

Chapter 7

Riverfront District

Downtown Capital District Master Plan
Trenton, New Jersey

Riverfront District

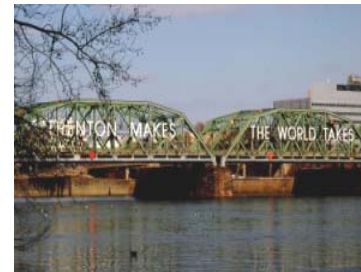
Trenton will reclaim its connection with the Delaware River to enhance the experience of living, working and visiting Downtown. Route 29 will be rebuilt as an Urban Boulevard and surface parking lots will be replaced by pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development.

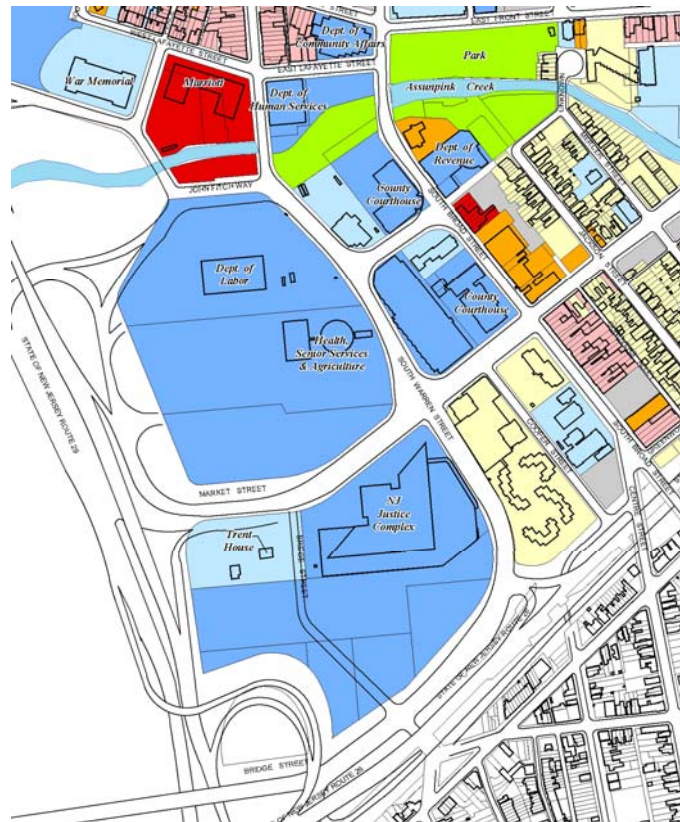
Description



The Riverfront District is bounded by East Lafayette on the north, U.S. Route 1 on the south, South Broad Street on the east, and the Delaware River on the west. Predominant land uses within this area include large office buildings, surface parking lots and road infrastructure. This area is the former site of Stacy Park, which was once the primary downtown open space linking the State House to the Delaware River.

In the 1950s, the State of New Jersey purchased a large portion of Stacy Park from the City and constructed the NJ Route 29 Freeway. This roadway provides access to Downtown Trenton from outlying suburbs to the east and west, as well as controlled access between the north-south radial routes that connect to New York and Philadelphia. After completion of the roadway, a series of state office buildings were constructed with land consuming surface parking lots. As the result, Downtown Trenton became disconnected from the river, both physically and spiritually.





Legend

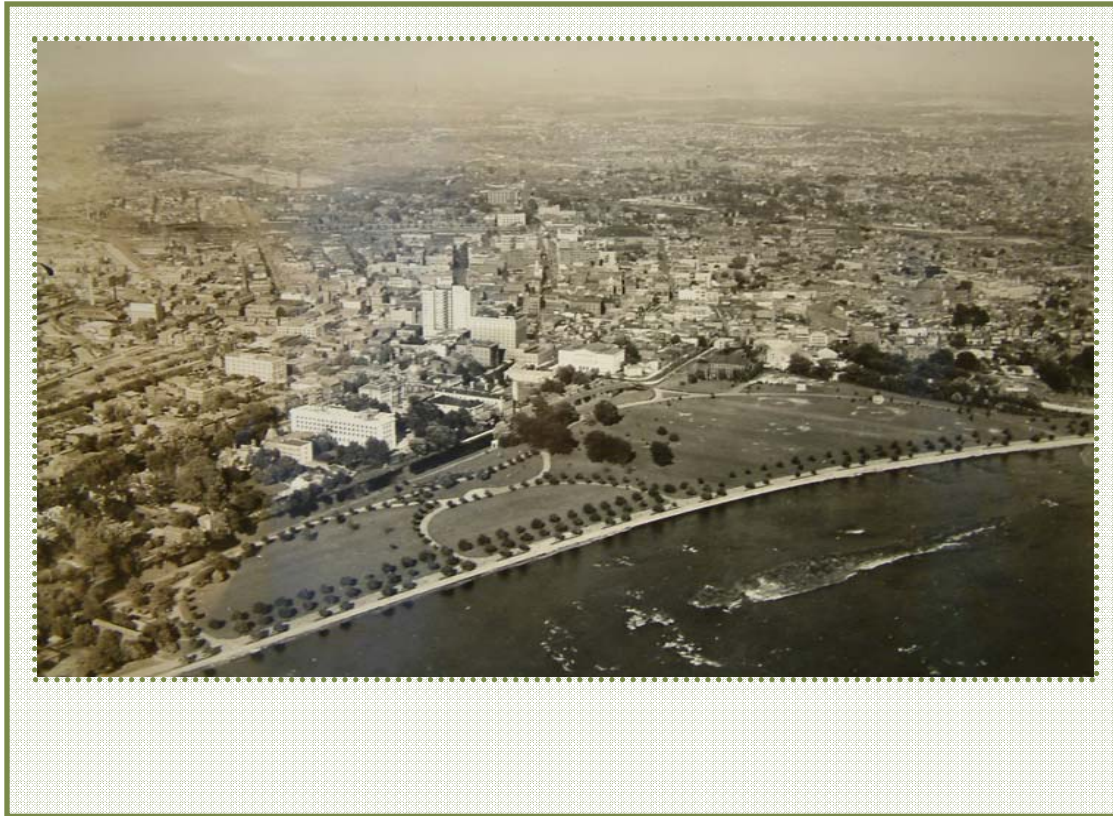
- | | |
|---|---|
| Residential | Workshop/Auto |
| Commercial | Train Station |
| Mixed-Use | Open Space |
| Office | Parking |
| Government Office | Vacant Parcels |
| Church/School/Institution | Vacant Buildings |

Existing Land Use – Land use within the Riverfront District includes State office buildings, the Mercer County Courthouse Complex, surface parking lots and the historic Trent House.



Current Configuration – Large scale government office buildings, surface parking lots and roadway infrastructure dominate the Riverfront District.

History of Stacy Park & NJ Route 29



Beautiful Stacy Park once served as the signature open space for the Statehouse of New Jersey and Downtown Trenton. This park was the City's connection to the Delaware Riverfront. The park was characterized by large open lawns, quality landscape, and promenades.

In the 1950's, Stacy Park was demolished in the name of progress when the State constructed the New Jersey Route 29 Freeway. Subsequent phases of development by government agencies have produced an area characterized by scattered office buildings, surface parking lots and disconnection from the river.



NJ Route 29 Urban Boulevard Study

New Jersey Route 29 is currently configured as a high speed freeway that runs along the riverfront in Downtown Trenton. Multiple access points are provided from adjacent parking areas via a web of circular ramps and drives that consume land and further restrict access to the Riverfront.

The reconstruction of Route 29 into an urban boulevard is proposed to accomplish the following goals:

- **Reclaim the Delaware River Waterfront**
- **Improve Access to the Waterfront**
- **Improve Safety and Provide Traffic Calming**
- **Promote Urban and Economic Redevelopment**
- **Provide Environmental Enhancements along the Assumpink Creek and Delaware River**

To support the City of Trenton’s vision and goals for the Riverfront, NJ DOT conducted the Route 29 Urban Boulevard Study, with consultants Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Rinehart, Inc. Vollmer & Act Engineering, to examine alignment and access alternatives for Route 29 throughout the entire length of the City.

The recommendations contained in this Master Plan are based upon the preferred scenario identified in the NJDOT study. The proposed alignment would veer Route 29 inland away from the River between the State House and the U.S. Route 1 Bridge in order to recapture developable land and restore opportunities for pedestrian access to the riverfront (see illustrations at right). This configuration recalls the alignment of the road through historic Stacy Park that once brought motorists alongside the landmark War Memorial building, thereby creating a memorable experience of being in Downtown Trenton.



Existing Road Network

Route 29 is currently configured as a high-speed freeway along the Delaware River, though it is not built to modern safety standards. Multiple circular ramps and access points unnecessarily consume land. Adjacent areas are used primarily as surface parking lots.



Proposed Road Network

Reconfiguration of Route 29 into an urban boulevard, as depicted in red, is proposed to establish a signature experience for arrival into Downtown Trenton. This improvement will increase motorist and pedestrian safety while enabling access to the Delaware Riverfront. Extension of the City’s street grid in adjacent areas, as depicted in yellow, provides large-scale economic development opportunities.



This illustration depicts New Jersey Route 29 reconstructed as an urban boulevard and the establishment of a new mixed-use district and public amenities along the Delaware River.



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

Improvement Program

Reconnecting Downtown Trenton to the Delaware Riverfront is a high priority for the City. Redevelopment of the Riverfront District is envisioned to include the reconfiguration of Route 29 into an Urban Boulevard that facilitates vehicular and pedestrian mobility through the District. Also proposed is the replacement of surface parking lots with strategically located parking structures sized to accommodate parking demand, and the development of mixed-use office, commercial and residential buildings that step down in height and development density as they approach the River. Improved pedestrian access to the River and paths along the Riverfront are envisioned to provide a signature experience of being in Downtown Trenton.

The illustration to the left highlights redevelopment opportunities within the Riverfront District. Opportunity sites are depicted in orange. The reconfiguration of Route 29 and the extension of the street grid create a cluster of new development parcels to accommodate tax-generating development in Downtown Trenton. A mix of uses is proposed that includes residential, office, retail and recreational uses. Key projects are described in the text that follows.

A. Riverfront Low-Rise Residential/Mixed-Use

This block is approximately 4.2 acres in size. Development should be organized around an alley system to provide service and parking access. Mixed-use with ground level commercial and upper floor residential is proposed for the area that fronts Route 29, with a maximum building height of four stories recommended. Residential development is proposed for the area that fronts the Delaware River, with a maximum building height of three stories recommended.



B. Riverfront Low-Rise Residential/Mixed-Use

This block is approximately 2.12 acres in size. Development should be organized around an alley system to provide service and parking access. Mixed-use with ground level commercial and upper floor residential is proposed for the area that fronts Route 29. A maximum building height of four stories is recommended. Residential development is recommended along the River, with a maximum building height of three stories.

C. Riverfront Low-Rise Mixed-Use

This small block is approximately 0.75 acres in size. Service and parking access should be provided from the northern edge of the block, and restricted from Route 29 and Market Street. Mixed-use with ground level commercial and upper floor residential is proposed, with a maximum building height of four stories. Market site for a signature restaurant or other entertainment destination oriented toward the river on this high visibility parcel.

D. Assunpink Creek Office/Commercial

This block is approximately 3.2 acres in size and currently contains the thirteen-story New Jersey Department of Labor building. Infill sites fronting Assunpink Creek are identified for mixed office and commercial development. Buildings heights should step down toward the Creek; a maximum building height of six stories is recommended.



E. Public Square

This block is approximately 2.45 acres in size. This site is partially owned by Trigen Energy Corporation, which operates a cogeneration facility that provides for the thermal and electricity needs of over 40 buildings in Downtown Trenton.

A circular helipad covered with grass is located in the center of the block above the utility infrastructure. The utility use should remain but the helipad should be relocated to another site. This entire block should be reconceived as a Public Square around which development on surrounding blocks is focused.



Landscape enhancements and pedestrian amenities should be installed around the perimeter of the block in a way that would allow service access to the utility to be maintained.

F. Mid-Rise Mixed-Use

This block is approximately 2.2 acres in size. Development should be organized around an alley system to provide service and parking access primarily from the street that defines the north block face. Vehicular access should be restricted from Route 29. A mix of retail, office and residential uses is recommended for this block, with a maximum building height of thirteen stories. This block is ideal for a mid-block parking structure around which development could be wrapped in subsequent phases of development (if not included in an initial development phase).

G. Trent House Museum Site

This 3 acre site is the founding place of Trenton and the location of the William Trent House Museum.



The proposed road reconfiguration expands the land area dedicated to the Museum, which could be utilized to accommodate visitor parking along the south and east perimeters of the block. The prominence of the intersection of Route 29 and Market Street will secure the stature of the Trent House as a landmark destination. Fencing and gateway signage features should be enhanced at this intersection.

H. Mid-Rise Mixed-Use

This small block is approximately 1 acre in size, and service and parking access should be provided from the street that defines either the west or the south block face, and restricted from South Warren Street. A mix of office and retail uses is recommended for this block with a maximum building height of seven stories.



I. Department of Health, Senior Services, & Agriculture Site

This block is approximately 2.4 acres in size. Existing development includes older office buildings that house the Departments of Health, Senior Services and Agriculture. These

buildings are scheduled to be demolished within three to five years. Service and parking access should be provided from the street that defines either the north or the south block face, and restricted from Warren Street.

This block is ideal for a mid-block parking structure around which development could be wrapped in subsequent phases of development if not included in an initial development phase. A mix of retail, office and/or residential uses is recommended for this block when redeveloped with a maximum building height of thirteen stories.

J. Mid-Rise Mixed-Use & Parking

This block is approximately 2.5 acres in size. Service and parking access should be provided from the street that defines either the north or west block face, and restricted from South Warren and Market Streets. This block is ideal for a mid-block parking structure around which development could be wrapped in subsequent phases of development, if not included in initial phase. A mix of retail, office and/or residential uses is recommended, with a maximum height of 13 stories, though anticipated building heights are four-to-six stories. The illustration to the right depicts the mixed-use office, retail residential district envisioned for the Riverfront District of Trenton.

K. Mercer County Parking Structure Site

This is the site of the proposed Mercer County Parking Structure described in detail in the Mill Hill section of this plan. This project is reemphasized in this section because it is a key element of the redevelopment staging. This site has capacity for 800-1,000 spaces in a new parking structure which could be utilized to accommodate displaced parking while construction projects that include structured parking are underway. Utilization of this parking facility could be temporary or permanent as negotiated with Mercer County.

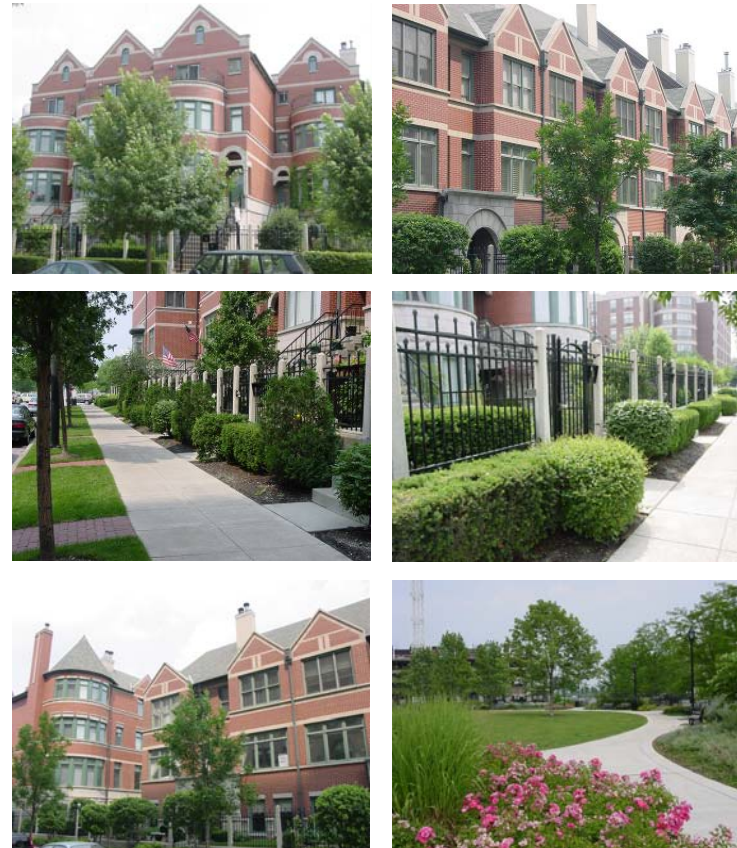


This illustration depicts the character of the mixed-use office, retail residential district envisioned for the Riverfront District of Trenton.

L. South Riverfront Residential/Mixed-Use Site

This site encompasses an area of approximately eight acres. The portion of this area that is not utilized for the Route 29 and Route 1 interchange is City-owned land that the State leases for parking. Phased relocation of State parking will likely be required in order to redevelop this area.

Westrum Development Company has been identified as the developer for this site. Current proposals include a mixed-use district of significant density. This proposal should be refined to support the overall goals for Downtown redevelopment. This district is ideal for upscale residential development of the character depicted in the photos to the right. Many of the proposed commercial and entertainment uses proposed by Westrum would be ideal for the parcels described above which have a more central location in the Riverfront District and relationship to Downtown.



Riverfront District Character Improvements

The establishment of a high-quality public image is a key opportunity for the City of Trenton. Public sector investments in infrastructure support elevated levels of private sector investment in development projects.

Character imparting details, such as median treatments, signature street lighting, landscape, signage and pedestrian amenities should be incorporated into City, County and State designs for this area.

The images to the right depict a range of public improvements and character details that could be emulated to enhance the function and appearance of the Riverfront District.

