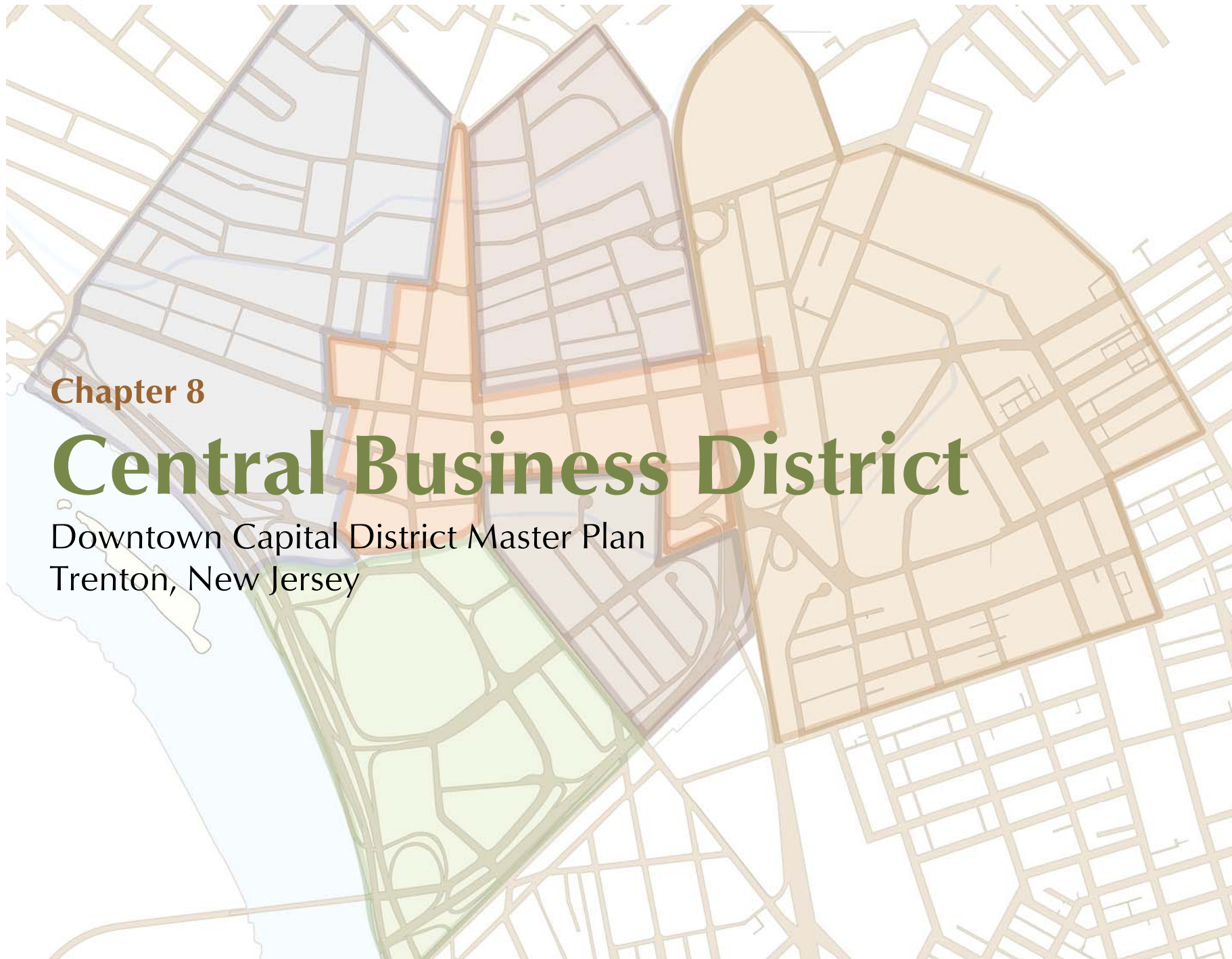




Chapter 8

# Central Business District

Downtown Capital District Master Plan  
Trenton, New Jersey



# Central Business District

The Central Business District of Downtown Trenton located along State, Broad and Warren Streets will be reinvigorated as a new employment center, shopping and entertainment destination, and residential community of choice.

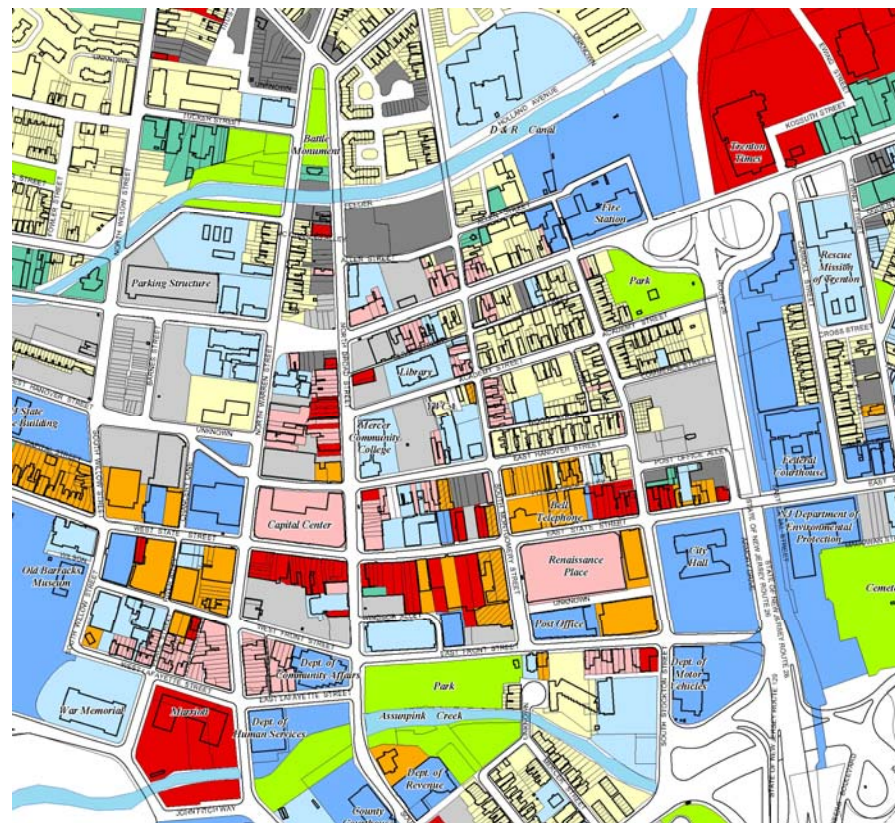
## Description



Trenton's historic Central Business District is located along East State, North Broad and North Warren Streets. This district is generally bounded by the Assunpink Creek and Front Street on the south, the intersection of Clinton and State Street on the east, the Battle Monument on the north, and Warren and Willow Streets on the west.

This district is fortunate in that a large number of its original buildings are intact. In some cases though, entire blocks have been demolished and redeveloped with large office complexes that are used primarily by state government. The South Warren Street Historic District is located in this district, adjacent to the Trenton Marriot Lafayette Yard hotel. Parking structures are distributed throughout this district and there is limited on-street parking.

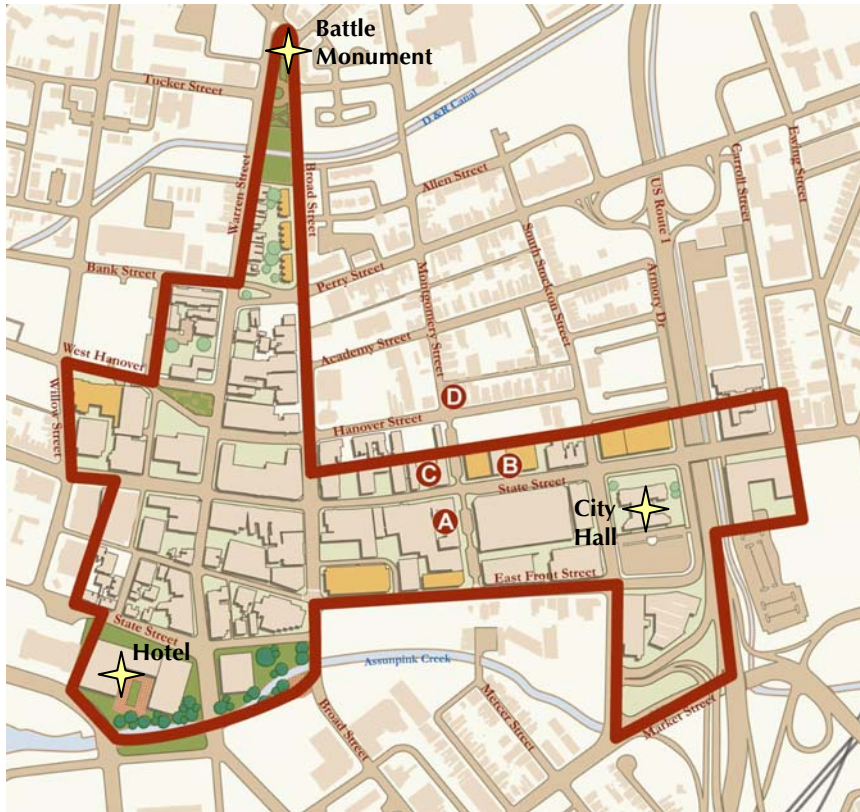




**Existing Land Use** – Land use within the Central Business District includes a mix of historic-scaled, mixed-use structures, new large-scale office complexes, parking structures, hotel, institutional buildings and pocket parks.



**Current Configuration** – The Central Business District was historically comprised of three- and four-story mixed-use buildings along with tall landmark buildings such as Broad Street Bank. The demolition and redevelopment of entire blocks for large-scale office uses has been the trend in recent years. Care must be given to maintaining the historic integrity of this district while accommodating change.



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

## Improvement Program

Downtown Trenton has a pleasant, walkable scale that is suitable for an urban business and residential center. It offers an urban lifestyle in contrast to the small town and rural lifestyles that dominate the area. Trenton is rich in architectural character, derived primarily from its trove of well-maintained, turn-of-the-century buildings and public monuments.

Trenton is committed to growing its downtown private-sector office and residential sectors. Several large-scale buildings are ideal for adaptive reuse for these purposes. As Trenton’s residential and professional employment base grows, it will be able to attract new retail and restaurants.

### A. Broad Street Bank Adaptive Reuse

The residential marketplace is responding to Trenton and the vision set forth in this Plan. One of the key questions at the onset of the planning process was the fate of the Broad Street Bank Building which had sat vacant and deteriorating for more than a decade. Many suggested that it be torn down. Recognizing the significance of this landmark building, the City chose to stabilize it and promote redevelopment. The Broad Street Bank has been completely renovated as an adaptive reuse project with ground level commercial and upper story residential. The development includes 124 one- and two-bedroom apartments with initial rents ranging from \$700-\$1,500.



### B. Trenton Town Center Adaptive Reuse

A major mixed-use development is in planning stages adjacent to Broad Street Bank on the block bounded by East State, Montgomery and East Hanover Streets. Adaptive reuse of the seven-story Bell Telephone building with a three-story addition is proposed for residential use. In addition, a twenty-story building is proposed with retail, office and residential uses, along with an additional mid-rise

building, townhouses, and mid-block parking structure with roof garden. This is anticipated to be a \$180 million dollar investment in Downtown Trenton.

### C. Commonwealth Building Adaptive Reuse

The Commonwealth Building is directly across East State Street from the Broad Street Bank development. This adaptive reuse project is in planning stages for conversion of this 30,000 sf building to upscale residential units with ground floor commercial.



### D. Aleda Building Adaptive Reuse



The Aleda building is a five-story historic structure currently used for apartment rental. This building is ideal for adaptive reuse as a boutique hotel to complement the modern hotel accommodations offered at the Trenton Marriott Lafayette Yard. The Aleda Building is located at the corner of East Hanover and Montgomery Streets. Montgomery Street widens between the Aleda Building and Mill Hill Park so the building serves as a landmark that is visible from East State Street and the Park. Parking would have to be dedicated in a parking structure located nearby.

### E. Round out the Business Mix

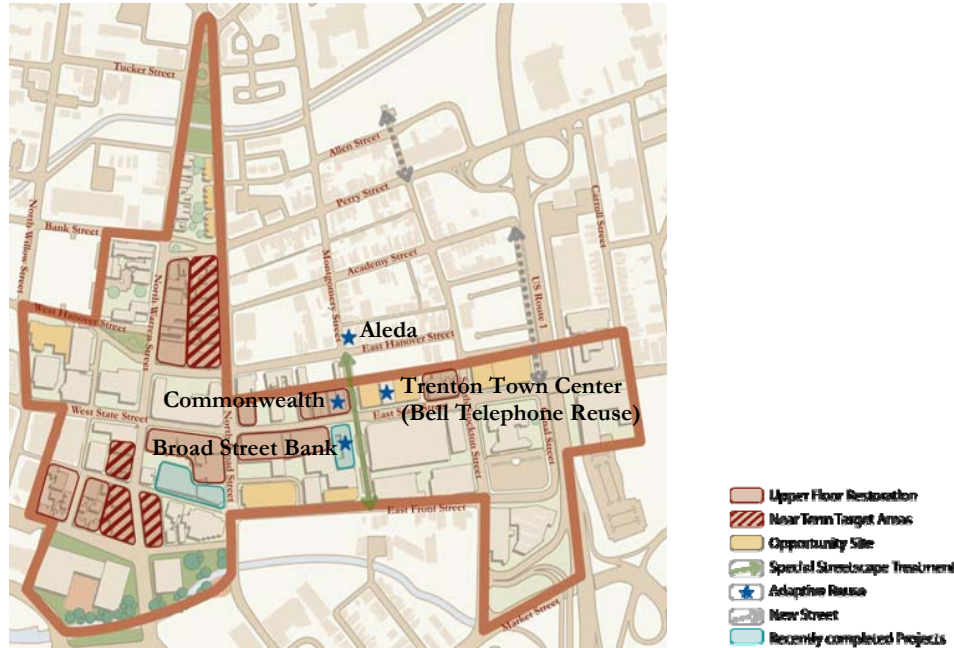
The business mix in the Central Business District is dominated by reduced price retailers, such as dollar stores, bodegas and sandwich shops. There are also several banks in this district. With the exception of fast food, the mix of downtown businesses is not tailored to capture sales from the employment base that fills downtown each weekday. There is no fresh food market downtown.

All totaled, the residential developments described above have potential to add 500 new living units within the Central Business District. As the residential population grows, the mix of retail is likely to change. The City should work with the Trenton Downtown Association to recruit new retail vendors and restaurants. This effort is best supported by maintaining a detailed inventory of available space by square footage.

### F. Upper Floor Restoration Program

Upper floor uses are an essential part of vibrant downtowns. Many property owners in Trenton have expressed the desire to renovate the upper floors of their buildings though the cost to do so has proven to be prohibitive. This is primarily due to the fact that downtown property owners were permitted to abandon the upper floors of their buildings in the 1950s. Many owners demolished the stairways that provided access to the upper floors in order to maximize ground level square footage. Since the stair was removed, a new stair must be built to modern building code standards. In many cases, the required size of the new stair is larger than the structural opening of the original stair, making expensive structural reconfigurations necessary. Fire-safety standards such as sprinkler systems are also required. The cost associated with these requirements has prevented the majority of eager and well-intentioned property owners from renovating the upper floors of their downtown properties. If a building still has its original stairway, then New Jersey historic structure building codes (NJAC 5:23-6.33) apply, which are less financially burdensome.

Recognizing that vacant upper story space has a blighting effect on downtown, a grant program could be enacted to write down a portion of the costs associated with upper story renovations. This scale of this program would be determined by available funds. If the program targeted two buildings a year for five years, ten buildings would be revitalized to the benefit of all downtown. Buildings in the South Warren Street Historic District and buildings on North Broad Street across from Mercer County Community College could be targeted in the early phases of this program.



Upper Floor Restoration & Adaptive Reuse Targets

## G. Design Guidelines

Authenticity of place is one of Trenton’s greatest assets. It is an important colonial city that has experienced subsequent phases of high quality growth and development. The most recent phase that has impacted the scale, character and function of downtown has been the demolition of entire blocks for the development of large-scale office complexes. This has been beneficial for Trenton in that it has a major employment base coming into downtown each weekday. Care must be given to balance the need for change with the need for preservations.

Design guidelines are effective tools to guide both new development and renovations. Guidelines should be developed for the Central Business to assure new developments complement the historic building fabric of the city. At a minimum these guidelines should address building massing, construction materials, window and door articulation, lighting, signage and sidewalk amenities.

## H. Streetscape Enhancements

A unique visual character should be established for the Central Business. Recent streetscape enhancements that feature brick detailing are very attractive and should be extended throughout downtown in phases over time.

### Street Lighting Program

A hierarchy of street lighting fixtures should be specified for key corridors in this district. The use of signature lighting fixtures to guide people into and through the district would be very helpful for visitors trying to find their way.

The street configuration in downtown is very interesting but it is also very confusing if one does not know their way.

State Street should be lined with the most dominant fixture type, and Broad and Warren Streets lined with slightly smaller fixtures. This will emphasize the importance of State Street as the center of downtown, while also providing cues for drivers to follow Broad and Warren Streets to move north and south across downtown.

### Montgomery Street Special Treatment

Montgomery Street should be improved between East Hanover and Front Streets. Montgomery is the widest street downtown and it is ideal for connecting pedestrians from the State Street corridor and the Hanover Academy Neighborhood to Mill Hill Park. Street trees should be added along with corner and

mid block “bump out” features to visually frame the entrance into the park and to provide additional space for trees and street furniture. This street could be closed for special events such as street fairs.

### ***State Street Bridge over Route 1***

The pedestrian environment on State Street at Route 1 could be improved. The bridge condition is utilitarian, has a poor visual character and is uninviting to pedestrians. This condition should be improved given the strategic importance of linking commuter foot traffic from Trenton Train Station to the East State Street corridor and the rest of Downtown.

Special paving treatments could be integrated into the sidewalk to add color and interest, and the chain-link type fencing guardrail could be replaced with a more attractive feature. Planters could be added along the outside edges of the bridge to soften the hard lines, a strategy that yields terrific results.



