Verona
Environmental
Commission

Memo

To: Zoning Board Chairperson McGinley and Secretary Carpinelli
From: Plan Review Committee of the Verona Environmental Commission
c: Verona Environmental Commission Chair
Date: December 29, 2025
Re: **Case # 2026-03**
21-25 Grove Avenue [Block 1702, Lot 22]
Verona, New Jersey
Zone: C-2 (Professional Office and Business)

The Plan Review Committee of the Verona Environmental Commission (VEC) reviewed the application for 21-25 Grove Avenue in Verona submitted by Abassi Construction LLC, which we received on December 12, 2025. We understand that the Applicant is seeking to construct a residential townhouse development consisting of 11 three-bedroom units, associated parking, lighting and landscaping, which would require a number of variances including but not limited to rear and side yard setbacks, building coverage, building height, multiple uses and more. There are also 13 trees to be removed. The comments below are provided for the Board's consideration:

1) A properly registered and Licensed Tree Expert (LTE) should be engaged to prepare the Tree Removal and Replacement Plan with their license number documented on the Tree Removal and Replacement Application. We note that we were not in receipt of a tree removal/ replacement application. Without this document, this application is incomplete.

2) Existing and Proposed Total Improved Lot Coverage is listed as 69.4% (21,651 ft^2) and 61.8% (19,293 ft^2) on the Sheet SP-1, respectively. Scaling off the drawing, we calculated a Proposed Improved Lot Coverage of 64.3% based on a Proposed "Improved Area" of 20,055 ft^2 (please see attached annotated pdf). We understand that the maximum Improved Lot Coverage for the C-2 Zone is 65%.

3) The proposed density and total improved lot coverage for the proposed residential use exceeds all allowable coverage in all other residential use zones. The Applicant is applying for a residential use, but is relying upon the C-2 commercial zoning use coverage percentage of 65% allowable coverage. The VEC reviewed two other residential use zones that we consider more applicable:

    a) In the A-3 Townhouse Zone, the maximum density for a property containing less than four (4) acres is 12 units per acre. Applying this zone's requirements to a 0.716-acre site results in a maximum of 8.6 units. Rounding downwards to the next sustainable number of units for the property size would, therefore, be 8 units, where total allowable lot coverage is 55%, or almost 7% less that the Applicant's current proposal of 61.8%. In this zone, the minimum rear-yard setback is 30 feet and the maximum building height 35 feet.

   b) In the A-1 Zone, which allows for townhouses and low-rise apartments, the maximum allowable density is 6 units per acre for townhouses or 10 units per acre for apartments. Applying this zone's requirements to a 0.716-acre site results in a maximum of 4.3 townhouse units or 7.2 apartment units. Rounding downwards to the next sustainable number of townhouse units for the property size would, therefore, be 4 units, where the maximum allowable total improved lot coverage of 75%. But again, 4 acres are needed at minimum to allow for such coverage. In this zone, the minimum rear-yard setback is 25 feet and the maximum building height 35 feet

   Due to the encroachment into the side-yard setbacks by accessory decks and HVAC mechanical equipment, and the noncompliance with the required 15-foot buffer on the north and east sides of the site, the VEC PRC believes that the number of proposed units should be reduced to comply with the requirements of the A-3 zoning code (the most congruent use) and the buffer zone requirements.

4) The plans appear to seek waiver for the minimum 15-foot landscape buffe. This buffer should be required on the east and north sides of the site where the property borders residential use zones containing single-family homes. On a site that appears to provide none of the required green infrastructure and abuts single-family homes, the VEC PRC recommends that this requirement be a condition of any approval.

5) The Stormwater Management Plan submitted by the Applicant and dated October 6, 2025 lacks compliance with many sections of Verona's Stormwater Ordinance §150 of Verona's Zoning Code, Article 25.

   a) Verona's stormwater ordinance is applicable to all redevelopment projects, as defined in §150-25.2.

      The Applicant acknowledges that the project is a redevelopment project in the stormwater management report which states:

      "All existing improvements on site will be demolished. In addition, a new parking lot will be constructed through the center of the property, leading to garages below each of the townhouse units. Additionally, there are 4 parking spaces proposed in the rear of the site. The new driveway will pitch from west to east, draining into the existing Type A inlet in the northeast corner."

      The definition stipulates that, "Only areas that drain into an existing stormwater best management practice that is to remain after the redevelopment and that meets current stormwater management requirements shall be deducted from the total amount of impervious surface that must be treated by new stormwater best management practices."

      There are no areas of the site that drain into an existing stormwater best management practice.

      1. The existing Type A inlet at the northeast corner is simply a pipe and does not meet the requirements of a best management practice, as listed within Tables 1, 2, and 3, in §150-25.4G.

2. The existing Type A inlet is neither treating nor withholding the stormwater on the Applicant's site, as is required. Its sole function is to merely pipe the stormwater off site. This is not the intention, nor does this follow the requirements of NJ's or Verona's stormwater rules.

b) The Applicant's statement on page 3 of the Stormwater Management Report is incorrect:

"this project is required to address the water quantity requirements, but not the water quality requirements."

Any type of impervious surface qualifies as a regulated impervious surface; not merely motor vehicle surfaces. Additionally, 150-25.4R(1) under Stormwater runoff quality standards states:

"This subsection contains the minimum design and performance standards to control stormwater runoff quality impacts of major development. Stormwater runoff quality standards are applicable when the project meets the definition of a major development according to §150-25.2."

c) According to Verona's Ordinance, the Applicant cannot pipe the stormwater off site, as is proposed via the Type A inlet in the northeast corner of the site.

§150-25.4S (2) The site shall be designed to manage through on-site retention the retention storm, (or 1/2 of the projected two-year storm per (square foot) as reflected in Table 6[1].) at the site or on contiguous properties in common ownership. The management shall be through the use of one or more green infrastructure techniques and shall apply to the total impervious on the site, both retained and proposed.

d) There appears to be no green infrastructure, existing or proposed, on this site for either quality or quantity controls. The use of green infrastructure is required for both quantity and quality controls as stated in 150-25.4P(2) and (3). The existing inlet that pipes the water off site does not meet the requirements of this ordinance. As such, the VEC PRC recommends the following:

1. The Applicant investigate the site's seasonal high water table and, if found sufficiently below grade, install pervious pavement on areas of the site to meet a portion of the green infrastructure requirements that strive to withhold and treat the stormwater on site.

2. Install one or more bioretention basins at the east portions of the site to ensure that stormwaters are safely retained on the site.

3. Propose berms at the back of the bioretention basins to further retain and infiltrate water onsite.

4. Perform curb cuts at the west side of each of the small permeable bump outs, in front of each proposed unit to all for sheet flow infiltration into those areas. Enhance plantings in each of those areas to help with water retention and infiltration.

    5. Reduce unit and deck size to accommodate required 15-foot buffer on the north and east sides of the site where adjoining properties are in residential use zones.

6) The VEC notes that the site drains towards flood-prone areas to the east and the Peckman River, as depicted in the attached PDF derived from NJFloodmapper.org. The Applicant should make efforts to meet the green infrastructure requirements to withhold and treat the stormwater on site to protect downgradient flood-prone Verona properties.

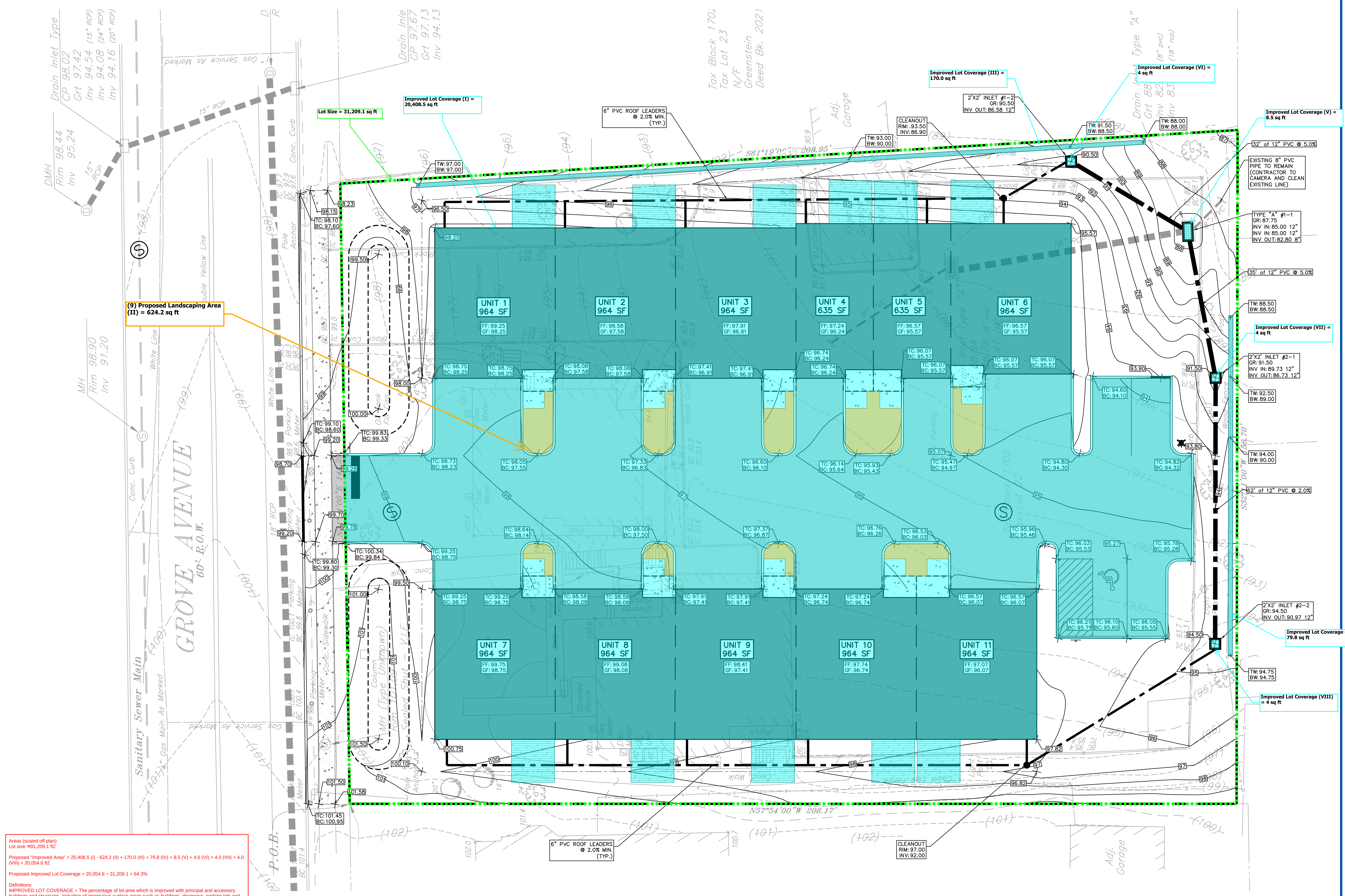
7) The landscaping plans for this major application were not appropriately clarified or addressed in the Applicant's Plans. We recommend that the unpaved/landscaped areas of the site are further evaluated to what other plantings and land cover could be used. Those sections of the site include:

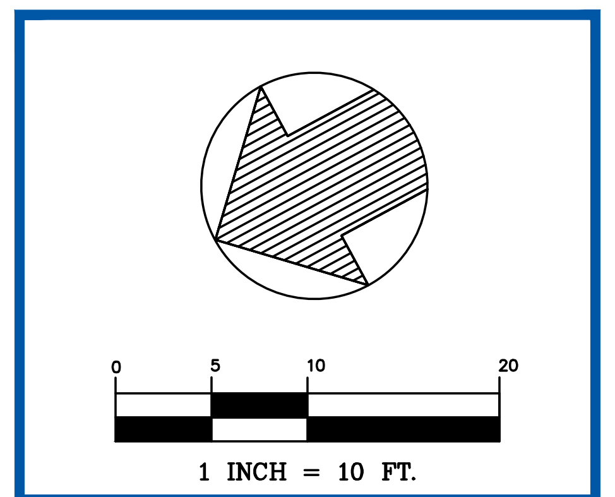
    a) The small areas in front of each home where a single tree will be placed.
    b) The planned berms at the west side of the site
    c) The small, unpaved areas at the east side of the site.
    d) The areas that should contain buffers on the north side of the site, (besides the planting of the columnar red cedars).
    e) Any other details that will aid in gaining a better understanding of the full landscape plan. Please refer to the recommended planting list contains in Verona's Zoning Code Recommended Planting List.

8) Juniperus virginiana 'Taylor' is a columnar evergreen species of red cedar that is a moderate to fast growing tree. This tree's general size at maturity is between 3 to 4 feet wide and 15 to 25 feet tall. They are being proposed as a privacy/buffering option on the north and east sides of this site, however, there are many problems with this:

    a) This tree requires at least 6 hours of sun per day (full sun). The northern location behind a row of tall townhouses will block most, if not all, of the sun for most of the plantings. This is not a good location for this species.
    b) This tree is relatively drought resistant but cannot tolerate wet conditions. The cedars proposed at the northeast and east sides of the site exist at the bottom of sloped areas where runoff would be directed. Any standing water that may not infiltrate quickly will have a negative impact on those trees.
    c) The buildings on this northern side of the lot are proposed to be between 37.2 through 44.5 feet tall, and will loom well over these trees, which again, will not survive in a shaded or wet areas. This will undermine any privacy benefit from these trees.
    d) Please refer to the Recommended Planting List to find more appropriate species.

[JP/STD/WS]
VEC_2025-12-29 Comments 21-25 Grove Ave.docx





Areas (scaled off plan)
Lot size ≈31,209.1 ft2

Proposed "Improved Area" = 20,408.5 (I) - 624.2 (II) + 170.0 (III) + 79.8 (IV) + 8.5 (V) + 4.0 (VI) + 4.0 (VII) + 4.0 (VIII) = 20,054.6 ft2

Proposed Improved Lot Coverage = 20,054.6 ÷ 31,209.1 = 64.3%

Definitions:
IMPROVED LOT COVERAGE = The percentage of lot area which is improved with principal and accessory buildings and structures, including all impervious surface areas such as buildings, driveways, parking lots and garages and other man-made improvements, and swimming pools.

PERVIOUS INTERLOCKING PAVERS = Any pavers with a void area of 20% or less will be considered completely impervious for the purposes of the Stormwater Management rules. In pavers with greater than 20% void area, the applicant may count only the non-void area as impervious, provided the void areas are not grouted or made impermeable in any way.

REFERENCES:
1. BOUNDARY AND TOPOGRAPHIC INFORMATION TAKEN FROM A CERTAIN MAP ENTITLED "BOUNDARY & TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY MAP FOR 21-25 GROVE AVENUE, BLOCK 1702 LOT 22, TOWNSHIP OF VERONA, ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY" PREPARED BY AZZOLINA & FEURY ENGINEERING INC. AND SIGNED BY JOHN A. LOCH, P.L.S. DATED 08/05/2025.

PETRY ENGINEERING , LLC
DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS LICENSE NUMBER 24GA28155900
155 PASSAIC AVENUE • FAIRFIELD • NEW JERSEY • 07004
TEL. (973) 227-7004 FAX (973) 227-7074
PETRYENGINEERING.COM

REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE

CHECKED BY: SPD

DRAFTED BY: JAF

PETRY ENGINEERING , LLC

J. MICHAEL PETRY-PE,PP,RA
NJ PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER LIC. No. 36662
DATE: 10/06/2025

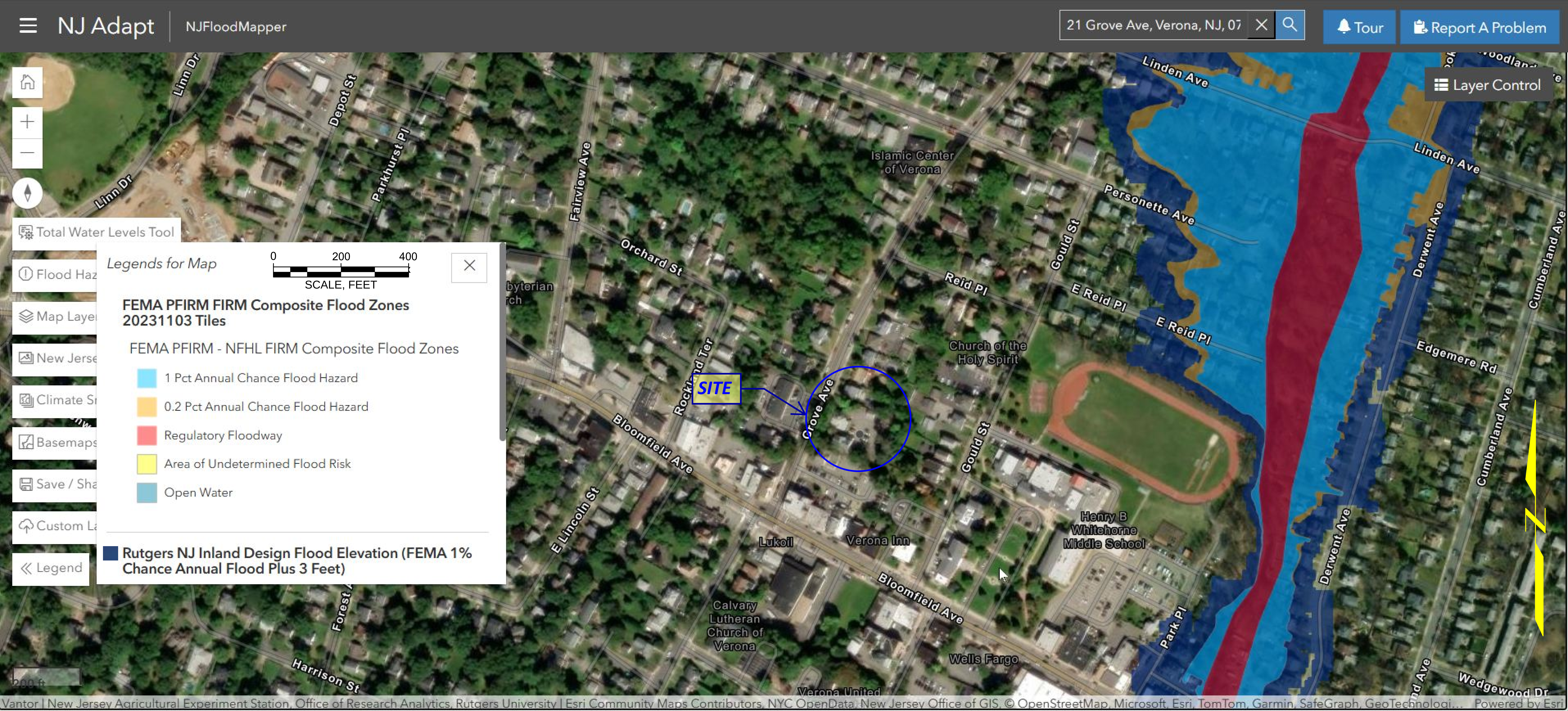
CAUTION: *IF THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CONTAIN A RAISED IMPRESSION SEAL OR AN ELECTRONIC SEAL OF THE UNDERSIGNED PROFESSIONAL, IT IS NOT AN AUTHORIZED ORIGINAL DOCUMENT.*

PREPARED FOR
MOHAMMAD ABBASI
BLOCK 1702, LOT 22
21-25 GROVE AVENUE
TOWNSHIP OF VERONA
ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

TITLE:
GRADING AND DRAINAGE PLAN

PROJECT #: 25-250

SHEET: SP-4.1



Legends for Map

FEMA PFIRM FIRM Composite Flood Zones 20231103 Tiles

FEMA PFIRM - NFHL FIRM Composite Flood Zones

- 🟦 1 Pct Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- 🟧 0.2 Pct Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- 🟥 Regulatory Floodway
- 🟨 Area of Undetermined Flood Risk
- 🟦 Open Water

🟦 **Rutgers NJ Inland Design Flood Elevation (FEMA 1% Chance Annual Flood Plus 3 Feet)**