



Chapter 6

Downtown Transit Village

Downtown Capital District Master Plan
Trenton, New Jersey

Downtown Transit Village

Trenton’s commuter infrastructure is the key to unlock Downtown’s economic development potential. Based upon Smart Growth Principles, Trenton will increase the mix and density of development around Trenton Station in accord with New Jersey Transit Village guidelines.

Description



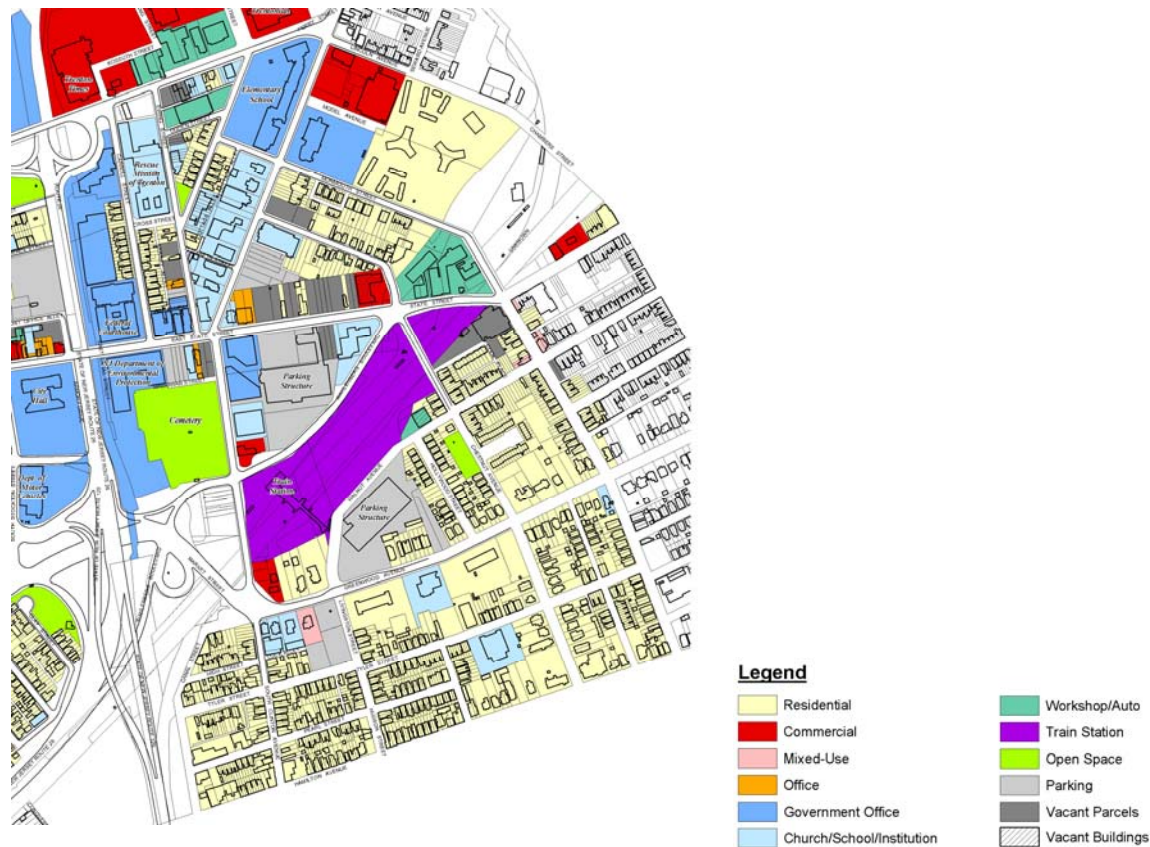
Trenton’s Downtown Transit Village is bounded generally by Perry Street on the north, Hamilton Avenue on the south, Monmouth Street on the east, and U.S. Route 1 on the west. This district contains a vibrant mix of land uses, though parcels of vacant land exist for near-term redevelopment at a variety of scales.

This area is anchored by Trenton Station, the southern terminus for NJ Transit trains to New York City, the northern terminus for SEPTA trains to Philadelphia, and an intermediate station for Amtrak trains traveling along Northeast Corridor between Boston and Washington, D.C. Directly across Clinton Avenue, the River LINE light rail station provides service to Camden, NJ.

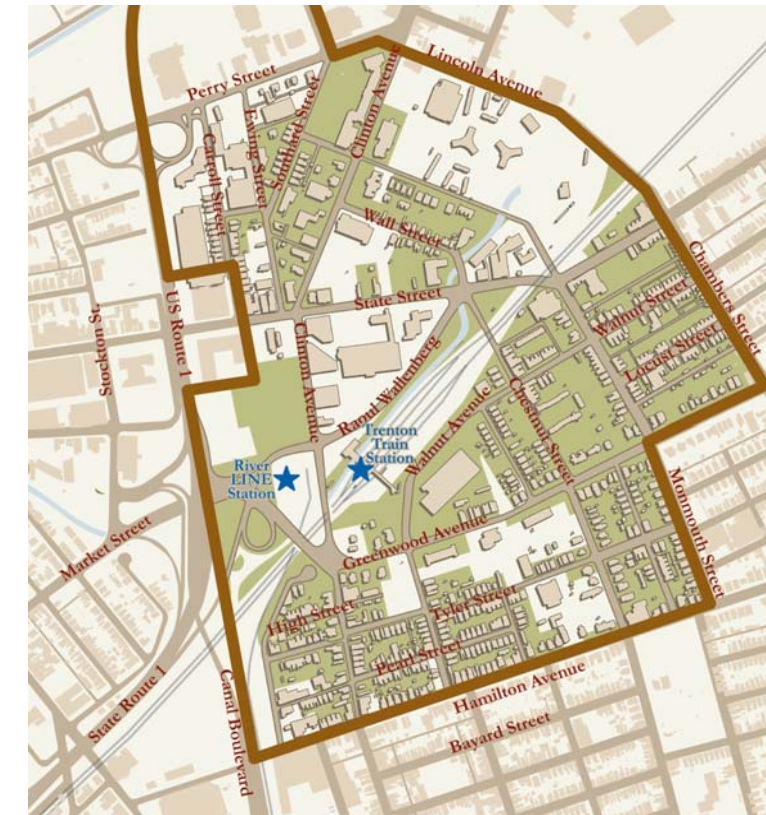
Large-scale public and private sector office uses are located in the Transit Village, including the Federal Courthouse, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Mercer County office complex and a 10-story, mid-rise office tower. Institutional uses include education administration facilities, an elementary school, churches and non-profit organizations. The area also contains a mix of housing types, including two mid-rise residential towers.

Mercer Cemetery is located here and is an important landmark that contains the memorials of many prominent Trentonians, including George McClellan, Civil War general and Governor of New Jersey. Park and open space amenities are very limited within this district and should be developed to balance the quality-of-life attributes of the neighborhood.





Existing Land Use - Land use within the Transit Village includes transit facility, parking, office, institutional, retail, residential and open space uses.



Current Configuration – Development in this area has been focused primarily on government, office, and institutional projects. Restoration of the existing housing stock and development of mixed-density infill projects that include residential, office and retail to provide convenience goods and services should be implemented.

Improvement Program

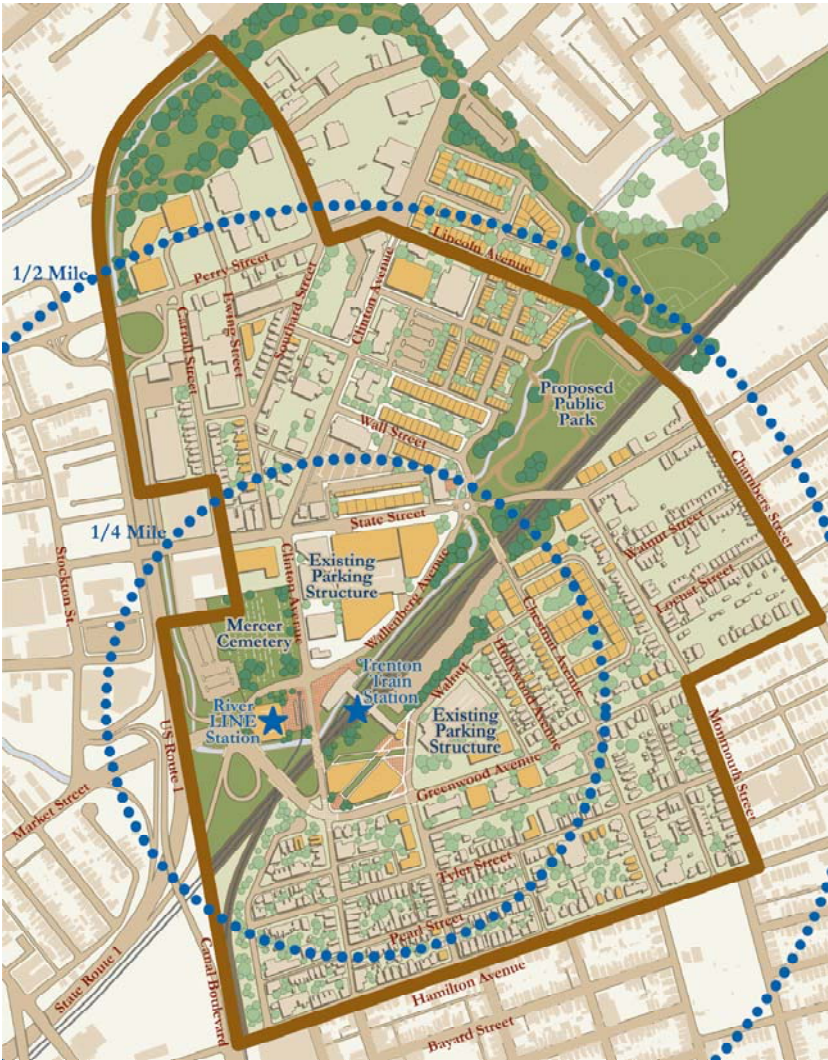
Downtown Trenton possesses a unique urban density and commuter rail infrastructure which can be capitalized upon to transform Trenton into a major employment center and residential community of choice. Commuter accessibility has the power to positively impact all of Downtown’s planning subdistricts, but the most direct opportunities for development utilizing Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) best practices are in the area immediately adjacent to Trenton Station. The City is committed to “Transit Village” development in this area and has applied for the official State designation. The illustration to the right depicts redevelopment opportunities in orange within the Downtown Transit Village. The blue dotted circles indicate quarter- and half-mile walking distances.

New Jersey Transit Villages

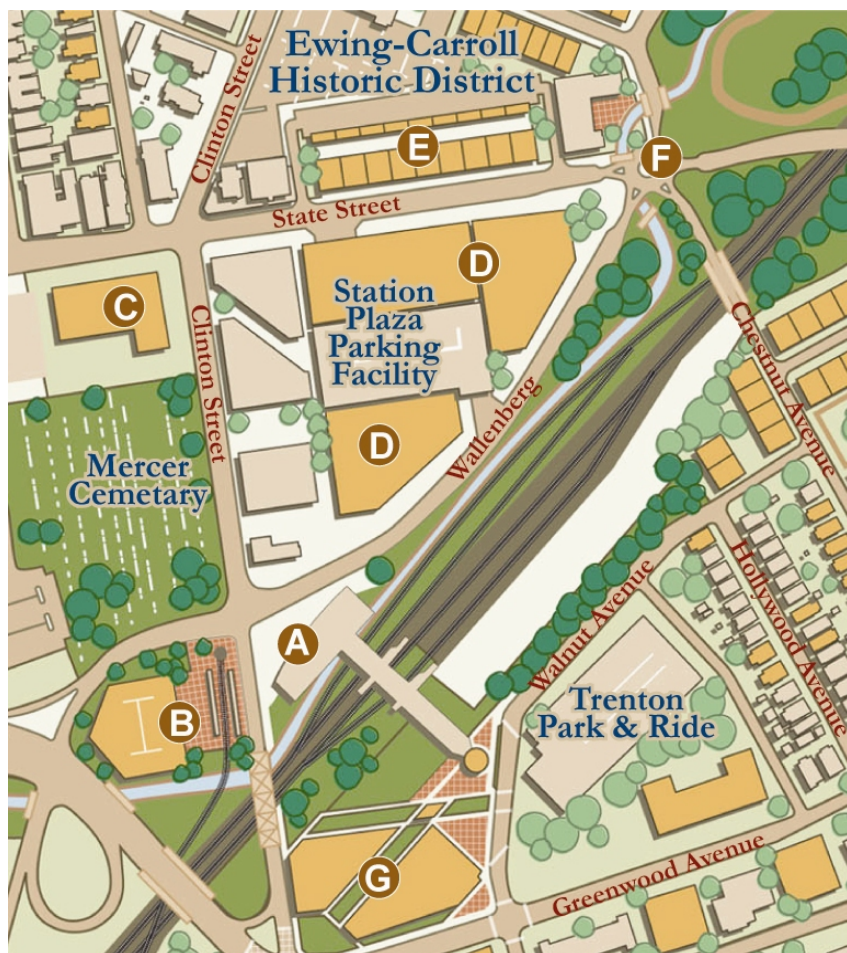
New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and NJ Transit spearhead a multi-agency partnership known as the “Transit Village Initiative.” This initiative helps to redevelop and revitalize communities around transit facilities in order to make them an appealing choice for people to live, work, learn and play and thereby reduce their reliance upon automobiles. The Transit Village Initiative is an excellent model for Smart Growth because it encourages growth in urban centers where infrastructure already exists. It is a goal of the Transit Village Initiative to bring more housing, more businesses and more people into communities with transit facilities. The area surrounding Trenton Station in Downtown Trenton meets many of the key criteria needed to be officially designated as a “transit village” by the State. These criteria include the following:

- Presence of existing transit facilities
- Local commitment to grow jobs, housing, and population
- Presence of vacant land and/or underutilized or deteriorated buildings around transit
- Adopted land use strategy to achieve compact, transit-supportive, mixed-use development
- Integration of a strong residential component
- Ready-to-go projects to be implemented within three years, in addition to longer-term projects

Information courtesy of <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/community/village/index.shtml>



Opportunity sites are depicted in orange.
Key sites and projects are keyed to the text that follows.



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A. Trenton Station Enhancements

A \$73 million dollar renovation project to enhance the safety, function and visual character of Trenton Station is nearing completion. These enhancements include reconstruction of the existing building to include a new façade, user accessibility upgrades and a new mezzanine level to accommodate additional retail, office and civic space amenities. The rebuilt station will present a new image of Trenton and serve to anchor private reinvestment in the Transit Village District.



Trenton Station is undergoing a major renovation to enhance its safety and function, as well as to elevate its stature as a Trenton landmark.

B. River LINE Enhancements

Trenton is the northern terminus of the River LINE, a light rail service that connects Trenton to Camden with 18 intermediate stations in between. The platform areas are located directly across the street from Trenton Station, which facilitates connections between several modes of transit. The platforms are beautifully detailed with colorful tile and original artwork. Surface parking is provided in a lot immediately to the west. This lot is ideal for a parking structure with ground-level retail/office space.

C. Transit Village/Central Business District Transition Parcel

This site is strategically located on the highly visible corner that connects the Transit Village to the Central Business District. Development of this vacant parcel should be limited to three stories so as to blend with the scale of the historic church located on East State Street at Clinton Avenue, and the architecture of the adjacent Ewing-Carroll Historic District. The corner of the parcel should be richly landscaped, including amenities such as benches that enhance the pedestrian environment along State Street near the train station. Development of this parcel should not preclude the accommodation of a light rail extension along State Street that links the train station to the Capital Area and Riverfront.

D. Major Mixed-Use Redevelopment Opportunity Sites

Station Plaza Parking Facility is a privately-operated 1,600 space structure for commuter, worker and visitor use. It is located in the large block north of Trenton Station, along with a mid-rise office tower and the renowned Pete Lorenzo's café. This parking facility is surrounded by large vacant parcels. These sites are high-priority targets for transit-oriented, mixed-use development. Mid-rise residential towers with two levels of office/commercial uses are proposed to wrap the parking structure. Additional parking should be integrated into the design of the new structures.

E. State Street/Ewing-Carroll Historic District Transition Site

The north block face of East State Street, between the intersection of Wallenberg Boulevard and Clinton Avenue, is a residential development site that should provide a transition between the high-density, mixed-use development proposed around the Station Plaza Parking Facility and the three story architecture of the Ewing-Carroll Historic District that is located directly north of East State Street. A three-story town home development is proposed with rear access parking. Four stories could be considered with a top floor stepback of 6' minimum. Commercial use could be considered for a portion of the site as long as it is architecturally integrated into the residential development.

F. State Street Roundabout



The intersection of Wallenberg Boulevard and East State Street should be reconfigured to support economic development in Downtown Trenton. In its current configuration, motorists leaving the train station driving north are forced into a right-turn-only situation directing them away from Downtown.

A roundabout configuration is recommended for this intersection so that travel from multiple streets with irregular intersections may be accommodated. This configuration is explored in greater detail in the recently completed study titled the "Train Station Linkage Plan."

G. Greenwood/Clinton Redevelopment

A mixed-use development is proposed for the intersection of Greenwood and Walnut Avenues at Clinton Street. This site is directly adjacent to Trenton Station and is currently underutilized. Development should include residential and commercial components, such as office and convenience retail. This area has an interesting visual character as the result of the adaptive reuse of historic homes for business purposes. To the extent possible, the site plan for this development should incorporate existing structures of significant character.

H. Large Scale Office Site

Redevelopment of this site for large-scale office development is proposed. This site is located on a prominent intersection in Trenton with high visibility and direct access from US Route 1. Mid-rise office buildings in the ten- to fourteen-story range are proposed.

I. Redevelopment of former Miller Homes Site

The Trenton Housing Authority intends to demolish the two vacant high rise residential towers known as Miller homes and convey the property to the City of Trenton. This presents a large scale opportunity to establish a new neighborhood cluster of housing within walking distance of the train station. Development should accommodate a mix of income types including units for low income, affordable and market rate.

An interconnected road network should be established to provide access to Perry and the train station.

J. Proposed Assunpink Greenway Park

A new public park is proposed along the Assunpink Greenway. This park is intended to anchor private-sector reinvestment in Downtown Trenton and elevate its quality-of-life amenities, particularly in the adjacent Transit Village and Hanover Academy Districts. It should be developed with both passive open space and active recreational features, such as baseball, softball and soccer fields, tennis courts, swimming pool(s), activity pavilions, planting areas and wetland restoration areas. The new park would replace the Trenton freight yards, a vacant brownfield site adjacent to the Northeast Corridor rail line. Because the site is located within a floodplain, no structures can be erected that impede flood waters.



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Proposed Assunpink Greenway Park



This concept sketch prepared by Cassway-Albert, Ltd. & Kelly Varnell Virgona, Inc. illustrates one concept for the Proposed Assunpink Greenway Park.



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K. Chestnut Area Residential

The areas surrounding Chestnut Avenue, south of the railroad tracks to Greenwood Avenue including Walnut and Hollywood Avenues, contain opportunity sites for residential redevelopment. Efforts should be made to assemble property along Chestnut for a multi-unit, attached housing development. The scale of the neighborhood should be maintained at a 3 to 3.5 story maximum height to reflect the scale and character of the adjacent Greenwood-Hamilton Historic District. Renovation of existing housing is proposed where multiple ownerships limit the ability to assemble property. Attached housing should also be considered for the property between the railroad tracks and Walnut Avenue, west of Chestnut Avenue, across the street from the 1,800-space Trenton Park-and-Ride facility.

L. Greenwood-Hamilton Neighborhood Renovation & Infill

The Greenwood-Hamilton District is an ideal transit-oriented neighborhood as it is located within comfortable walking distance to the train station. It is comprised of attractive housing stock with a mix of scales that could accommodate both first-time home buyers as well as the move-up housing market. Renovation of the existing housing stock should be the primary focus, with scattered infill sites developed with attached housing of the same scale and character as the exiting stock. Historic mansions have been adapted for reuse as office/retail space along Greenwood Avenue to the benefit of the neighborhood. Future proposals for adaptive reuse should be considered.





Mixed residential and commercial infill should be constructed to complement the scale and character of the adjacent Ewing-Carroll and Greenwood-Hamilton Historic Districts as depicted in photos to the left and this illustration. Depicted here are redevelopment prototypes envisioned for the north block face of State Street east of Clinton Street.