



City of Trenton

LAND USE PLAN

ADOPTED BY THE TRENTON PLANNING BOARD
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CITY OF TRENTON
Douglas H. Palmer, Mayor

Division of Planning
Department of Housing and Development

CITY OF TRENTON

JANUARY 1999

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*In fond & respectful memory
of
B. Budd Chavooshian*

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PREFACE

The City of Trenton's Land Use Plan is first and foremost a guide to issues relating to the physical structure of the city. While it seeks to answer the questions of where to encourage the development of housing of different types and at different densities, commercial or industrial facilities, it must be read within a context that takes into consideration the social conditions of the community and the social and economic implications of new development and redevelopment. It is impossible to think about the future of Trenton without considering the people and the families who make up the City's neighborhoods and who are the lifeblood of the community.

The vision statement included in the 1994 *Trenton Enterprise Initiative* articulated the hopes of Trenton residents for a healthy and strong city. It is this vision which continues to inspire so many to work so hard to improve the quality of life in the City of Trenton:

Our vision for Trenton as we build bridges into the 21st Century is based on our passionate belief in the bright possibilities for our future and the great strengths we already enjoy. We see a vital and sustainable community filled with people who celebrate their diversity and heritage. We enjoy safe, flourishing, and harmonious neighborhoods marked by attractive housing, beautiful parks, busy shopping areas, and a wide range of recreational and cultural opportunities. Our children are the center of our focus, and our families are strong and healthy. We are life-long learners, striving to achieve our full potential within a supportive and economically vibrant community. Our city is open to the world as a crossroad of government, business and culture that once again "makes what the world takes."

It is to the spirit of that vision that this land use plan is dedicated.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Trenton 1998 Land Use Plan is organized into five main sections which consist of the following: Introduction, Special Planning Areas, Existing Land Use, Proposed Land Uses, and Related Issues. Each section is summarized briefly below.

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of the Land Use Plan is to articulate a vision for the future of development and/or redevelopment in the City of Trenton. The Land Use Plan is intended to be implemented as the City's official plan and basis for zoning regulations and other redevelopment initiatives, in accordance with the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq. The City's objectives and principles for the Land Use Plan include encouraging appropriate and desirable development to take place in the capital city while maintaining Trenton's historic fabric and architectural resources.

SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS:

In a fully developed city such as Trenton, the land use plan must deal with issues related to the redevelopment of deteriorated and/or obsolete areas and the preservation of historic neighborhoods and architectural resources. As such, this section is the core of the Land Use Plan and addresses the different visions for, and the redevelopment and land use issues of, twenty-five selected geographical sites or "special planning areas." Specific issues and problems are identified, area by area, and recommendations for planning and development actions are presented. The twenty-five special planning areas are divided into eight groups which include: Downtown, Roebling Complex, Canal Banks, Industrial Areas, North Ward, West Ward, South Ward and East Ward.

Some of the recommendations addressed in this section include dealing with vacant properties, implementing housing rehabilitation, constructing new housing, meeting commercial development needs, supporting viable industrial areas, identifying open space opportunities, identifying parking problems and working with the community. Vacant property and housing development issues are addressed in relationship to several special planning areas, particularly within the Canal Banks district where the City has developed a homeownership plan to construct more than 250 owner-occupied homes through rehabilitation of scattered vacant units and new construction. Housing development issues are central to many other special planning areas as well, and include, for example, discussion

of the historic restoration of homes in the Clinton Park/Ewing-Carroll neighborhood and the infill development of homes in the East Trenton neighborhood, both located in the North Ward. Similarly in the West Ward, the focus is on providing support for housing projects in the Hermitage Ave./West End neighborhood and changing industrial land uses to allow for housing development along Oakland Street.

The issues of commercial and retail development are addressed in the context of several special planning areas each with its own particular meaning and significance. In the General Downtown Trenton discussion, addressing commercial/retail issues means considering opening up the Trenton Commons and ensuring sufficient public parking is provided. In South Trenton, a reconfiguration of the Cass Street and Route 29 intersection is recommended to allow for commercial development adjacent to the baseball stadium. In Chambersburg, the main commercial interest is to support the restaurant and food industry which requires adequate parking, signage, and streetscape upgrades.

Parking issues are touched upon in almost every special planning area as parking is central to all uses and is often provided in surface lots at the expense of the existing streetscape. In particular, the provision of sufficient and attractive parking is at issue in the redevelopment of both the Roebling Complex and the Trenton Train Station neighborhood. In Old Trenton, the rehabilitation of large old townhouses into multi-family apartments has created a new parking demand in an area previously largely abandoned. Along South Broad Street, as in Chambersburg and Downtown, public parking is needed to support local business activity.

The identification of open space opportunities is an important purpose of the land use plan. Recommendations are made for open space development in several special planning areas. Some of these include carving out new green plazas in the planned Magic Marker neighborhood, developing an overall greenway and recreation plan for the Assunpink Creek Park (otherwise known as the freight yards) located in the East Trenton special planning area, and converting a junk yard located next to an elementary school into a major new park on East State Street in the Wilbur/East State Street area.

BACKGROUND CONDITIONS AND RELATED ISSUES:

This section provides a brief background for understanding Trenton's existing urban land use patterns and its decline throughout much of the last half of the twentieth century. The existing patterns and current conditions of the City's residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, downtown, industrial, and open space resources are discussed. Related Issues includes discussion of a number of topics related to, and having an impact on, the City's land use, redevelopment, and planning policies. These include:

- * Parking and Transportation
- * Natural Conditions
- * Utility Services
- * Airport Hazard Areas

The parking and circulation section attempts to bring a number of parking issues identified throughout the plan together under one section and presents the recommendation that all large-scale surface parking lots be considered temporary. The natural conditions section briefly discusses the City's topography, floodplains and wetlands. The floodplain issues in particular have an impact on how certain areas will be redeveloped, particularly the freight yards. The plan also determines that neither the City's water supply nor its sewage capacity appear to be limiting factors in the City's future development. Finally the plan states that the City of Trenton is not located with an airport hazard area as defined by the State of New Jersey.

PROPOSED LAND USES:

This section sets land use designations for the entire city. The land use designations are illustrated in the attached Land Use Map. The land use map and accompanying recommendations represent the City of Trenton's Official Land Use Plan and Map, and are the legal basis for any land use or zoning regulations made by the City. The majority of the proposed land use designations correspond to existing uses, as the plan is intended to reinforce positive land use trends. However there are specific instances, such as in the case of the Oakland Street and Roebling Complex planning areas, where the recommendations are to convert land use patterns from the historical, but obsolete, industrial uses. The land use designations in this plan also address issues of density or what might be considered the "intensity of use." For instance, there are five residential land use designations included in this plan which range from "large lot single-family detached houses", to "single-family row houses" to "multi-family apartment houses." The proposed land use categories and examples of applicable neighborhoods are listed in the table on the following page.

PROPOSED LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Land Use Designation

Example

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Very Low Density Residential (Large Lot Single-family Detached) | a. Hiltonia, Glen Afton |
| b. Low Density Residential (Single-Family Detached) | b. Berkeley Sq., Hillcrest |
| c. Low-Medium Density Residential (Single-Family Semi-Detached (Twins)) | c. Villa Park |
| d. Medium Density Residential (Single-Family Attached (Rowhouses)) | d. Mill Hill, Chambersburg |
| e. High Density Residential (Multi-Family (Apartments)) | e. 200 Block of Academy St. |
| f. Multi-family Residential and Office Mixed Use | f. W. State St. between Prospect and Overbrook |
| g. Neighborhood Commercial & Residential Mixed | g. Part of Hermitage Ave. |
| h. Regional Commercial & Residential Mixed-Use (Shopping Centers) | h. New York/N. Olden Ave. intersection |
| i. Low Density Downtown (Mixed-Use) | i. Warren St. historic district |
| j. Medium Density Downtown (Mixed-Use) | j. Trenton Train Station |
| k. High Density Downtown (Mixed-Use) | k. The Trenton Commons |
| l. Industrial Use | l. Muirhead Ave., New York Ave. |
| m. Open Space/Recreation (Parks and Playgrounds) | m. Stacy Park/Assumpink Greenway |

Most of these proposed land use designations correspond to zoning districts that are already established in the Trenton Zoning and Land Development Ordinance. However, the Proposed Land Uses section also includes recommendations for the designation of land use types that could result in the creation of six new zoning districts. These recommendations are summarized below:

1. High Density Residential (Multi-Family/Apartments). The recommendation is to create a new zoning district that would permit all residential uses including multi-family housing, but not commercial uses. Currently, the City's zoning ordinance permits multi-family housing only where commercial uses are permitted as well. This new district is needed in order to identify the multi-family housing planning objectives for areas such as in Old Trenton on Academy Street and along part of Greenwood Avenue, as well as to correspond to existing multi-family complexes where appropriate.
2. Regional Commercial & Residential Mixed-Use (Shopping Centers). The recommendation is to create a new commercial and residential mixed use zoning district that would accommodate large-scale commercial areas requiring significant public parking. Currently, the zoning ordinance has only a neighborhood commercial/residential zoning designation that does not differentiate between the traditional linear commercial corridors like those found on Hermitage Avenue and South Broad Street, and the supermarket-anchored shopping centers with their greater surface parking demands such as at the Roebling Complex.
- 3,4,5. Low, Medium and High Density Downtown. The recommendation is to create three downtown land use designations to differentiate downtown areas by height. This recommendation is especially important for the downtown historic districts. Currently, the zoning ordinance refers to the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC) Plan for height restrictions in the downtown. The Low Density Downtown designation is recommended to have a four-story height limit and includes the State House, Warren Street, and part of the Academy-Hanover Historic Districts. The Medium Density Downtown designation is recommended to have a six-story height limit and includes the State Street Square III and City Hall areas. The High Density Downtown designation, which would apply only to State Street between Willow and Stockton Streets, is recommended to have a ten-story height limit.
6. Open Space/Recreation (Parks and Playgrounds). The recommendation is to create an open space zoning designation that would identify existing public parks and open space as well as those which are proposed, including the Assunpink Creek Park Greenway. The current zoning ordinance absorbs parks and playgrounds into the nearest adjacent zoning area, giving the impression that Cadwalader Park is available for residential development and that the Calhoun Street Park is an industrial area.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE OF THE LAND USE PLAN: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The purpose of the City of Trenton's 1998 Land Use Plan is to set in place a vision and a framework of how development should occur in the City of Trenton during the the next several years. At its heart, the vision for the City of Trenton's future is to once again become a whole, healthy, city as expressed in the *Trenton Enterprise Initiative* Vision Statement quoted previously. Accordingly, rather than limit the discussion to land uses in the conventional sense, the greater part of this Land Use Plan is devoted to a discussion of what we have entitled Special Planning Areas, areas in which a broad range of policy issues, many requiring the initiative of the public sector, must be addressed.

In these Special Planning Areas, many issues are addressed that could perhaps be better labeled *redevelopment issues*, as opposed to pure *land use issues*. Redevelopment and land use issues must be addressed simultaneously in order for the City to truly become what its citizens yearn for, and for Trenton to realize its vision of the future. While that vision must be grounded in realistic expectations for growth and development, it must force us to reach beyond what we know we can achieve, setting high standards and identifying revitalization goals that will not be easily attained. The Trenton 1998 Land Use Plan attempts to serve both purposes at once. It will serve as a realistic, positive, forward-thinking, enlightened and visionary map for the future.

To frame such a vision, it is important to establish the setting in which the City currently stands. At the end of the twentieth century, Trenton finds itself, for the first time in several decades, at the cusp of genuine economic revitalization. The type and number of development projects that have been recently developed, are currently underway or are on the drawing boards, taken together, have the potential to dramatically alter Trenton's image as a drab government center with few popular attractions, old rather than historic. These projects include Waterfront Park, bringing nearly 500,000 visitors from throughout the region to baseball games and musical events; Kat-Man-Du, the new 400+ seat nightclub and restaurant on the river; the two new museums that are planned for the Roebling Complex, the new Hotel and Conference Center that will connect to the newly renovated War Memorial Auditorium; and the new multi-purpose arena for hockey and basketball under construction along Route 129 in the Roebling Complex. Less glamorous but also important indicators of Trenton's resurgence include the City's active environmental remediation activities which have resulted in the development of new industrial facilities on the long vacant Crane Site located on North Clinton Avenue and the relocation of several businesses to the old Hill Refrigeration complex, bringing new manufacturing industries into the city for the first time in many decades.

While Trenton may never again be the manufacturing center it once was, the City still has several key attributes, including an excellent regional location with a high degree of accessibility, the relative affordability of the City's real estate, attractive and stable residential neighborhoods, a plentiful and eager workforce, a rich historical heritage and the presence of State and County government. Based on those assets, the City is moving forward with economic revitalization efforts to build the city's role as a destination for sports, entertainment, culture, heritage tourism and the arts. The entertainment value of the Mercer County Waterfront Park, the Mercer County Arena, the renovated War Memorial Auditorium, and the new hotel/conference center will become an engine for additional investment in the City. Combined with the City's ability to build on its history and cultural assets, and its position as the center of state government, these facilities will become the new pillars upon which Trenton's emerging tourism industry will be based. This evolving identity as a regional "entertainment center" will provide support for the thriving restaurants in Chambersburg and new retail businesses in downtown. The City will become recognized as a center for arts and artists which will promote interest and investment in Trenton's historic and cultural resources. This in turn will bring new dollars and energy into Trenton's neighborhoods where attractive new and rehabilitated housing for all income groups will attract families and households to move to the City. Ultimately this effort will enhance the already strong sense of community felt throughout Trenton's neighborhoods.

While much of this vision may include possible proposals for new commercial and entertainment development in different parts of the City, it also demands that the City preserve and maintain the historic character and scale of the downtown and the residential neighborhoods that make Trenton unique. As a central element of its vision of the future, Trenton must restore and preserve its historic character even as it remakes itself into a modern city with cultural and entertainment activities appropriate for the 21st century.

Despite these efforts, however, one must recognize that the reality, as Trenton approaches the new century, remains a difficult and problematic one. Many city neighborhoods continue to be plagued by vacant and boarded up houses, downtown Trenton closes down at 5 PM, the City's public school system remains a concern, crime and drug activity remains widespread, and the economic conditions and social needs of Trenton's least well-off citizens are certainly no less dire than in the recent past. The disparities between the poverty that exists in cities like Trenton and the affluence of nearby suburban communities have become all the more extreme.

In Trenton, as elsewhere, the most visible urban revitalization efforts have yet to have a significant impact on improving the lives of the neediest residents. The City of Trenton recognizes that the creation of true economic opportunity for city residents is in many ways more complex than the creation of physical improvements or discrete economic development projects. As a guide to physical development first and foremost, this Land Use Plan does not attempt to identify or address all the human needs that must be addressed in order to bring about the provision of economic opportunity for all. If the social issues are not addressed, however many physical changes are made to the city's fabric, the vision can never be fully realized.

B. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

[as required by the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A.40:55D-28(b)(1)]

The objectives of Trenton's Land Use Plan are as follows:

- To encourage the construction of appropriate and desirable development projects through the designation of permitted land uses, and the provision of appropriate public sector incentives.
- To discourage development incompatible with existing uses, and to identify new uses for areas currently incompatible with their surroundings.
- To identify appropriate land use densities for new development.
- To integrate the many land use and redevelopment policies established in various redevelopment plans into one document.
- To address land use issues related to obsolete industrial areas; to identify areas that have changed and are in transition and to propose alternative uses.
- To create a cohesive and well-grounded framework for the land use decisions that must be made in order to further the physical, economic, and social revitalization of the community.

Central principles underlying Trenton's Land Use Plan include the following:

- Urban development planning needs to be both visionary and pragmatic.
- Planning that is comprehensive, citizen based, collaborative, coordinated, equitable and based on capacity analysis is an essential prerequisite to successful urban development and redevelopment.
- Further development in the City of Trenton should generally follow established development patterns to achieve consistency and compatibility of various land uses. While large-scale development areas can introduce a variety of different land uses, site specific small-scale development should be compatible with surrounding or adjacent land uses.
- Major industrial areas in the city, where not compatible with surrounding residential uses, should be retained and strengthened to provide employment opportunities.

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- The neighborhood character of the City's residential areas should be preserved. Redevelopment should take place with the minimum disruption of the lives of residents.
 - Surface parking in the downtown, whether privately or publicly owned, should be regarded as a temporary land use, and long-term plans should be developed for its reuse for purposes more appropriate to a vital urban downtown.
 - Trenton must maximize the potential of its waterways as aesthetic and recreational amenities. The Delaware River, the Assumpink Creek and the Delaware and Raritan Canal can become important attractions and amenities for residents and visitors.
 - The diversity and special quality of Trenton's older buildings link the city to its rich historical heritage and give the city a unique character and identity. That quality should be protected. In order to create an urban community that works as a whole, new development should respect the built and natural environments in regard to the choices of scale and materials. Trenton's historic fabric and its historic architectural resources should be preserved.

Central assumptions made in preparation of this Land Use Plan include the following:

- Trenton may never again be the industrial giant it once was, but there are important niches that the Trenton economy can successfully fill in both the industrial and the entertainment sectors.
- By setting forth a vision for the future, an historic city such as Trenton can help guide its own redevelopment and revitalization.
- In pursuing its continued economic revitalization, Trenton can and must capitalize on its competitive advantages. These advantages include:
 - (1) A strategic location between two major metropolitan areas with its own metropolitan area population of over half a million;
 - (2) Local market demand of a currently underserved urban population;
 - (3) Proximity to regional attractions and employment centers such as academic institutions and major corporations;
 - (4) The city's identity as the capital of both the State of New Jersey and of Mercer County, and as a major health care center; and
 - (5) The human resources represented by Trenton's residents.

C. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Relationship of the Land Use Plan to other elements of the City's Master Plan

By adopting this Land Use Plan, representing the land use element of the city's Master Plan, the intent of the City of Trenton is to establish an official plan setting forth the City's vision for its future and guiding the future development and redevelopment of the city, in accordance with the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq. The Master Plan, which must include a land use plan element, is prepared and adopted by the municipal planning board.

The provisions of the Master Plan can then be implemented through the zoning and land development regulations adopted by the City Council, and by other initiatives undertaken by the municipal planning board, the city council and the administration, acting both under its general police powers and in its capacity as a redevelopment agency. Under the Municipal Land Use Law, an adopted and current Land Use Plan must be in place in order to provide the legal underpinnings to the City's land use regulations. All municipalities in the State of New Jersey must review and update their master plans every six years. The City's previous Land Use Element was adopted on April 25, 1991.

The Land Use Plan Chapter is the central element of the Master Plan since in conjunction with a statement of objectives, it can function alone as the municipal Master Plan. It is the most comprehensive element of the master plan as it is the physical framework which connects and integrates the schematic plans of the other chapters. To be meaningful other elements of the master plan must be consistent with the land use element.

The Housing Element addresses the City's efforts to meet its housing needs, which must take place in the context of the land use plan recommendations. The housing element sets forth policies and strategies dealing with the preservation, production or rehabilitation of housing and neighborhoods. The land use plan element, however, deals more specifically with the recommended location of specific residential districts and densities from which the municipal zoning ordinance is derived.

D. RELATIONSHIP OF THE CITY OF TRENTON LAND USE PLAN TO NEIGHBORING MUNICIPAL PLANS, COUNTY PLANS AND THE NEW JERSEY STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

[as required by the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28(d)]

The City of Trenton shares borders with Hamilton, Ewing, and Lawrence Townships. The areas along the municipal boundaries, on both sides of these borders, are developed in a manner that permits little or no distinction in land uses between the City and the townships. No new or different land uses are proposed which are incompatible with either existing uses or proposed land use plans of neighboring townships as set forth in township master or land use ordinances. The City has had preliminary discussions with Lawrence and Ewing Township officials to explore issues of mutual concern with respect to these areas.

The City of Trenton's Land Use Plan is compatible with Mercer County plans. In recent years, Mercer County and the City of Trenton have worked closely together on planning and redevelopment projects, a collaboration that has led to significant new investment in Trenton, including the development of a new downtown county courthouse, Waterfront Park, a new arena, and open space improvements along the Delaware Riverwalk. The planning for the South Trenton Waterfront has been a joint effort, although there are recommendations made in this plan which reflect some variation from proposed solutions presented elsewhere for that area. The City of Trenton contributed to the 1998 Mercer County Cross Acceptance Report. There are no significant conflicts between City and County's plans.

Trenton's plans and ordinances are compatible with the broad principles and specific policy objectives of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The City of Trenton's planning policies and redevelopment efforts are compatible with the State Plan's objectives to promote development in urban centers, cores and neighborhoods, build and redevelop a full range of housing opportunities, promote economic development and encourage private sector investment in urban areas, maintain and enhance the public transportation system, and encourage adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized properties.