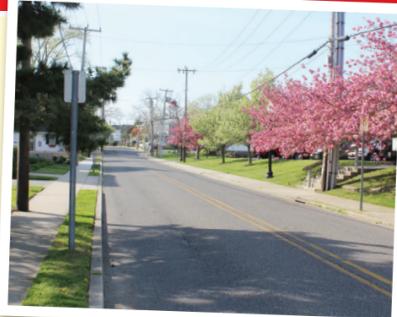




## House of the week

Page B1



## Resident: Bank Street poor choice for parking

Page A5



## Agencies restart bridge planning on Ocean Drive

### Construction of Mill Creek, Middle Thorofare, Upper Thorofare spans years away

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

**WILDWOOD CREST** — The planning process to replace the obsolete Mill Creek, Middle Thorofare and Upper Thorofare bridges and elevate Ocean Drive above flood level is starting over.

The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO), in conjunction with Cape May County and the state Department of Transportation, held information sessions in Wildwood Crest and Cape May on May 4. The proposed project is in the early stages, with engineers conducting studies for a proposed roadway upgrade and bridge improvements along Ocean Drive. The 2.7-mile study area stretches from the traffic light at Route 109, including the Mill Creek, Middle Thorofare and Upper Thorofare bridges, past Two Mile Landing and ending at the beginning of Diamond Beach.

The three bridges were built in 1939 and are beyond their serviceable life at more than 75 years old, according to the SJTPO. Due to the overall condition of the Middle Thorofare

Bridge, heavy truck traffic is prohibited with a sign indicating no loads over 15 tons.

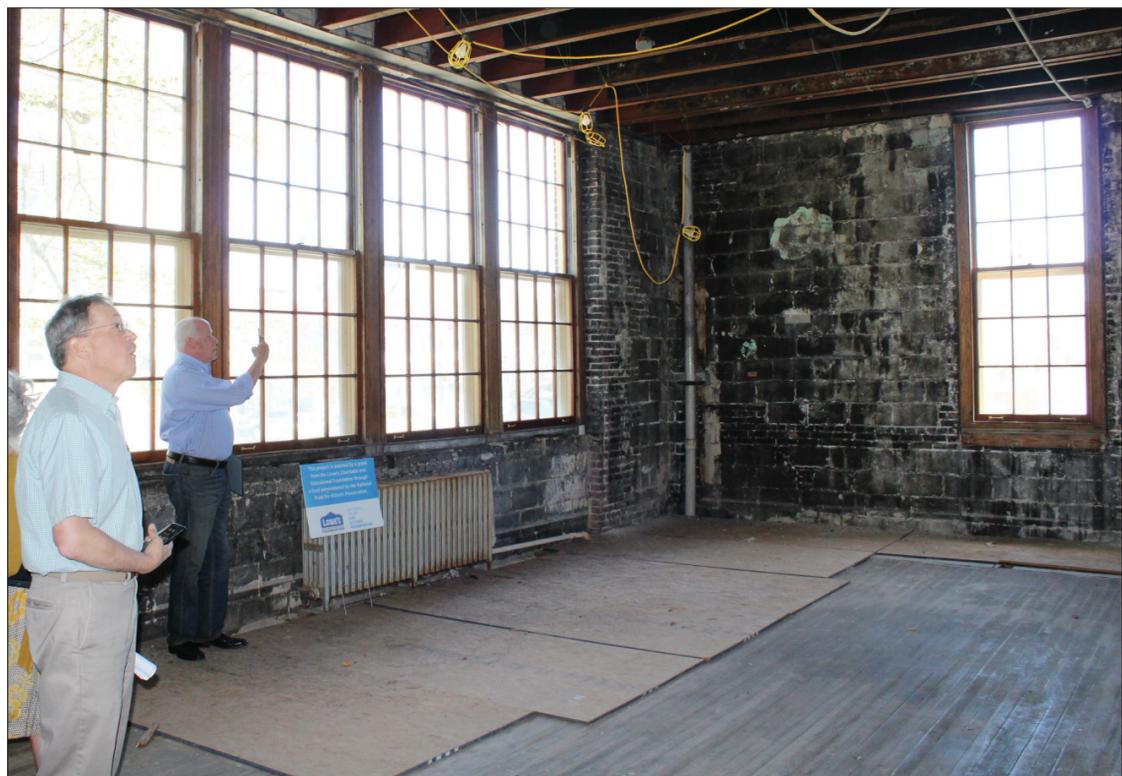
According to the SJTPO, the bridges are safe for travel, but without significant ongoing structural maintenance they may require more restrictive load limits due to continued deterioration.

Portions of Ocean Drive are below the 100-year flood zone elevation and prone to occasional flooding, becoming impassible in a hurricane or significant storm event. Much of the roadbed was constructed at an elevation of 7.5 feet on fill dirt that has settled to about an elevation of 6 feet, well below a 100-year flood elevation of 11 feet as per recently proposed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

County engineer Dale Foster said a study of the bridges began in 1999 but the process was terminated and is starting over. He said the preferred design that was selected at that time is no longer feasible.

"We're using the federal process, so there are certain hurdles we have to go

See Agencies, Page A5



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Two architects inspect the interior of the Franklin Street School to gauge the extent of work needed and possibly bid on the project to restore the building, which was built in 1927 as a racially segregated instructional facility. The city hopes to turn it into a library branch and community center in conjunction with the Center for Community Arts and Cape May County.

## Can building be restored?

### Architects tour Franklin St. School to gauge feasibility

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

**CAPE MAY** — A half-dozen architects, with an interest in conducting a feasibility study to determine if the Franklin Street School could be turned into a library and community center, toured the school's three floors May 2.

Also on the tour were county Facilities Director Ann Marie McMahon, county library system Director Deborah Poillon, Mayor Chuck Lear, Councilwoman Patricia Hendricks and Center for Community Arts Director David Mackenzie. The county put the feasibility study out to bid to determine whether the school could be restored for use as a branch library and community center.

McMahon addressed the architects on the front steps of the former racially segregated school built in 1927.

Architects, Page A3



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The view of the Allen AME Church across the street from the Franklin Street School has not changed in 90 years. The city is hoping to restore the school for use as a branch of the Cape May County Library System with help from the county.

## Engineers present feasibility study on Lower swim center

By RACHEL SHUBIN  
Special to the Star and Wave

**VILLAS** — Lower Township residents viewed a feasibility study presentation Monday by LAN Associates for a proposed aquatic center.

Multiple locations for the aquatic center have been proposed, including the Cape May County Airport grounds. The proposed center's estimated cost is \$14 million. Original estimates were more than \$20 million, according to Township Manager Jim Ridgway.

The aquatic center would feature two pools, a lap pool and a lifestyle pool. An additional \$2 million would be required for the eight-lane lap pool.

In addition to the two pools, other items pro-

posed include "watertainment" equipment, play structures, competition equipment, a timing system, a single-tower water slide, community and administrative areas as well as locker rooms and restrooms.

Discussions of having a feasibility study started more than nine months ago, but discussions of an aquatic center in Lower Township have been ongoing for many years.

"Over seven years ago I came to work for Lower Township in the recreation department and immediately attended several meetings in which a master plan was shown for a swimming pool," Ridgway said. "For the next three years, we had lots of research

See Engineers, Page A4





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