

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC REPORT

TRENTON250
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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

To successfully build a Premier Economic and Cultural Center, the City, County and State must abandon their efforts to create “silver bullet” solutions to the City of Trenton’s challenges and begin strategically investing in efforts that will build a healthy sustainable economy that provides opportunities for a diverse community.

The key to meeting Trenton’s long-term economic development goals lies in unlocking its potential by building off of strengths. To accomplish this, this Report recommends focusing on simultaneously strengthening the three key pillars of Trenton’s economy:

- the downtown
- the industrial areas, and
- the neighborhoods.

Each of these areas has relatively unique challenges and solutions, but success in these areas will have a city-wide impact. In addition, this report makes city-wide recommendations on how to strengthen the economy.

The following report outlines initiatives that the City can begin immediately and which can be implemented simultaneously. Moreover, each initiative will reinforce efforts to develop and attract industries with regional strength into the city, nurture the city’s workforce and make capital of available land, increase tax revenues, and place more money in the pocketbooks of residents, making neighborhood retail more viable. A stronger downtown will be more attractive to regional employers and professional workers looking for high-quality places to live, which will, in turn, bring jobs and economic opportunity to all residents. This evolution will further the appeal of downtown, luring even more higher-wage industries and companies to Trenton. Moreover, stronger neighborhood commercial centers will make neighborhoods more attractive to new and current residents, strengthening efforts to make Trenton a regional destination.

These initiatives will:

- improve the retail environment;
- create new development and business opportunities in key locations;
- create an improved business environment that provides high-quality employment to residents;
- take advantage of the region's employment strengths and growth areas;
- strengthen Trenton's arts, culture, and heritage tourism; and
- promote all of these attributes to the outside world.

With multiple departments working in coordination, including both Economic Development and Planning Divisions, the City will maintain an environment that is conducive to accomplishing these initiatives through a series of detailed actions, outlined below.

DEFINING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development can be defined as actions by communities and policymakers that improve a region's well-being by growing its tax base, increasing residents' incomes, and creating jobs with the intent of an improved standard of living and quality of life. In this context, Trenton is poised to reestablish itself as the economic and cultural center of Mercer County and the Central Jersey region.

A CITY WITH STRENGTHS

The Capital of New Jersey

As the state capital of New Jersey, more than 28,000 workers arrive in Trenton each weekday, providing significant opportunities to exploit multiple markets of products and services. As a former manufacturing hub with a still relatively strong industrial workforce and a ready-to-work immigrant population that can be trained for today's industries, there are opportunities for expanding the city's industrial base.

A City with Multiple Assets

With convenient access to New York, Philadelphia, and the Shore through many modes of transportation, Trenton's location and transportation infrastructure give it a major advantage over many other New Jersey cities. Moreover, the city is surrounded by multiple public and private educational institutions, and there are opportunities to forge new partnerships to better educate Trenton's residents and prepare them to help grow the city's economy. Equally important, Trenton offers a unique heritage to visitors, unlike any other city because of its significant place in American history. Combined with the emerging arts scene incubating throughout the city, Trenton can position itself as the region's capital of arts and culture. Such efforts will only enhance Trenton's potential to offer a unique urban lifestyle not found anywhere else in the area, and attract a more creative and innovative demographic.

Strong Regional Economy

Regionally, Trenton is in the heart of an economy encompassing Bucks and Mercer Counties. While Trenton is the center for State government, many private-sector industries are experiencing significant growth in the surround Counties. According to On the Map, a resource of the US Census, the following industries experienced the largest growth in employment in the combined Mercer/Bucks area from 2002 to 2014 (growth indicated in parentheses):

- Management of Companies and Enterprises (139%)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (50%)
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (38%)
- Accommodation and Food Services (33%)
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (21%)

Because of their relative strength in the region, these are the industries for which Trenton is best positioned to exploit. The City could capture a portion of this growth and employment, enabling Trenton to better capitalize on its existing infrastructure and the region's workforce. Therefore, they should be the focus of the City's near-term efforts to expand business development and increase employment. In some ways, the City has already begun to position itself to do so. Arts, entertainment, and recreation are focused within Downtown Trenton and expanding. Moreover, as demographics change, these large private-sector companies will need to offer the types of amenities their employees are seeking. A segment of millennials continues to seek urban, transit-rich, and walkable communities, and Trenton is well positioned to attract industries that have in the past chosen to locate in the suburbs.

A Strong Industrial Past

With its strategic location on the Delaware River, as well as its rail and canal access, Trenton developed into an industrial and manufacturing hub early in this country's history. Ironworks and potteries flourished first in Trenton, with steel and ceramics developing into iconic Trenton businesses, followed by rubber manufacturing. Well-known Trenton companies include Lenox, Boehm, American Standard, and Roebling, which built the Brooklyn Bridge. After the city's chamber of commerce had held a contest for a civic slogan, "Trenton Makes The World Takes" was selected to reflect the city's manufacturing prowess. Though Trenton's manufacturing heyday is behind it, the industrial culture remains, and the City looks forward to a renewed interest in manufacturing. While manufacturers in Trenton contracted somewhat in the last ten years due to the recession and to sequestration, according to stakeholder interviews, these same industries are now expanding and hiring.

ENDURING CHALLENGES

Despite these strengths, the City is not currently capitalizing on all of its assets. To develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the City must be clear about what prevents it from doing so, though the obstacles are serious and often entrenched.

A Homogeneous Economy

Trenton's economy is currently highly dependent on government as a base industry. This base economy encourages other related businesses, such as lobbyists and social service organizations, to locate in Trenton. However, it also attracts a high concentration of non-profit entities. As a result, much of Trenton's land is either tax exempt or producing little income: 35% of all land in Trenton is non-taxable, according to the City Profile Report. This severely limits the ability of the City to leverage tax revenue to address many of its entrenched issues and forces it to place a significant tax burden on residents: Trenton has the highest effective Tax rate in the Mercer County Region, according to the State of New Jersey's 2015 *Abstract of Ratables for the County of Mercer*. Combined with high concentrations of poverty, crime, and struggling schools, the City currently lags attracting residents who have the financial resources to invest in the city and make it successful.

Trenton's current struggles are due in part to past Urban Renewal efforts. As the following Case Study explains, urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s focused largely on "slum" clearance in the downtown. Tragically, this effort resulted in the displacement of a largely African-American community in the Coalport Neighborhood. The planned industrial district for small manufacturing firms never materialized, and the City ultimately transitioned its effort to providing facilities for state government. To varying degrees of success, subsequent efforts have largely focused on leveraging County, State, or National funding to build government buildings, event centers, and/or subsidized affordable housing.

Multi-Sector Challenges

Trenton faces a variety of other economic development challenges impacting its ability to capitalize on its assets. Trenton has a limited supply of retail goods and services, slow business growth, and a shortage of readily developed industrial sites. The arts and culture industry also faces numerous challenges that are impacting its potential for being an economic engine for the city.

In addition, the city faces a variety of workforce, job-skill, employment access, and education-related issues. This includes the fact that those who have been incarcerated often do not have the support they need to return to the workforce upon return to Trenton. These issues are addressed in the Education and Workforce Development Report of Trenton250 Master Plan. Trentonians, as well as stakeholders, have identified improving all of these sectors as critical for achieving the community-driven Vision. Collectively, Trenton's economic development challenges are limiting its ability to reach its potential.

CASE STUDY: URBAN “RENEWAL” IN TRENTON

The following is an excerpt from In Philadelphia’s Shadow: Small Cities in the Third Federal Reserve District (Alan Mallach, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia; 2012). It provides a strong background understanding of the City’s Urban Revitalization Efforts from 1950 to 2000.

Trenton’s recognition of its need for renewal was spurred by the 1957 publication of an article in House & Home magazine, based on a study by a University of Pennsylvania team, which described a hypothetical “case city” clearly recognizable as Trenton and predicted that it would be a “low-income ghetto” by 1980. Although the article was denounced by city officials, a contemporary noted that “it said what everyone around here really thought but did not have the stomach to say” (Shuman 1958).

Trenton had already begun to take advantage of the federal urban renewal program, initiating its first urban renewal project in 1954 in Coalport, an area north of downtown flanking the newly constructed Route 1 freeway. The project, however, which displaced some 400 largely African-American families and was designed to create a new industrial district for small manufacturing firms, was a failure. It drew few firms, and in the 1970s, under pressure from the federal government to close out the project, the city sold the last vacant parcel to itself for construction of a new police headquarters and municipal court. Trenton continued aggressively to seek federal urban renewal funds, and over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, the city obtained funds to redevelop most of the city’s downtown as well as the nearby historic Mill Hill area.

The city’s downtown redevelopment strategies tended to focus largely on providing facilities for state government, reflecting the extent to which the city’s role as state capital was coming to outstrip its other economic functions. The city’s two major downtown urban renewal projects of the 1960s,

which between them led to the displacement of over 2,000 families, resulted in the construction of a series of state office buildings, along with some 500 units of subsidized housing, adding little to the city’s economic base. A planned downtown shopping mall, for which the city acquired land and covered over a picturesque creek running through downtown, failed to materialize. Another significant effort to rebuild the downtown retail base was the conversion of two blocks of West State Street into a pedestrian mall, which opened in 1973. The mall was generally acknowledged to have made the already bad retail conditions worse, and the street was reopened to traffic in the 1990s.

In the late 1970s the city took the lead in creating the New Trenton Corporation (NTC), a public-private partnership modeled on the Harristown Development Corporation established in 1974 in Harrisburg. The mission of the NTC was to spur the economic development of the city and “bring the city back where it should be” (NTC 1977). In that same publication, the city highlighted 10 “milestone redevelopment projects” representing \$156 million (\$582 million in 2011 dollars) of investment. Six of the “milestones,” however, were state or city government facilities, three were publicly subsidized low-income housing developments, and the tenth was a publicly funded energy co-generation plant. None were true private investments, nor did any look to the private market for its success. Meanwhile, in 1978, three of the city’s few remaining major manufacturers closed, eliminating 1,000 jobs (Brenna 1979). The only private market success that the city could point to was Mill Hill, where the rehabilitation of historic row houses, public open space, and a modest amount of historically sensitive infill development led to the creation of an attractive but small downtown residential area. The area did not achieve true market vitality, however, until the mid to late 1990s.

Through the 1980s, the two principal prongs of the city's redevelopment continued to be state government buildings downtown and subsidized housing elsewhere. The NTC faded out of the picture, but under Governor Thomas Kean, the state government began to take a more aggressive role toward its capital city, building three major state office buildings and using long-term state office leases as an inducement for private developers to build additional taxpaying office buildings, some of which also contained modest amounts of space for private tenants or ground floor retail space. Responding to the city's lack of systematic planning during the 1980s, in 1988 the state legislature created a state agency, the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC), whose mission was to develop a master plan for downtown Trenton and coordinate the state's investment in that area. Although the CCRC still exists, it has never played a significant role (except perhaps briefly during its first two years of existence) in shaping the city's downtown.

By the early 1990s state government had largely stabilized its Trenton footprint, and since then, there has been little growth in its building inventory. The 1990s saw the city adopt different strategies, in which public resources were used to leverage private investment unrelated to state government, including the conversion of a large part of the former Roebbing Wire Works into a mixed-use complex, including retail and office space and senior housing, and the development of a downtown conference hotel under the Marriott flag.

In other areas, the city initiated a redevelopment strategy in the Canal Banks area north of downtown centered on mixed-income development for residential homeownership and established a manufacturing attraction and retention program focused primarily on encouraging the growth of small manufacturers already in the city. Over the course of four years, the city was able to assist over

15 firms, adding roughly 500 manufacturing jobs to the city's job base. Reflecting the city's continuing difficulties, however, those years saw the loss of Trenton's last large "legacy" manufacturing plant, eliminating 800 jobs in one blow. The 1990s also saw the development by Mercer County of a minor league baseball stadium and an indoor arena, both of which were financed by the county through bond issues.

Some individual development projects, most planned in the 1990s, came to fruition in the 2000s, but little new activity ensued despite considerable developer interest during the first part of the decade. While a long-awaited new railroad station, replacing a rundown 1970s structure, was finally constructed, plans to create an office hub around the station stalled with the economic downturn. While the residential market appeared to be gathering steam during the first half of the decade, later events revealed that much of the seeming improvement was fueled by subprime lending and speculation. From 2006 to 2009 the number of residential sales in Trenton dropped by 60 percent and the median sales price by 55 percent. Meanwhile, the city continued to lose jobs as Mercer Hospital closed and the Trenton Times newspaper, for many years the city's largest for-profit corporation, was downsized substantially.

It is not hard to fault many of the strategies and specific decisions by Trenton's elected officials, planners, and business leaders, although one should hesitate to do so given the limited options available at the time. Even so, a strategy that did little but add state office buildings must be seen in retrospect as a poorly conceived one. Not only did the proliferation of state office buildings do little to enhance downtown activity, since the vast majority of state workers commuted from outside the city, but the construction of those buildings led to the removal of hundreds of older residential and commercial buildings, many of a scale and character

that might have led to future downtown revival. In their place are an architecturally undistinguished collection of concrete and glass behemoths and a sea of parking lots. Roughly half of the total frontage of West State Street for nearly a mile through downtown Trenton is occupied by state office buildings.

All along, Trenton was at both a political and a legal disadvantage. With state government not subject to local land use regulation, the state could – and often did – build whatever it chose, wherever it chose. Many of the city's efforts to further construction of state facilities can be seen not so much as its own initiatives but as strategies to gain a role in the siting and planning of buildings that would be built in any event while attempting to see that state facilities were built in the city rather than elsewhere. How much the city actually benefited from those efforts is uncertain.

Similar reservations can be expressed about the extent to which little housing other than publicly subsidized low-income housing was pursued; yet, at a time when funds for low-income housing were relatively abundant and the idea of market-building - that is, concentrating on rebuilding the housing market through strengthening consumer demand for the community's housing stock - was not widely recognized as a strategy for urban revitalization,

too harsh a critique would be inappropriate. Cities with far more resources and capacity than Trenton were also too overwhelmed by the effects of white flight and racial transition to mount market-oriented neighborhood strategies. Still, in retrospect, a strategy to mitigate some of the effects of those transitions might have paid off in subsequent decades.

Moreover, it is debatable whether the more intentionally market-oriented strategies of the 1990s were any more transformative. While the Canal Banks redevelopment, the reuse of the Roebling Wire Works, and similar projects improved parts of the city, they generated little in the way of spontaneous improvement or stronger market conditions outside the projects themselves. Similarly, while the largely low-wage jobs created in these projects were not insignificant, they at most blunted the trajectory of decline.

In short, for all the expenditure of time, effort, and money, Trenton was manifestly in far worse shape demographically and economically in 2010 than it had been in the 1950s. Whether it was in worse shape than it would have been without this expenditure can never be determined.

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BACKGROUND

As noted previously, achieving Trenton's long-term economic development goals requires unlocking its potential. This can be accomplished by building off of the City's strengths. This Report recommends focusing on simultaneously strengthening the three key pillars of Trenton's economy:

- the downtown,
- the industrial areas, and
- the neighborhoods.

Each of these areas has relatively unique challenges and solutions, but success in these areas will have a city-wide impact. Moreover, they represent three mutually reinforcing strategies for moving the city forward: make the downtown a destination to live and work, expand and enhance opportunities for industrial development, and support the growth of neighborhood commercial areas. The following provides detailed background on each of these sectors.

DOWNTOWN

As the economic engine of the city, Trenton's downtown must be a major focus for economic revitalization. Key economic development issues affecting the downtown and waterfront include:

- a limited capture of retail demand,
- limited downtown development and growth,
- a fragmented arts and culture industry, and
- a disconnected waterfront dominated by highway infrastructure and underutilized surface parking lots.

Downtown Retail

As outlined in the *Trenton Citywide Economic Market Study*, Trenton's weak downtown retail market is defined by significant gaps in retail opportunity due to both market conditions and negative perceptions of the city. Simply stated, there is demand for services, but the downtown does not provide the right business supply to capture these workers and its regional share of retail. As a result, shoppers either don't seek amenities in Trenton or are forced to go outside the city due to market limitations. While there is a surplus in some retail categories, downtown workers are generally leaving Trenton because there are not enough grocers, convenience stores, personal services, and general merchandise stores to serve their daytime needs.

Limited Growth

Compounding these downtown retail challenges, Trenton has experienced a prolonged period of limited development and business growth, and a lack of market-rate housing construction. Major investments in Trenton, including the Trenton Transit Center, the Sun National Bank Center, and Arm & Hammer Park have not attracted sufficient spin-off development. Few businesses have been created as a result of these facilities, and many businesses that do exist near these venues have not successfully capitalized on the foot traffic. Developable parcels near these facilities remain vacant or underutilized. Further exacerbating the challenge, many large parcels in key development locations - including the waterfront area - are owned by the state or county. These parcels remain extremely underutilized, unproductive, and generate no tax revenue for the City.

Redevelopment

In instances where the City has used redevelopment as a tool for sparking private investment, there have been mixed results. Various projects have been constructed, only to have been converted into office space for the state or county when no private sector tenants could be found. In addition, many plans have simply sat on the shelf, largely unsuccessful in advancing toward implementation. Interviews with stakeholders and City staff indicate several reasons for the lack of progress:

- in some cases, these efforts have failed to meet state requirements for financial support;
- in other cases, project visions were too large to be feasible;
- a few efforts have lacked sufficient coordination between City leadership and developers;
- lack of coordination between City departments and accountability to the plans;
- some have been plagued by recent unfavorable market conditions for redevelopment; and
- redevelopment sites have not been widely marketed to prospective developers due to limited budgets and staff resources.

However, market conditions are improving, particularly for residential development, and financing is increasingly available. As a result, market-rate development is beginning to occur in Trenton.

Arts & Culture

Arts and cultural organizations can be significant economic drivers in Trenton; nonprofit arts expenditures per capita in 2010 were higher in Mercer County than several nearby counties according to the National Endowment for the Arts. However, Trenton's primary challenge regarding arts and culture is the fragmentation of the industry. Despite having a significant presence in the city with a wealth of attractions and venues, Trenton arts and culture groups have not effectively communicated their efforts, including marketing/promotion, branding, and event coordination. In addition, several venues and facilities are significantly underutilized. Furthermore, Trenton has tended to focus its tourism efforts on its historical heritage more than its arts and cultural heritage. Funding to support the industry is a challenge as well.

INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Industry is another key component of Trenton's economy and a significant economic development opportunity. A lack of industrial growth and development is another significant issue for Trenton, despite the city's history as an industrial powerhouse, its relatively strong industrial workforce, and economic development trends pointing toward a resurgence of manufacturing. Trenton's struggles to stimulate industry are the result of a variety of overlapping issues:

- While the city has an abundance of abandoned industrial properties, many lack the physical characteristics demanded by modern industry. Most industrial businesses (particularly light industry) require large floorplates to accommodate their desired production plan. Parcels with characteristics sought by prospective industrial companies (specifically, parcels larger than 60,000 SF with adequate parking and good highway access) are difficult to find in Trenton.
- Trenton has limited large, undeveloped, and "shovel-ready" sites available for industrial development. Sites that are vacant are often fragmented and owned by multiple entities, while properties that are available have not been well-marketed.
- There is also a disconnect between Trenton's industrial workforce skills and business needs. Better matching the two for both existing and future businesses will require partnerships among the public, private, and non-profit sectors.
- Finally, stakeholders have identified Trenton's relatively inexpensive energy resources and water capacity as an asset. But those assets have not been effectively marketed as a means for attracting industrial businesses.

According to stakeholder interviews, in the past ten years manufacturing in Trenton has contracted due to the recession and sequestration. However, these same industries are now exploring ways to expand and are hiring new workers. As such, the time is ripe to support manufacturing expansion in Trenton.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AREAS

A third major facet of Trenton's economy is the neighborhood-level service economy that meets the needs of residents near their homes. It is in these locations that entrepreneurs and ethnic small businesses have an opportunity to flourish with the

right assistance. However, Trenton's neighborhoods experience a variety of challenges impacting economic development. The Housing Report addresses the numerous housing impediments facing many of Trenton's neighborhoods; however, there are obstacles to the commercial realm that impact the neighborhoods as well. Specifically, there are a lack of resources and support to encourage the growth of retail and service amenities in neighborhoods. As a result, shortages in retail options exist in many categories throughout the city's neighborhoods, particularly in the West Ward. There, a significant lack of retail exists in almost every major category, including general merchandise, food service, clothing and accessories, and health and personal care. This area is also located farthest from shopping options outside the city and therefore should experience the least competition. The North and East Wards are also underserved but to a lesser degree than the West Ward, and have several similar opportunities for additional retail stores.

RELEVANT GOALS

1. **Overall Economic Development:** Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities
2. **Downtown Economic Development:** Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Jersey Region
3. **Industrial:** Trenton will attract employers to its industrial areas that generate comparatively high rates of job opportunities
4. **Neighborhood Commercial:** Trenton will have vibrant neighborhood business districts

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INITIATIVES

This Economic Development Report of Trenton250 will address Trenton's economic challenges by focusing market-based strategies on the three major pillars that define Trenton's economy: downtown/waterfront, industrial areas, and neighborhoods. In addition, the report provides city-wide initiatives to strengthen the economy.

The City can begin immediately on the following initiatives. Each will be reinforcing: efforts to develop and attract industries with regional strength into the city, nurture the city's workforce and make capital of available land, increase tax revenues, and place more money in the pocketbooks of residents, making neighborhood retail more viable. A stronger downtown will be more attractive to regional employers and professional workers looking for high-quality places to live and work, which will, in turn, bring jobs and economic opportunity to all residents. This evolution will further the appeal of downtown, luring even more higher-wage industries and companies to Trenton. Moreover, stronger neighborhood commercial centers will make neighborhoods more attractive to new and future residents, strengthening efforts to make Trenton a regional destination. These initiatives will:

- improve the retail environment;
- create new development and business opportunities in key locations;
- create an improved business environment that provides high-quality employment to residents;
- take advantage of the region's employment strengths and growth areas;
- strengthen Trenton's arts, culture, and heritage tourism; and
- promote all of these attributes to the outside world.

However, the City must also recognize that education investments must drive long-term economic development. The City, County, and State must take an integrated approach to providing educational opportunities to residents of all ages. In doing so, they must balance two critical needs. The first is an immediate need to address short-term issues and train residents for jobs that are available now. At the same time, any educational initiative must take into consideration what might be demanded in a 21st Century economy and give guidance for how Trenton can position its residents to succeed in a rapidly shifting environment. Moreover, investments in open spaces, reducing the prevalence of brownfield sites, and improving mobility options will all make Trenton a more desirable place to live and work. These efforts are not mutually exclusive but instead work together to achieve the community-driven vision.

A. DOWNTOWN INITIATIVES OVERVIEW

The economic development initiatives for downtown are focused on continuing to create a great place for people to live, work and visit. This effort starts by focusing efforts on facilitating new construction and rehabilitation to attract new and current residents to downtown. As downtown attracts more residents, business owners should see expanded opportunities for retail growth. Establishing a creative district downtown, while strengthening Trenton's arts and cultural offerings city-wide, will also support efforts to expand retail. Creative districts have been shown to be drivers of economic development while providing critical cultural amenities for residents.

If Trenton is able to steadily build stronger residential, retail, and cultural sectors, the downtown is likely to become a destination for new or relocated businesses, regardless of the industry. This is because Trenton is the natural downtown of the Central Jersey Region, a region that has a strong economy but which provides few alternatives to suburban offices. As employers begin to compete for high-quality talent, it is likely that some will see urban amenities (e.g. walkable streets, access to transit, and cultural diversity) as a competitive advantage.

The following section provides a more detailed framework for how to drive economic revitalization of the downtown.

Ensure Stability

In executing this Downtown Strategy, **the first thing the City must do is ensure that the State remains a stable employer in downtown Trenton and that it does not lose its base economy.** Although relying on a single employer as a backbone for the economy is not advisable, the City must not underestimate the important economic role this industry plays in its economy. Nonetheless, effort to reduce the footprint that the State occupies, while maintaining the same level or more of employment, will open up development opportunities for private employers and new residential development.

Attract Market-Rate Housing

Next, **the City must leverage its best redevelopment opportunities to attract market-rate rental housing development downtown.** There are currently limited

quality market-rate rental units available in the heart of downtown. However, these types of units are exactly the kind that new and current residents, looking for modern urban living, are seeking out. Not only are these potential downtown residents less likely to have the financial ability to buy homes or condos but they are also less likely to do so in an unproven market like downtown Trenton.

Nonetheless, new market-rate residential construction will not happen without City support: the market downtown is untested, and there are few high-quality “shovel ready” sites. As such, the City must incentivize new residential development to provide the catalyst for future change.

The importance of getting people to live downtown cannot be understated. Currently, there are not enough people living downtown to support a diverse enough retail environment that will make Trenton a destination. Currently, retailers are almost exclusively dependent on 9-to-5 office workforce for clients, one of the reasons the downtown “shuts down” in the evenings. This is a particularly unfriendly business environment for retailers, and especially for food and entertainment establishments.

Each new resident that the City can get to live downtown increases the total number of dollars that will be spent downtown. Moreover, they will diversify the kinds of retail that is in demand and increase demand for retail after traditional business hours. This latter point is critical. A more diverse client base downtown will likely give downtown retailers a better opportunity to capitalize on the thousands of employees who come to Trenton every day. It is difficult for a business to remain profitable by only serving a government-salaried 9-to-5 workforce. However, the combination of both residents and office workers should give more retail establishments a stronger foundation for growth. More retail will make downtown an even more attractive place to live, which will in-turn attract new residents to downtown.

Efforts to attract residents to the downtown are strongly supported by other recommendations made in this and other Trenton250 Topic Reports. Strengthening arts and culture amenities in Trenton should be a cornerstone for making the city, and downtown especially, an attractive place to live. Moreover, recommendations to improve parks and trails, as well as improved mobility options, will be welcome amenities to anyone looking to live in the city. Nonetheless, these investments will only have the desired spillover effects if the City, County, and State can continue to encourage the development of market-rate housing in the downtown.

Support Arts & Culture

The City should strongly support efforts to establish a creative district downtown while strengthening Trenton’s arts and cultural offerings city-wide. Such districts have been proven to attract new younger residents that interject vibrancy into areas that need it. Investments in a creative district will be good for the City and the citywide arts scene, good for downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, good for artists and makers, good for local businesses both established and emerging, and good for all who come to look and listen, stay and play, exploring the full range of Trenton’s historic assets and newest works of art, formal parks, and reclaimed gardens.

Nurture Retail

As noted earlier, the combination of both residents and office workers should give more retail establishments a stronger foundation for growth. More retail will make downtown an even more attractive place to live, which will in-turn attract new residents to downtown. As such, the City will need to cultivate the growth of downtown retail to capture the economic impact of the downtown workforce, residents, and events. This means supporting and nurturing a cluster of unique and homegrown retail, restaurants and events to increase social opportunities and a niche downtown in comparison to the suburbs and surrounding towns.

CASE STUDY: WORCESTER ARTS DISTRICT, WORCESTER, MA

IDEA

The Arts District functions as an economic development and revitalization tool. By creating a downtown gateway, promoting family education, and providing diverse dining options, Worcester became a destination for new visitors and residents.

POLICIES

The Artist Overlay Zone enables artist live/work spaces as well as exhibition space in areas designated as “Commercial Artist Lofts.” The overlay also allows for former manufacturing warehouses converted into business and residential uses.

PROGRAMS

Unblurred First Fridays, classes and design competitions, branding and marketing, support for young entrepreneurs and start-ups, and goal of increasing the number of live-work artists in the area.

IMPACT

More than 15 small art galleries and studios, several private design firms, a dance company, coffee shops, a co-working space, and a cluster of non-profits have opened along the Avenue.

RELEVANT TO TRENTON

- renaming facilitated rebranding
- active marketing of available properties
- initially run by two CDCs, now has dedicated non-profit

DIFFERS FROM TRENTON

- focused on a commercial corridor

Leveraging Anchor Institutions

Anchor Institutions are large entities, such as colleges and hospitals, which have long-term investment horizons and vested interests in making their host community better places to live, work, and visit. In the short-term, **the City should ensure that existing anchor institutions (Thomas Edison State University and Mercer County Community College) integrate into revitalization** efforts and that their long-term development goals support and are supported by the Master Plan. In the medium and long-term, the City should work to create partnerships that would encourage other educational institutions to come to Trenton and facilitate the growth of current institutions.

Staff, faculty, and students of these institutions will contribute significantly to the downtown economy. Their staff and visitors support retailers, service businesses, and hotels. They can also be important drivers of residential growth. As such, they have the potential to be important medium and long-term drivers of revitalization in the downtown.

Capitalize on Key Physical Assets

While the City works on the above sectors of the downtown economy, it cannot lose sight of the importance of capitalizing on two of its major locational advantages: the Trenton Transit Center and the Delaware Waterfront. Redeveloping either one of these areas has the potential to change the economic development landscape in Trenton significantly. Nonetheless, these projects are only likely to attract private sector development if and when the City can demonstrate success in smaller-scale revitalization efforts. These projects are long-term efforts that will require sustained investment and planning from local, county, regional, and state entities. Instead of being “silver bullet” projects, they will likely be the long-term game changers that are the result of sustained dedication to building a broad, well-rounded economy throughout the city. Additional initiatives such as improving regional bike-pedestrian trail access, connecting the downtown to the waterfront, and placemaking initiatives will further reinforce the “livability” of downtown.

A Well-Rounded Reinforcing Structure

These investments in creating housing options downtown; investing in arts, culture and retail; and supporting anchor institutions are likely to have a snowball effect on the downtown economy. Each new resident increases the total number of dollars that will be spent downtown. Moreover, they will diversify the kinds of retail that is in demand and increase demand for retail after traditional business hours. Arts and culture will reinforce this effect, bringing even more people downtown who will visit Trenton’s shopping and dining establishments.

More residents, more retail to support them, and a stronger arts and cultural environment will make downtown significantly more appealing to higher-wage industries and companies. Nationally and regionally, there are businesses looking to relocate in urban areas to attract and retain high-quality employees who do not want

to work in suburban office parks. Trenton is the natural and historic downtown for the Central Jersey region which has a robust and diverse economy. By creating a downtown that is amenity rich and provides a variety of housing options, the City will attract new business and diversify its economy.

Moreover, continued investment in new residential development will demonstrate to investors that there is a market for redevelopment in Trenton. Establishing a market record is critical since it will reduce the risk of future investment by demonstrating that developers can make profits in the downtown. Stated differently, establishing a development record in the downtown will “fertilize the ground” for future investments. This will put the City in a strong position to capitalize when major infrastructure and amenity investments, such as the re-alignment of Route 29 or the extension of the RiverLINE, do become a reality.

It is about More than Just Downtown

Efforts to build a stronger downtown are strongly supported by other recommendations made in this and other Trenton250 Topic Reports. Improvements to parks and trails; enhanced mobility options; better neighborhoods and retail districts; as well as improved education opportunities in the surrounding neighborhoods will make downtown Trenton stronger. Likewise, a stronger downtown will reinforce these efforts in the surrounding neighborhoods. As such, the City must coordinate recommendations in this section with neighborhood efforts identified in this and other Topic Reports to ensure that Trenton progresses as a well-rounded city that has opportunities for all residents.

B. ENSURING STABILITY INITIATIVES

1 | CREATE A DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Downtown is a critical community asset that can further provide civic, business, shopping and recreational needs. As noted in this plan, the City wants to strengthen this underutilized asset by:

- Facilitating the development of more quality market-rate downtown housing;
- Supporting the formation of a creative district;
- Nurturing retail expansion;
- Expanding placemaking, open space, and recreational opportunities; and
- Building upon its core strengths of transit-supported character, walkability, and proximity to the Delaware River.

To achieve this, the City and its partners (including Greater Trenton, TDA, TPA, CCRC, and the State of New Jersey) need a detailed consensus-driven Downtown Strategic Development Plan that garners community input and focuses on mobilizing and

DOWNTOWN PARTNERS

The successful revitalization of the downtown will not occur without strong strategic partnerships. Four such partners that will provide support for the redevelopment efforts in the downtown include:

Greater Trenton is an independent 501c-3 nonprofit that will use private funding and a network of collaborative relationships to promote economic development in the capital city.

Its key objectives include coordinating downtown economic development projects; providing one-stop support and information for investors interested in taking on new projects; reaching out to potential residential, commercial and/or retail investors and tenants; supporting and promoting existing downtown initiatives; engaging downtown stakeholders in a strategic economic development plan; and developing investment marketing strategies. Although Greater Trenton's focus is downtown, the organization has a city-wide reach to help leverage economic development partnerships throughout Trenton.

Trenton Parking Authority (TPA) is a public body politic and corporate, organized and existing under the Act and created by virtue of an ordinance (571) of the City of Trenton adopted on December 16, 1948. The Authority was created for the purpose of acquiring, constructing, maintaining and operating parking facilities to promote commerce and economic renewal. The objective of the Authority is to serve the community's parking needs while addressing the increase vehicles congestion on the city street and to provide affordable parking.

Trenton Downtown Association is the non-profit organization that manages the Special Improvement District in downtown Trenton, New Jersey. Since 1986, TDA has offered programs that promote economic growth and development in the capital city. TDA provides ombudsman services, financing information, referrals, public relations consulting, event planning, and marketing assistance for Trenton businesses. Through maintenance of a clean and safe commercial district, support for the arts and cultural heritage, and public policy planning and advocacy, the TDA is leading the revitalization of the City of Trenton.

Capital City Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC) was created pursuant to N.J.S.A 52:9Q-9 et seq. to plan, coordinate, and promote the public and private development within a capital district defined in the Act, consisting of those portions of the City of Trenton that serve as the commercial center of the community and in which public buildings and historic sites are located.

1. *Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents*
2. *Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Jersey Region*

coordinating public and private investment in accordance with the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Goals identified in this Master Plan. Such an effort should be seen in contrast to the previous efforts that were more design-oriented, including the use of an urban design code. These past efforts were largely unsuccessful, in part, because much of the work was devoted to enforcing the design code rather than developing an overall development strategy for the downtown area and facilitating private and public investment.

In creating this Development Plan, the City should build off the framework identified in the Topic Reports and identify strategic action items necessary for future redevelopment and revitalization. The Downtown District Plan within this Master Plan provides recommended initiatives to be implemented in the district and should be used as a foundation and guiding document. Equally, the previous 2008 Downtown Master Plan may prove informative to the Development Plan.

As the Development Plan is created and implemented, it is likely that the City and its partners will identify new actions that will facilitate (re)development. Examples may include updates to zoning to balance development with transportation demand and parking; updated design guidelines; new or amended redevelopment area designations; new open or public space improvements; and more. To the extent that these efforts require official City action, the City should incorporate them into this initiative.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development¹**
- ▶ **Downtown²**

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

- ▶ **Downtown Strategic Development Plan**

2 | ENCOURAGE FURTHER CONSOLIDATING AND CONCENTRATION OF STATE OFFICES DOWNTOWN

As the largest employment sector in the city, Trenton's state government workforce is a key component of the downtown economy and an important part of its growth potential. While recognizing the opportunity to redevelop the abundance of surface parking lots serving the state office buildings, the future of Trenton depends, in part, on these offices and workers remaining downtown without expanding its non-ratable footprint. State employees are downtown customers and potential future residents who will further expand the downtown market for goods and services. This growth will encourage additional private investment in the downtown office market, leading to additional employment opportunities. Therefore, it is critical that the City make strides to ensure this workforce remain and grow in downtown Trenton. In September 2016, Governor Christie announced that the state plans to demolish the offices for the Departments of Health, Agriculture, and Taxation and relocate them to new buildings

downtown. This will create opportunities for new downtown private investment in the former location of the Taxation Building.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development³**
- ▶ **Downtown⁴**
- ▶ **Land Use and Transportation Connection⁵**

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

- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process Audit**
- ▶ **Downtown Strategic Development Plan**
- ▶ **Live Where you Work Program**
- ▶ **Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton**
- ▶ **Partnership with State and County Officials**

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

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

5. 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

C. HOUSING INITIATIVES

1 | EXPAND DOWNTOWN MARKET-RATE HOUSING

Expanding the number of residents living downtown is critical. Each new resident that the City can get to live downtown increases the total number of dollars that will be spent downtown. With more residents spending dollars downtown, the kinds of retail offered will diversify and expand. A more diverse client base downtown (that includes new residents) will give downtown retailers a better opportunity to capitalize on the thousands of employees who come to Trenton every day. More retail will make downtown an even more attractive place to live, which will in-turn attract new residents to downtown. At the same time, incentives to increase residential construction downtown will support efforts to create a creative district while making the area more attractive to anchor institutions.

In the Housing Report, the City has identified two priority investment areas for downtown: the Downtown Core and the Old Trenton Neighborhood. Priority Investment 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 and are likely to have a significant impact on the 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. These housing initiatives will be critical elements of the economic development strategy for downtown.

To support these housing initiatives and meet its downtown economic development goals, the City must concentrate its economic development efforts on facilitating the process for developers to invest in market-rate rental housing downtown while

6. *Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents*
7. *Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Jersey Region*
8. *Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels*
9. *Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency*

promoting the downtown lifestyle to prospective and current residents. Two key state incentive programs that may significantly support this initiative are the Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program and the Real Estate Impact Loan. The ERG Program provides up to a 40% tax credit for new construction, which includes residential and mixed-use construction. This is a major development incentive that might help offset the costs of developing in Trenton and ensure that market rate housing can be provided at a cost attractive to prospective and current residents. The Real Estate Impact Loan is available for mixed-use project (minimum 20% commercial) but not all-residential projects. Applicants get 3% financing up to \$3 Million, and 25% of project costs and funds can be used to cover property acquisition, assemblage, demolition, environmental remediation, and on-site infrastructure, among other uses. As a result, this funding is ideal for mixed-use projects in the downtown that will require significant rehabilitation or in which new construction will require that existing buildings are demolished, or the site needs to be remediated.

At the same time, the City must leverage the powers and incentives that are granted to it through the Redevelopment statutes. This includes the ability to acquire property and to provide additional tax incentives, including 30-year tax abatements. Combined with the Home-Owner Assistance Program and Live Where You Work Program, the City can stimulate new residential construction downtown.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development⁶**
- ▶ **Downtown⁷**
- ▶ **Overall Housing⁸**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing⁹**

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

- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Development Opportunities (Developer Resource Portal)**
- ▶ **Design Guidelines**
- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process Audit**
- ▶ **Downtown Strategic Development Plan**
- ▶ **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 Plan 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**
- ▶ **Upper Floor Restoration Program**

D. ARTS AND CULTURE INITIATIVES

1 | STRENGTHEN ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE IN TRENTON

Arts and cultural organizations can be significant economic drivers in Trenton; nonprofit arts expenditures per capita in 2010 were higher in Mercer County than several nearby counties according to the National Endowment for the Arts. Trenton has multiple arts and culture-related institutions that organize well-attended events. Furthermore, the city has an incredible wealth of historical heritage attractions.

With the proper arts and culture infrastructure in place, Trenton can capture entertainment, retail, and dining revenue from residents and visitors that would otherwise be spent outside the city, generate grant funding, and use evening and weekend events to bring vibrancy to the City.

Trenton has multiple arts and culture-related institutions that organize well-attended events. Furthermore, the city has an incredible wealth of historical attractions. In promoting these assets, the City and its partners should emphasize all aspects of Trenton’s history, including its Revolutionary War history, black history, immigrant and ethnic history, and industrial history, among others.

To make Trenton a premier destination for historical tourism and those seeking unique arts and culture amenities, the City should enhance coordination between all of its arts and culture organizations. This is best achieved through the establishment of an Arts and Culture Council that can, among other efforts, establish a collaborative marketing campaign for the arts. In the medium term, this will require coordination with the proposed Convention and Visitors’ Bureau (CVB) or whatever entity arises to drive marketing for the city.

Assets must also be connected physically to encourage increased visitation (see Physically Connect Arts and Culture Assets Initiative in the Circulation Report). At the same time, the City should strive toward developing new assets to help further make Trenton a destination for history, art, and culture.

Since arts and culture could be a significant economic driver for downtown and a focus of one of the Guiding Principles, the City should evaluate the feasibility of expanding staff capacities to assist the arts and culture community with making Trenton a destination for history, art, and culture as well as dedicating funding to support tourism. Dedicating City staff to this effort will not only speed up the process

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

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

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

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

and improve coordination but will also demonstrate to stakeholders that the City is committed to making Trenton a destination for arts and culture.

From a regulatory perspective, the City must work to align its housing and economic development policies with its regulations. Among other efforts, this will require zoning for affordable live-work and/or studio space and update applicable redevelopment plans.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development¹⁰**
- ▶ **Downtown¹¹**
- ▶ **Overall Housing¹²**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing¹³**

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

- ▶ **Arts and Culture Staffing**
- ▶ **Arts and Culture Council**
- ▶ **Convention and Visitors' Bureau (CVB)**
- ▶ **Dedicated Funding Source for Promoting Tourism**
- ▶ **Land Development Ordinance Update**
- ▶ **Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton**
- ▶ **New Cultural Assets**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Plans Review and Update**

E. RETAIL INITIATIVES

1 | SUPPORT AND EXPAND DOWNTOWN RETAIL

The City finalized the *Trenton Citywide Economic Market Study* in 2015, which provides a valuable tool to the City for making strategic decisions regarding the investment of resources that will improve economic development. According to the Market Study, Trenton's downtown retail market exhibits significant gaps in retail opportunity due to both market conditions and negative perceptions of Trenton. As a result, shoppers either don't seek amenities in the city or are forced to go outside the city due to market limitations. However, this gap creates a variety of immediate retail opportunities for downtown Trenton, including retailers who provide service in the categories of food and beverage (grocers and convenience stores) and general merchandise.

This initiative is aimed at capitalizing on the retail opportunities that exist in Downtown Trenton to fulfill the goal of creating a vibrant downtown commercial district while filling vacant commercial space. Immediate downtown retail opportunities include grocers, convenience stores, personal services, and general

merchandise stores. Opportunities for new niche retailers and restaurants will increase as downtown visitation, arts and culture, and residential activity increases as well.

To ensure that the goal of vibrant retail areas is satisfied, and a retail expansion strategy throughout Trenton is successful, it will be important for the City to provide assistance to new and existing business owners and empower them with the resources necessary to start and sustain their businesses. Moreover, the City should create a retail space inventory that identifies all vacant ground-floor properties throughout the downtown area. This database can provide prospective business owners with a one-stop shop for identifying new spaces. If the City partners with a retail recruitment firm or commercial broker to identify and contact appropriate retailers for downtown Trenton, the City and its partners can effectively play matchmaker between businesses and property owners. A pop-up storefront program may provide opportunities to new businesses interested in opening downtown but hesitant to fully invest.

The City should also seek to capture economic impact from residents, workers, event goers, and arts and culture tourists by developing a signature retail and restaurants program. This cluster must be driven by the assessed desires of the community, must be of high quality in terms of both product and service, and must be unique (or near unique) to the city to assist with the placemaking and niche branding that comes with signature clusters. A downtown restaurant fund could strengthen such an effort. Nonetheless, the City should be cognizant of the current issues facing downtown: without more residents living in the area, retail and restaurants will continue to struggle. As such, the City must coordinate this effort with the Expand Downtown Market-Rate Housing Initiative.

Overall, the growth and expansion of downtown retail will provide services to residents, workers, and visitors, while creating new business and job opportunities for residents. This initiative should involve coordinating efforts with the Trenton Downtown Association and Greater Trenton.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development¹⁴**
- ▶ **Downtown¹⁵**

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

- ▶ **Downtown Retail Space Database**
- ▶ **Downtown Restaurant Fund**
- ▶ **Façade Improvement Program**
- ▶ **Retail Recruitment Program**
- ▶ **Pop-Up Storefront Program**
- ▶ **Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton**

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

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

- ▶ **Signature Restaurants and Retail Program**
- ▶ **Technical Assistance Program for Retailers**
- ▶ **Urban Enterprise Zone Program**

F. ANCHOR INSTITUTION INITIATIVES

1 | LEVERAGE DOWNTOWN'S LARGEST ECONOMIC ANCHORS

The large employment anchors in the downtown - the State of New Jersey, the City of Trenton, Thomas Edison State University and Mercer County Community College's (MCCC) James Kearney Campus - are important downtown institutions and drivers for economic development. Staff, faculty, and students of these institutions are customers, as are their visitors, all of whom contribute significantly to the downtown economy. Colleges support retailers, service businesses, and hotels. They can also supply student residents to support these entities further. State and City employees are downtown customers, and potential future downtown residents who will further expand the downtown market for goods and services and they are a key component of the Downtown economy and an important part of its growth potential.

In addition, indirect economic benefits of these institutions can include spin-off businesses affiliated with the colleges and encourage additional private investment in the downtown office market, leading to additional employment opportunities. The potential expansion of educational offerings at MCCC downtown could amount to even greater economic opportunities. The City should ensure that downtown Trenton leverages these opportunities. The city must work with the colleges to identify opportunities to create downtown student housing, student life amenities, and to align their long-term development goals with the City's master plan. Moreover, these partnerships should push to encourage other educational institutions to develop Downtown satellite campuses. For this to take shape, the City will need to demonstrate it can be an effective and efficient development partner. As such, it will have to implement changes to the City's development application review process for efficiency, effectiveness, and a predictable and transparent approval process.

The City must also create partnerships with state and county officials to identify, agree on, and resolve issues that impede downtown and waterfront vibrancy as part of the Waterfront Reclamation and Redevelopment planning process. Moreover, the City must encourage further consolidation and concentration of state offices downtown (see Encourage Further Consolidating and Concentration of State Offices Downtown Initiative). The City must also work with the state to re-establish and promote the Live Where You Work Trenton program.

Finally, the City should work with all institutional partners to identify how they can support local retailers and restaurants and what impediments exists to employees

patronizing local retailers and restaurants.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development**¹⁶
- ▶ **Downtown**¹⁷

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

- ▶ **Academic Institutions Partnership**
- ▶ **Downtown Strategic Development Strategy**
- ▶ **Live Where You Work Program**
- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process Audit**
- ▶ **Waterfront Reclamation and Redevelopment Strategic Plan**

^{16.} Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents

^{17.} Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Jersey Region

G. DEVELOPING KEY PHYSICAL ASSETS

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.

The City should consider several sites around the Transit Center 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 District 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).

- 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. *All of Trenton's neighborhoods will have no abandoned housing units, with vacancy rates equal to or better than those of Mercer County*
- 20. *Trenton will have a strong housing market and will be perceived as a choice location for residency*
- 21. *Trenton will continue to provide its regional fair share of affordable housing*
- 22. *Trenton's downtown and waterfront will be the economic center of Mercer County and the Central Jersey Region*

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. 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 on the City's website.

In addition, the Education and Workforce Development Report noted that there might be an opportunity to establish a shared makerspace near the Transit Center. This space 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.

In all scenarios, the City or the master developer will have to conduct a full build-out analysis of the train station to identify the infrastructure improvement that will be necessary to support the development. This buildout analysis will aid the City in assessing infrastructure needs as part of the Northeast Corridor Bridge Crossings Improvements (also known as the Three Bridges Project).

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Housing¹⁸**
- ▶ **Vacancy and Abandonment¹⁹**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing²⁰**
- ▶ **Affordable Housing²¹**
- ▶ **Downtown²²**

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

- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Development Opportunities (Developer Resource Portal)**
- ▶ **Align Zoning with Housing Policy**
- ▶ **Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan Review**
- ▶ **Design Guidelines**
- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process**
- ▶ **Five-Year Tax Abatement and Exemption Ordinance**
- ▶ **Live Where You Work Program**
- ▶ **Live, Work, Visit Trenton Marketing Campaign**
- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Development Opportunities (Developer Resource Portal)**
- ▶ **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**

2 | RECLAIM AND REDEVELOP THE WATERFRONT

Currently, Trenton’s waterfront is overwhelmed by a sea of mostly state-owned parking lots and Nj 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 State is currently using the area for surface parking, and this use will need to find a new home. As such, this effort is closely linked to the **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, the City should add actions from that plan to this initiative.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Multi-modal Transportation²³**
- ▶ **Land Use and Transportation Connection²⁴**
- ▶ **Overall Economic Development²⁵**
- ▶ **Overall Housing²⁶**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing²⁷**
- ▶ **Natural and Cultural Resources²⁸**

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

23. Trenton residents and visitors will characterize the City as a walkable and vibrant area with a high quality of life, including access to high quality 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.

24. 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

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

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

30. Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways

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

31. Trenton will attract employers to its industrial areas that generate comparatively high rates of job opportunities

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**

H. INDUSTRIAL AREA INITIATIVES

Strategies must also focus on Trenton’s industrial areas. The City must consolidate industrial parcels and market them to attract industries with regional strength to Trenton. The City already has a strong industrial workforce, and if the City can properly assemble land and market it, the City will likely attract new businesses to Trenton. If successful, the City will see increase tax revenues and more money in the pocketbooks of residents. In turn, this will make neighborhood retail more viable and give the City more revenues to invest. With an emphasis on supporting the growth and expansion of environmentally-friendly industries, Trenton has the potential of becoming a green manufacturing city.

1 | NURTURE A CITY-BASED INDUSTRIAL WORKFORCE TO ATTRACT INDUSTRY

With its manufacturing legacy, Trenton’s industrial workforce remains relatively strong in several parts of the city. To achieve the goal of having a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities while attracting new business development to the city, Trenton should nurture a city-based industrial workforce that aligns and responds to current and future manufacturing skill demands. Implementation of this initiative should focus on fostering partnerships and connections between government agencies, businesses, and educators to match needs with training. As such, the City should include industrial businesses in the Workforce Task Force to ensure that manufacturing is a viable career path for Trenton residents. Including them will help the City and its education partners to work with manufacturers to assess Trenton’s workforce needs.

The City should also be working with prospective employees to ensure they are aware of the job opportunities that fit their skills. As a result, this initiative is closely connected to the Job and Career Pathways initiative identified in the Education and Workforce Development Report. This will include supporting training and educational programs that match skill development with local business needs while recruiting businesses that match Trenton’s workforce skills.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development²⁹**
- ▶ **Workforce Development³⁰**
- ▶ **Industrial³¹**

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

- ▶ **Career and Technical Education Programming**
- ▶ **First Source Hiring Program**
- ▶ **Mentorship Program**
- ▶ **Regional Workforce-Education Partnership**
- ▶ **Trenton Central High School Small Learning Communities Program**
- ▶ **Workforce Alignment Policy**
- ▶ **Workforce Marketing Program**
- ▶ **Workforce Task Force**

2 | CREATE DEVELOPMENT SITES THAT MEET MODERN INDUSTRIAL NEEDS

This initiative improves opportunities for and facilitates large-scale redevelopment in Trenton’s industrial areas to help create a more sustainable diverse economy in the city with new employment opportunities. It is a combined effort to make land available specifically for industrial development and its unique infrastructure requirements, make it known that the available land exists, assist with acquiring the land, and facilitate the land development process. To do this, the City must acquire and assemble lots to create parcels larger than 60,000 SF, and ensure those parcels have adequate parking and good highway access. The City must also make it known – through marketing efforts - that the available land exists, and ensure that its regulations facilitate the land development process. The availability of the NJ Real Estate Impact Loan program may be particularly advantageous, in part because the low-interest loan can be used for site acquisition, demolition, and environmental remediation. This program provides an opportunity for a public-private partnership with large industrial developers who can access these loans.

To carry this out, the City must encourage the redevelopment of key parcels in the vicinity of Route 1 and New York Avenue targeted for industrial development. Many redevelopment opportunities exist in this vicinity, including a portion of Capital Health’s 750 Brunswick Avenue campus, which has a surplus of land from underutilized parking lots and abuts vacant/underutilized properties along New York Avenue. This area would be ideal to accommodate more traditional light industrial users, such as recyclers and warehouse companies, as well as med/tech companies, small manufacturers, and startups. In addition, the completion of the Oak Street Corridor Project would provide improved access to Route 1 and creates the potential for a regional freight center. As a result, the City should coordinate this initiative with the Improve Network Connectivity Initiative identified in the Circulation Report.

More generally, creating development sites will require an assessment of where development is best suited and what parcels would need to be acquired and assembled.

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

33. Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways

34. Trenton will attract employers to its industrial areas that generate comparatively high rates of job opportunities

Such an effort should include the identification of priority sites for brownfield remediation. This information must be marketed to attract desired industries and appropriate users. At the same time, the City must explore enhancing these sites through transportation improvements and modify any regulations or procedures that will inhibit development (i.e. reduce “red tape”). Those sites that the City cannot assemble should be marketed to companies that could accommodate a smaller building footprint.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development**³²
- ▶ **Workforce Development**³³
- ▶ **Industrial**³⁴

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

- ▶ **Acquisition and Assemblage Program**
- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Industrial Parcels**
- ▶ **Brownfield Action Plan Implementation**
- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process Audit**
- ▶ **Improve Network Connectivity Study**
- ▶ **Oak Street Corridor Project**
- ▶ **Redevelopment Powers & Incentives**
- ▶ **State Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program**
- ▶ **State GrowNJ Incentive Program**
- ▶ **State Real Estate Impact Loan**
- ▶ **Truck Circulation Management Program**

3 | LEVERAGE THE REGION'S 'EDS AND MEDS' INDUSTRY TO CREATE SPIN-OFF BUSINESSES

Considering the Bucks/Mercer region's employment concentration in the growing 'eds and meds' sector, Trenton is well-positioned to take advantage of this growth. A potential focus for Trenton is the med/tech industry, such as the production of medical equipment, product development, laboratory technical work, and smaller-scale distribution activity. This emphasis could strengthen and exploit some of the industry's assets that remain in Trenton, particularly Capital Health Regional Medical Center's campus at 750 Brunswick Avenue that retains many medical functions and specialties but has reduced its physical presence. This facility, with surplus capacity and land, is located in the vicinity of Route 1 and New York Avenue targeted for industrial development.

The City must focus on fostering partnerships and connections with the 'eds and meds' industry. The goal should be to identify their needs and opportunities and how

that can result in new spin-off startup businesses that can employ Trenton residents. As with the more traditional industrial development efforts, it is also fostering relationships between businesses and educators to match training with ‘eds and meds’ employer needs. As such, this initiative is linked to the implementation of the Nurture a City-Based Industrial Workforce Initiative identified in this report, and the Job and Career Pathways Initiative identified in the Education and Workforce Development Report. Specifically, the City will need to support the effort to match prospective businesses with appropriate employees who have the skills they need. This will require a partnership between ‘eds and meds’ industry leaders to assess employment and production needs that can be fulfilled in Trenton.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development³⁵**
- ▶ **Workforce Development³⁶**
- ▶ **Industrial³⁷**

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

- ▶ **Career and Technical Education Programming**
- ▶ **First Source Hiring Program**
- ▶ **Grow NJ Assistance Program**
- ▶ **Mentorship Program**
- ▶ **Microenterprise Technical Support Program**
- ▶ **Regional Workforce-Education Partnership**
- ▶ **Startup and Maker’s Plan**
- ▶ **State Small & Midsize Business Incentive Programs**
- ▶ **Trenton Central High School Small Learning Communities Program**
- ▶ **Workforce Alignment Policy**
- ▶ **Workforce Marketing Program**
- ▶ **Workforce Task Force**

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

36. Trenton’s diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways

37. Trenton will attract employers to its industrial areas that generate comparatively high rates of job opportunities

4 | ADVANCE FOOD PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION INDUSTRIES

Based on the city’s street network, central location, close proximity to local farms, and industrial base, the city could be an ideal location to re-introduce a centralized food production and distribution network, creating a “Trenton food hub.” The success and expansion of food manufacturers like City Beef, Case Pork Roll, and Muirhead Foods, the commercial kitchen at Cherry Street Kitchen, and the Trenton Farmers Market located just outside the city limits in Lawrence Township, indicate that this is already happening informally. With support, food production industries could take advantage of the city’s relatively inexpensive utilities and water capacity (see Capitalize on Trenton’s Relatively Inexpensive Energy Resources and Water Capacity), as well as

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

39. Trenton will attract employers to its industrial areas that generate comparatively high rates of job opportunities

the above-mentioned infrastructure and locational advantages. This could lead to a concentration of food production companies in Trenton which would reduce costs and improve efficiencies (also known as an agglomeration economy). Such efforts could be further exploited to produce spin-off industries, such as the production of energy from food waste or be used to support new farmers market and/or a new downtown fresh foods market.

A food hub would not only support economic development goals but would also help alleviate the barrier to fresh whole food and help advance a culture of health within Trenton. As a result, the food hub idea is mentioned in the Health and Food Systems Report.

Early steps in creating a food hub will require fostering relationships with key food production partners. Examples include partnerships with the Trenton Market Growers Co-op Association and food production businesses, as well as educators. The goal should be to streamline food distribution, concentrate food production, match businesses with development opportunities, employers with employees, and employees with training. These efforts will be supported by work on the Create Development Sites that Meet Modern Industrial Needs Initiative and the Nurture a City-Based Industrial Workforce Initiative.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development**³⁸
- ▶ **Industrial**³⁹

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

- ▶ **Food Production Organization Partnership**
- ▶ **Technical Assistance for Food Production Businesses**
- ▶ **State Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program**
- ▶ **State GrowNJ Incentive Program**
- ▶ **State Real Estate Impact Loan**

5 | CAPITALIZE ON TRENTON'S RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE ENERGY RESOURCES AND WATER CAPACITY

PSE&G provides reliable energy at highly competitive prices relative to energy suppliers in other regions of the Northeast. At the same time, Trenton's access to the Delaware River and the Delaware and Raritan Canal uniquely positions the city to take advantage of a freshwater supply. In addition, the infrastructure to use the D&R Canal for power production remains intact but non-operational. There remains the possibility to use the canal system to produce power. Therefore, Trenton could be considered an attractive location for industries with high energy and water needs. To capitalize on its energy and water resources, Trenton must market these advantages to industries outside of the region. This may include marketing Duck Island as a traditional working

waterfront for water-dependent uses. Moreover, the City should write the Trenton250 Utilities Report and continue to pursue funding and advice through the Energy Savings Improvement Program (ESIP).

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development**⁴⁰
- ▶ **Industrial**⁴¹

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

- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Low-Cost Energy**
- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Water Quality**
- ▶ **Energy Savings Improvement Program**
- ▶ **Trenton250 Utilities Report**

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

41. Trenton will attract employers to its industrial areas that generate comparatively high rates of job opportunities

I. NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL AND LARGE DEVELOPMENT AREAS INITIATIVES

The City must work diligently to strengthen its neighborhoods. An economic development strategy that neglects the city's neighborhoods is likely to produce an unbalanced economy and create tensions around gentrification. The Housing, Environment, and Circulation Reports all detail approaches for the development of strong, diverse neighborhoods that provide high-quality amenities to a variety of residents. The following economic development initiatives are intended to complement those efforts.

Neighborhood commercial efforts aim to strengthen retail opportunities in Trenton's residential areas. In these initiatives, it will be important for the City to provide services to prospective business owners that empower them with the resources necessary to start and sustain their businesses. Moreover, the City must support immigrant entrepreneurs and the growth of neighborhood-based businesses. This will allow the City to capitalize on its multicultural demographics and heritage. These neighborhood initiatives go hand-in-hand with the housing policy: a stronger housing market will strengthen adjacent retail and vice-versa. Therefore, the City must closely coordinate these efforts.

As the Housing Report discusses in detail, the City needs to initially target investment in areas most likely to be catalysts for city-wide change. And there are some neighborhoods in Trenton that are ripe for this type of investment. (See Approach Map) 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. As with housing, these initiatives call for attracting new commercial development to the areas to spur development. Furthermore, these areas will be the focus of circulation investments that seek to make them more attractive to private investment.

FIGURE 1. APPROACH MAP

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

Projects

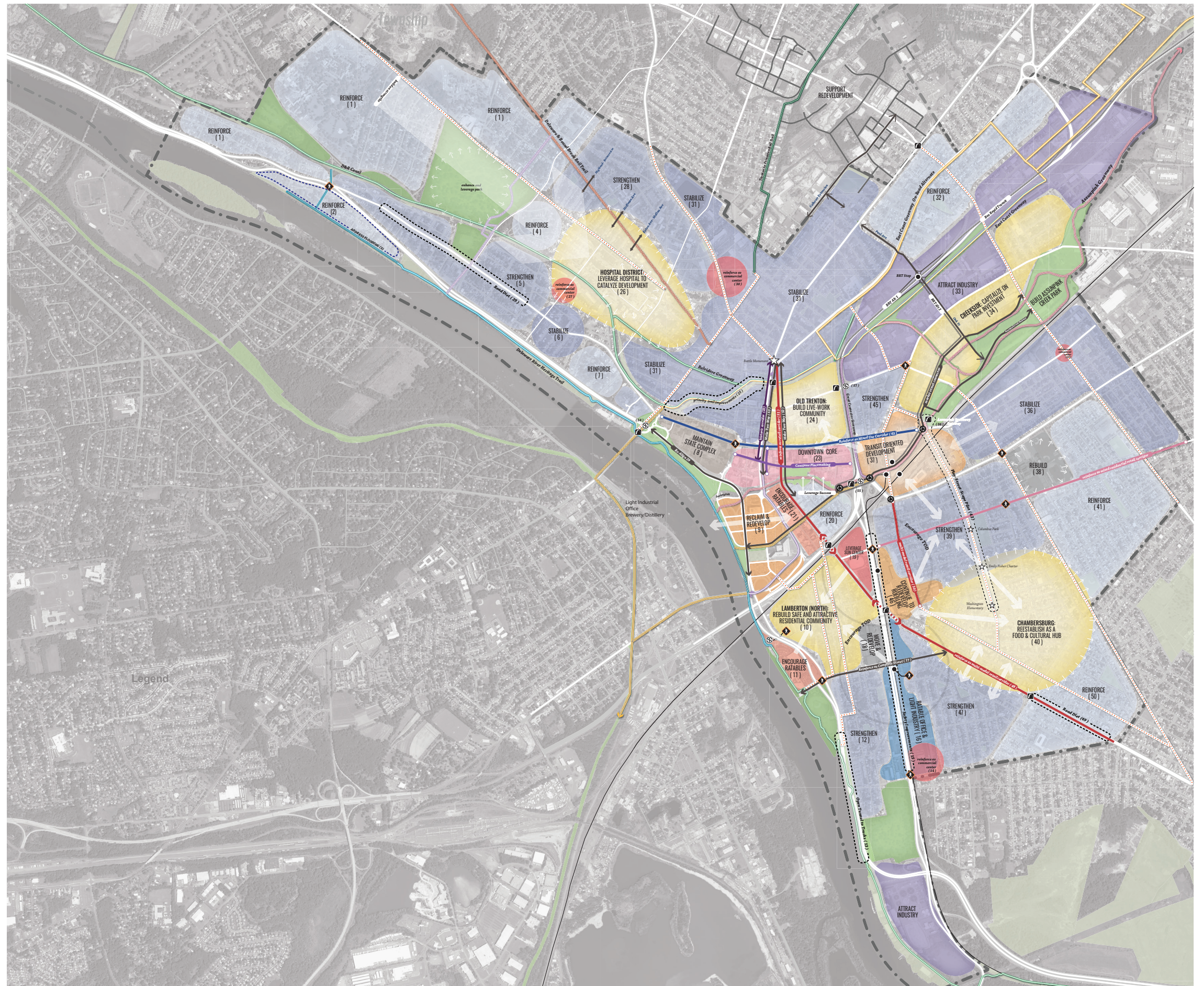
- Pedestrian Safety Improvements
- Construct Gateways
- Redesign Interchanges
- Construct Roundabouts

Markers

- Transit Stops

Trails And Streets

- New / Improved Street
- Existing Multi-Purpose Trail
- Proposed Multi-Purpose Trail
- Complete Street
- Proposed BRT



Intentionally Blank

1 | EXPAND AND SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL

This initiative is aimed taking advantage of the retail opportunities in Trenton’s residential areas, many of which are composed of various ethnic groups, to help create vibrant commercial areas in the neighborhood business districts while filling vacant commercial space. Neighborhood retail opportunities are the strongest in the West Ward, where demand exists for almost every retail category. In the North and East Wards, demand is strong for general merchandise, food service, clothing and accessories, and health and personal care stores. The goal is to support the growth of unique/niche businesses that can serve both residents and visitors.

Overall, the growth and expansion of neighborhood retail will provide needed services to residents while creating new business and job opportunities. In addition, stronger neighborhood retail services will make neighborhoods more attractive to potential and current residents, which will support the City’s effort to make Trenton a choice location for residency.

To execute this strategy, the City must identify specific locations to expand retail in each ward, especially locations capable of accommodating larger format retail (e.g. supermarket). This information should be compiled into a neighborhood retail database to help prospective businesses identify locations. Combining this with a pop-up storefront initiative in targeted neighborhood locations will likely help new business test the market in Trenton.

Moreover, the City should support existing businesses by developing a façade improvement program for commercial corridors and consider combining it with an upper floor vacancy restoration program. Focusing the Signature Restaurants and Retail Program on areas with strong potential for niche commercial growth (for example, Chambersburg) and aggressively marketing these areas may help them grow quickly.

Throughout this effort, it will be critical for the City to provide support services to existing and prospective business owners. The City should create a business development portal as a “one-stop” resource of information for new and existing businesses and a single port of entry in any dealings with the City (see Technical Assistance Program for Retailers). This portal should provide resources necessary to start and sustain business, which can range from financial to educational, physical, and programmatic resources. Equally important, the portal should include information on how to access the powerful NJ Economic Development Authority incentives for small businesses.

An important part of expanding neighborhood retail will be capitalizing on the consumer habits and entrepreneurial capabilities of Trenton’s immigrant population. Moreover, the City will need to support the growth of new businesses from within Trenton’s population. As a result, this initiative is closely linked with the Support

Growth of Neighborhood-Based Businesses and Immigrant Entrepreneurs Initiative.

Among other funding sources, the City should utilize Urban Enterprise Zone funds to assist existing businesses and support new business development, leverage the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) investments in the NRTC neighborhoods, and utilize the incentive powers in the tax abatement ordinance and the redevelopment laws to support rehabilitation and redevelopment.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development**⁴²
- ▶ **Neighborhood Commercial**⁴³

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

- ▶ **South Broad Street Commercial Corridor Plan**
- ▶ **Façade Improvement Program**
- ▶ **Pop-Up Storefront Program**
- ▶ **Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton**
- ▶ **Neighborhood Retail Space Database**
- ▶ **Retail Recruitment Program**
- ▶ **Signature Restaurants and Retail Program**
- ▶ **Technical Assistance Program for Retailers**
- ▶ **Upper Floor Restoration Program**
- ▶ **Urban Enterprise Zone Program**

2 | SUPPORT GROWTH OF “HOME-GROWN” BUSINESSES AND IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS

The City should seek new ways to assist residents interested in creating new businesses or expanding current ones. To do so, the City will have to place emphasis on supporting immigrant entrepreneurs: According to the Kauffman Foundation, immigrants are almost twice as likely to start businesses in 2012 as native-born Americans, and almost 20% of Trenton residents are Foreign Born (City Profile Report).

Overall, this initiative emphasizes fostering home-grown small business development through the sharing of resources and information, while providing existing businesses with outreach and critical ongoing support measures as well. In addition to the efforts identified in the Expand and Support Neighborhood Retail Initiative, the City should coordinate with potential economic development partners to create a microenterprise support program. This will likely require organizing the philanthropic community as a potential funding source. The City must also ensure that new businesses have information how to access the powerful NJ Economic Development Authority incentives for small businesses. These are powerful incentives that may be difficult

⁴². Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents

⁴³. Trenton will have vibrant neighborhood business districts

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

45. *Trenton will have vibrant neighborhood business districts*

for non-native English speakers to access without assistance. These efforts should be combined with a program to promote Trenton’s niche business and using that as a means of differentiating Trenton from surrounding communities.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development⁴⁴**
- ▶ **Neighborhood Commercial⁴⁵**

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

- ▶ **Microenterprise Technical Support Program**
- ▶ **Mentorship Program**
- ▶ **State Small & Midsize Business Incentive Programs**

3 | REVITALIZE LARGE CATALYTIC DEVELOPMENT SITES

Outside of the downtown, and in neighborhood areas considered catalytic in terms of potential for city-wide change, there are key sites that have significant redevelopment potential, namely the Roebing Complex and Mercer Hospital Complex.

Roebing Complex

Portions of the Roebing Complex have undergone redevelopment in the past, including the portion that contains Roebing Market. Currently, plans are underway to redevelop Block 3 of the Roebing Complex, also called the Wire Rope District. Further redevelopment of the Roebing Complex will produce a premier mixed-use residential, retail, and entertainment district with significant walking and biking connectivity to transit and downtown. At the same time, the Sun National Bank Center has not attracted associated spin-off development. Ensuring that these areas are successful will be key to revitalizing areas of Downtown, Lambertson, and Chambersburg.

Former Mercer Hospital Complex

In 2014, Capital Health sold the Mercer Hospital Complex to a private company Global Life Enterprises, which was looking to redevelop the 650,000- square-foot space into a health and wellness complex. The intent was for the campus to host a network of medical and healthcare offices that can supplement services offered at the hospitals in the area. As of 2016, the site remained vacant. To effectively drive the revitalization of the surrounding area, redevelopment of the Mercer Hospital Complex is critical. The City should work with the property owner to create a Mercer Hospital Complex Feasibility Study and Redevelopment Plan. This plan should take into consideration public/private partnerships and the housing options available in the vicinity and how such a redevelopment plan could support the City’s goals of creating strong residential neighborhoods that have a deep sense of community and history.

Implementation

To begin with, the City must create Strategic Development Plans for the Mercer Hospital Complex and the Sun National Bank Center area. This must be coordinated with efforts to aggressively advertise development opportunities in the City and to connect developers with State development and employment incentives. At the same time, the City must implement changes to the City's development application review process to promote efficiency, predictability, and transparency. This should include updates to the City's zoning ordinance as well as a review and update of its redevelopment plans. Hiring additional City staff in both Economic Development and Planning Divisions may support these efforts.

In all of the large development sites, the City must focus on creating attractive streetscapes and public spaces that emphasize these places as choice locations for businesses and residents. As major development sites, they have the opportunity to be character defining urban elements. As such, the City should be sure to develop design guidelines for new development that reinforces high-quality, urban-scale design.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development⁴⁶**
- ▶ **Neighborhood Commercial⁴⁷**
- ▶ **Overall Housing⁴⁸**
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing⁴⁹**
- ▶ **Safe City Environment⁵⁰**

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

- ▶ **Advertise & Market: Development Opportunities (Developer Resource Portal)**
- ▶ **Design Guidelines**
- ▶ **Development Application Review and Approval Process Audit**
- ▶ **Former Mercer Hospital Complex Area Strategic Development Plan**
- ▶ **State Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program**
- ▶ **State GrowNJ incentive program**
- ▶ **State Real Estate Impact Loan**
- ▶ **Sun National Bank Center Area Strategic Development Plan**

4 | ENCOURAGE MULTI-PURPOSE USE OF THE SUN NATIONAL BANK CENTER AND ARM & HAMMER PARK FOR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Sun National Bank Center and Arm & Hammer Park are underused event venues that could contribute significantly toward the goal of a more vibrant entertainment business district if used more frequently. With many colleges in the region, the venues

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

47. Trenton will have vibrant neighborhood business districts

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

49. Trenton will continue to provide its fair share of affordable housing opportunities

50. Trenton will have a safe City environment where residents are free from the hazards of land and building contamination.

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

could continue hosting various championship games for several sports, as well as host pre-season games for professional sports teams in New York and Philadelphia. While not in use for these events, the Center could be more available to the surrounding community. These are regional amenities which will most help activate the downtown.

To accomplish this, the City should create a partnership with Mercer County Improvement Authority (MCIA) to create a strategic redevelopment plan for the Sun National Bank Center. The plan should have concrete steps, accountability, and development phases. The plan should address the insularity of the Sun National Bank Center and explore possibilities to integrate its economy with the surrounding economy. To the extent possible, the City should work with MCIA and Mercer County to establish relationships with professional teams, colleges, and universities to host pre-season games and/or tournaments. Moreover, the City must promote the facilities for local organizations' events as part of its larger marketing efforts.

To capitalize on the development potential created by these venues, the City must assess the merits of a dedicated revenue for improvements and redevelopment of the arena and ballpark. This will require exploring the use of public/private partnerships for redevelopment with a transparent and efficient process.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development⁵¹**
 - The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:
 - ▶ **Advertise & Market: Development Opportunities (Developer Resource Portal)**
 - ▶ **Marketing Campaign - Live, Work, Visit Trenton**
 - ▶ **Partnership with Mercer County Improvement Authority**
 - ▶ **Sun National Bank Center Area Strategic Development Plan**

J. CITY-WIDE INITIATIVES

There are economic development initiatives that do not apply to a specific area of Trenton but impact the entire city. The following are city-wide initiatives to address access to affordable jobs and to improve overall entrepreneurship. They are designed to complement the above area-specific initiatives.

1 | PUBLIC SAFETY AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DRIVER

According to the 2011 Mayor's Economic Development Summit Survey, Crime Rate was the #1 disadvantage to Trenton's economic prosperity. Despite the crime rate and economic challenges facing Trenton, City leaders, residents, property owners, and stakeholders share a collective vision of Trenton's revitalization that builds upon the City's many assets and opportunities. This revitalization vision is addressed throughout the report. The desire is to create:

- a redeveloped waterfront,
- a skilled workforce and a well-educated citizenry for a range of local employment options,
- quality housing stock,
- a vibrant downtown,
- productive and successful industries, and
- more amenities choices such as retail, dining, arts, culture and entertainment.

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

53. Trenton will have a safe environment where residents are free from the hazards of land and building contamination.

Critical to creating that vision is **the cultivation of a safer city in both reality and perception**. The first step in achieving that goal is the creation of a comprehensive report on the City’s current public safety issues that:

- assess current resources;
- analyzes existing community and City programs;
- identifies current crime data and performance measures and how this data is analyzed;
- expresses realistic, measurable community-driven goals;
- provides strong recommendations for moving forward that considers best practices and evidence-based practices tailored to Trenton’s environment;
- recommends any new initiatives, programs, and services that can effectively address public safety issues;
- has performance measures and standards; and
- recommends structure and/or environments to enhance customer service, tracking of complaints as well as non-emergency and emergency calls.

Additionally, this effort should look at the natural and built environment including complete streets, the stabilization and re-use of vacant lots and properties, clean neighborhoods, and healthy homes.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development**⁵²
- ▶ **Safe Environment**⁵³

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

- ▶ **Trenton250’s Public Safety Report**

2 | CREATE AFFORDABLE AND EASY ACCESS TO GOOD-PAYING REGIONAL JOBS AND AMENITIES

To accomplish the goal of having a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents, Trenton workers must have adequate transportation to get to their places of employment. Approximately 2/3 of Trenton residents leave the city for work, and 30% of residents do not have a car.

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

55. Trentonians will have reliable and affordable transportation options to local and regional destinations

56. Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways

57. 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

Therefore, this initiative focuses on creating the necessary connections to jobs, whether they are located in the city or outside. This is addressed in the Circulation Report as well.

To execute this initiative the City must work with area organizations, Mercer County, and the Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association, and regional employers to expand workforce shuttles to employment centers outside Trenton. At the same time, the City should provide information on regional employment opportunities with existing transit access.

A BRT connection into Trenton could improve the connection between the downtown and suburban destinations with a transfer location just off of Route 1. As such, transit access to suburban destinations can be accomplished by working with the Central Jersey Transportation Forum to ensure that the City of Trenton is represented in their planning for the Route 1 BRT. The City should coordinate shuttle service to final destinations with Greater Mercer TMA.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development**⁵⁴
- ▶ **Job Access**⁵⁵
- ▶ **Workforce Development**⁵⁶
- ▶ **Land Use and Transportation Connection**⁵⁷

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

- ▶ **Partnership to Connect Trenton to Suburban Job Centers**
- ▶ **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Advocacy/Partnership**

3 | **INCUBATE A STARTUP AND MAKERS' CULTURE**

A makers' culture can be described as a "learn-through-doing" culture that breeds an entrepreneurial innovation spirit with an emphasis on an informal, networked, peer-led, and shared learning community. Such cultures include artisans, software developers, food producers, researchers, and those interested in open technology. The City can help foster a successful climate for entrepreneurs and makers to create an innovation identity for Trenton by providing new companies the necessary resources to develop their products, creating opportunities to interact with potential investors and grantors, and offering affordable rental space.

The first step in developing this initiative should be the creation of a Startup and Maker's Plan that would identify current conditions, opportunities, and specific implementation actions to foster a startup and makers' culture in Trenton. Next, the City must identify and establish partnerships with regional universities and research centers to develop and facilitate startup businesses. These partnerships can be the basis for creating a mentorship program that will attract entrepreneurs as well as business

incubators and accelerators. Moreover, the City must create opportunities whereby potential makers can be trained in the required skills and given access to the necessary means of production. As such, this initiative must be coordinated with the Job and Career Pathways Initiative identified in the Education and Workforce Development Report.

Such an effort would be supported by a partnership with local companies that have an interest in entrepreneurship. At the same time, makers cultures are often grown from the ground up, and the City should support community groups focused around making and the arts.

Finally, the City should utilize incentives and leverage partnerships to encourage the creation of a collaborative lab for prototyping, testing of products, and educational opportunities. This could be done by offering tax credits to for-profit companies that operate within specific targeted industries in a specific location, similar to Pennsylvania's Keystone Innovation Zone program. This should be complemented with efforts to provide development bonuses to private developers who create co-working spaces near transit. As a result, the City must align the updates to the Land Development Ordinance as well as its redevelopment plans with this initiative.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Overall Economic Development⁵⁸**
- ▶ **Workforce Development⁵⁹**

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

- ▶ **Academic Institutions Partnership**
- ▶ **Career and Technical Education Programming**
- ▶ **Land Development Ordinance Update**
- ▶ **Marketing Campaign: Live, Work, Visit Trenton**
- ▶ **Mentorship Program**
- ▶ **Microenterprise Technical Support Program**
- ▶ **Regional Workforce-Education Partnership**
- ▶ **Startup and Maker's Plan**
- ▶ **State Small & Midsize Business Incentive Programs**
- ▶ **Trenton250's Technology Report**
- ▶ **Workforce Alignment Policy**
- ▶ **Workforce Task Force**

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

59. Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways



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