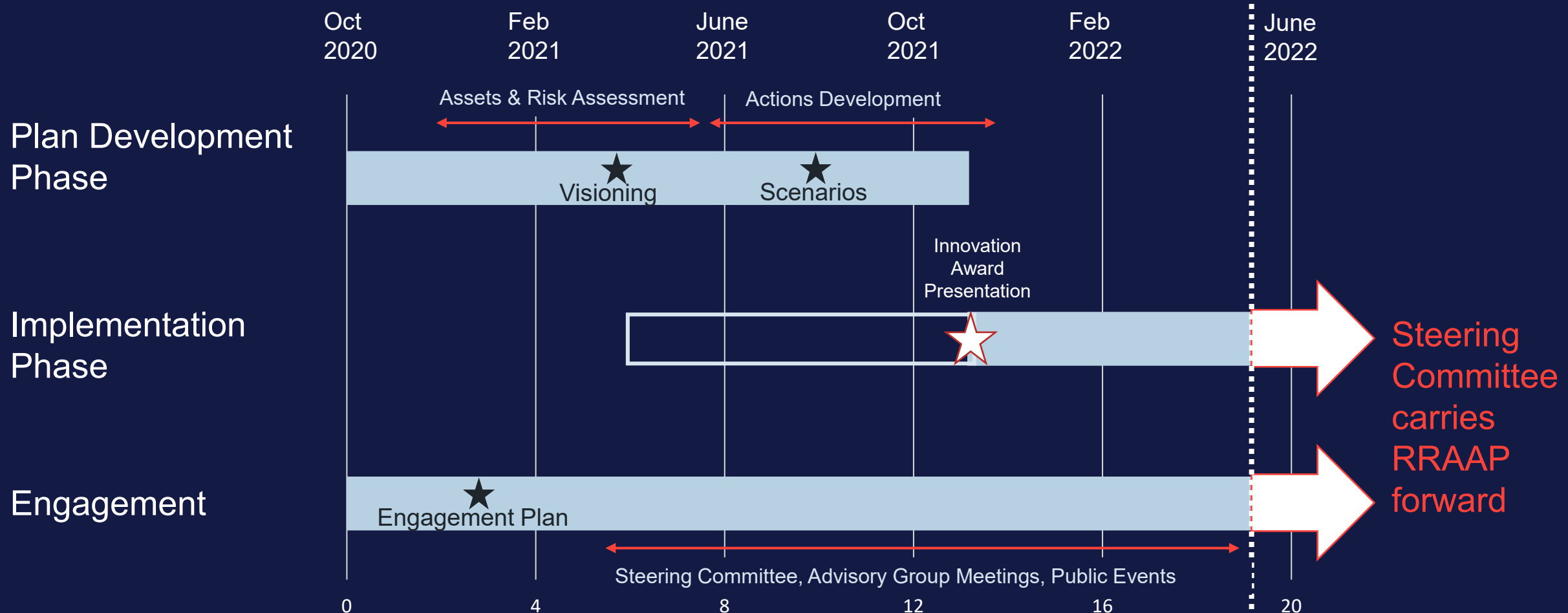


American
Red Cross

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
Resilient NJ inter-regional
coordination
Soft launched website
CAC engagement
Planning Context
development

Focus group / resident
advisory survey
launched
Planning Context
review
Project visioning
Asset collection / risk
assessment

CAC engagement, focus
group outreach
Project visioning
Vet risk assessment
methods
Lay groundwork for
Scenarios development

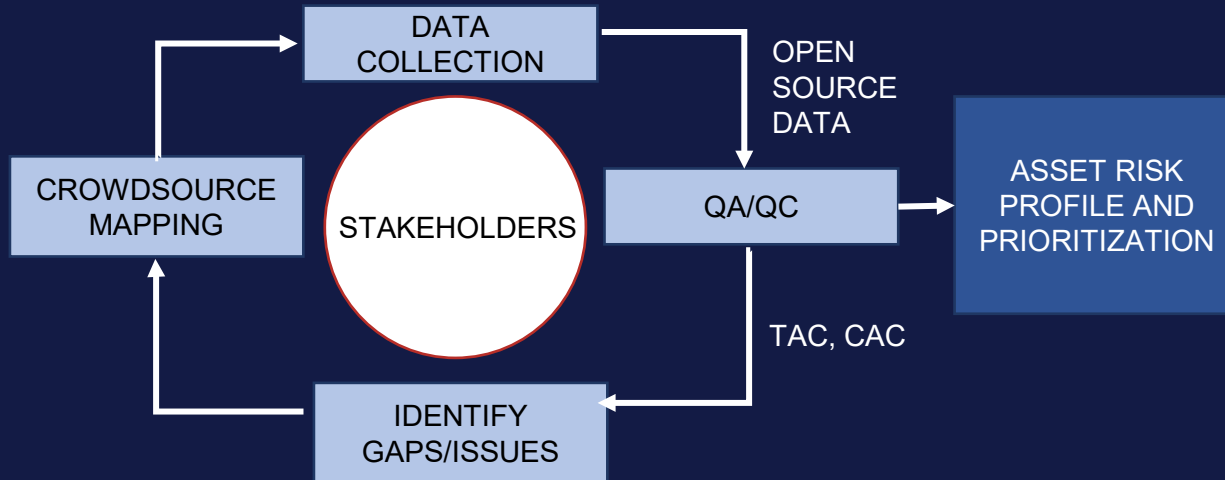
Ongoing CAC/TAC and
public engagement
Project visioning
Risk assessment &
prioritization
Scenarios development

Public Event/
Focus Groups
Project visioning
Risk assessment &
prioritization
Scenarios
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

Transportation System

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

Economic & Cultural Assets

Casinos
Major Employers
Sports
Tourism
Place of worship
Commercial Corridor
Opportunity Zone
Urban Enterorise Zone
Fishing areas

Key Infrastructure Assets

Govt. Facilities and Buildings
Public Safety/Essential Services
Places of Interest/Landmark
Education
Resident Services

Utility Infrastructure

Power Generation facilities
Wasterwater Treatment plant
Recycle Facilities
Sewer Serving Area
ACUA Facilities

Natural & Cultural Environment

Beach
Conservation Area
Natural Areas
Parks and Recreational Areas
Wetlands
Historic Sites
Wildlife refuge

Capital Projects

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)**



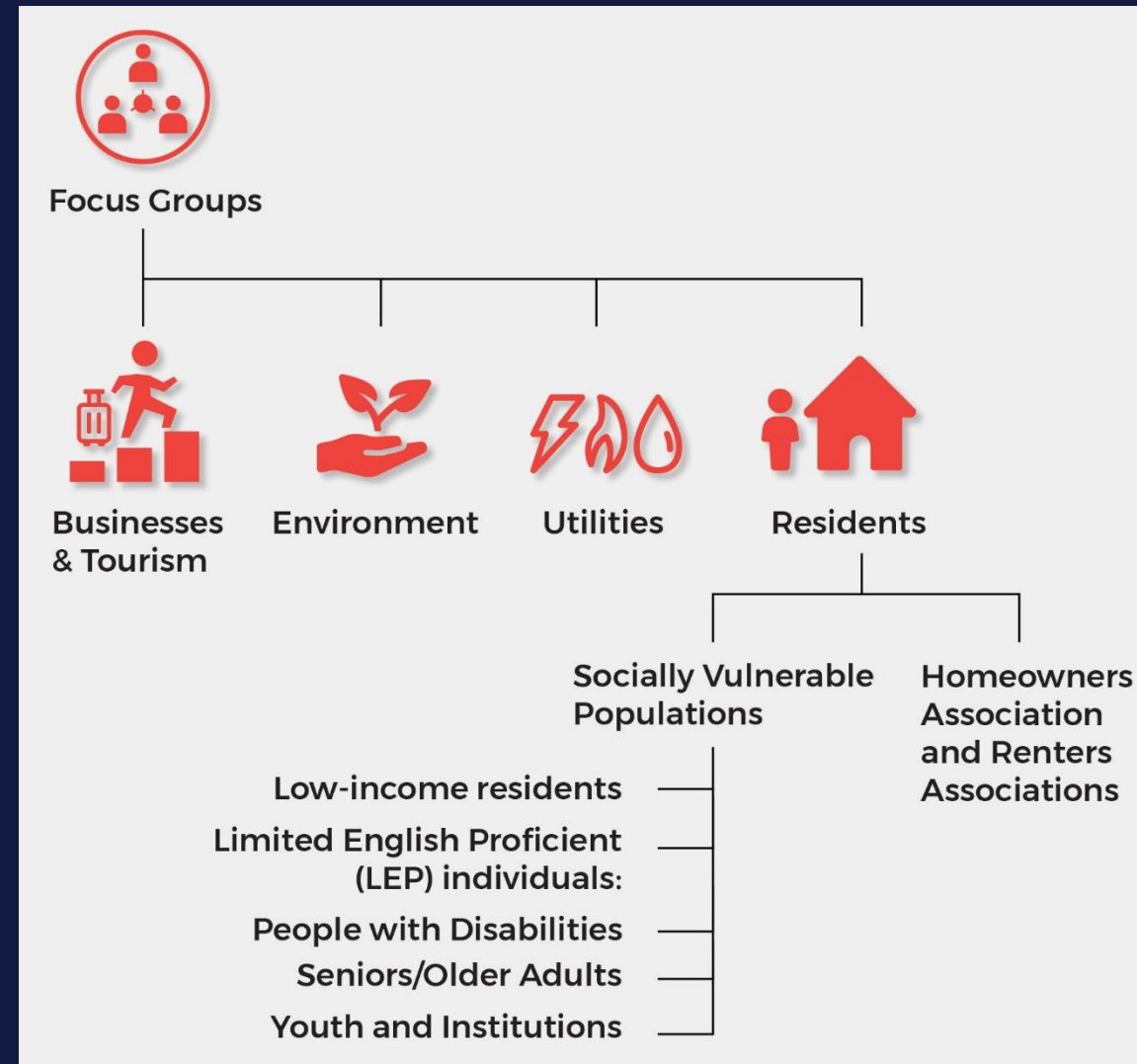
Focus Groups (FG)



You are in a
Focus Group

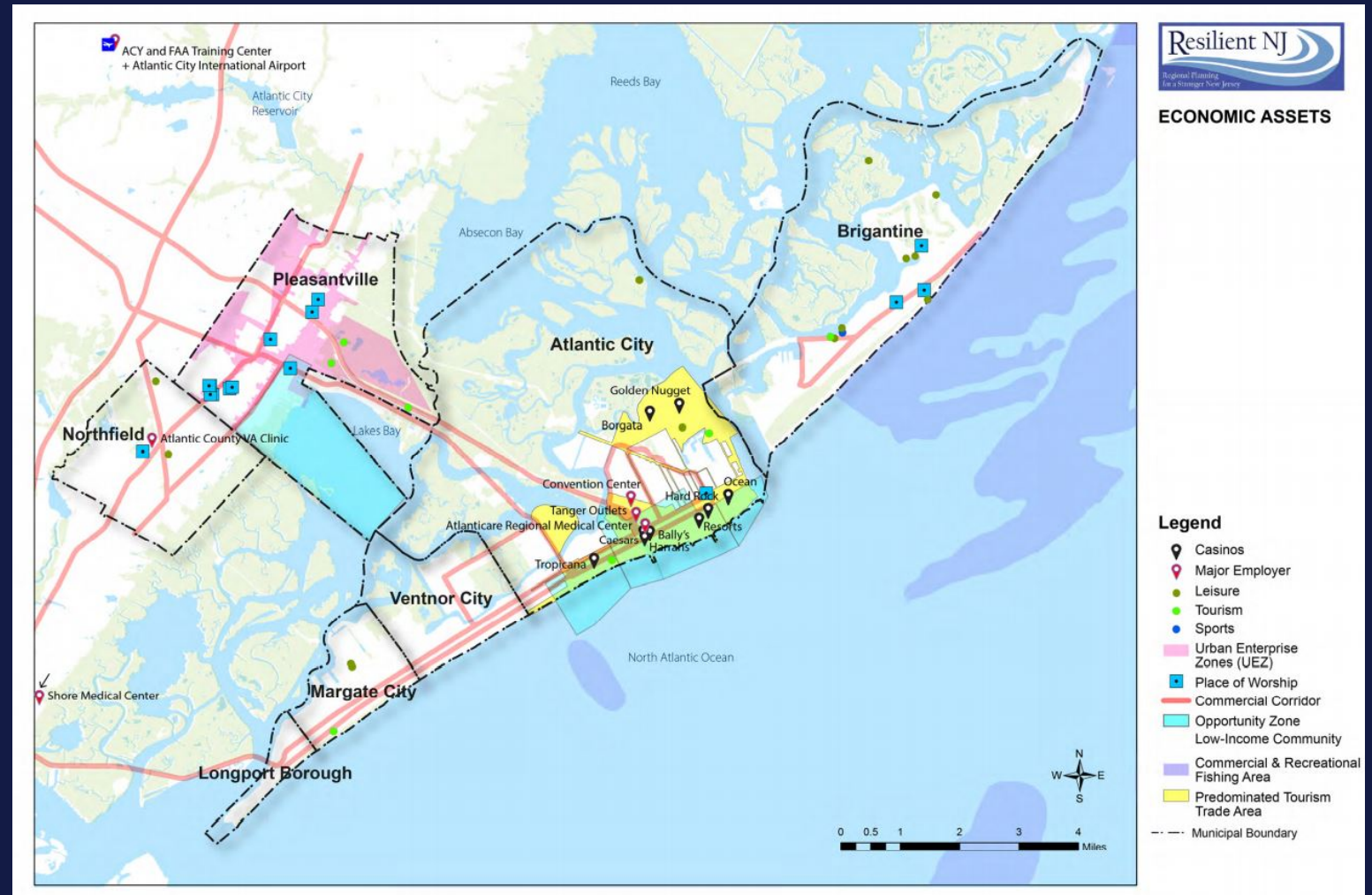
Overview

Resilient NJ Project



III. Understanding Economic Assets that should be included in Analysis

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



IV. Past Disasters- Where was the ACCR economy the most vulnerable

What made your business (or businesses in the Region) the most vulnerable in past disasters?

What gaps remain in the aftermath of response and recovery?



V. Planned Projects/Policies for ACCR economy

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 economy of the Region as a whole more resilient?



VI. Next Steps

Thank you!

Regional

Regional Transportation



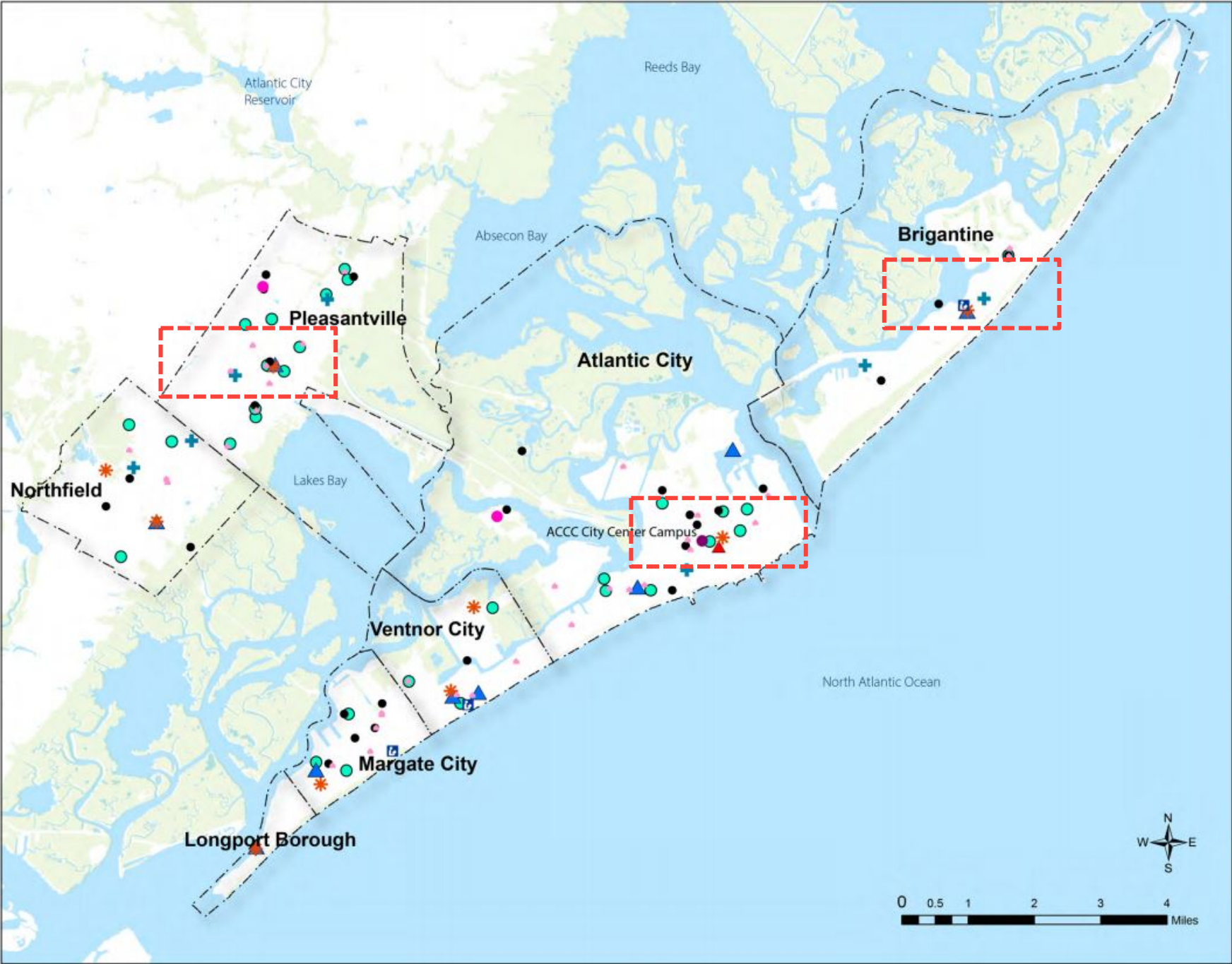
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

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

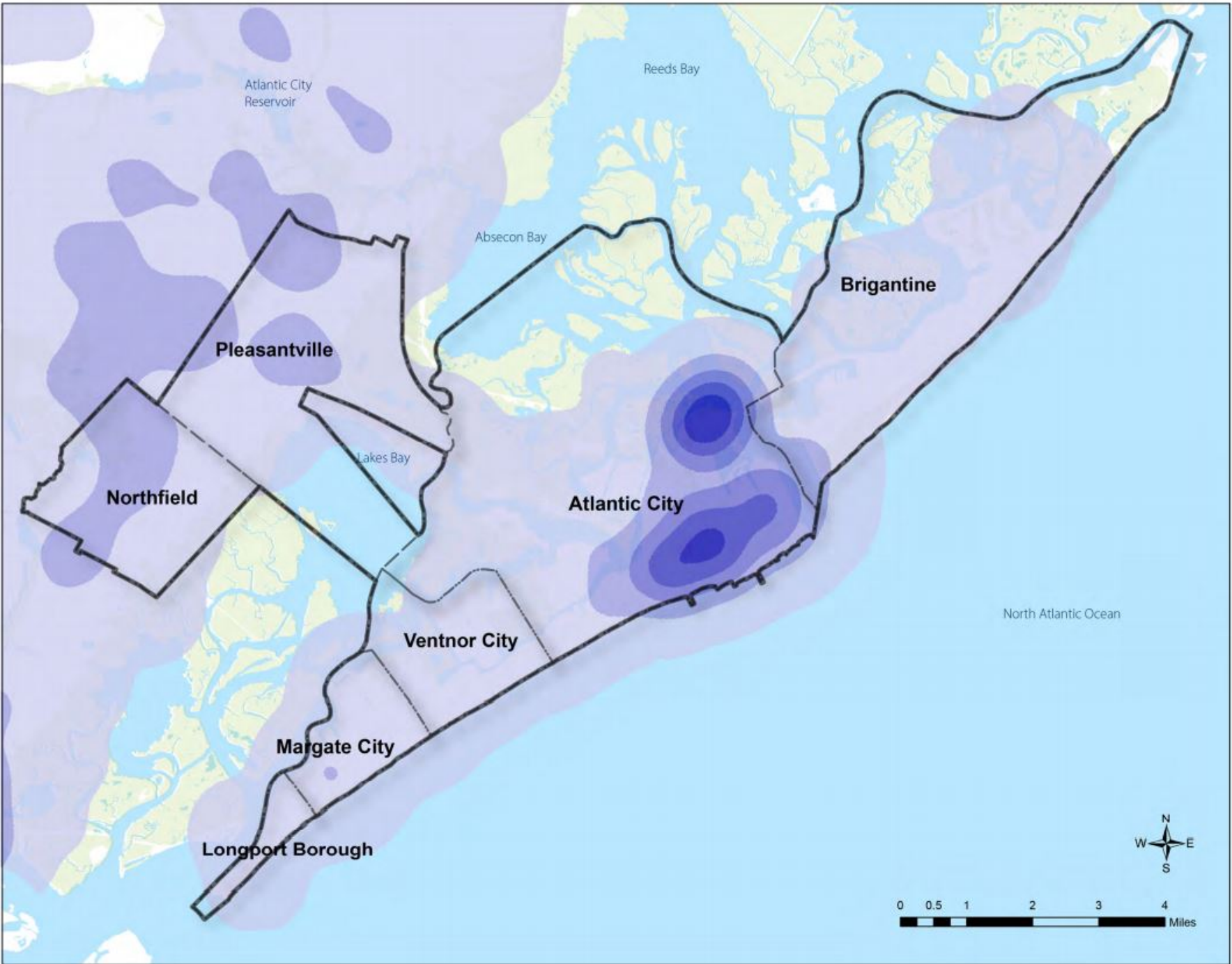
--- Municipal Boundary

Regional Employment Density

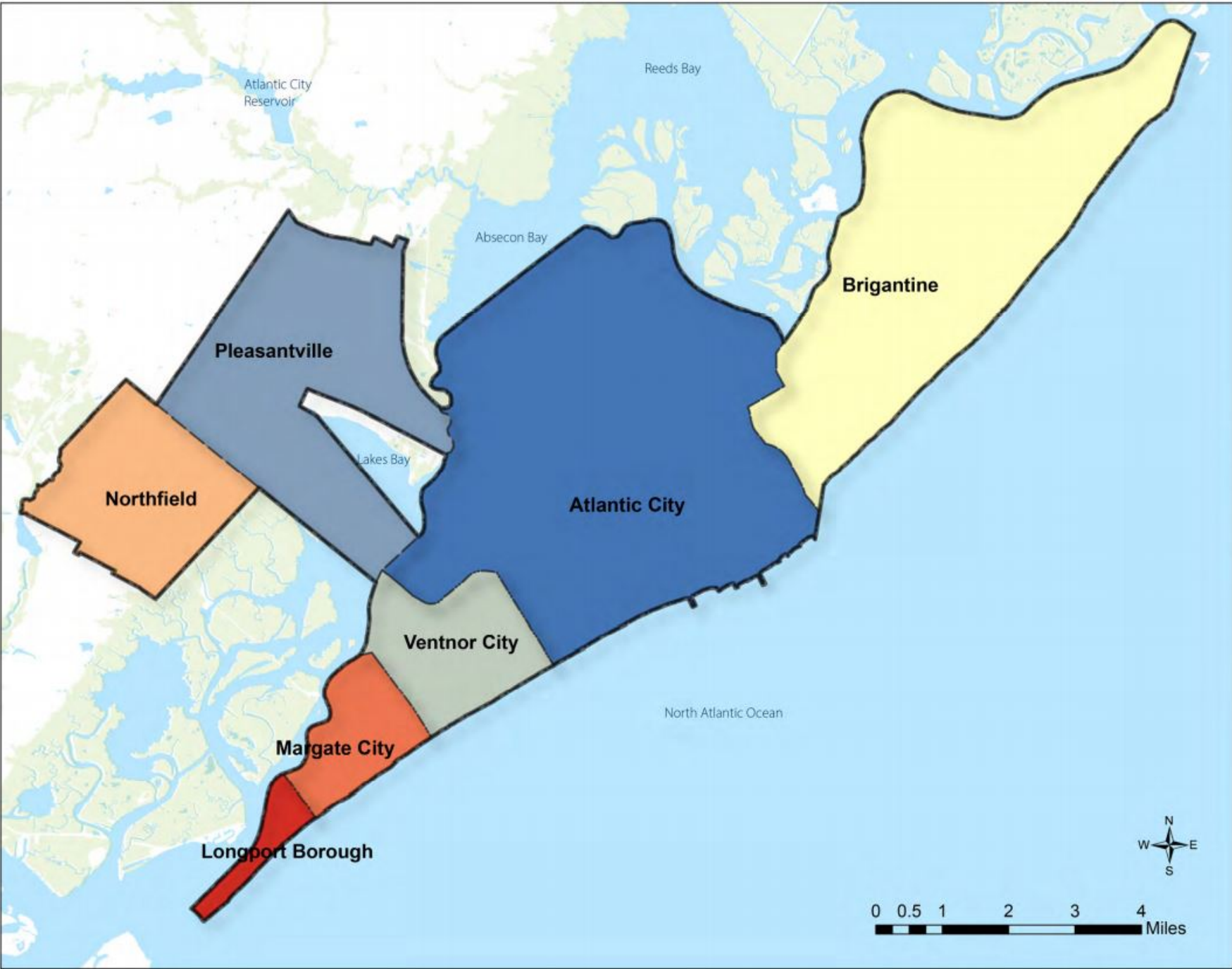
**EMPLOYMENT
DENSITY**

Legend

Jobs/Sq.Mile



Regional
Median
Household
Income Change
From 2010 - 2019



**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD
INCOME CHANGE
FROM 2010 TO 2019**

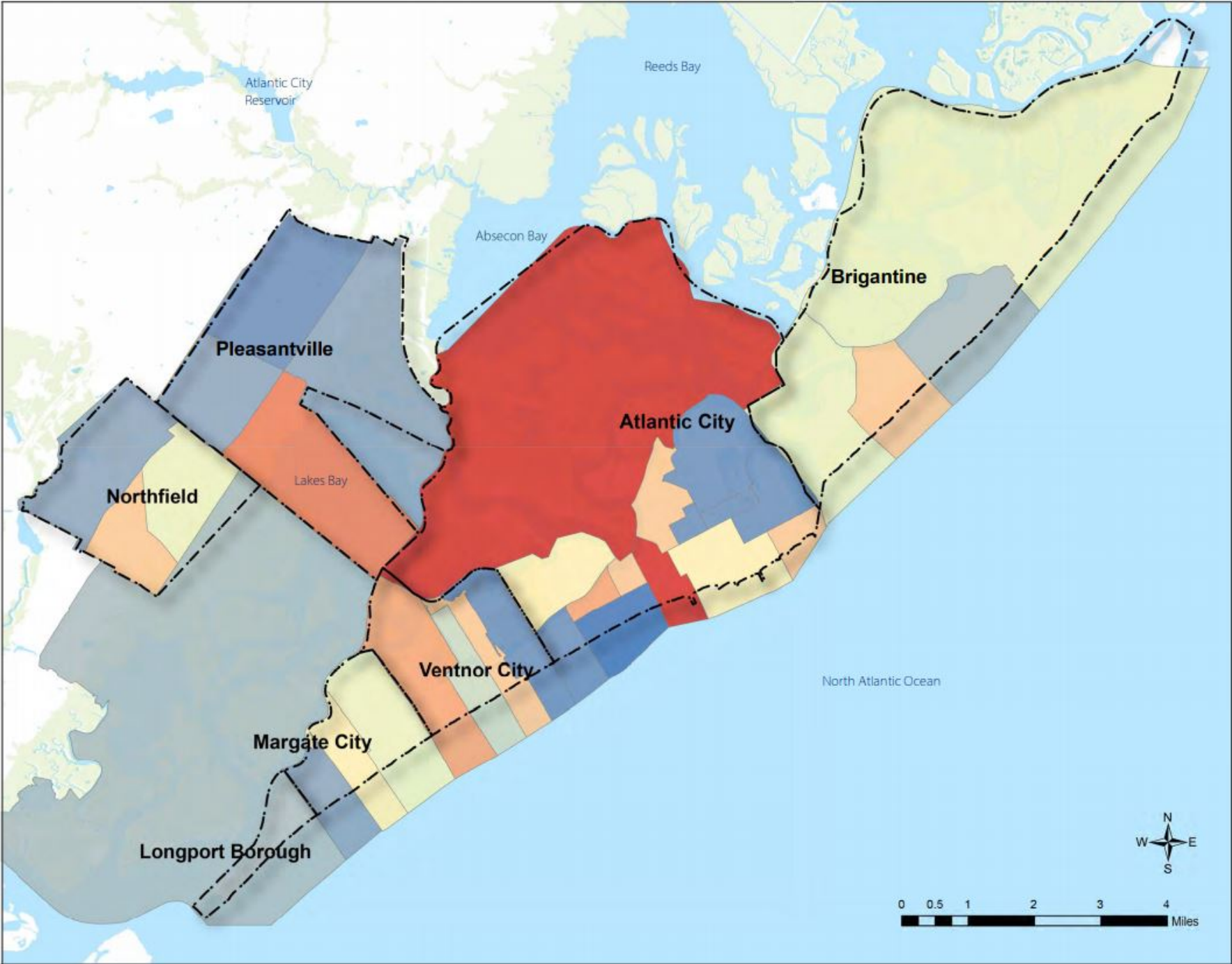
Legend

**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

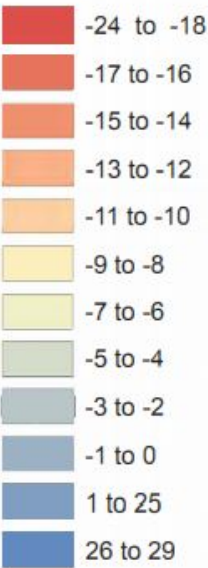
Population
Change in
Percentage from
2010 - 2019



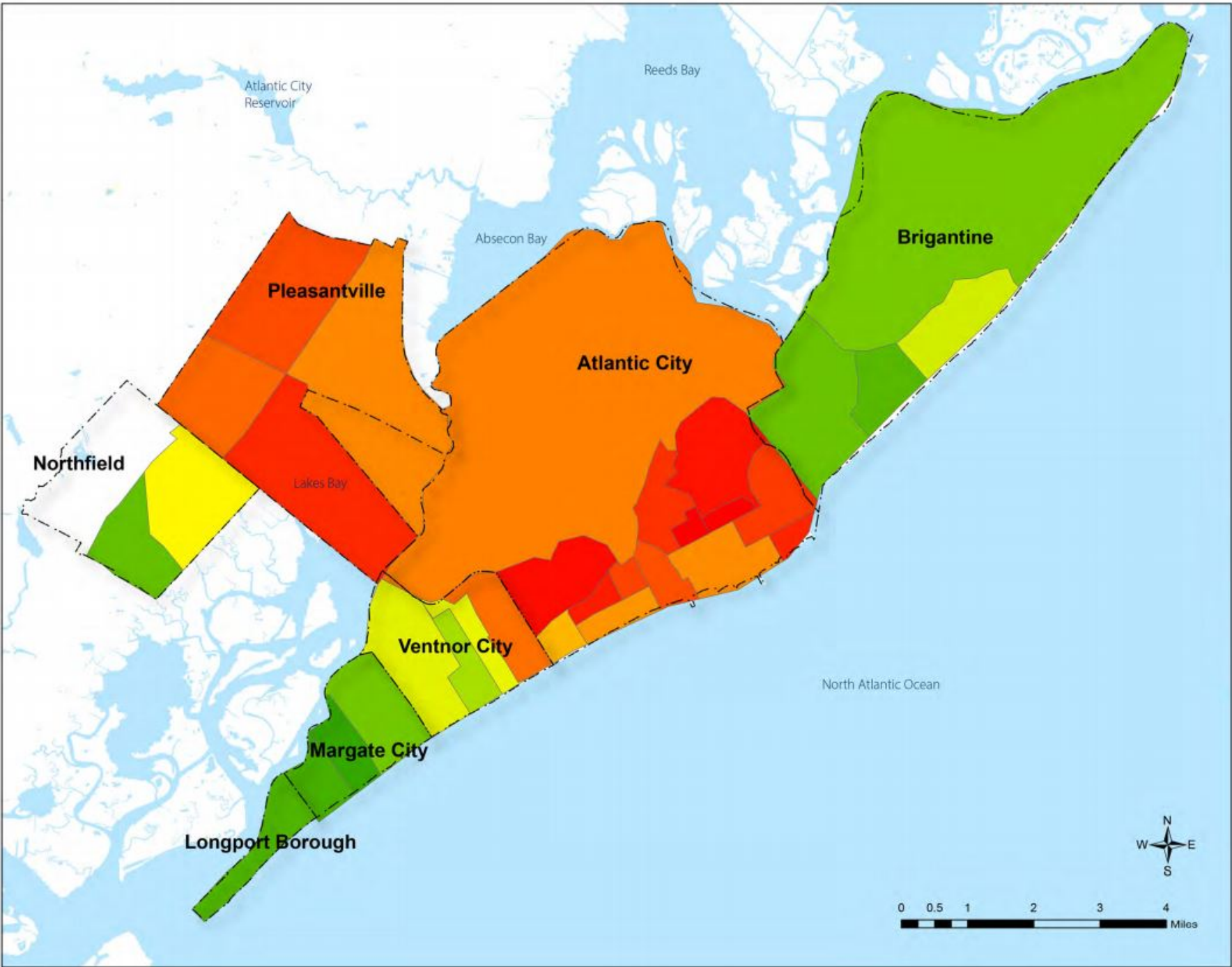
**POPULATION
CHANGE IN
PERCENTAGE
FROM 2010 TO 2019**

Legend

Change %



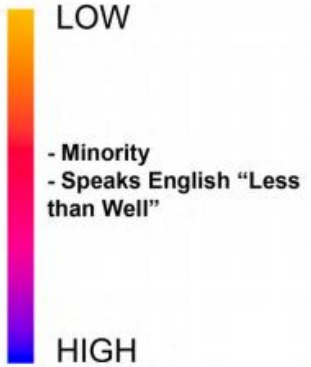
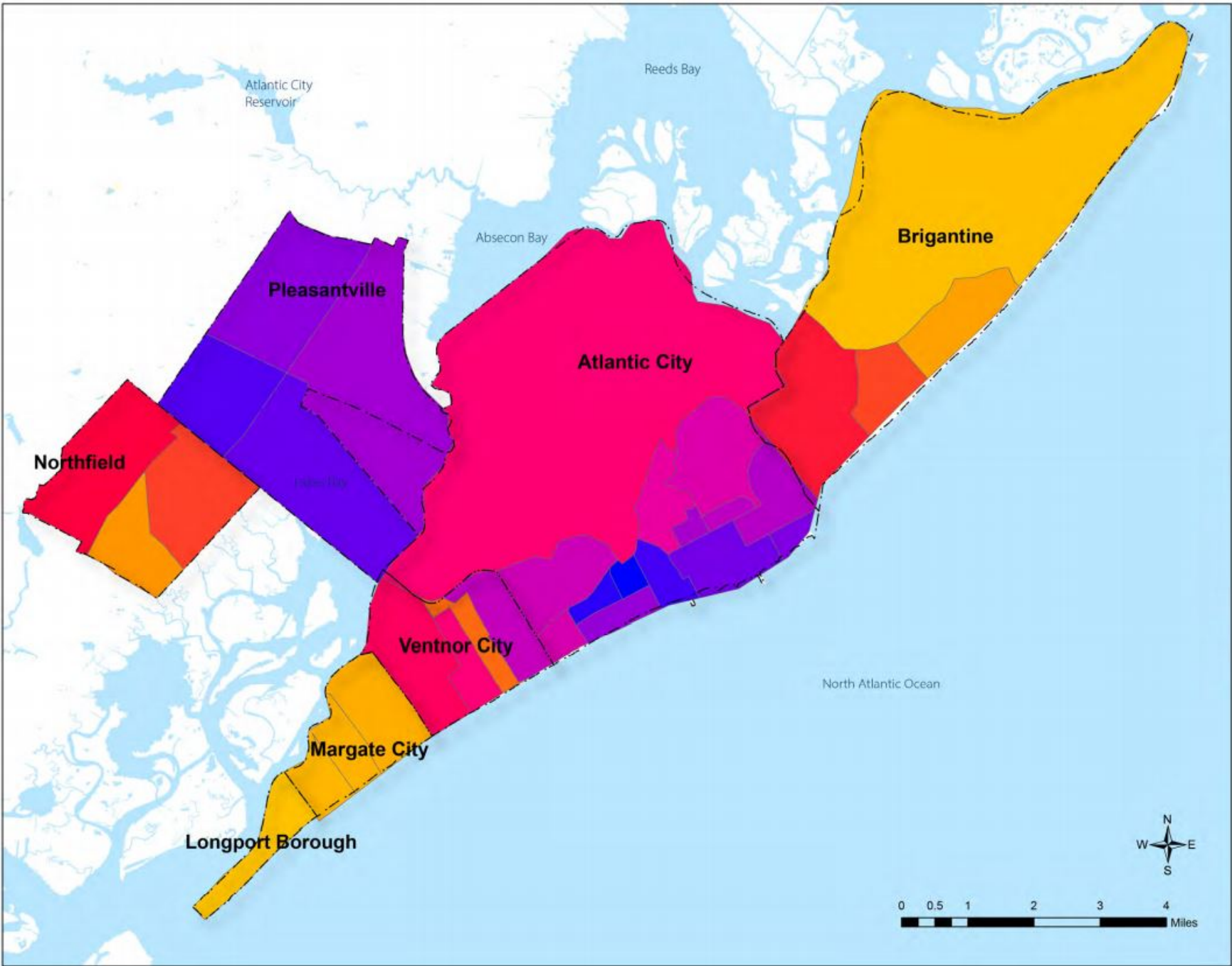
Regional Socioeconomic Status



SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

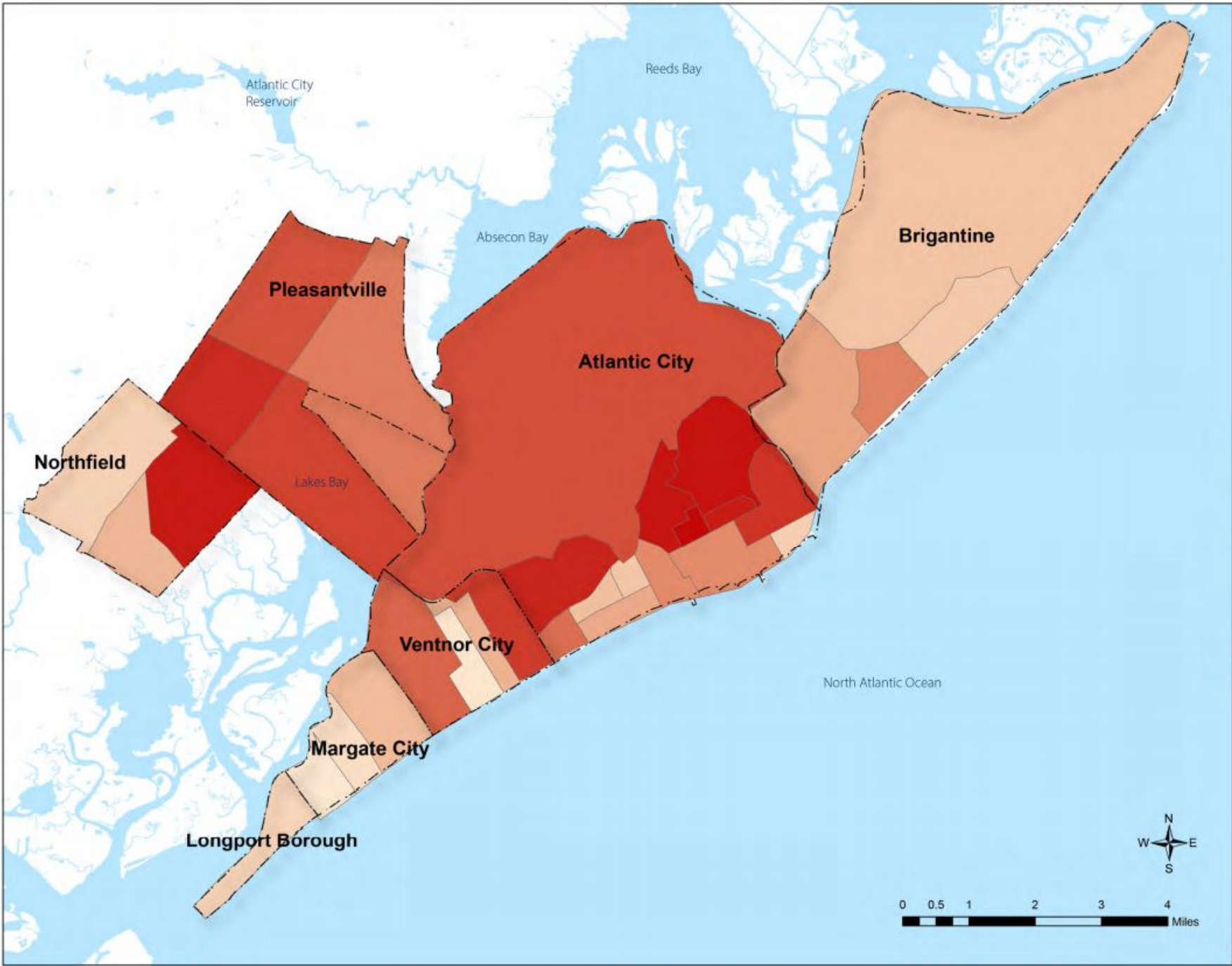
Regional

Minority Status and Language



Regional

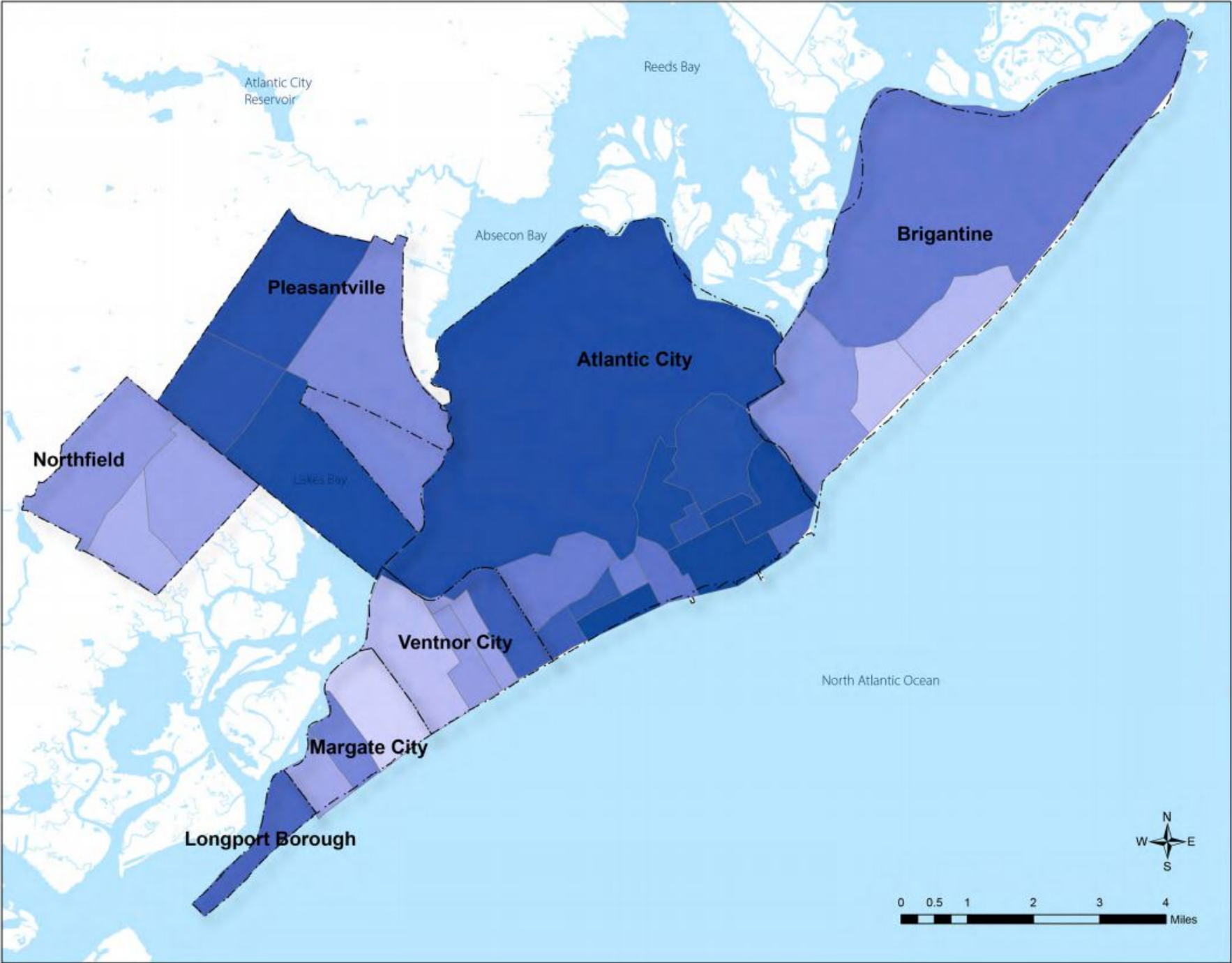
Household Composition and Disability



HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION & DISABILITY



Regional Housing Type and Transportation

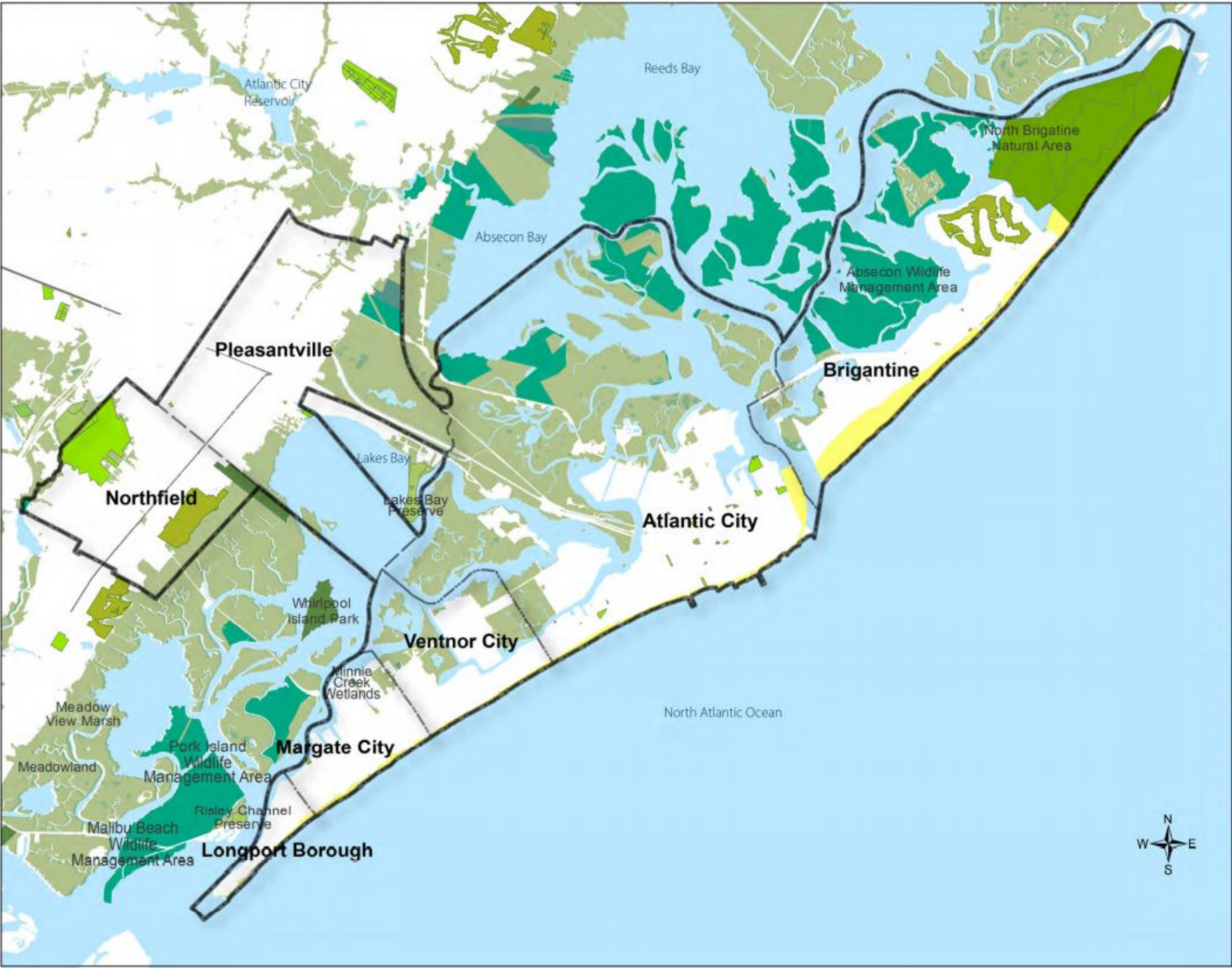


HOUSING TYPE & TRANSPORTATION



Regional

Natural and Cultural Environments



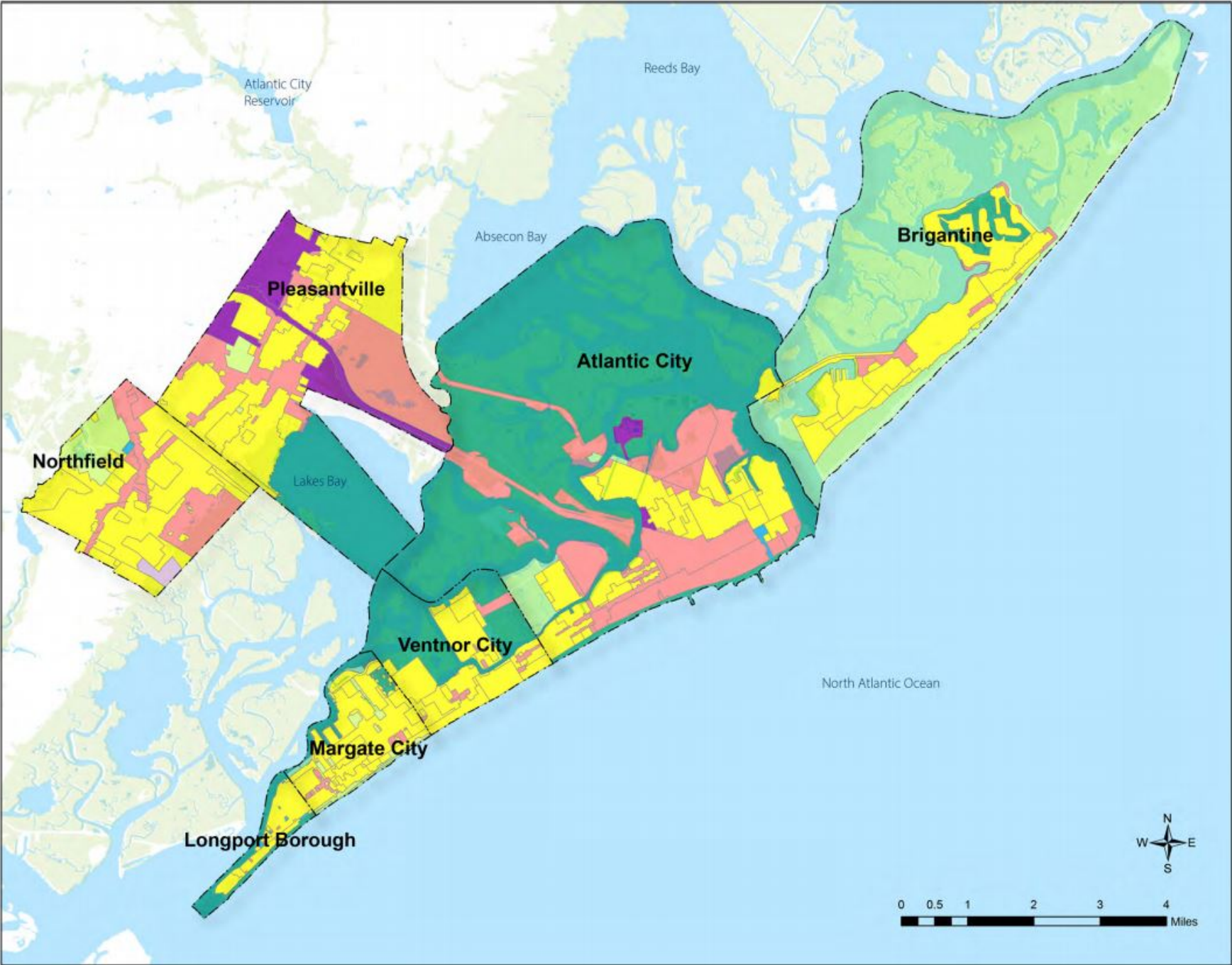
NATURAL AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Legend

- Beach
- Conservation Area
- Estuary or Marsh
- Natural Area
- Park
- Wildlife Management Area
- Wildlife Refuge
- Wetlands
- Trails
- Golf Course/Country Club
- Municipal Boundary



Regional Land Coverage



LANDCOVER

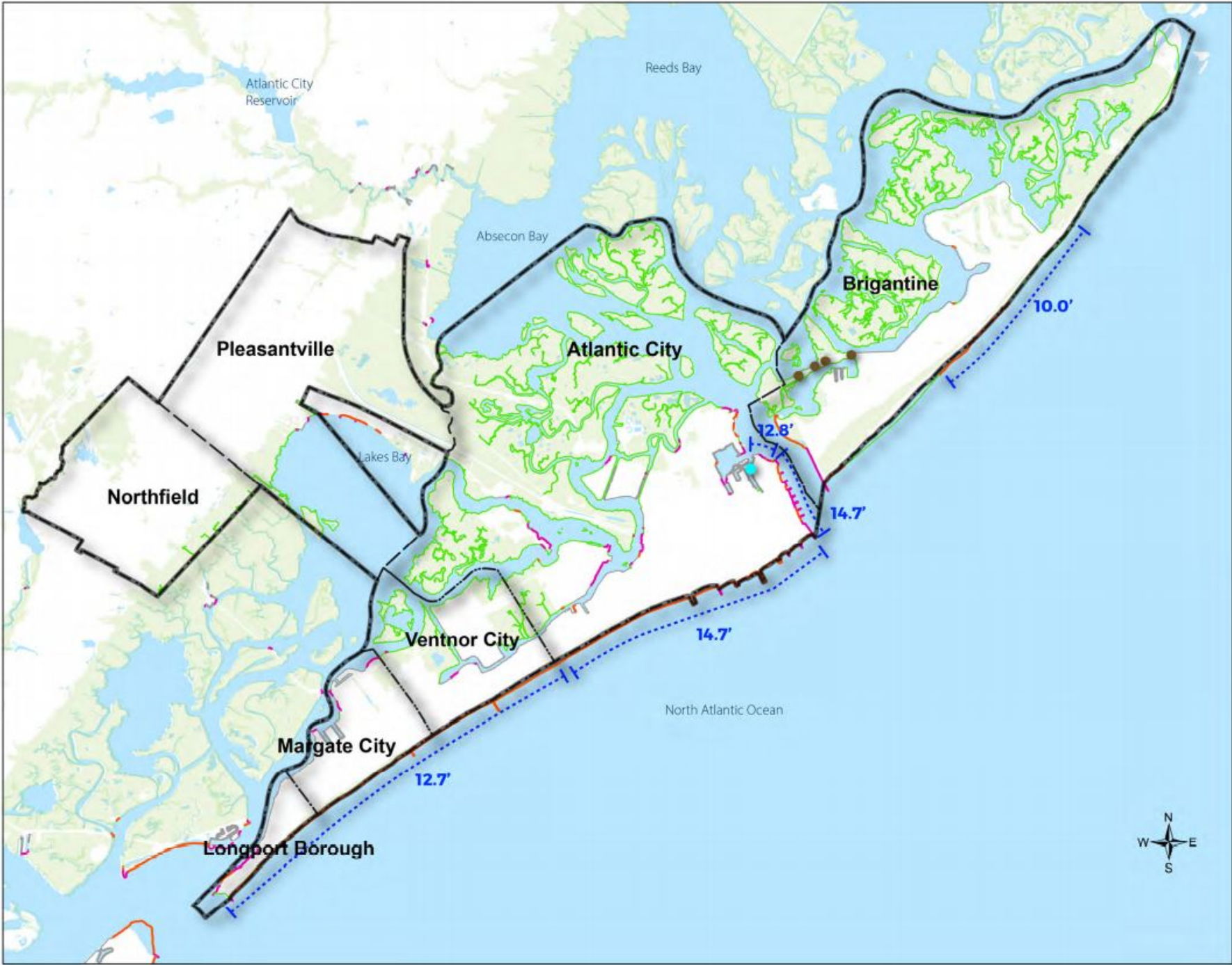
Legend

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

Regional

Projects – Shoreline Type

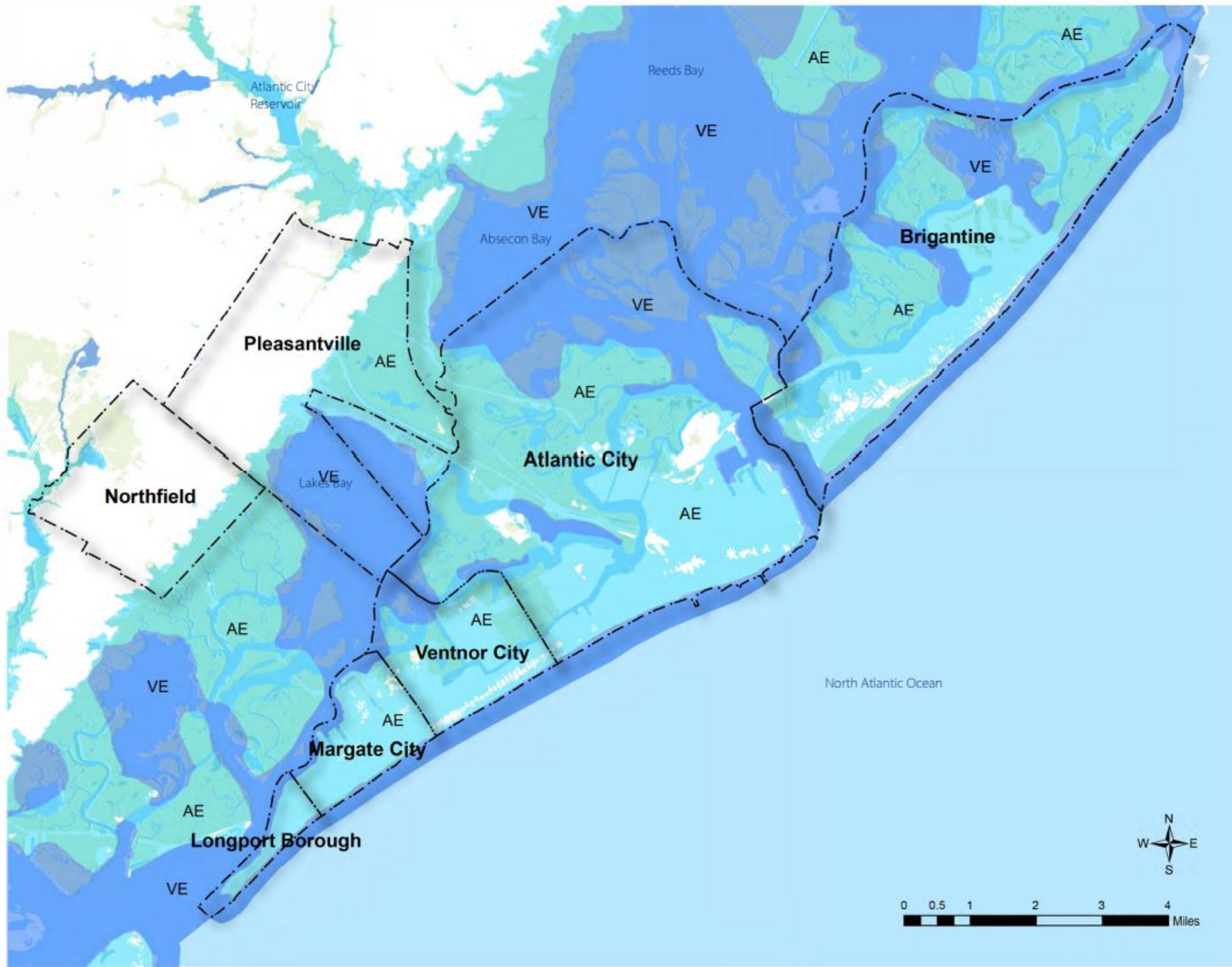
PROJECTS - SHORELINE TYPE



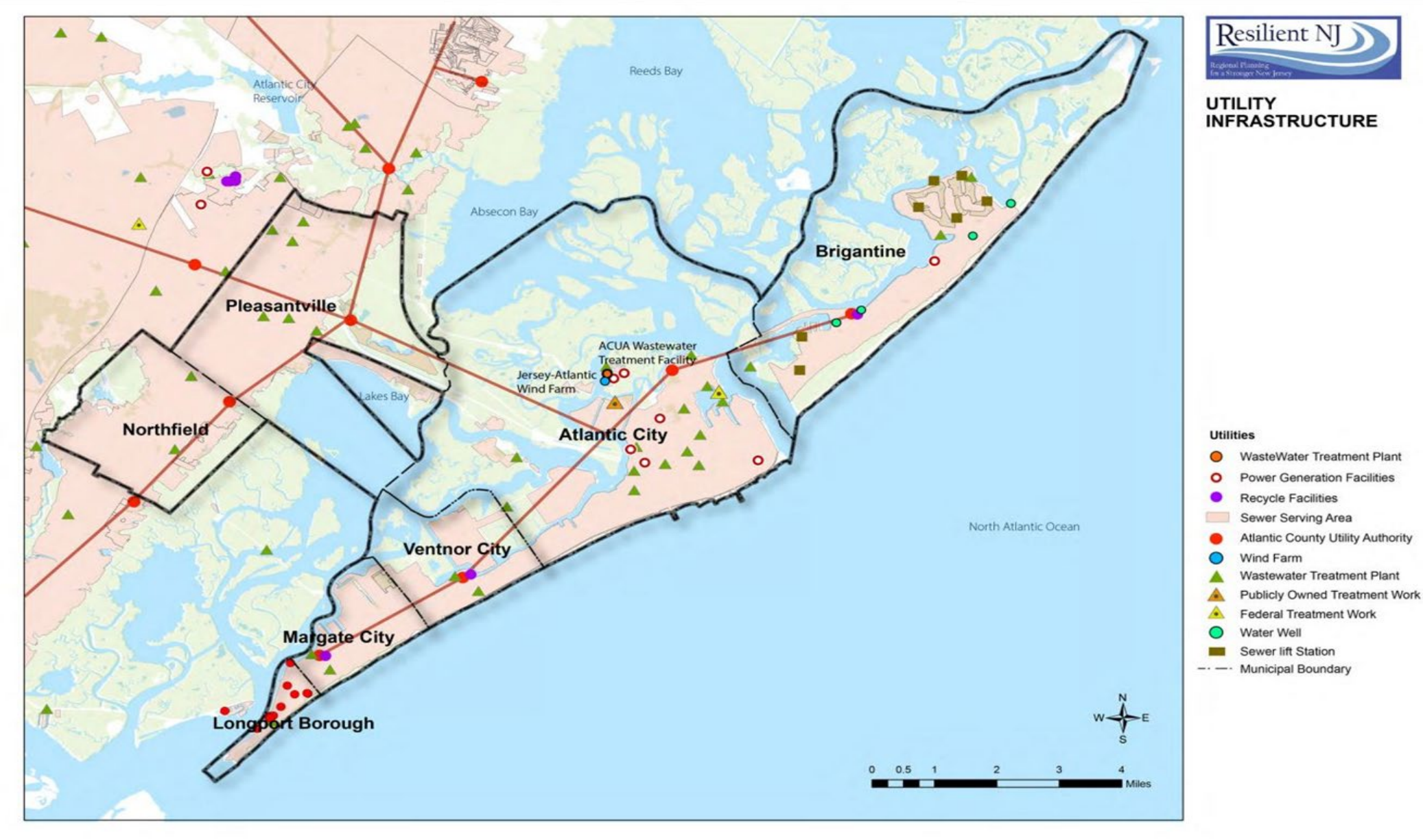
Legend

- 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



Regional Utility Infrastructure



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