

HOUSING

TOPIC REPORT

TRENTON250
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The City of Trenton - Division of Planning
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TRENTON
DIVISION *of* PLANNING



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PLAN OVERVIEW

Trenton250 is Trenton’s long range Comprehensive Master Plan that will guide the City from now to the 250th Anniversary of its incorporation in 2042.

TOPIC REPORTS

The core recommendations for the Master Plan are organized in “Topic Reports”, commonly called Elements of the Master Plan. These reports take a particular perspective on trying to achieve the Vision and enact the Guiding Principles. They contain a background section that summaries the issues and opportunities relevant to that topic. The reports then enumerate a series of goals, initiatives, and actions that the City should implement to achieve the Vision.

TERMINOLOGY

The following terminology is helpful for understanding the Master Plan:

- **Action:** An individual policy, project, program, partnership, study, or advocacy position that the City and the community must execute to support an initiative to achieve a goal (e.g. Green Infrastructure Program, Assunpink Greenway Daylighting Project, or an Anti-Litter Campaign)
- **Initiative:** A collection of Actions (see above) to achieve a desired goal (e.g. Reduce Water Pollution and Enhance the Natural Environment).

PRIORITY INVESTMENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Trenton’s community-driven plan to create, “A Premier Economic and Cultural Center Built on Arts, Industry, and Education” is ambitious. Implementation will require

sustained long-term commitment. Moreover, the vision must be reconciled with the reality that the City and its partners have limited resources: all initiatives cannot be executed in all locations immediately.

To address this, the City has identified six neighborhoods throughout the City where neighborhood efforts should be concentrated to have the greatest impact. These areas, also known as “Priority Investment Neighborhoods”, are likely to see the fastest revitalization while catalyzing improvements in surrounding areas. Although this framework is laid out in greater detail in the Housing Report (see **Develop Housing Toolkit & Implement Prioritized Investment Framework Initiative**), the intent is for the city to prioritize its neighborhood investment - whether housing, economic development, circulation, environment, or education – in these areas. (See Priority Investment Framework Map for more details which neighborhoods have been identified for priority investment)

LONG-TERM CATALYTIC PROJECT AREAS

In addition to these strategic neighborhood investments, the City must continue to work diligently on long-term catalytic projects such as creating a Trenton Transit Center Transit-Oriented Development, Reclaiming and Redeveloping the Waterfront, and encouraging more active use of the Sun Center. These efforts are not likely to see year-to-year improvements, and the payoff for investments in these projects may not be realized for a number of years. Nonetheless, this is the benefit of long-range planning: it allows the City to see the long-term benefits of consistent investment in projects, even if they are unlikely to yield short-term results.

DISTRICT PLANS

Those interested in understanding how the recommendations made in the Topic-Focused Reports should be implemented “on the ground” should consult the District Plans. The Plans do not provide any additional initiatives or actions but instead provide insight on where those recommendations might best be implemented.

INTRODUCTION

Trenton's housing market is full of opportunities with the potential to improve significantly. The city has several stable neighborhoods with a strong home-ownership rate, and others poised to revitalize with the right tools and policies in place. Adding to this potential are the city's significant assets that can contribute toward housing revitalization, including its central location in an economically vibrant region, its educational institutions, its role as a government hub, and its transportation connections through multiple modes. These assets will be key for attracting new residents and maintaining residents that prefer a dense well-connected environment.

However, Trenton faces a variety of housing challenges impacting its ability to be the region's location of choice for residents of all income levels. The city's biggest housing obstacles include an overall suppressed housing market, limited desirable market-rate housing, vacancy and abandonment, a lack of quality affordable housing, and difficulties in maintaining quality housing stock in its neighborhoods.

To build a premier economic and cultural center built on arts, industry, and education, as well as meet the desire to reinforce high-quality neighborhoods and a 24/7 downtown Trenton, this report outlines a framework for evaluating the progress Trenton is making towards its community-driven vision. This framework focuses on:

- Overall Housing Quality
- Vacancy and Abandonment
- Market-Rate Housing
- Affordable Housing
- Historic Neighborhoods

Unlike other frameworks in this Master Plan, however, the recommendations made in the housing report do not directly correspond to this evaluative framework. Instead, the City has identified five approaches to meeting its housing goals:

- **Foundational Initiatives:** The City must begin work on three core initiatives that will help the City build capacity to work at the neighborhood level and will support city-wide initiatives that focus on affordable housing and historic preservation.
- **Neighborhood Based Initiatives:** The scope of issues confronting Trenton's neighborhoods exceeds the resources available to address them. Moreover, the City does not have the capacity to quickly develop all the tools it needs to address every problem in every neighborhood. As a result, the City has developed a prioritized approach to building stronger neighborhoods in which revitalization investments are targeted to priority neighborhoods where they are likely to have the greatest impact. The initiatives in this section identify four types of neighborhoods and the types of policies and programs that should be implemented in those areas.
- **Affordable Housing Initiatives:** Although all housing goals should be considered when working at the neighborhood level, this initiative focuses on the affordable housing actions that the City can implement city-wide.
- **Historic Preservation Initiatives:** Like affordable housing, historic preservation must be integrated into neighborhood-level efforts. Nonetheless, there are also specific city-wide historic preservation actions that the City should implement. The City will likely add additional initiatives to this section when it completes its Historic Preservation Report.
- **Transportation Oriented Initiatives:** The City of Trenton has a transportation network that connects it to the Mercer-Bucks region as well as the larger northeast corridor. Nonetheless, the City has not effectively capitalized on the land use potential around these assets. The initiatives in this section involve large-scale redevelopment of areas around transit and transportation. Because of their scale, however, redevelopment is also likely to involve a variety of land uses including retail, office, and commercial uses. As a result, initiatives in this section are also identified in the Economic Development and Circulation Reports.

The following background section provides context for understanding this framework. This is followed by a section that identifies the goals as well as a complete discussion of the initiatives.

BACKGROUND

The following section is based on the Trenton250 Issues and Opportunities Report, which compiled information from residents, previous plans, stakeholder interviews, and existing conditions analysis conducted by the City and its consultant team. A list of stakeholder interviewed is available in Appendix A of the Issues and Opportunities Report. The following previous plans and studies were reviewed:

- 1999 Land Use Plan
- 2008 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy
- Canal Banks Homeownership Zone Plan
- Capital City Renaissance Plan (1989)
- Downtown Capital District Master Plan
- DVRPC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Trenton Five Year Consolidated Plan for USHUD
- Historic Preservation Plan
- NJ Transit – Transit Friendly Plan for Trenton Train Station Area
- North 25 Park – Battle Monument Neighborhood Plan
- Redevelopment Area Plans
- Trenton Train Station Redevelopment Area – Station Area Analysis

Of particular importance to this Report was a comprehensive inventory of vacant and abandoned buildings that was recently prepared by the City in conjunction with Isles. Shortly thereafter, New Jersey Community Capital completed a neighborhood conditions study, *Laying the Foundations for Strong Neighborhoods*, which contains valuable data on housing market conditions. Together, these two datasets are valuable tools that can be leveraged to make more informed decisions about housing policy. The following analysis builds on that work.

VACANCY AND ABANDONMENT

As outlined in the *Laying the Foundations for Strong Neighborhoods* study, some Trenton neighborhoods have high concentrations of abandonment and vacancy. Specific sub-neighborhoods with the highest vacancy rates include Miller/Wall with a vacancy rate of 40%, Central West 2 (33.5%), Wilbur 1 (30.3%), North Trenton 3 (28.6%), and Hanover Academy (27.3%). There are a variety of reasons for Trenton's vacant housing situation, including housing location, an aging population that cannot maintain the housing stock, the cost of home maintenance, the size of housing, ownership issues, and politics. In addition, many neighborhoods in Trenton face other problems including a low home-ownership rate, high rate of investor-owned properties (many of which have problem landlords), low median sales prices, high tax delinquencies, and high rates of violent crime. As also discussed in *Laying the Foundations for Strong Neighborhoods*, there have also been a high number of foreclosures following the housing crisis, leading to significant speculative purchasing. Sub-neighborhoods with the highest foreclosure filing rates include Downtown at 52.7%, Berkeley Square at 41.3%, Hanover Academy at 40.9%, Circle F at 37.7%, and Chambersburg 3 at 33.2%. (See Figure 1: Mortgage Foreclosure Map)

MARKET-RATE HOUSING

Combined, this weak market discourages people with higher spending power to live in Trenton. Very little quality market-rate housing exists in the city. Furthermore, Trenton's housing stock in many neighborhoods does not appeal to middle and upper-income people due to its quality, size, location, and features. Quality housing that does exist, particularly for-sale housing, is limited to a few specific neighborhoods, creating a short supply. Qualified prospective homeowners are scarce as well.

Rental housing in Trenton is in poorer condition than owner-occupied housing and far more predominant, often located in concentrations that lead to deteriorated neighborhoods. Safety is a concern in these areas as well, which can lead to further property value decline and abandonment as well as a reluctance to invest in market-rate housing. Furthermore, the City lacks the capacity to inspect properties and enforce their proper maintenance to help improve these conditions.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing consists of two types – deed-restricted affordable housing and housing that is affordable to low-income residents. Deed-restricted housing cannot legally be sold or rented, for a certain period of time, to households with incomes at or below 80% of area median income (AMI). Trenton has an excessive amount of deed-restricted affordable housing as a proportion of total housing stock and regional “fair share.” Using data from the NJ Department of Community Affairs Division of Codes and Standards, the NJ Housing Mortgage Finance Agency, and the US Department

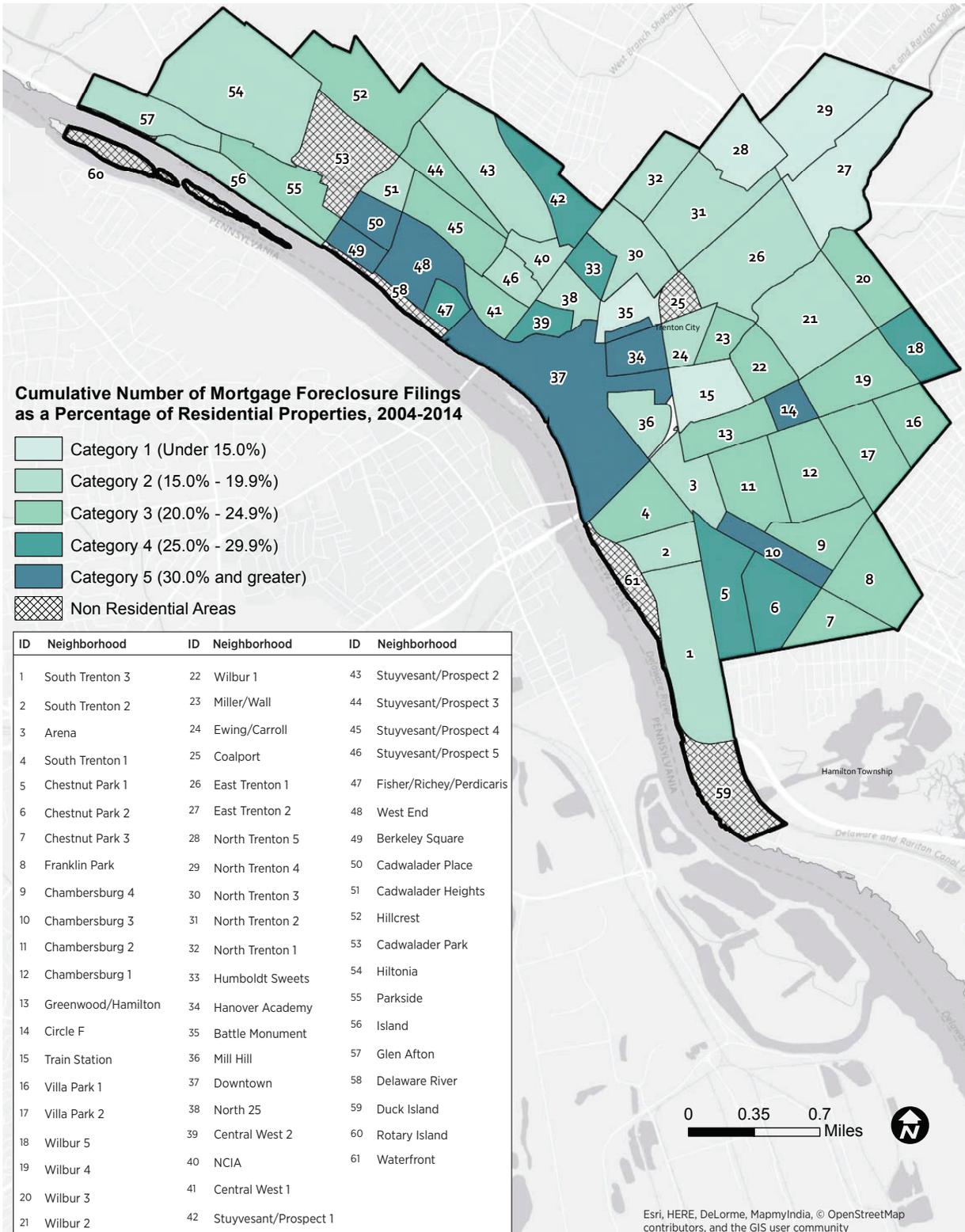


Figure 1: Market Street Corridor

Source: Laying the Foundations for Strong Neighborhoods

of Housing and Urban Development, the city has identified 8,282 deed-restricted affordable units in the City of Trenton, or 24% of the city's housing stock. Despite its prominence, there is still too little affordable housing to meet the needs of some Trenton residents due to high rates of poverty, particularly the very poor with incomes at or below 30% AMI. Approximately 1/3 of these households are spending greater than 50% of their incomes on housing, according to the 2010-2015 Trenton Five-Year Consolidated Plan. Furthermore, Trenton's deed-restricted affordable housing is often low in quality and poorly maintained. The City has limited resources to address its deed-restricted affordable housing situation. However, new market-rate housing in Trenton can also be affordable for residents of relatively modest income levels, relieving the City of this burden. Whether through deed-restricted or market-rate housing, affordability must be preserved as the city grows and neighborhoods improve so that the housing needs of all types of households can be accommodated. This will ensure the continued diversity of Trenton's neighborhoods.

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

Despite these challenges, one of City of Trenton's greatest assets is its historic urban form and the buildings that define that form. This ranges from historic homes to landmark buildings which played an important role in the history of the city, state and country. Homes range from those built early in the colonial era (1700s), the industrial revolution, as well as contemporary housing. These historic neighborhoods are unique within the Central Jersey region. They are often quite walkable, characterized by smaller streets, and generally have high-quality construction. As such, they are an asset to the city and - if leveraged properly - could attract moderate to high-income residents with the disposable incomes necessary to maintain these homes.

RELEVANT GOALS

1. **Overall Housing:** Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels
2. **Vacancy and Abandonment:** All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County
3. **Market-Rate Housing:** Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency
4. **Affordable Housing:** Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing
5. **Historic Neighborhoods:** Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected

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INITIATIVES

To effectively achieve these goals, the City should implement the following initiatives. As noted in the introduction, the initiatives can be grouped into five categories:

- Foundational Initiatives
- Neighborhood Based Initiatives
- Affordable Housing Initiatives
- Historic Preservation Initiatives
- Transportation Oriented Initiatives

A. FOUNDATIONAL HOUSING INITIATIVES

The City must begin its housing efforts by developing a set of core policies and programs. These initiatives build a foundation for neighborhood level work, as well as city-wide initiatives that focus on affordable housing and historic homes.

1 | PROPERTY INFORMATION INITIATIVE

Building off of the success of vacant and abandoned buildings survey as well as the *Laying the Foundation for Strong Neighborhoods Study*, the City must begin the process of identifying the condition of many of the vacant and abandoned properties. An assessment of the condition of these properties will help the City and its housing partners decide which must be included in the Acquisition and Demolition Program, which should be protected for historic reasons, and which might be appropriate for homesteading, among other examples. This information must be fed into the Property Management Database so that property condition can be cross-referenced with tax information, inspections violations, and police calls to make more informed

1. *Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels*
2. *All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County*
3. *Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency*
4. *Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing*
5. *Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected*

decisions. The City should consider using income generated from the Vacant Property Registration Ordinance (VPRO) to fund this effort.

The *Laying the Foundation for Stronger Neighborhoods* report provided critical details on the condition of Trenton's neighborhoods. The next step is to understand how well Trenton's neighborhood characteristics align with the demands of residents in the region. A regional employer partnership should begin with a study of employees housing preference as well as an identification of opportunities in which the City of Trenton can work with employers to meet those housing needs.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing¹**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment²**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing³**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing⁴**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods⁵**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Property Conditions Study**
- ▶ **Property Management Database**
- ▶ **Vacant Property Registration Ordinance (VPRO) Fund**
- ▶ **Regional Employer Partnership**

2 | FIRST-STEP RENTER & HOMEOWNER ASSISTANCE INITIATIVE

Of critical concern is the fact that some landlords are not investing in their properties and maintaining them to standards required by the city code. When they do make improvements, work is often substandard and dangerous. Renters who live in these properties are often susceptible to illegal evictions and other violations of their rights. A Landlord Registration Ordinance would require all owners of residential rental properties to obtain a license for a fee depending on the type of property, which must be renewed each year. This information should be fed into the Property Management Database so that problem landlords can be identified. Those landlords will then be inspected more frequently by the Division of Housing Inspections and be required to participate in the Landlord Technical Assistance Program and/or fined.

At the same time an Annual Housing Workshop would educate landlords on required codes, regulations, and standards, such as the Landlord Registration Ordinance, and inform tenants of their rights as renters. Moreover, the workshop would be a forum to provide owner-occupiers information about home improvement programs and give prospective homebuyers credit and housing counseling.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing⁶**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment⁷**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing⁸**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing⁹**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods¹⁰**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Annual Housing Workshop**
- ▶ **Home Improvement Assistance**
- ▶ **Landlord Technical Assistance Program**
- ▶ **Property Management Database**
- ▶ **Landlord Registration Ordinance**

3 | HOUSING POLICY ALIGNMENT INITIATIVE

The City has struggled to ensure that its housing policy is aligned with its regulations. Moreover, there are a number of regulations which are out of alignment with the housing policy outlined in this Report. For example, the zoning code creates a number of “nonconforming” use issues that make it difficult for residents who are trying to increase the productivity and value of their property. Such obstacles to improvement are counterproductive: the disparity between the existing conditions and housing needs and the current zoning adds cost and delays, hampering neighborhood improvement. At the same time, Stakeholders have reported that the development application review and approval process in the city is rather complex and tedious. The City must simplify the review and approval process (i.e. “reduce red tape”) to make it more efficient, effective, predictable, and transparent with fewer restrictions. These efforts are closely related to the City’s **Land Use Regulation Initiatives, and the City must work to coordinate these efforts.**

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing¹¹**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment¹²**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing¹³**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing¹⁴**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods¹⁵**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Aligning Zoning and Housing Policy**
- ▶ **Annual Housing Conference**
- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process Audit**
- ▶ **Fair Housing Policy**
- ▶ **Land Development Ordinance Update**

6. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

7. All of Trenton’s neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County

8. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

9. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing

10. Trenton’s housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected

11. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

12. All of Trenton’s neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County

13. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

14. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing

15. Trenton’s housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected

- 16. *Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels*
- 17. *Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected*

B. AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVES

The following initiative is intended to address affordable housing. As the City continues to work on affordable housing, especially at the neighborhood level, it should add additional initiatives to this section.

1 | PROTECT AND MAINTAIN TRENTON'S SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The City has identified 8,282 affordable units in the City of Trenton, or 24% of the city's housing stock. Within the context of both city-wide and geography-specific housing initiatives, Trenton's quantity (but not necessarily proportion) of affordable housing should be preserved. Preserving the quantity of affordable housing will help ensure that housing is available to all residents regardless of income while preventing the City of Trenton from being obligated to supply a disproportionately high amount of affordable housing compared to its neighboring municipalities.

The City should work aggressively to minimize displacement of both renters and homeowners resulting from efforts to improve the condition of the housing stock and make Trenton a choice location for residency. At the same time, it must account for and improve the condition of Trenton's existing deed-restricted affordable housing units while encouraging the construction of new low-cost market-rate units in strategic areas of the city. This can be done from both a government and non-government entities. As such, the City should support and encourage voluntary, philanthropic, and non-profit programs that assist Trenton residents in the upkeep of their homes and properties. Going forward, the City should continue to monitor its affordable housing situation through its Five-Year Consolidated Plan.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing¹⁶**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods¹⁷**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Annual Housing Workshop**
- ▶ **Direct Rental Assistance**
- ▶ **Energy Retrofits**
- ▶ **Fair Housing Policy**
- ▶ **Landlord Registration Ordinance**
- ▶ **Landlord Technical Assistance Program**
- ▶ **Longtime Owner Occupants Program**
- ▶ **Property Management Database**
- ▶ **Substantive Certification for COAH**

C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION HOUSING INITIATIVES

The following initiative addresses historic homes and neighborhoods. As the City develops its Historic Preservation Report it should add additional initiatives to this section.

1 | PROTECT AND ENHANCE HISTORIC HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD FABRIC

Trenton's historic assets are not just important to Trenton residents. They are crucial pieces of New Jersey and Mercer County heritage, and those entities have an interest in and responsibility to promote their preservation. One of the largest obstacles to historic preservation in Trenton is the availability of funding to support those efforts. As such, the city should build partnerships with the state and county to provide funding and technical assistance for historic preservation and to establish a State Historic Tax Credit program. Such a tax credit would provide homeowners, businesses, and developers with an economic incentive to help revitalize older, historic neighborhoods.

Moreover, the City must be strategic and target historic preservation efforts to areas where it is most likely to be successful. The investments to restore a home are often costly, and the market price of the home must justify the cost. There is no better example of how effective these targeted efforts can be than in the Mill Hill Neighborhood. Targeting neighborhoods will ensure that investments made in one home will have positive cumulative effects on adjacent properties, making it easier for subsequent improvements to be financially justified. Two potential locations for such efforts include the Lambertson Historic District (identified below as an area to Prioritize Investment to produce catalytic change) and the Greenwood-Hamilton District, which is well-positioned to take advantage of transit-oriented investments near the Transit Center. In each of these areas, a combination of the below-identified actions should be considered as well as new neighborhood specific strategies.

Efforts to protect historic homes in Trenton will necessarily be a long-term effort. As such, there will likely be many historic properties that will remain vacant for a number of years. In the meantime, the City should utilize the Property Conditions Study to identify historic assets and then stabilize them until the point when the market can support their rehabilitation.

The Historic Preservation Report should be used as a tool to further analyze these issues. The report should provide more detailed recommendations for specific neighborhoods and work with historic preservation experts to identify new policies and programs to support historic preservation of existing buildings.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing¹⁸**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing¹⁹**

¹⁸. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

¹⁹. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Controlled Scrapping Program**
- ▶ **Design Guidelines**
- ▶ **Property Conditions Study**
- ▶ **Property Stabilization Program**
- ▶ **Receivership Program**
- ▶ **State Historic Preservation Tax Credit Advocacy**
- ▶ **Strategic Foreclosure and Sales Program**

D. NEIGHBORHOOD BASED INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are meant to work together to help the City strategically invest its resources. The Develop Housing Toolkit & Implement Prioritized Investment Framework Initiative provides an overview of the strategy and identifies the actions that must be developed. Subsequent initiatives provide guidance on how that toolkit should be implemented in four types of neighborhoods.

1 | DEVELOP HOUSING TOOLKIT & IMPLEMENT PRIORITIZED INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

Toolkit

The City does not currently have all the necessary tools it needs to capitalize on neighborhood strengths and address the variety of problems different neighborhoods face. As such, the City must develop a “housing toolkit”: foundational housing programs that the City needs to develop to work at the neighborhood level effectively. The actions at the end of this initiative make up that toolkit.

Prioritized Investment Framework

Not all of the tools in the toolkit are appropriate in every neighborhood: Trenton’s neighborhoods are varied and unique, as are the problems they face. Moreover, the City does not have the resources to develop all of these tools quickly and to implement them city-wide. Instead, a prioritized approach to building stronger neighborhoods is likely to have better success.

Using the neighborhood conditions study *Laying the Foundations for Strong Neighborhoods* as a guide, this City has classified four types of neighborhoods throughout the City and identified initiatives for addressing their unique needs. The neighborhood initiatives include:

- Stabilize Neighborhoods with the Highest Concentration of Vacancy and Abandonment;
- Reinforce Neighborhoods with the Highest Values and Concentration of Home-Ownership;

- Strengthen Neighborhoods at the Risk of Decline; and
- Prioritize Investment in Neighborhoods with Catalytic Potential.

For more details on which neighborhoods are covered by each of the following type, see Figure 2. Priority Investment Framework.

The goal in the Stabilize, Reinforce, and Strengthen neighborhoods is to support residents and stakeholders without investing heavily to try and “bend” the market in the short- to medium-term. This means that in the short term these neighborhoods are not ideal locations for heavily subsidized housing projects or heavy investments in infrastructure or housing programs.

In the Priority Investment Neighborhoods, however, the City should be investing aggressively to revitalize these areas. These neighborhoods are unique because of their building assets, location, existing amenities, and/or the existence of successful revitalization efforts. Moreover, these areas have the market conditions to change relatively quickly or are likely to have a significant impact on the overall housing market if they become successful. As such, initiatives focused on these areas are intended to attract new development, often with the aid of subsidies.

Furthermore, **these Priority Investment Neighborhoods should be the focus of other non-housing related actions (such as economic development and circulation investments) that seek to make them more attractive to private investment.** By combining multiple investments from local, county, and state funding sources, the City has the potential to make these neighborhoods unique assets in the City and to build off of their success to produce momentum and long-term city-wide change.

However, this strategy is not a gentrification strategy. New development in these areas should fit the needs and affordability of a variety of households, including students, seniors, modest wage-earners and their families, as well as professionals. A variety of market-rate housing types should be considered, including detached homes, townhomes, co-ops/condos, apartments, micro units, and modular units that provide varying levels of density that can be appropriate for a multitude of sites. **The City should work closely with residents and stakeholders to meet all of the housing goals in the Priority Investment Neighborhoods.**

In the short-term, this strategy will allow the City to invest its limited resources in neighborhoods where it is likely to have the greatest impact. By concentrating efforts in smaller geographies, it also gives the City an opportunity to pilot many of these programs before they are implemented city-wide. This will reduce both upfront costs and full-scale deployment costs.

A Framework

These neighborhood typologies provide a policy framework for the City of Trenton, giving broad guidance for how the City should approach allocating its limited

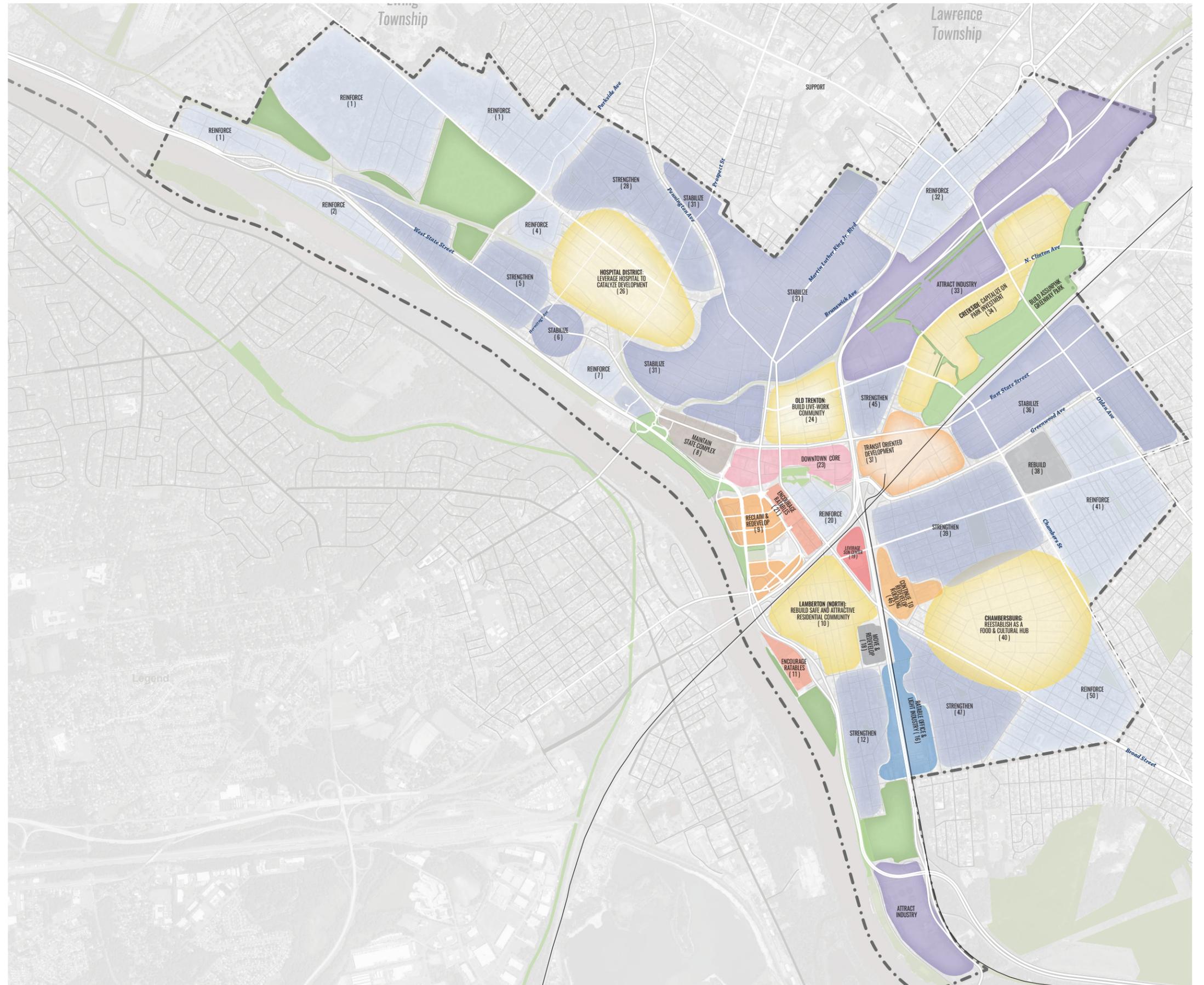
FIGURE 2. PRIORITY INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

Neighborhoods

- Stabilize** Neighborhoods With The Highest Concentration Of Vacancy And Abandonment
- Strengthen** Neighborhoods At The Risk Of Decline
- Reinforce** Neighborhoods With The Highest Values And Concentration Of Home-Ownership
- Prioritize** Investment In Neighborhoods With Catalytic Potential

Cores

- Redevelop** Sites With Significant Potential
- Support** Neighborhood And Regional Commercial Centers
- Continue Building** A Mixed-Use Downtown Core
- Attract** Industry To Appropriate Areas



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- 20. *Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels*
- 21. *All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County*
- 22. *Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency*
- 23. *Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing*
- 24. *Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected*

resources. However, the specific courses of action for implementing these initiatives in each neighborhood will depend on their particular market conditions and individual character of each. This will require additional work beyond the Master Plan to tailor the implementation to the place. Thus, these initiatives should be considered a starting point for a larger implementation effort that should continue to engage residents, stakeholders, and property owners.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing²⁰**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment²¹**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing²²**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing²³**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods²⁴**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Acquisition And Demolition Program**
- ▶ **Annual Housing Conference**
- ▶ **Area In Need Of Rehabilitation Designation**
- ▶ **Beautify Your Neighborhood Program**
- ▶ **City & Neighborhood Partnership Committees**
- ▶ **Community Safety Initiative**
- ▶ **Controlled Scrapping Program**
- ▶ **Design Guidelines**
- ▶ **Direct Rental Assistance**
- ▶ **Energy Retrofits Program**
- ▶ **Five-Year Tax Abatement and Exemption Ordinance**
- ▶ **Home Improvement Assistance**
- ▶ **Home Ownership Incentive Program**
- ▶ **Homesteading Program**
- ▶ **Housing for Teachers**
- ▶ **Land Bank Advocacy**
- ▶ **Landlord Technical Assistance Program**
- ▶ **Landlord Registration Ordinance**
- ▶ **Live Where You Work Program**
- ▶ **Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton**
- ▶ **Longtime Owner Occupants Program**
- ▶ **New Uses For Vacant Buildings Program**
- ▶ **Property Stabilization Program**
- ▶ **Receivership Program**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Powers and Incentives**

- ▶ **Rental Construction Incentive Program**
- ▶ **Restricted Development Subsidy Policy**
- ▶ **State Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program**
- ▶ **State GrowNJ Incentive Program**
- ▶ **State Real Estate Impact Loan**
- ▶ **Strategic Code Enforcement Program**
- ▶ **Strategic Foreclosure And Sales Program**
- ▶ **Trenton250's Public Safety Report**
- ▶ **Upper Floor Restoration Program**
- ▶ **Vacant Lot Stabilization Program**
- ▶ **Vacant Lot to Open Space Program**
- ▶ **Vacant Property Registration Ordinance Fund**

25. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

26. All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County

27. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

28. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing

29. Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected

Stabilize Neighborhoods with the Highest Concentration of Vacancy and Abandonment

The *Laying the Foundations for Strong Neighborhoods* report identified 20 sub-neighborhoods in Trenton as “very weak,” most of which surround the downtown. It is these areas where vacancy and abandonment exist in the highest concentrations. The long-term vision of these areas is for them to evolve into vibrant residential neighborhoods once Trenton’s housing market strengthens.

The short-term vision in these areas is to reduce the impact of the weak housing market on residents while stabilizing the housing stock so that it is ready for private sector investment when the housing market in Trenton does improve. Programs that will support this policy include demolition of dangerous properties, allowing residents to reuse vacant lots for non-development uses, property stabilization programs, and controlled scrapping of homes to ensure they remain secure. Once the housing market does improve in these neighborhoods, they should then receive the same actions as those recommended in the Strengthen Neighborhoods at the Risk of Decline initiative.

Going forward, the City must clearly communicate to residents that these areas are likely to continue to face significant challenges for the foreseeable future. As such, residents should understand that efforts to encourage catalytic projects are not likely to be successful and will divert resources from areas where they are likely to have a sustaining city-wide impact.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing²⁵**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment²⁶**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing²⁷**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing²⁸**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods²⁹**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Acquisition And Demolition Program**

- 30. *Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels*
- 31. *All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County*
- 32. *Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency*
- 33. *Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing*
- 34. *Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected*

- ▶ **Controlled Scrapping Program**
- ▶ **Land Bank Program**
- ▶ **Property Conditions Study**
- ▶ **Property Stabilization Program**
- ▶ **Restricted Development Subsidy Policy**
- ▶ **Vacant Lot Stabilization Program**

Reinforce Neighborhoods with the Highest Values and Concentration of Home-Ownership

The *Laying the Foundations for Strong Neighborhoods* report identified 19 sub-neighborhoods in Trenton as “strong” and “moderately strong”, most of which constitute the outer edges of the city and border its neighboring municipalities. Generally, these areas have the highest property values and highest concentration of home-ownership in Trenton.

The goal in these areas is to enhance and maintain the neighborhood and to promote growth in the housing market. To do so, the City must be able to respond rapidly to situations that pose a threat to neighborhood stability and work to make incremental improvements that will drive increased property values.

These neighborhoods are the ones where market-based solutions are most likely to succeed. As such, the initiative that are likely to be both efficient and effective are the ones that provide support to existing homeowners by increasing homebuyer activity, preserve historic assets, and marketing the strengths of the neighborhood to prospective residents. Since market values are relatively high in these areas and property values can support the cost of improvements, they are also the places where code enforcement and tax abatements are likely to have a major impact.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing³⁰**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment³¹**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing³²**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing³³**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods³⁴**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Design Guidelines**
- ▶ **Energy Retrofits Program**
- ▶ **Five-Year Tax Abatement and Exemption Ordinance**
- ▶ **Home Improvement Assistance**
- ▶ **Homesteading**
- ▶ **Live Where You Work Program**
- ▶ **Receivership Program**
- ▶ **Strategic Code Enforcement Program**
- ▶ **Strategic Foreclosure And Sales**

▶ **Trenton250 Historic Preservation Report**

Strengthen Neighborhoods at the Risk of Decline

The *Laying the Foundations for Strong Neighborhoods* report identified 16 sub-neighborhoods in Trenton as “weak”. These neighborhoods tend to be located between the “strong” or “moderately strong” outer neighborhoods and the “very weak” neighborhoods just beyond the immediate environs of downtown. While most are relatively stable, they could continue to weaken without intervention. At the same time, they may be the first neighborhoods to see the positive spillover of targeted efforts in the stronger and invested neighborhoods.

These areas tend to have high levels of rental occupancy. Therefore, this initiative focuses on sustaining and improving the quality and affordability of rental housing are likely to have the greatest impact on these areas. The First-Step Renter & Homeowner Assistance Initiative, with its heavy focus on creating a Landlord Registration Ordinance, is likely to have substantial impacts on these neighborhoods.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing**³⁵
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment**³⁶
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing**³⁷
- ▶ **Affordable Housing**³⁸
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods**³⁹

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Acquisition And Demolition Program**
- ▶ **Controlled Scrapping Program**
- ▶ **Direct Rental Assistance**
- ▶ **Land Bank Program**
- ▶ **Landlord Registration Ordinance**
- ▶ **Landlord Technical Assistance Program**
- ▶ **Property Conditions Study**
- ▶ **Property Stabilization Program**
- ▶ **Restricted Development Subsidy Policy**
- ▶ **Strategic Foreclosure And Sales**
- ▶ **Vacant Lot Stabilization Program**

35. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

36. All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County

37. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

38. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing

39. Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected

2 | PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH CATALYTIC POTENTIAL: DOWNTOWN CORE

Trenton has successfully created “place” along Warren Street and W Lafayette St. In addition, the Mill Hill Neighborhood has been a major success. The City must continue to capitalize on such efforts to encourage a strong residential community downtown,

- 40. *Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels*
- 41. *All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County*
- 42. *Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency*
- 43. *Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing*
- 44. *Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Jersey Region*

which can support local arts and retail, entertainment, and dining establishments. In the initial phase, the City must concentrate its efforts on promoting market-rate rental housing. This will allow the City to develop a critical mass of residents to support the types of establishments that will help establish Trenton as the Downtown to the Central Jersey Region.

The City has identified Expand Downtown Market-Rate Housing as a key economic development initiative that is closely linked to this one. In the Downtown Core, an early step in this process will be the completion of the Downtown Parking Management Plan. This will not only identify how the City can better utilize its land but may also result in increased parking revenue. This revenue may be an important funding source that could support redevelopment. However, the City must also leverage the powers and incentives that are granted to it through the Redevelopment statutes as well as the Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program and Real Estate Impact Loan incentives provided by the State. Since this area is also envisioned as a mixed-used district, the State's GrowNJ incentive program may also provide opportunities to encourage office development in conjunction with new residential development. Combining these efforts with the Home Ownership Incentive Program and Live Where You Work Program gives the City significant leverage to stimulate new construction downtown.

As new development begins to happen, the City must be prepared to reinforce the high-quality historic public realm that has already been established in this area. As such, the city should consider updating, publicizing, and enforce the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation downtown design standards.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing⁴⁰**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment⁴¹**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing⁴²**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing⁴³**
- ▶ **Downtown⁴⁴**

Since there is currently not a large residential community in this area not all of the actions in the toolkit are appropriate. Instead, the City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Development Opportunities**
- ▶ **Design Guidelines**
- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process Audit**
- ▶ **Downtown Parking Management Plan**
- ▶ **Five-Year Tax Abatement and Exemption Ordinance**
- ▶ **Home Ownership Incentive Program**
- ▶ **Land Development Ordinance Update**

- ▶ **Live Where You Work Program**
- ▶ **Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Plans: Review and Update**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Powers and Incentives**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Through Parking Fees**
- ▶ **Rental Construction Incentive Program**
- ▶ **State Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program**
- ▶ **State GrowNJ Incentive Program**
- ▶ **State Real Estate Impact Loan**
- ▶ **Land Development Ordinance Update**
- ▶ **Upper Floor Restoration Program**

3 | PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH CATALYTIC POTENTIAL: OLD TRENTON NEIGHBORHOOD

Old Trenton is a historic community with the potential of attracting a critical mass of residents to downtown Trenton. The City must continue to encourage a strong residential community that can support the local economy by restoring the critical mass in Old Trenton. The Bell Telephone building will contribute to that housing provision with market-rate apartments once complete and can spur additional market-rate residential development in the area. Housing in Old Trenton must also be affordable for lower income residents, and provide opportunities for live/work space. This could occur through new infill construction, rehabbing historic homes, and adaptive reuse of structures. As such, housing rehabilitation incentives and rental construction incentives may be effective in this area. Old Trenton will also be the part of the focus of the Strengthen Arts, Culture, and Heritage in Trenton Initiative, as detailed in the Economic Development Report. Execution of initiatives in this neighborhood will likely require multiple investments from the City and coordination between community groups and multiple City departments. As such, early on the City should establish a City & Neighborhood Partnership Committees for this area to coordinate all investments in the neighborhood, not just housing.

At the same time, the City has identified Expand Downtown Market-Rate Housing as a key economic development initiative that is closely linked to this one. The key to the initiative is leveraging the powers and incentives that are granted to it through the Redevelopment statutes as well as the Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program and Real Estate Impact Loan incentives provided by the State. Since this area is also envisioned as a mixed-used district, the State's GrowNJ incentive program may also provide opportunities to encourage office development in conjunction with new residential development. Close coordination between those responsible for stimulating economic development through residential construction and those working on housing issues in Old Trenton is strongly recommended.

- 51. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels
- 52. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels to or better than the regional market
- 53. Trenton will have a strong and vibrant downtown
- 54. Trenton will be perceived as a choice location for residency
- 45. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing
- 46. Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected
- 47. Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Region

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ Overall Housing⁴⁵
- ▶ Vacancy and Abandonment⁴⁶
- ▶ Market-Rate Housing⁴⁷
- ▶ Affordable Housing⁴⁸
- ▶ Historic Neighborhoods⁴⁹
- ▶ Downtown⁵⁰

The City should consider all of the tools identified in the Housing Toolkit to execute this initiative. For more information on the toolkit, see Develop Housing Toolkit & Implement Prioritized Investment Framework Initiative.

4 | PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH CATALYTIC POTENTIAL: CHAMBERSBURG

Chambersburg’s greatest assets are its location, demographics, and history. The area, affectionately known as “the ‘burg,” was once a mecca for fine Italian dining and Italian culture. Although many of those restaurants have closed and many original residents of that era have moved out, a growing Hispanic population has added to the area’s vibrancy and cultural richness. As a result, the area offers potential to build a neighborhood that is once again a destination to safely shop, dine and live. The housing strategy for this area is closely related to the Expand and Support Neighborhood Retail and Support Growth of Neighborhood-Based Businesses and Immigrant Entrepreneurs initiatives identified in the Economic Development Report.

Nonetheless, the area has a significant number rental units and is one of the most densely populated areas in the city. Efforts to improve rental properties, eliminate predatory landlords, and support local restaurants will help support the goal of making this area a destination neighborhood in the city. The work, however, must be closely coordinated with residents and business owners who may face language and cultural hurdles to accessing programs and services. As such, early on the City should establish a City & Neighborhood Partnership Committee for this area to coordinate all investments in the neighborhood, not just housing. Moreover, the City should consider strongly emphasizing Chambersburg within the Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton: both as an attractive place to visit and potentially a cost effective, walkable, culturally rich area to live.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ Overall Housing⁵¹
- ▶ Vacancy and Abandonment⁵²
- ▶ Market-Rate Housing⁵³
- ▶ Affordable Housing⁵⁴

- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods**⁵⁵
- ▶ **Neighborhood Commercial**⁵⁶
- ▶ **Downtown**⁵⁷

The City should consider all of the tools identified in the Housing Toolkit to execute this initiative. For more information on the toolkit, see Develop Housing Toolkit & Implement Prioritized Investment Framework Initiative.

5 | **PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH CATALYTIC POTENTIAL: LAMBERTON NORTH**

The Lambertton Street area has the potential to become an attractive and safe residential community. If the City is successful in achieving this, the area will further reinforce all of South Trenton as a strong residential community and help bolster property values. With high-quality access to highways, transit, as well as key City amenities - such as the Sun Center, the Delaware River waterfront, Roebbling Complex Redevelopment, and Arm & Hammer Stadium - the area has a number of amenities that could be attractive to perspective homebuyers. As such, the Encourage Multi-purpose Use of the Sun National Bank Center and Arm & Hammer Park for Events and Activities initiative and the Revitalize Large Catalytic Development Sites initiatives are closely linked to the housing strategy.

Moreover, Vacant Lot Stabilization programs will be particularly important in this area, since there is a high level of vacancy and abandonment. However, there may also be opportunities for the assemblage of properties for larger scale redevelopment. Such efforts must be made in close coordination with the community and local civic associations, as such an early step should be the establishment of a City & Neighborhood Partnership Committee. In addition, the Lambertton area is a designated historic district and may be an excellent opportunity for a coordinated historic preservation. Such an effort could make significant contributions to efforts to strengthen the housing market in this area. Past efforts in the Mill Hill Neighborhood demonstrate the success that coordinated historic preservation can have on a neighborhood. As a result, the Protect and Enhance Historic Housing and Neighborhood Fabric initiative must be coordinated with the investment strategy for this area.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing**⁵⁸
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment**⁵⁹
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing**⁶⁰
- ▶ **Affordable Housing**⁶¹
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods**⁶²
- ▶ **Neighborhood Commercial**⁶³
- ▶ **Downtown**⁶⁴

^{61.} Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing

^{62.} Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected

^{63.} Trenton will have vibrant neighborhood business districts

^{64.} Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Region

^{55.} Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected

^{56.} Trenton will have vibrant neighborhood business districts

^{57.} Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Region

^{58.} Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

^{59.} All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County

^{60.} Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

- 67. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency
- 68. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing
- 69. Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected
 - 70. Trenton will have vibrant neighborhood business districts
- 65. Trenton will provide a diversity of quality affordable rental options in the central and downtown areas of the city
- 66. All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County

The City should consider all of the tools identified in the Housing Toolkit to execute this initiative. For more information on the toolkit, see Develop Housing Toolkit & Implement Prioritized Investment Framework Initiative. In addition, the City should implement the following actions to supplement the toolkit:

- ▶ **Trenton250 Historic Preservation Report**

6 | **PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH CATALYTIC POTENTIAL: FORMER MERCER HOSPITAL COMPLEX AREA**

The goal in this area is to use the redevelopment of the hospital as a catalyst for change in the larger neighborhoods surrounding the complex. At the same time, the City should consider the strong neighborhoods surrounding Cadwalader Park as a base that can be incrementally expanded towards downtown Trenton. Moreover, excellent access to the D&R Canal will be a key amenity that encourages growth in the area. As such, the following initiatives must be coordinated with the housing strategy in this area:

- Comprehensive Capital City Regional Trail Network Initiative
- Revitalize Large Catalytic Development Sites
- Reinforce Neighborhoods with the Highest Values and Concentration of Home-Ownership

Within the surrounding neighborhoods, the relatively high level of vacancy will require initiatives to be focused on stabilization, and in certain cases, demolition. However, since the area also has relatively strong homeownership rates and foreclosure rates, homeowner assistance programs are also likely to be effective tool for improving the area. One of the most significant things affecting this area is the low median sale price and high percentage of homes with tax liens. This creates a difficult situation: even if the City acquires troubled properties, it is unlikely to be able to return them to productive use quickly. However, if the City can be successful in redeveloping the formal hospital and expanding stronger neighborhoods towards downtown, it will likely have leverage to get property owners to improve their homes. Early efforts to establish a City & Neighborhood Partnership Committee in the area are likely to pay long-term benefits: the City will be able to work with residents to redevelop the formal hospital in a context sensitive manner and build relationships for rehabilitation efforts later in the process.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing⁶⁵**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment⁶⁶**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing⁶⁷**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing⁶⁸**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods⁶⁹**
- ▶ **Neighborhood Commercial⁷⁰**
- ▶ **Downtown⁷¹**

The City should consider all of the tools identified in the Housing Toolkit to execute this initiative. For more information on the toolkit, see Develop Housing Toolkit & Implement Prioritized Investment Framework Initiative. In addition, the City should implement the following actions to supplement the toolkit:

- ▶ **Former Mercer Hospital Complex Area Strategic Development Plan**

7 | PRIORITIZE INVESTMENT IN NEIGHBORHOODS WITH CATALYTIC POTENTIAL: CREEKSIDE HOUSING

The construction of the Assunpink Creek Greenway and Park, the potential for Bus Rapid Transit access along Route 1, and the proposed Market Street Corridor Project have the potential to change the market conditions in this area significantly. Combined, these projects will make the Creekside area very attractive for residential development and a new anchor of stability in East Trenton. However, these large infrastructure investments are likely to bring significant change to the neighborhood. As such, the City should utilize the East Trenton Collaborative as the City & Neighborhood Partnership Committee to ensure context-appropriate development. In the short and medium-term the City should continue its efforts to acquire and hold parcels that are likely to have a high market value after the completion of the park. The high percentage of homes with Tax liens in the area may support such effort. Moreover, the City should develop a Creekside Area Strategic Development Plan to guide its efforts in the area and update the Redevelopment Plan that covers this area to capture the potential for growth.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing⁷²**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment⁷³**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing⁷⁴**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing⁷⁵**
- ▶ **Historic Neighborhoods⁷⁶**
- ▶ **Neighborhood Commercial⁷⁷**
- ▶ **Downtown⁷⁸**

The City should consider all of the tools identified in the Housing Toolkit to execute this initiative. For more information on the toolkit, see Develop Housing Toolkit & Implement Prioritized Investment Framework Initiative. In addition, the City should implement the following actions to supplement the toolkit:

- ▶ **Assunpink Creek Park**
- ▶ **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Advocacy-Partnership**
- ▶ **Creekside Area Strategic Development Plan**
- ▶ **Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan Review**
- ▶ **Market Street Corridor Project**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Plan Reform**

72. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

73. All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County

74. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

75. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing

76. Trenton's housing stock will be well-maintained and its historic fabric protected

77. Trenton will have vibrant neighborhood business districts

78. Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Region

E. TRANSPORTATION ORIENTED INITIATIVES

The City of Trenton has a transportation network that connects it to the Mercer-Bucks region as well as the larger northeast corridor. Nonetheless, the City has not effectively capitalized on the land use potential around these assets. The following initiatives involve large-scale redevelopment of areas around transit and transportation that are likely to involve a variety of land uses including retail, office, and commercial uses. As a result, they also have been identified in the Economic Development and Circulation Reports.

1 | TRENTON TRANSIT CENTER TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The Trenton Transit Center directly links downtown Trenton to the entire Northeast Corridor, thus making it a key economic development opportunity for the city – both commercial and residential. Despite its current disconnectedness from downtown, with several parcels prime for redevelopment, the potential for implementing new transit-oriented development (TOD) in the vicinity of the station is significant, along with creating new pedestrian connections.

Several sites around the Transit Center should be considered for transit-oriented development, primarily mixed-use buildings with ground-floor retail and residential/commercial above. These locations include assembled parcels at the corner of N. Clinton Ave. and E. State St. and along E. State St., the existing parking lots at the corner of Barlow St./S. Clinton Ave./Wallenberg Ave. and the parking lot opposite Trent Center Apartments at the corner of Greenwood Ave./Hudson St. For the City, this initiative involves focusing efforts on encouraging and facilitating mixed-use development in these specific areas initially to take advantage of the Transit Center's location and access.

The Transit Center also suffers from low visibility from the rest of downtown. Redevelopment of the Transit Center area should include landmarks, and other wayfinding elements to further increase the visibility of the station. The Transit Center could also be more visible by improving the roadways leading to it. By extending Market Street to State Street, and giving the Trenton Transit Center a Market Street address, the prominence of this corridor and the station will be improved (See Trenton Transit Center Connection Initiative in the Circulation Report).

At this time, the City is working on a strategic plan for the Transit Center area. Implementing the recommendations of this plan will be an important step in moving TOD forward in this area. Although that report is not yet complete, it is clear that creation of a TOD around the Transit Center would likely require acquisition or purchase of the properties to create developable sites. Furthermore, the City will need to market these sites to potential developers. This could involve direct outreach and marketing to the City's preferred developers and/or including those properties on

a searchable database of development opportunities the City’s website. In addition, the Education and Workforce Development Report noted that there may be an opportunity to establish a shared makerspace near the Transit Center area that would include collaborative and knowledge sharing workspace for startups, entrepreneurs, corporations, and community makers, as well as classroom and lecture space for satellite programs offered by regional colleges and universities.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing**⁷⁹
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment**⁸⁰
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing**⁸¹
- ▶ **Affordable Housing**⁸²
- ▶ **Downtown**⁸³

To successfully execute this initiative, the City should implement the following actions:

- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Development Opportunities**
- ▶ **Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan Review**
- ▶ **Design Guidelines**
- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process**
- ▶ **State Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program**
- ▶ **Five-Year Tax Abatement and Exemption Ordinance**
- ▶ **Live Where You Work Program**
- ▶ **Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton**
- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Development Opportunities**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Powers and Incentives**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Plan Reform**
- ▶ **State Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program**
- ▶ **State GrowNJ Incentive Program**
- ▶ **State Real Estate Impact Loan**
- ▶ **Tax Abatement and Exemption Ordinance**
- ▶ **Transit Center TOD Strategic Development Plan**
- ▶ **Trenton Transit Center Shared-Space Project**

79. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

80. All of Trenton’s neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County

81. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

82. Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing

83. Trenton’s downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Region

2 | RIVERLINE STATIONS TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Trenton should take advantage of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities at the Hamilton Street and Cass Street Station along the RiverLINE. These stops provide continuous service to South Jersey towns between Trenton and Camden. Furthermore, they provide easy access to the Trenton Transit Station, which provides service to the entire northeast. As a result, residents who live near these stations have a one-transfer access to New York, Philadelphia, Camden, and the rest of the northeast.

84. Trenton residents and visitors will characterize the City as “bikeable” and “walkable.” Trentonians will be able to safely walk, bike, access transit, and share the streets with motorized vehicles. A high-quality, safe, and clearly navigable trail system and in-street network will form the foundation for a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network. People and goods will efficiently move throughout the City and beyond its borders.

85. Trenton will have walkable neighborhoods and an active downtown that are supported by a multi-modal transportation system that includes, but is not limited to, high quality transit-oriented developments. Parking will no longer be a dominant land use in the City’s downtown and will be managed effectively to support active land uses, streetscapes and economy, in accordance with Trenton’s multi-modal objectives

86. Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents

87. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

88. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

89. Trenton will be a leader in conservation by reducing its community wide carbon footprint and improve water conservation throughout the City.

In addition, if the RiverLINE is further extended to West Trenton and the Airport, these stations will become ideal locations for new residential and commercial development. If the Bus Rapid Transit service is extended to the Transit Center, these stations would provide nearby residents quick access to job centers along the Route 1 corridor.

The first step in developing these stations as a TOD will be to undertake a RiverLINE TOD Strategic Plan that will allow the City to evaluate the issues and opportunities and make recommendations on how the City can facilitate development in the area.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Multi-modal Transportation⁸⁴**
- ▶ **Land Use and Transportation Connection⁸⁵**
- ▶ **Overall Economic Development⁸⁶**
- ▶ **Overall Housing⁸⁷**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing⁸⁸**
- ▶ **Conservation and Energy Efficiency⁸⁹**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Bus Rapid Transit Advocacy-Partnership**
- ▶ **RiverLINE TOD Strategic Plan**
- ▶ **Safe Streets to Transit (SSTT)**
- ▶ **Transit to West Trenton Station and the Airport Study**

3 | RECLAIM AND REDEVELOP THE WATERFRONT

Currently, Trenton’s waterfront is overwhelmed by a sea of mostly state-owned parking lots and is further disconnected from Downtown by Route 29. A reclaimed waterfront will create the opportunity to develop a vibrant, mixed-use community that could offer new commercial and residential space, and serve as a magnet for new private investment. It could also become a regional destination as a great public space for creative patterns of use and define physical, cultural, and social identities as the heart of Trenton.

Route 29 has been re-envisioned to be a very different facility – one that will fit into its context and better serve both the transportation needs and social and economic goals of the city. The current Route 29 will be re-designed as an urban boulevard that will move traffic efficiently, but at lower, safer speeds. It will form the spine of the waterfront redevelopment area in the downtown and will provide physical and visual connections to the river. For more information on this Project, see the Waterfront Reclamation and Redevelopment Project action.

Reclaiming the Waterfront is a major undertaking. It will require significant additional planning, property acquisition, and assembly, programming the Route 29 project on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), engineering design, an environmental

review process, significant stakeholder involvement, and substantial investment. In addition, the area is currently being used as surface parking, a use that will need to find a new home. As such, this effort is closely linked to **Convert Surface Parking to Productive Uses Initiative**.

In the short term, completing the Downtown Parking Management Plan will give the City a better understanding of how it can convert the surface parking lots into active uses. Moreover, the City can begin moving the process forward by creating a Waterfront Reclamation and Revitalization Strategic Plan to guide the process. Once complete, Actions from that Plan can be added to this initiative.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Multi-modal Transportation⁹⁰**
- ▶ **Land Use and Transportation Connection⁹¹**
- ▶ **Overall Economic Development⁹²**
- ▶ **Overall Housing⁹³**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing⁹⁴**
- ▶ **Natural and Cultural Resources⁹⁵**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Downtown Parking Management Plan**
- ▶ **Waterfront Reclamation and Redevelopment Project**
- ▶ **Waterfront Reclamation and Revitalization Strategic Plan**

90. Trenton residents and visitors will characterize the City as “bikeable” and “walkable.” Trentonians will be able to safely walk, bike, access transit, and share the streets with motorized vehicles. A high-quality, safe, and clearly navigable trail system and in-street network will form the foundation for a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network. People and goods will efficiently move throughout the City and beyond its borders.

91. Trenton will have walkable neighborhoods and an active downtown that are supported by a multi-modal transportation system that includes, but is not limited to, high quality transit-oriented developments. Parking will no longer be a dominant land use in the City’s downtown and will be managed effectively to support active land uses, streetscapes and economy, in accordance with Trenton’s multi-modal objectives

92. Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents

93. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

94. Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency

95. Trenton will protect and promote access to its natural, cultural and historic resources, including natural ecosystems.

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