

# CITY OF TRENTON HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN



**City of Trenton  
Department of Housing & Economic Development  
Division of Planning**

APPROVED BY:

TRENTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
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TRENTON PLANNING BOARD  
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# Historic Preservation Plan City of Trenton

## I. Executive Summary

The City of Trenton has a long and commendable experience in historic preservation. In 1972 Trenton was one of the first municipalities in New Jersey to establish a local ordinance to designate and regulate landmarks, historic sites, and historic districts. Trenton was a leader amongst municipalities in undertaking a series of historic sites surveys to identify and document older buildings, streetscapes, and districts in the 1970s and 1980s. Trenton is one of a very few municipalities in New Jersey that has a staff person to provide professional historic preservation assistance to the Landmarks Commission, the Planning Board, and the Zoning Board.

The City of Trenton currently has forty-five sites and landmarks and eight historic districts, representing several hundred historic properties designated and regulated under the local ordinance. These represent a wide range periods of Trenton's history, areas of historic significance, building types, and architectural styles. Trenton has fine examples of restoration and rehabilitation within its residential historic districts, magnificent restoration of individual landmark buildings, and distinguished examples of adaptive use of many industrial, commercial, and civic buildings scattered throughout the city.

Historic preservation has been a key component of many of the city's successful revitalization efforts over the last three decades. Yet preservation is often misunderstood. Few people understand the range of activities historic preservation encompasses or the ways in which historic preservation boosts the local economy, improves the image of the city, and contributes to the quality of life in Trenton.

The purpose of this historic preservation plan is to promote preservation and rehabilitation of buildings, sites, structures, and areas of historic and aesthetic value that reflect the cultural, social, economic, and architectural history of Trenton. The plan attempts to shed light upon the many and varied activities historic preservation encompasses. The plan recommends a series of preservation-related strategies the city should undertake to help historic preservation become a fully integral part of the planning and revitalization efforts within Trenton.

### **Overview of Plan**

The plan starts with an explanation of the differences between listing on State and National Registers and designation at the local level. It establishes criteria for local designation of landmarks and historic districts. Section III lists Trenton's designated landmarks and historic districts and provides brief descriptions of their significance. Section IV evaluates Trenton's historic sites surveys and comments on their use. Section V makes recommendations for additional designation of landmarks and historic districts and establishes priorities for designation. Section VI introduces the concept of conservation and buffer districts as alternative tools for promoting historic preservation and makes recommendations for conservation and buffer district designation. Section VII analyses Trenton's Land Use Plan and other planning/special areas issues for their impact on preservation. The last section outlines additional strategies to further historic preservation in Trenton. The goals and strategies discussed in Sections V-VIII are summarized below.

## **Goals and Strategies**

### **1. Protect historic properties and older neighborhoods from deterioration, demolition, and inappropriate alterations by both private and public sector actions.**

- Revise the City's Zoning and Land Development Ordinance to bring its historic preservation provisions involving the appeals process into compliance with the Municipal Land Use Law.
- Apply to the State Historic Preservation Office to become a certified local government to more formally participate in the federal/state/local partnership in historic preservation.
- Nominate selected historic districts to the State and National Registers.
- Zone historic districts for low density.
- Develop conservation and buffer districts as overlay zones to help enable more residents and property owners in older neighborhoods benefit from preservation/design tools.
- Actively solicit resident involvement in watch dogging landmarks, historic districts, and conservation districts and alerting staff to illegal construction, deteriorating building conditions, and other enforcement problems.
- Take aggressive measures to stabilize vacant landmarks and key buildings in historic districts and conservation districts.

### **2. Protect and enhance landmarks, historic districts, and older neighborhoods through a more integrated effort at education, incentives, and regulation.**

- Designate additional landmarks and historic districts as indicated in Section V.
- Develop and widely disseminate illustrated preservation/design guidelines for use in historic districts and conservation districts.
- Develop written procedures incorporating alternative review methods for the landmarks commission to streamline and improve the design review process.
- Continue the Landmarks Commission's annual preservation awards program.

### **3. Promote the continued and adaptive use of a wide range of historic resources and areas and an appreciation of the benefits of preserving them.**

- Actively support the development of a local non-profit historic preservation organization.
- Work cooperatively with local organizations to develop and disseminate informational materials on Trenton's historic resources and the social, cultural, and economic benefits of preserving them.
- Advocate use of preservation/design guidelines to other public and non-profit entities with funds, programs, and/or districts in Trenton (Capital City Redevelopment Corporation, Trenton Downtown Association, Capital South Special Improvement District, Arena Improvement District).

## **II. Planning for Historic Resources Through Designation at the National, State, and Local Levels**

### **The New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places**

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended through 1992 promotes a federal/state/local partnership in historic preservation. Among other provisions, it established the National Register of Historic Places to recognize buildings, sites, districts, objects, and structures of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register includes properties of state and local significance as well as national significance. Properties are listed on the National Register after a nomination and review process undertaken by the State Historic Preservation Officer (in New Jersey, the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection and staffed by the Historic Preservation Office.)

The National Historic Preservation Act provides a measure of protection for properties listed on or determined eligible for the National Register. This protection takes the form of a review of federally funded, licensed, or assisted projects and an assessment of whether these projects would affect properties listed on or determined eligible for the National Register. The responsible federal agency is required to assess the impact of its proposed undertaking on listed or eligible properties and attempt to avoid or mitigate any adverse impact. The federal agency is required to consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer and a federal preservation organization, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This process is informally known as the Section 106 review process. Some federal agencies, such as HUD, may pass on their 106 review responsibility to their grantees, so that in practice the City of Trenton's Historic Preservation Specialist reviews the impact of federal funds, such as HOME and CDBG on properties on or eligible for the National Register.

New Jersey established the New Jersey Register of Historic Places in 1970 (N.J.S.A. 13:1B-15.128) with the same criteria for eligibility and nomination process as the National Register. Consequently, most properties listed on the National Register also are listed on the State Register. Listing on the New Jersey Register offers a degree of protection against state, county, or local undertakings. Projects that might encroach upon properties listed on the State Register are reviewed by the Historic Sites Council, staffed by the Historic Preservation Office. Properties must actually be listed on (rather than merely eligible for) the State Register to be subject to Historic Sites Council review.

### **Locally Designated Landmarks and Historic Districts**

In 1972, the City of Trenton established a Landmarks Commission to preserve and regulate historic landmarks and in 1974, the City designated thirteen individual landmarks and historic sites. Over the next fifteen years, Trenton undertook historic sites surveys of each ward and had historic district reports prepared for several areas. Today the City has locally designated forty-five landmarks (sites, structures, and buildings) and eight historic districts, encompassing several hundred properties. Many of these locally designated historic resources are also listed on the State and National Registers. Sixteen of the landmarks are located within the historic districts.

In 1985 the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S. 40:55D-1 et seq.) was amended to give municipalities explicit authorization to enact historic preservation ordinances, designate historic sites and districts, and establish historic preservation commissions (Article 14A 40:55D107-112). The MLUL specifies numbers, classes, and terms of members; funding authority; and commission responsibilities. Commissions are authorized to make surveys of historic sites, make recommendations to the planning board on the historic preservation element of the master plan and other preservation issues, and advise the planning and zoning board on development within designed historic sites and historic districts.

Today, in accordance with the enabling authority of the MLUL and the historic preservation sections of the City's Zoning and Land Development Ordinance, designation as a Trenton landmark or historic district provides for review of proposed demolition, alterations, related exterior work, and new construction by the Landmarks Commission. If the proposed project is part of a development application, i.e., subdivision or site plan application, the Landmarks Commission serves as an advisory body to the Planning Board or Zoning Board, which decides whether a restoration permit should be issued. If the proposed project is not part of a development application, then the landmarks commission decides whether a restoration permit should be issued.

### **Criteria and Standards for Designating Trenton Landmarks and Historic Districts**

The criteria and standards for evaluating properties for designation as Trenton landmarks and historic districts are the same as for the New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places. These state and national criteria and standards are broad and flexible enough to apply to Trenton's diverse historic resources. The criteria and standards set forth below have been used in Trenton's local designation process over the years, but have not been stated explicitly in either the preservation ordinance or in official plans.

The designated property or area must be historically or architecturally significant on the national, state, or local level and possess integrity, which can be defined as a relatively high level of character-defining features from the period in which it derives its importance. The resource generally must be at least fifty years old.

**Criteria:** The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, culture, and engineering is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our past; or
- B. that are associated with persons significant in our past;
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### III. Existing Trenton Landmarks, Historic Sites, and Historic Districts

The Trenton Historic Landmarks Map (see Appendix A) identifies and shows the location of all landmarks, historic sites, and historic districts.

#### List of Designated Historic Resources

The following is a list of Trenton's designated historic resources, their addresses, and a very brief synopsis of their significance. The list is in alphabetical order, with historic districts listed first. Individually designated landmarks located within historic districts are identified alphabetically within the district listing. The list ends with designated landmarks that are not situated within historic districts. The number indicated in parentheses following the listing refers to the accompanying Trenton Historic Landmarks Map for cross-referencing. A more detailed description and significance statement is on file with the City's Historic Preservation Specialist. Several of the properties are also described in somewhat more detail in various brochures prepared by the Trenton's Department of Housing and Development. In addition to locating the properties, the City's Land Use Plan lists their address and indicates which properties are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The properties are also listed in the zoning ordinance.

#### List of Designated Historic Districts and Individually Designated Landmarks within the Districts

**Berkeley Square Historic District** This is an early example of a planned residential suburban area in Trenton, with a variety of large detached houses of eclectic late Victorian design. Developed in the late 1800s from the rural lands of the Cadwalader estate with the urban amenities of paved streets, city water, sewers, gas light, and trolley service, this area attracted upper middle class Trentonians with its marriage of town and country--the hallmarks of late nineteenth century suburban style living (39).

**Ewing/Carroll Historic District** Located within a neighborhood known as Coalport/North Clinton, this primarily residential area is characterized by both high style villas along Clinton Avenue and brick rowhouses from the period 1865-1890, with Italianate and French Second Empire styles predominating. A significant industrial building within the district, the Maddock Factory at 100 Carroll Street, is an excellent, well-designed example of an adaptive use, occupied by the Rescue Mission (53).

Within the district is one individually designated landmark, the **Mount Carmel Guild, 73 North Clinton Avenue**, a fine example of an Italianate villa (36).

**Fisher/Richey/Perdicaris Historic District** This is another good example of Trenton's residential suburban neighborhoods. Although closer to downtown than Berkeley Square, this area was developed later, in the second and third decades of the twentieth century and has a variety of charming Colonial Revival houses as well as other popular styles of the period, including Tudor, and Craftsman. (58).

**Greenwood/Hamilton Historic District** This area features a variety of architectural styles, sizes, and housing types from the 1870s through the early twentieth century as the city expanded to the east. This includes mid-late nineteenth century detached houses on Greenwood Avenue, Hamilton and South Clinton Avenues in Italianate, French Second Empire, Queen Anne, and Classical Revival styles. The more modest semi-detached and rowhouses on most of the other streets have some of the period detailing that characterize the grandeur avenues. Churches and schools also contribute to the historic and architectural character of the district (45).

**Hanover/Academy Historic District** Among the oldest sections of Trenton with a history extending back to the mid-eighteenth century, this area is dominated by handsome brick rowhouses of the second half of the nineteenth century. The district also is noteworthy for its long and rich African American history. Commercial and civic buildings from earlier and later periods add to the physical and social diversity of the area (38).

Within the district are five individually designated landmarks. **The Ackerman Building, 210 East Hanover Street** is the finest Greek Revival house in the district. Built in the 1840s, it is brick with eyebrow windows in the frieze and has a reeded pilaster entrance (34). **The Friends Meeting House, Montgomery and East Hanover Streets**, built in 1739 to house the first Society of Friends in Trenton and enlarged in 1873, displays the simplicity of Quaker brick architecture. Several prominent Trentonians are buried in the graveyard (18). **The Mount Zion Church, 135-137 Perry Street** was incorporated in 1816 as the Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church. The present 1878 building with its Gothic stained glass windows is on the site of the original church. This Church developed out of the Free African Society of Trenton, Trenton's oldest black organization established in 1811 (22). **The Trenton Public Library** is significant for its splendid Neo-Classical interior and grand marble staircase (50).

**Mill Hill Historic District** Mill Hill is a mid-late nineteenth century residential neighborhood with roots going back to the seventeenth century when Mahlon Stacy built a grist mill, the area's first industrial enterprise. The site of the Second Battle of Trenton is within the district, in and around Mill Hill Park. The area is characterized by two and three story brick rowhouses in the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Second Empire styles. Three decades of restoration and rehabilitation have made this district a showcase for the many benefits of historic preservation (31).

Within the Mill Hill Historic District are two individually designated landmarks. **The Douglas House, East Front Street, at end of South Montgomery Street**, is a small freestanding frame house, built in 1766 and now owned by the City, is significant in the history of the Revolutionary War. On January 2, 1777, after the second battle of Trenton, George Washington held a council of war here where the decision was made that the continental army would leave its encampment on the south side of the Assunpink Creek and march to attack Princeton (1). **The Mercer Street Friends Center, 151 Mercer Street** exemplifies the simplicity and conservatism of Quaker design and beliefs (16).

**South Warren Street Historic District** This street, which today features some of Trenton's oldest buildings—brick rowhouses in the Federal and Greek Revival styles—has a civic, commercial, and residential history going back to the eighteenth century, when it was known as King Street. As Trenton's downtown commercial area grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, many of the streets handsome older houses were remodeled with Victorian storefronts (47).



Within the district are two individually listed landmarks. The **Site of Hunterdon County Courthouse and Prison Walls, 16 Warren Street** features a portion of the foundation wall of the Hunterdon County Courthouse, built in 1730 (14). The **Golden Swan, 101-103 South Warren Street**, is the finest surviving Federal style building on the street. Built ca. 1815 as a residence, it was used as a tavern, Sign of the Golden Swan, until 1855 (26).

**State House Historic District** The district features the classical grandeur of the statehouse complex and an outstanding grouping of nineteenth century rowhouses in the Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Romanesque Revival styles (28).

Within the district are six individually designated landmarks. The **Kelsey Building, 101 West State Street**, is a five story brick building with decorative tile detailing, built in 1911 as the School of Industrial Arts. A fine example of Renaissance Palazzo architecture designed by noted New York architect, Cass Gilbert, it is now part of Thomas Edison College (10). The **Old Barracks, Barrack Street** was built in 1758 and used by British troops in the French and Indian War and again during the Revolution. Several Hessian troops whom Washington's army fought in the Battle of Trenton were quartered here. The building, now a history museum, is also a fascinating example of twentieth century restoration practices (first restored in 1917 and most recently in 1998) (8). The **Old Masonic Temple, corner of South Warren and West Lafayette Streets**, was built in 1793, as a meeting place for Trenton's first Masonic organization, Lodge No. 5. It is a five-bay vernacular Federal style stone building, moved in 1915 from the site of the present Masonic Temple. It now serves as the Trenton Visitor's and Convention Bureau (12). **204 and 222 West State Street** are designated for their architecturally distinguished interiors (51 and 54). The **Emlen House, 312 West State Street**, one of the oldest houses in the district, was built in 1796 and features a random stone facade of three bays and two and one half stories (15).

### **Individually Designated Landmarks Not Located within Historic Districts**

**Adams and Sickle Building, 1 West End Avenue** This Queen Anne style building with its distinctive shape and corner tower is a good example of the small, yet imposing building that once characterized Trenton's neighborhood commercial areas (42).

**Carver Center, 36-44 Fowler Street** Built in 1927 by J. Osborne Hunt for the Elks—BPOE, this 2-story brick Colonial Revival building has long served Trenton's African-American community as a social club and recreational facility (33).

**Champale Office 1024 Lamberton Street** This is a fine and rare surviving example of a detached 5 bay, 2 story Federal style building, executed in brick, and featuring a central entrance with an elliptical fanlight (24).

**Delaware and Raritan Canal, citywide** Built in the 1830s, the D & R Canal is significant in nineteenth century and industrial history in central New Jersey. Although partially in a culvert within the city, the Canal today presents a wonderful opportunity for use as both a historic and open space amenity (7).

**Delaware and Raritan Canal House, 1 Prospect Street** This a typical example of the modest, vernacular, wooden canal houses built in conjunction with the D & R Canal and was used as the bridge tender's house (19).

**Dickinson House, 701 Clinton Avenue** This old stone house was reputedly built in 1796 by Samuel Dickinson and known as "The Grove." The mansion has, over the years, served a succession of owners and tenants, and was used as an orphanage, public school, saloon, factory, laundry, lodge, girls' club and community buildings. It served as a library since 1926 and was formally modernized for library usage in 1933-34 with Federal Civil Works Administration funds (5).

**Elk's Lodge No. 105, 120 North Warren Street** This is a fine example of a small Beaux Arts style building. Designed in 1910 for Trenton Lodge No. 105, it is a 4-story, 3-bay brick building with rich classical detailing. The Benevolent Protection Order of the Elks was established in 1888 and met at a number of locations before building this new hall which opened in 1912 (37).

**Ellarslie Mansion, Cadwalader Park** This Italianate villa was designed ca. 1850 by the prominent Philadelphia architect, John Notman. In the mid twentieth century, when Victorian buildings were out of style, the building was unfortunately adapted for zoo use and served as a monkey house. Its current adaptive use as the Trenton City Museum is far more appropriate (4). Ellarslie is located in **Cadwalader Park**, designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, and a superb example of Olmstead's naturalistic urban park design (27).

**First Presbyterian Church, 120 East State Street** Built in 1839 in the in-antis form of Greek Temple design (with a tower reconstructed in 1964), this is an excellent example of monumental Greek Revival church architecture in Trenton. The congregation predates the building and the graveyard includes several of Trenton's founding fathers and mothers (17).

**Forty Eight - Fifty Two Passaic Street** This 2 ½ story, 6-bay gable roofed stone structure was originally a barn amongst the quarries and fields between Calhoun and North Willow Streets. Now divided into three dwelling units, it is the oldest building in the neighborhood (55).

**Grinslade's Blacksmith, 334 North Olden Avenue** Comprised of four brick attached buildings, two fronting on Olden Avenue, this complex represents the kind of small-scale machine shop industry that flourished in Trenton in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Edward Grinslade ran a blacksmith, machine and ferrier shop here until 1975, one of the last surviving blacksmith shops in New Jersey (35).

**The Hermitage, 46 Colonial Avenue** Built in 1784, this stone house was built by Philemon Dickinson, major general and commander-in-Chief of the New Jersey militia during the Revolutionary War. The exterior of the house was considerably remodeled in the mid-nineteenth century and its interior was altered for use as an apartment house in 1905 (13).

**Rudolph Kuser Estate, 315 West State Street** Built in 1905 and occupied by the prominent Kuser family until 1943, this is one of the few remaining mansions of turn-of-the-century Trenton on West State Street. The house represents of eclecticism of the period, with distinctive Georgian, Federal, Mediterranean and Arts and Craft style features. It now serves as offices for Thomas Edison College and has retained some of its handsome interior detailing (40).

**Ladder Company No. 2, 1005 South Clinton Avenue** Originally the Lincoln Hook & Ladder Company, this is the sole surviving volunteer firehouse built by the City of Trenton. Constructed

in 1888 of brick with brownstone trim, it remains the only Ladder Company in the Chambersburg section of Trenton (46).

**Mercer Cemetery, west of Clinton Avenue** This was Trenton's first non-sectarian cemetery where many of Trenton's first families and Civil War veterans are buried (49).

**New Jersey National State Bank, 1 West State Street** This tall, imposing commercial building in the Renaissance Revival style with its massive rusticated stonework has been a landmark presence in downtown Trenton for many decades (48).

**New Jersey Steel and Iron Company Building, 501 John Fitch Way** Now adaptively used as the Katmandu Restaurant, this is the sole surviving remnant of the Cooper Iron Works, at one time the country's largest iron company (44).

**Higbee/Nixon School, 20 Bellevue Avenue** This school was built in 1857 to provide basic education for African-American children and is significant in African-American and educational history in Trenton. Remodeled in 1913, the brick building has a pedimented gable front (29).

**Old City Hall, 2 North Broad Street** Old City Hall is significant in Trenton's civic history and has been rehabilitated to resemble its appearance in the late nineteenth century when it was remodeled in the fashionable French Second Empire style (52).

**Old Eagle Tavern, 431-433 South Broad Street** Built ca. 1760 and expanded and remodeled as a tavern in the early nineteenth century, this old tavern is a good example of vernacular Federal style architecture (3).

**Old Mill House, School Lane and Mill Road**, This building is believed to have served as an ancillary building to a grist mill owned and operated by the State of New Jersey from ca. 1873 until 1949 (41).

**Reading Freight Station, 260 North Willow Street** Designed by New York architect Francis H. Kimball and built in 1888, this is a red brick structure with a 2 ½ story front section and an attached freight platform (32).

**St Michael's Episcopal Church, 140-144 North Warren Street** The Church is a good example of Gothic Revival architecture. An earlier St. Michael's Church building stood on the site in the eighteenth century, and a number of prominent Trentonians are buried in the cemetery (11).

**Shaky Bridge, City Water Works, Stacy Park, north of Calhoun Street Bridge** This is a small-scale replica of the Niagara River Bridge, built by Washington Roebling to commemorate his father, John A. Roebling's achievement in designing and building the Niagara Bridge (6).

**William Trent House, 513 South Warren Street** This is the house of William Trent, for whom Trenton is named. Built in 1719, this 5-bay, 2 story brick house with central entrance and hipped roof, is a very early example of Georgian architecture in the colonies (2).

**Trenton Battle Monument, North Broad and North Warren Streets** This tall granite column topped by a statue of George Washington was built in 1893 to commemorate Washington's victory in the Battle of Trenton. The site, overlooking downtown at the five points intersection

currently undergoing redevelopment as part of the Canal Banks project, is where American artillery had been placed during the battle (9).

**Trenton City Hall, 319 East State Street** This stately Beaux Arts civic building with its monumental entrance stairway, grand balustrade, and Doric colonnade was designed by Philadelphia architect, Spencer Roberts, and built in gleaming white marble in 1911 (23).

**Trenton State Prison Administration Building, Third Street** This 2-story stone building is the surviving remnant of New Jersey's original 1797 penitentiary. It once housed the keeper of the prison, with the keeper's kitchen and dining room located in the basement (20).

**Trenton State Prison Warden's House, 498 Second Street** This is a fine example of a 5 bay free-standing Federal style brick house (21).

#### **IV. Evaluation of Trenton's Historic Sites Surveys**

In cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office, the City of Trenton undertook an industrial survey in 1976 and historic sites surveys of each of the city's four wards in the 1980s. The surveys include narratives outlining the historic development of each ward and its various neighborhoods; survey forms; recommendations on eligibility of properties for the State and National Registers; maps and photographs. The surveys include brief information and a photo or contact print on several thousand city buildings and more detailed information on several hundred of other buildings.

As these surveys were undertaken over a twenty-year period by different consultants, they reflect slightly different survey methodologies, biases, and overall quality. The surveys' narrative histories are generally very good. Street indexes organized alphabetically by street make it easy to find a form on a surveyed property if the street address is known. However, ward maps indicating surveyed and register eligible resources were not prepared, which limits the utility of the surveys for quick reference of geographic distribution and concentration of resources.

The surveys are somewhat inconsistent with regard to opinions of eligibility for the National Register, as any broad brush survey in a city like Trenton with such a wealth of older buildings would be. The biggest problem is that no attempt was made over the past two decades to update the surveys—the extent to which resources still exist and/or remain as they appeared when surveyed is unknown.

The resources identified as register eligible in these surveys generally are eligible for both registration and local designation. Several are included as priorities 1, 2, or 3 for local designation under Section V of this plan. The exception, of course, is when buildings have been demolished or extensively altered. For example, the N.J. Furniture Factory at 600 Artisan Street, recently rehabilitated for housing, no longer retains enough historic fabric or integrity to be considered for register listing or local designation.

The **North Ward Survey** (1980) is nearly twenty years old, and so its usefulness is very limited. It generally does not include definitive opinions of register eligibility, fudging the issue with a lot of "maybe eligibles." The survey resulted in a small, illustrated booklet, providing the public with historical and architectural information derived from the survey. Despite the lack of recommendations for designation, the survey was a basis for the Hanover/Academy Historic

district, the Ewing/Carroll Historic District and the former Yard Avenue Historic District, de-designated in 1985 and now redeveloped as Station Plaza.

The **East Ward Survey** (1982) developed a building typology, which was subsequently used for the West and South Ward surveys. It recommended two eligible districts—Greenwood/Hamilton, subsequently designated locally, and the John A. Roebling Works. The narrative introduction identified four individual buildings as possibly eligible. These are the Immaculate Conception Church Complex, 520 Chestnut Avenue; Trenton Central High School, Chambers Street; Washington School, 331 Emory Avenue; and Junior School No. 2, Gladstone Avenue between Cuyler and South Olden Avenue. Other buildings are listed as eligible on the survey form (some of which were subsequently designated in the Greenwood/Hamilton Historic District) and many more buildings identified as possibly eligible.

The **West Ward Survey** (1986) also recommended a district as eligible for the National Register which was subsequently locally designated—Fisher/Richey/Perdicaris District. It recommended ten individual sites and eight other historic districts, further categorizing these resources into four periods and areas of development. The individual sites are 15-49 Colonial Avenue, Little Hermitage, 66 Hermitage Avenue; N.J. Furniture Factory, 600 Artisan Street; Brown Moon House, 408 Bellevue Avenue; Har Sinai Temple, 491 Bellevue Avenue; Engine Co.#8, 694 Stuyvesant Avenue; C.V. Hill and Co., 360 Pennington Avenue; Trenton Reservoir; F. Crittenton Home, 1212 Edgewood Avenue, and G. Dean House, 27 South Eastfield Avenue. The other districts recommended are Central West/West End District; State House District Addition; Bellevue Avenue District, Berkeley Square District Additions; Cadwalader Heights District, and New Jersey State Hospital District.

In an attempt to make sense of the vast numbers of vernacular older houses, the West Ward survey includes a building typology, based upon the typology developed for the East Ward Survey. The survey incorporates historic maps to good use. While this survey is less reliant on “possible” as a comment on register eligibility than the East Ward survey, its opinions of not eligible seem rather conservative.

The **South Ward Survey** (1989) is thickest of them all. The three volumes include 3500 resources. It too expands upon the East Ward building typology. This survey recommends a fairly large Chambersburg Historic District and Lambertson Street Historic District. It also recommends a thematic listing of churches and eight individual buildings. The individual buildings are Scudders Foundry, 2 Pearl Street; Public Service Electric and Gas Company Substation, Liberty Street; Junior High School #4, 401 Dayton Street; Home Rubber Company, 51 Woolverton Avenue; Mercer County Courthouse, Broad Street; Ray’s Lounge, 439-441 South Broad Street; Griffith Electric Company, 462 South Broad Street; and Engine Company # 3, 503 South Broad Street.

The South Ward Survey makes the best use of historic maps and photos. The street index includes the surveyor’s opinions of eligibility, specifying district or individual eligibility, which provides a user-friendly touch. The South Ward Survey includes a good overview of the other ward surveys and also makes suggestions for reviewing the surveys and knitting “the diverse patches into one quilt with a common thread.”

**Recommendations for Updating the Surveys** There are a variety of ways in which survey material can be updated and made more useful. Selected survey in the form of designation reports is the approach this plan recommends. There is sufficient information about the historical and/or architectural significance of selected sites and districts and threats/

opportunities to them through the ward surveys, city plans, and the windshield survey undertaken for this Historic Preservation Plan to warrant intensive survey/designation reports for the areas recommended in Section V.

If there are sufficient resources available to the City of Trenton, the City also could consider updating the surveys. This could be undertaken at the same time that survey/designation for selected sites and districts is pursued. A more intensive city-wide survey could be done geographically by ward, once again, or organized city-wide by historic themes and periods of development. Although there are different ways of approaching the methodology and organization of any new survey(s), it is important that there is consistency in method, outlining historic development, recording, and evaluation of resources. It also is critical to map properties surveyed and to integrate locally-designated landmarks and districts within any new surveys.

Adapting survey materials for public use has great benefits and should be considered an integral part of new survey effort. Publishing books or booklets that summarize significant aspects of development, significant buildings, and related issues is an adjunct to survey work that is of tremendous importance to the big picture, to making preservation a vital part of city planning and community consciousness.

The issue of developing a city-wide building typology is controversial. Some scholars and preservationists would argue that creating a useful and accurate building typology without extensive analysis of interior plans is not possible. They would argue that even with interior assessment, building typologies are of limited utility in an urban context—that there are too many buildings and too many variations to distill essential types and that time and money are better spent on more in-depth historic research and integrity analysis. Others will attempt to do building typologies without interior assessment and would argue that such typologies are useful in understanding the development and range buildings within a survey area.

To summarize, if there are not sufficient human and financial resources to undertake both selected survey/designation and updating the city-wide survey, this plan recommends survey/designation as top priority. Rather than focusing on whether many areas scattered throughout the city are eligible for registration and designation, it is preferable to take areas that are clearly eligible and/or clearly at risk and expeditiously move ahead with survey, designation, and preservation strategies for those. In other words a selective approach to survey and designation—prioritizing survey/designation—rather than intensive city-wide survey update/synthesis is better suited to accomplishing the goals outlined in this plan.

## **V. Recommendations for Designation of Trenton Landmarks and Historic Districts**

The recommendations for survey/designation that follow are based upon the extant surveys, unrecorded windshield surveys of selected areas of the city undertaken in May and June 1999, and interviews with city staff, city officials, preservation advocates, residents, and business people.

## **The Survey/Designation Report**

A survey/designation report should be prepared prior to designation by ordinance. The report should be in a form that not only describes the appearance and significance of the resource(s), but also includes information useful in the preservation/design review process. It is important to identify character-defining features of properties and, in historic districts, to identify whether individual properties are key, contributing, or non-contributing to the district. It also is helpful to comment on the condition of the building and, in particular, the condition of its various character-defining features. Historic and contemporary photos are essential.

The survey/designation report for an historic district should include a boundary justification. This plan recommends boundaries for some of the proposed districts. These boundary recommendations are not the definitive word on boundaries; they should be viewed as guidance for a more in-depth evaluation and decision on district boundaries.

If the survey/designation report is also to serve as a nomination to the State and National Registers, the information/analysis must be recorded on National Register forms, using the format mandated by the National Park Service and Historic Preservation Office. In any case, information important to the local preservation/design review process can and should be incorporated into register forms or included as a supplement for the landmarks commission and staff.

If the area to be designated is part of a larger redevelopment area, the survey/designation process should be undertaken with the redevelopment plan in mind. If there are anticipated differences between the designation report and the redevelopment plan (on items such as demolition, rehabilitation treatment, and streetscape improvements), it is advisable to address them in the earliest possible stages.

## **Considering State and National Register Nomination Along with Local Designation**

Sometimes it is advisable to place historic resources on the State and National Registers. Theoretically, listing on the National Register provides no additional protection or benefits. The same protection (review of encroachment from Federal undertakings) is afforded eligible resources as well as listed resources. Benefits (such as Federal tax credits for preservation and transportation enhancement funding opportunities) are extended to National Register eligible as well as listed properties. Trenton's locally designated historic districts are "certified historic districts," which means contributing properties within them are eligible for Federal tax credits. New local districts can also become certified fairly easily, if register nomination is not sought.

Additional protection and benefits, however, are provided to properties listed on the State Register. Review and a degree of protection against state, county, and municipal undertakings are applicable only to properties listed on the State Register. If there might be a potential threat from public entities, State Register listing should be sought concurrent with local designation. Properties for which nonprofit organizations or government agencies receive matching funds from the New Jersey Historic Trust must be listed on the State Register. But those properties do not have to be listed on the State Register when the grant application is submitted to the Trust; nomination to and listing on the State Register can occur after the funds are awarded.

Listing on the State and National Registers has honorific value. The benefit of that can not be measured, but may make a difference in the hearts and minds of Trentonians and visitors.

### **Priorities for Local Designation**

Rather than include a laundry list of potential landmarks and historic districts, the recommendations for local designation are purposefully short and strategically geared to complement other planning, housing, and economic development initiatives proposed or underway. The number of recommendations is based upon what can feasibly be surveyed, designated, and managed within the six year period this plan covers.

The criteria for inclusion on the priority list of resources recommended for survey/designation are:

- level of significance;
- architectural quality;
- location;
- threats;
- opportunities for enhancement; and
- diversity

All of the resources included in priority 1 recommendations meet all of the criteria for inclusion listed above. Priority 2 and 3 recommendations meet some but not all of the criteria above. City officials, residents, planners, and preservation advocates should use these recommendations as a guidepost. It is more important to use the where-will-designation-do-the-most-good-criteria for listing than to stick faithfully to this list if the threats/opportunity picture changes during the period this plan is in effect.

### **Priority 1 Recommendations**

**West Lafayette and Peace Streets** This group of mid-nineteenth century rowhouses could be designated as an expansion of the South Warren Street District. It is the missing historic link between the State House Historic District and the South Warren Street District, representing a rare surviving group of vernacular rowhouses in the downtown area.

**John A. Roebling Son's Historic District** The level of historic significance and architectural quality of this major industrial works has long been acknowledged, but official recognition in the form of National Register listing and local designation has been stymied in the years since planning and adaptive use projects have gotten underway. Some excellent rehabilitation and adaptive re-use has happened, but many buildings were demolished. Other buildings, particularly in Block 2, await redevelopment. Although the Landmarks Commission has been accorded courtesy review of projects, official designation and review authority is long overdue.

Listing Roebling on the State Register also is recommended to establish review authority over state, county, and municipal undertakings.

**Central West Historic District** On the issue of diversity, a question arises -Does Trenton need more historic districts comprised primarily of mid-late nineteenth century rowhouses and semi-detached houses? The answer is yes. The architectural significance of this area, the threats to these resources, the location, and the opportunities for enhancement through preservation tools and strategies make this area (identified as Central West/West End in the West Ward Survey and SHPO opinion of eligibility) a top priority for designation. This



neighborhood also is rich in black history; its listing would complement and expand upon other designated landmarks and districts representing Trenton's African-American past.

The designation survey should consider a single district that includes Prospect Avenue and extends north to Bellevue Avenue, between Prospect Avenue and Calhoun Street. The West Ward survey suggested a separate district for Bellevue Avenue, but a single district could be easily justified and would be better for preservation planning purposes. Spring Street is the core area, extending its entire length. Passaic and Hanover Streets should extend east of Calhoun, to the edge of the row house development, excluding parking lots and other modern intrusions.

As this area is part of the Trenton's Canal Banks Homeownership Zone, and the City proposes rehabilitation of many of the houses here, historic district designation is an important part of further planning and redevelopment efforts. Designation should help ensure that the scale is not weighed in favor of new construction at the expense of preservation and that both the rehabilitation and new construction are done according to state-of-the-art preservation/design review standards.

**Public Schools** New Jersey's Constitution requires a public school system to provide its children a thorough and efficient education. Trenton is one of the "Abbott Districts" which is to receive state funding to improve its educational programs and upgrade its educational facilities. The Trenton Board of Education produced an Abbott District Five-Year *Facilities Management Plan* in 1999, prepared by Don Todd Associates, Inc./Clarke Caton Hintz. Fortunately, the document's Plan A, which called for extensive abandonment of school buildings and demolition of some of them has been rejected by the State and its Plan B focuses more on rehabilitation of many of Trenton's older school buildings.

The city should designate all of the pre-1950 public school buildings. They are:

- Columbus Elementary School, Mulberry Street and Brunswick Avenue
- Cuyler High School, Cuyler Avenue and Walnut Avenue
- Franklin High School, William Street and Liberty Street
- Grace Dunn Middle School, Dayton Street and Grand Avenue
- Grant Elementary School, North Clinton Avenue and Perry Street
- Harrison Elementary School, Genesee Street near Chestnut Avenue
- Hedgepeth-Williams Middle School, Cuyler Avenue and Gladstone Avenue
- Holland Middle School, Parkside Avenue and West State Street
- Jefferson Elementary School, Brunswick Avenue and Southard Street
- Martin Luther King Middle School, Southard Street and Princeton Avenue
- Munoz-Rivera Elementary School, North Montgomery Street and Holland Avenue
- Parker Elementary School, Union Street and Perry Street
- Robbins Elementary School, Tyler Street
- Robeson Elementary School, Cuyler Avenue and Gladstone Avenue
- Trenton Central High School, Chambers Street and Greenwood Avenue
- Washington Elementary School, Chestnut Avenue and Emory Avenue

These have been well-documented in the Board of Education's *Facilities Management Plan*; some also were recommended for designation in the ward surveys and/or have SHPO opinions of eligibility. The survey/designation should include public schools that are closed, such as the Cuyler School.

The *Facilities Management Plan* is a multi-year plan and a work in progress, as state legislation/guidelines/ funding/evolves. Like downtown, Roebling, and the Central West area, local designation of schools is a useful complement to redevelopment planning currently underway. Special attention should be paid to the Martin Luther King School. Although additions to the school appear to be problematic, rather than demolish the entire building and rebuild on the site as the plan recommends, renovation of the original building and rebuilding of some or all of the wings is preferable. The two elementary schools the plan recommends vacating, the Harrison and Robbins Schools, are good candidates for adaptive use.

## **Priority 2 Recommendations**

**Cadwalader Heights Historic District** Attempts to designate this area of early twentieth century suburban development with an Olmstead site plan and landscape and fine period domestic architecture some years ago were unsuccessful. Now is the time to begin neighborhood outreach and preservation advocacy, culminating in district designation.

**New Jersey State Hospital Historic District** The New Jersey State Hospital is the first state psychiatric institution in New Jersey. The complex includes nineteenth and early twentieth century institutional buildings in both classical and romantic revival modes, including a hospital building by John Notman, within a landscape designed by Andrew Jackson Downing. The West Ward Survey recommended registration and proposed district boundaries to include the Mill Hamlet of Brookville.

With de-institutionalization continuing in New Jersey, this district should be nominated to the State and National Registers concurrent with local designation.

**State House Historic District Extension** These large, high-style masonry houses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, on the south side of State Street and now used as offices, represent a natural continuation of the State Street Historic District. The West Ward Survey recommends 349-383 West State Street. The survey/designation report should examine a larger area, including linkage along Prospect Avenue to the proposed Central West Historic District.

## **Priority 3 Recommendations**

**Ethnic Churches/Church Complexes** Churches are the most important buildings, architecturally and culturally, in many of the city's neighborhoods, particularly in the South Ward. Most of the churches were built to serve specific ethnic groups who settled together in specific neighborhoods. In addition to the many church complexes recommended for designation in the South Ward Survey (such as St. Stanislaus Polish Catholic Church, St. Mary's Greek Catholic Church, and Holy Cross Church), this thematic designation should include the Immaculate Conception Church Complex in the East Ward, St. Hedwig's in the North Ward, and Har Sinai Temple in the West Ward.

**Scattered-site Industrial Buildings** This should include buildings like the Horseman Doll Factory, vicinity of Grand and Elm Streets; Hill Refrigeration Company, 360 Pennington Avenue; Scudders Foundry, 2 Pearl Street; and the Lenox Pottery, vicinity of Olden Avenue and Prince Street, PSE & G Substation, Liberty Street; Home Rubber Company, 51 Woolverton Avenue; and the Public Service Buildings at Olden and St. Joe's Avenues.

## VI. Recommendations for Designation of Conservation Districts and Buffer Districts

### Criteria and Standards for Conservation and Buffer District Designation

A modest, ongoing, and strategic program of local designation of landmarks and historic districts as recommended above is a central feature of this preservation plan, but it leaves out many deserving older neighborhoods that could benefit from protection against wanton demolition and poorly designed alterations.

**Conservation Districts** An alternative kind of designation in the form of an overlay zone, commonly known as a conservation district<sup>1</sup>, can help bring some of the benefits of historic preservation to other areas without the full-blown process of a detailed survey/designation report, historic district listing, and landmarks commission review of all undertakings requiring a building permit.

The criteria and standards for designating a conservation district are:

- an area where the majority of buildings are at least fifty years old;
- the majority of buildings represent building types and/or architectural styles identified in Trenton's surveys as characteristic of Trenton's historic and architectural development; and
- sufficient historic fabric survives to make constructive use of preservation/design guidelines.

In some instances, the areas proposed as conservation districts also would qualify for designation as historic districts. Listing as conservation district may be a first step in a process that might eventually lead to historic district designation. Listing an area first as a conservation district has the following advantages:

- it is a first step-in-the-water for a neighborhood who may be resistant to historic district regulation;
- it starts an educational process for property owners and occupants in preserving and sensitively altering older buildings;
- it provides a modest measure of regulatory review and enhancement opportunity during a period when the City is busy designating and regulating higher priority historic districts.

Alternately, a conservation district may be an end in itself, using some but not all of the tools used to regulate and enhance historic districts.

**Buffer Districts** A buffer district is an area adjacent to a historic district, which has older buildings which relate to the historic district in period of development, building type(s), scale, or architectural styles. By virtue of its location, a buffer district serves as a gateway or transition to a historic district. Changes to the streetscape, landscape, or buildings within buffer districts, visually affect the district to which it connects.

The criteria for designation are the same as for conservation districts, but the area designated must be adjacent to a historic district.

### Recommended Conservation Districts

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<sup>1</sup> The term "conservation district" is used by planners and preservationists nationwide. However, as the Municipal Land Use Law does not use the term "conservation district," some planners and attorneys in New Jersey prefer not to develop an ordinance with anything called a conservation district. "Neighborhood preservation district" or some other term can be substituted for this type of overlay zone.

**Centre Street** Centre Street beginning at Bridge Street is recommended for designation as Trenton's first conservation district. This is the central linear core and most architecturally distinctive street in the area the South Ward Survey recommended as the Lamberton Historic District. In addition to mid-late nineteenth century row houses, the street contains distinctive churches, a theater, and commercial buildings.

**South Broad Street** South Broad Street from Dye Street to Liberty Street is another good candidate for a conservation district. This is one of the major and best-surviving of Trenton's neighborhood commercial areas of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The designation could reinforce benefits (advocacy, matching grants, facade design assistance) provided by the Capital South Special Improvement District, with review of demolition and major alterations.

**Downtown Commercial Historic District** This would include the remaining historic buildings from Trenton's commercial heyday—the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the Second World War. It should include State Street from 11 West State Street to Route 1, excluding those areas of State Street that were redeveloped over the last two decades (i.e., Capital Plaza, the south side of State between North Broad and Montgomery). It also should include the west side of North Broad Street (the east side is within the Hanover/Academy Historic district) from the Commons Parking area to Perry Street. And, it should consider North Warren Street to the canal. The historic bank building at West State Street, corner of Chancery Lane, now separated from other period commercial buildings by a block of buildings from the 1980s should be designated as an individual landmark.

A 1990 study by the National Preservation Institute, *National Register Assessment for a Trenton Commons Historic District* did not recommend this area for nomination to the National Register as a historic district citing diversity, loss of integrity, and difficulty in creating boundaries as a rationale for not nominating the area as a historic district. The report described the area as “a highly varied amalgam of buildings most of which have lost over thirty percent of their historic integrity.” The report recommended the following buildings as eligible for individual registration: the First Presbyterian Church and graveyard, 120 East State Street; the First Methodist Episcopal Church, 15 South Broad Street; the Trenton Savings Fund Society, 125 East State Street; the Broad Street Bank, 143 East State Street; and the Old City Hall, 2-8 North Broad Street.

The *National Register Assessment* revealed an very strict concept of integrity and a lack of appreciation for the diversity of many of today's historic districts. It did not understand Trenton. The diversity of downtown Trenton is one aspect of its significance. In past decades, areas that had a relatively homogeneous character in terms of building type, period, style, materials, and massing were favored for historic district designation. Today, preservationists recognize that many significant areas tend to have a more diverse or heterogeneous character, and that heterogeneity may be acknowledged as an aspect of the area's significance. Downtown Trenton is more than a small number of landmark-type commercial, religious and civic buildings. It includes a group of smaller commercial buildings—the kinds of buildings that are the connective tissue of most historic downtown districts.

The *Assessment* states that many of these smaller buildings have had some incompatible alterations over the years, particularly at storefront level. But even a twenty-five to thirty percent loss of integrity is not irreversible. Although other historic commercial areas of other small American cities may be more well-preserved than downtown Trenton, that is insufficient reason

to discount the historicity of the area or to categorically deny the area the benefits of local historic district. Trenton's commercial downtown may be the least well-preserved part of the city. Its remaining historic buildings should be afforded the same recognition as the rare surviving buildings of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Trenton's extant commercial downtown buildings also are rare survivors; they deserve priority in preservation planning. The loss of historic storefronts, while very unfortunate, does not mean a building has lost integrity forever.

Trenton cannot afford to demolish more of its historic downtown buildings. Designation would reinforce Trenton's *Land Use Plan* that explicitly states that new development downtown should take place on parking lots, rather than at the expense of existing buildings. These older downtown buildings, apart from their historic and architectural value, have an important economic value. They have the kinds of space and rents that downtown Trenton needs to attract incubator businesses, Mom-and-Pop stores, and other small-scale entrepreneurial activity. These historic buildings provide exactly what downtown Trenton requires and the new downtown office/retail buildings cannot provide. Designation would complement the efforts of the Trenton Downtown Association and TDA's facade grant program.

**Buffer Districts** This plan is not making specific recommendations for designating buffer districts. Instead, it recommends that the zoning ordinance establish the concept and criteria for designating buffer districts. In that way if the City, preservation advocates, or residents identify an area that would benefit from designation as a buffer district, such a district could be designated relatively quickly.

### **Benefits and Review Authority for Conservation and Buffer Districts**

A primary benefit of a conservation district is preservation outreach and introduction to preservation/design guidelines to property owners and residents. The City should disseminate generic materials—illustrated brochures and booklets--developed for historic districts in other parts of the city that have similar building types and preservation issues as those found in the conservation district. This would include recommended treatment guidelines for typical alterations. (See Section VIII for more on this issue.)

The City also should make use of design guidelines and facade renovation models used by other organizations and improvement entities such as the Trenton Downtown Association and Capital South Special Improvement District.

Additionally, designation as a conservation district also should clue City staff to the need for preservation-sensitive treatment for city-owned buildings and on enforcement issues.

Finally, the City should require approval from the Landmarks Commission for demolition and major alterations to key and contributing buildings. The ordinance establishing each conservation and buffer districts should define major alteration. That way, the level of design review is customized for the particular district.

## **VII. Analysis of Trenton's Land Use Plan and Related Planning and Zoning Issues**

Trenton's *Land Use Plan* incorporates historic preservation in its vision statements, central principles, and specific recommendations within many of its special planning areas.

The *Land Use Plan's* specific historic preservation recommendations are right on target and also are included and expanded upon in this preservation plan. They are: designation of Cadwalader Heights; development of another kind of local designation (herein called conservation and buffer districts); and changing the zoning of the Warren Street and State House Historic Districts.

### **Recommendations for Zoning Changes**

As the *Land Use Plan* recommends, the City should change the zoning of the Warren Street and the State House Historic Districts to a four-story height limit.

**Canal Banks Homeownership Zone Plan** This plan combines rehabilitation and new construction within a 212-acre area north of downtown. It, too, acknowledges the importance of historic preservation in the form of rehabilitation of historic houses, compatible infill buildings, and historically sensitive streetscape treatments. Sixty percent of the units are proposed as new construction. Initial projects within the zone in the critical Battle Monument area emphasized new construction over rehabilitation of undesignated, but historic buildings.

Subsequent phases, including the area proposed as the Central West Historic District, propose more rehabilitation. Historic district designation and landmarks commission preservation/design review should help preserve the rich historic streetscapes. Landmarks Commission review would provide another set of eyes and minds to help ensure that demolition, which can and should happen, happens in the appropriate places and that infill and open space are compatibly designed.

The plan incorporates some market-rate housing in infill buildings. Historic buildings which preserve architectural detailing are likely to be more attractive than infill buildings to middle income people, particularly some of the high style buildings on Bellevue and Prospect Avenues.

**Capital City Renaissance Plan** This 1989 plan of the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation (CCRC) recognizes the value of landmarks and historic districts. Its urban code was developed to be "compatible with the scale, placement, materials and facades of buildings in existing business districts and residential districts" and its design principles are sensible and sensitive to the historic urban fabric. The plan focuses more on new buildings and other urban design issues than rehabilitation.

## **VIII. Additional Strategies to Further Historic Preservation in Trenton**

Sections V, VI, and VII recommend designating additional landmarks and historic districts; nominating selected districts to the State and National Registers; establishing conservation and buffer districts; and zoning Warren Street, and the State House Historic Districts as low density.

Additional strategies listed below are intended to meet the following goals: Protect historic properties and older neighborhoods from deterioration, demolition, and inappropriate alterations by both private and public sector actions. Protect and enhance landmarks and historic districts through a more integrated effort at education, incentives, and regulation. Promote the continued and adaptive use of a wide range of historic resources and areas and an appreciation of the benefits of preserving them.

- **Revise historic preservation appeals provisions of Trenton's Zoning and Land Development Ordinance to comply with the Municipal Land Use Law.**

Under the historic preservation provisions of the City's Zoning and Land development Ordinance, Trenton City Council hears appeals from decisions made by the Landmarks Commission. (§19-28.2.a.6.) However, the MLUL states that the Board of Adjustment shall have the power to hear and decide appeals of "any order, requirement, decision or refusal made by an administrative officer based on or made in the enforcement of the zoning ordinance." (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70.a.)

This recommendation applies to the appeals of decisions by the administrative officer on applications regarding landmarks or buildings within historic districts decided by the Landmarks Commission, such as demolition.

- **Apply to the State Historic Preservation Office to become a certified local government (CLG) to more formally participate in the federal/state/local partnership in historic preservation.**

This would give the Trenton a formal role in the Section 106 review process as well as honorific recognition that the City deserves. The City would have to amend its Zoning Ordinance to include criteria for local designation and make other related ordinance changes. The CLG application is easy to prepare; the ordinance changes required are reasonable. The City and SHPO could then negotiate a memorandum of agreement to give Trenton greater authority in reviewing federal undertakings. CLG status requires annual training for landmark commission members.

- **Develop and widely disseminate illustrated design guidelines and brochures for use in historic districts, and conservation districts, and buffer districts.**

The City has prepared these kinds of materials in the past. It is time to do this again. *Preservation Guidelines*, prepared by city staff and reprinted in 1983 is a good model. A draft update from 1995 builds upon the earlier booklet. The current draft guidelines would benefit from extensive revision. A guidelines publication should focus on design guidelines, condense description of Trenton's architectural styles and details, and simplify the architectural terminology used. The guidelines should be heavily illustrated.

Brochures or simple computer-generated sheets showing good examples of how to treat typical preservation and design issues also are very useful. This kind of material can streamline the design review process and save time of the staff and Landmarks Commission.

User-friendly guidelines and brochures should help encourage preservation-minded design within older neighborhoods that are benefiting from redevelopment, special district status, and the funding that accompanies those districts.

- **Actively solicit resident involvement in watch dogging landmarks, historic districts, and neighborhood preservation districts and alerting local officials and staff to illegal construction, deteriorating buildings conditions, and other enforcement problems.**

Enforcement is a major preservation issue in older cities like Trenton. While continued better cooperation and vigilance between the City's Historic Preservation Specialist and the Inspections Department is essential, it is not enough. Vigorous outreach to residents and community leaders on the need for citizen watch dogging, information on what kinds of

construction activity and deteriorating building conditions are illegal, and who to contact should help.

- **Take aggressive measures to stabilize landmarks and key buildings in historic districts and conservation districts.**

Stabilizing and mothballing key historic buildings buys critical time for historic buildings. The City should fully utilize current authority to cite owners for building violations, get court orders to undertake repairs, make repairs to stabilize buildings, bill owners for costs, and, if necessary, place liens on buildings. If the current ordinance does not have sufficient preventive maintenance provisions to authorize the inspections department to require buildings owners to repair leaky roofs and prevent deterioration-by-neglect for vacant buildings in historic districts, the ordinance should be revised. Sufficient authority under state legislation and the BOCA Code exists today to enact a stronger maintenance code.

The City has suffered unnecessary losses of significant historic buildings and interiors such as the Knights of Columbus building and a portion of the Roebling Mansion. Those kinds of losses could have been prevented by aggressive enforcement of a strong preventive maintenance ordinance.

The Department of Community Affairs currently provides funding to cities for demolition of deteriorated buildings. The City of Trenton could take the lead building an urban/environment/preservation coalition to advocate for state funds for stabilizing and mothballing buildings.

- **Develop written procedures incorporating alternative review methods for the Landmarks Commission to streamline and improve the design review process.**

The Landmarks Commission has, over the years, developed ways of working with staff and applicants and reviewing projects. It is time to formalize the way the commission does business with written procedures.

These procedures should include alternative review methods used successfully by other commissions and the following items:

- Clarify what kinds of reviews (including concept plans) should be done by staff and what should be undertaken by the full commission;
  - Outline the requirements for submission of materials and completion of project;
  - Specify standards on attendance, conflict of interest, conduct of meetings, commission actions;
  - Establish a subcommittee review process for working out details, materials selection, and project changes on site and outline what should be reviewed by staff and what by subcommittee;
  - Make provision for streamlined review and special meetings;
  - Incorporate regular evaluation of selected completed projects as a method of landmarks and staff training in preservation/design review.
- **Actively support the development of a local non-profit historic preservation organization.**



Cities which have used historic preservation successfully to benefit residents, provide attractive housing, improve the economy, encourage the growth of heritage tourism, and create a more aesthetically pleasing environment all have local non-profit historic preservation organizations. A municipal preservation ordinance, professional staff, and a Landmarks Commission cannot do it all on their own. Trenton is blessed with many preservation advocates who are knowledgeable about the benefits and tools of preservation; it is time for them to form an organization. The city should actively encourage and support the development of a local-nonprofit historic preservation organization.

- **Work cooperatively with local organizations to develop and disseminate informational materials on Trenton's historic resources and the social, cultural and economic benefits of preserving them.**

The City should seek out and work cooperatively with regional history, tourism, preservation, development, and educational organizations to develop and disseminate brochures, books, website, and/or other informational materials on Trenton's historic resources. The City also could participate in tours and workshops to show the historical and architectural significance of its landmarks and historic districts and the social, cultural, and economic benefits of preserving them.

- **Advocate use of preservation/design guidelines to other public and non-profit entities with funds, programs, and/or districts in Trenton (CCRC, TDA, Capital South SID, Arena Improvement District).**

Some of these organizations have staff knowledgeable in preservation tools in general and preservation/design review in particular.

- **Continue the Landmarks Commission's annual preservation awards program.**

An alternative is to have another organization take over these awards or work with another organization to do a joint awards program.