



# DESIGNING

N E W J E R S E Y

NEW JERSEY

OFFICE

OF STATE

PLANNING

2000



# Design...



*A message*

has played and continues to play an important role in New Jersey. We have attractive housing, stately civic buildings, sober offices and robust industrial plants. We have beautiful streets, urbane parks, elegant bridges and causeways, picturesque canals and reservoirs, scenic parkways and a host of other well designed elements of infrastructure. And we have friendly neighborhoods, dynamic downtowns and vibrant districts. Indeed we have all the elements that make for attractive, diverse, well-rounded compact communities; and design has always played a vital role in how they are created and managed.

*from*

As this publication will show, New Jersey hosts many fine examples of enduring community design, from early railroad suburbs, to college towns, to new communities built by Federal initiative; from retreats designed by religious groups, to early suburbs in the picturesque tradition; from rural towns and villages, to beach resorts and planned industrial communities. New Jersey is also home to Radburn, perhaps the most influential new community of the 20th century.

*Governor*

*Christine*

There are many examples in our state of enduring projects developed with commitment to a body of design principles placing people at its center. With these principles we have created places that are memorable, attractive and long-lasting, that work as well today as they did in the past. These places are islands of respite in an often indistinguishable landscape. They are sources of inspiration and community pride. They are sound real estate investments.

*Todd*

*Whitman*

Over the last fifty years, however, in New Jersey and across the nation, we have moved away from these principles. We have built generic landscapes, with no center or identity. We need to stop building more sprawl, and return to traditional principles of community building.

And we are. Design is alive in New Jersey. A quiet revolution is occurring, with the impersonal solutions of our recent past quietly rejected in favor of models inspired by traditional values. We are planning, designing, and building new structures, streets, bridges, neighborhoods and entire communities in ways that respect and draw from our rich legacy while creating a physical framework that allows us to face the future with confidence.

In New Jersey, we are fortunate to have a State Plan providing guidance on where to focus new development, where to explore redevelopment opportunities, and where to preserve our open lands. Designing New Jersey explains how the spirit of this State Plan is translated into specific development projects, by drawing from that shared body of design principles used by many generations to build enduring places. We hope it will inspire the people of New Jersey to demand more from the design of their communities — to lift their expectations, show what we can reach for and empower them to achieve it.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Christine Todd Whitman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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THE

# Importance

O F

# Design

The illustrative site plan for Trenton's 1989 Capitol City Renaissance Plan shows footprints for proposed infill buildings and new street alignments, in effect providing a clear image of recommended building actions. Plan proposals are also shown in cross-section, such as a redesigned Stacy Park behind the capitol complex.

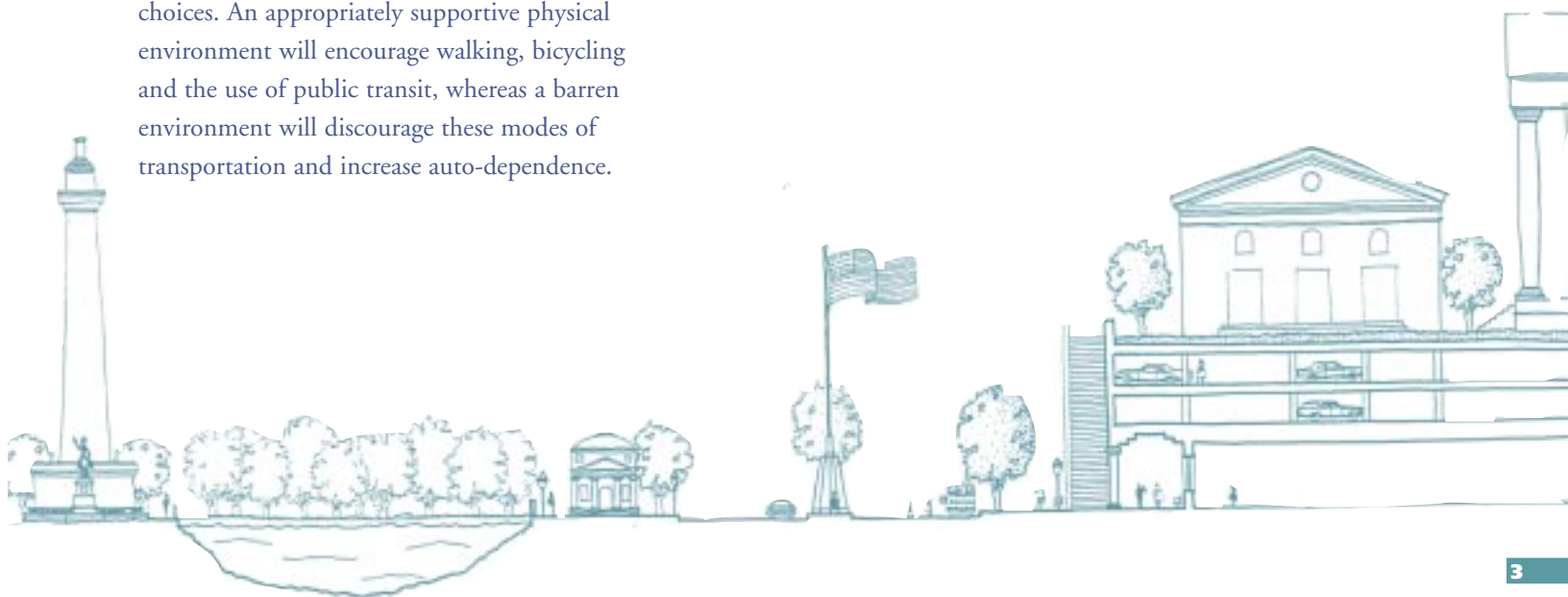


**T**he design and physical planning of our communities and their environs — the way in which buildings, streets, activities and open space are physically organized and related — is critically important to all of us. While design cannot, by itself, solve social and economic problems, an appropriate design framework will set the stage for, and enhance the success of other strategies. Quality design is indispensable to a sustainable future and to the long-term environmental quality, economic vitality, and community stability of New Jersey. It is also key to achieving the objectives of New Jersey's State Plan. Design is on par with coordinated planning and strategic investments in terms of its importance to State Plan implementation.

Design matters considerably, for both functional as well as aesthetic reasons. From a functional perspective, design can be a powerful influence on human behavior — it can promote or deter human interaction, inspire a sense of security or provoke apprehension, provide or deny access, indicate acceptance or rejection. It can improve efficiencies in infrastructure and service provisions; and it strongly conditions transportation choices. An appropriately supportive physical environment will encourage walking, bicycling and the use of public transit, whereas a barren environment will discourage these modes of transportation and increase auto-dependence.

From an aesthetic viewpoint, design plays an important role in the quality-of-life assessments which we all make on a daily basis, and it influences the locational choices and investment decisions of both residents and employers. A well-designed environment is much more than the sum of its parts — it represents an asset to the community, it enriches its users, and it creates real estate value. A bleak and uninspiring physical environment will not achieve these ends — it will alienate its users, reinforce feelings of disenfranchisement and vulnerability and lead to disinvestment and community fragmentation.

The design of our physical environment encompasses a wide variety of elements of all shapes and sizes. The character of our communities and their environs is defined primarily by the ways in which we have altered the natural landscape, which remains as a backdrop of receding importance. No matter how stunning this natural backdrop, the roads, bridges, buildings, signs, parks, public spaces and all the apparatus of human habitation contribute decisively to our perception of local character. New Jersey has myriad examples of the best in design encompassing all these elements, but they are not well known and deserve greater recognition.



# A Design Paradigm

## FOR NEW JERSEY COMMUNITIES

### Paradigm:

*an overall concept accepted by most people in a community.*

**A**t present, there is no commonly accepted set of ground rules, no general model — or paradigm — for the physical planning and design of New Jersey communities. Developers, planners, citizens, local officials, architects, traffic engineers, lenders and representatives of myriad interest groups often find themselves at odds over community design issues. Activists for different interest groups are frequently pitted against each other, arguing the issues based upon narrow interpretations of how to advance their respective mandates — historic preservation, environmental protection, agriculture, affordable housing, senior housing, mobility, economic development, open space and so forth — often to the exclusion of other, equally compelling interests. Residents frequently oppose any change in their neighborhoods.

The lack of consensus over development issues reflects the absence of a shared vision — a lack of consensus over design. It also signals tangible shortcomings in our contemporary planning documents, and indicates a failure of leadership on the part of our public bodies. This has not always been the case. New Jersey, like the rest of our country, was built in a hurry. Towns and cities developed, literally, overnight. This would not have been possible without a commonly accepted framework for making decisions regarding land







**Plans for early New Jersey settlements, such as the 1677 plan for Burlington (in background), reflect a tentative urban structure defined primarily by the intersection of two important streets. Grid platting became widespread in the 19th and early 20th century, providing a partial (Maplewood, 1910, previous page) or extended (Egg Harbor City, 1924) sense of discipline and rational spatial order. While the resulting community forms range from the organic to the highly gridded, these planning models all created communities with circulation systems providing high levels of connectivity.**

development. This framework — this paradigm — has been lost, and we have not found a mechanism to take its place.

In the 19th century, prior to zoning, New Jersey communities were planned in a very tangible and proactive way. Public right-of-ways were identified and secured, as were spaces for public squares and parks, along with sites for the municipal building, library, house of worship and other important civic functions. The community was physically organized around its most important elements — its public spaces, civic functions, transportation facilities and commercial hubs. Mapped representations of these intentions offered a clear picture of how the community would expand.

Most land development occurred through grid platting. Some towns, like Hoboken, were platted using a single uniform grid. Many others grew by successive accretions, with grids of different sizes and orientations, often attached to older, more organic patterns. While the grid can appear constraining to some, it provides a level of certainty with regard to the development outcomes. The form and character the community will take is understandable to current and future residents, developers and other interested parties. The grid is an extremely efficient way of platting land and creates a physical framework with the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances over time.

Nevertheless, the grid was not universal. There was experimentation and variation, and other New Jersey communities were platted using a variety of formal devices, from modified grids, to radial schemes to more picturesque layouts. These layout schemes all share certain physical attributes,

however: a circulation system offering a high level of connectivity, pedestrian-scale blocks and a concern for the public realm; and their physical form was pre-determined and clearly understood.

This way of planning our communities has changed, largely since the 1930s.

First, the emphasis on defining a community's future physical structure has been lost. This is reflected in our contemporary planning documents, which rely on land use diagrams and zone maps providing little substantive guidance about the physical form or character desired for the undeveloped (or redevelopable) sections of a community. While showing a proposed distribution of uses and their intensities, these maps do not evoke a desired future form and character for those lands contained within each zone or "land use designation." Instead, zones are described in mostly generic terms in a written narrative, and assigned unconvincing land use labels ("low density residential," "highway commercial") for regulatory purposes.

Second, the tradition of defining the public realm in advance — by mapping the major street network and siting important public spaces and buildings — has been forgotten. This reflects a reduced interest in the public realm in general and a propensity to retreat to private or limited access spaces. Access to more and more "community facilities," such as club houses, pools or tennis courts is actually restricted to residents or tenants of a given development.





**At the end of 19th century, New Jersey communities were growing both by incremental additions (Newark, 1874) as well as through wholesale planning. James Bradley's 1877 plan for Ocean Grove and Asbury Park uses a variable grid to create two adjoining communities with very different characters. It elegantly incorporates several significant water features (Deal Lake, Sunset Lake and Wesley Lake) as well as other areas of public open space. The flared street right-of-ways as the grid reaches the oceanfront were intended to increase ocean views and capture cooling ocean breezes.**

Third, public leadership in defining community form has waned. Municipal planning is predominantly administrative, focusing on the minutiae of zoning — the painstaking control of uses and densities — rather than on the form and character of new development. Municipal expectations regarding design are rarely articulated ahead of time in ways that are useful to the development applicant. Effective visualizations are seldom presented. Based on the scant information contained in municipal master plans, site plan and subdivision regulations, and on the zoning's bulk requirements, developers are expected to conjure a vision of what new areas should look like and how they should function. While a hands-off approach to site planning may appear justified to some as market driven, lack of municipal leadership regarding issues of physical form often creates serious quandaries for developers and promotes conflicts between stakeholders.

And fourth, many community design professionals set aside traditional design principles in response to the apparently unlimited mobility offered by the newly available and affordable private means of transportation — the automobile. Physical landscapes designed entirely for the automobile, thereby excluding pedestrians, cyclists and transit,

were conceived and built. Connectivity was eschewed for the privacy of cul-de-sacs and driveways, thereby forcing all traffic onto ever more congested collectors and arterials. At the same time, we enforced ever stricter separations between land uses and successfully managed to distance home from workplace, from school, from place of commerce, from place of worship, from recreation and so forth.

In the absence of an overall plan clearly defining the future physical form of the community, each parcel of land is approached on a case-by-case basis, in isolation. The configuration of the street system, the size and shape of the blocks which it defines, the character of the streets and the architectural character of the buildings — in essence the treatment of those features which largely determine a community's form and character — are left to the developer to propose. Each site is considered individually, in a reactive way, without reference to the broader physical context. Its history and significance to the larger community are generally overlooked. And its impacts on neighboring communities are generally not addressed.

There is consequently a pressing need for a statewide discussion of the elements of physical design — the determinants of the future form and character of our communities — to begin to fill this void. We need a new set of values and principles, shared by all interested parties, to guide the design of our communities. With this publication we hope to take a first step in that direction.



# Purpose of This Publication

**W**e recognize the need for an informed discussion focusing on the desirable future form and character of our communities. New Jersey communities need design principles and values shared by all interested parties. With this publication we hope to start a broad-based discussion that may help clarify the community design principles the state needs.

The design principles and guidelines provided here are offered to municipalities, counties, state agencies, developers, interest groups and the general public of New Jersey as a tool to help build better communities in a better state. It goes without saying that they are meant to be applied flexibly.

Interested readers are also encouraged to refer to the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan and specifically to the Plan's design framework, including its design policies.

This publication is organized into four sections. The first section contains design principles which are considered generally valid for both urban, suburban and rural conditions alike. More detailed principles specifically oriented to compact communities are presented in the next section. A third section provides guidance for auto-oriented, dispersed areas, with a view towards their eventual redesign and transformation into more compact, pedestrian-oriented places. Finally, a fourth and concluding section presents an overview of the statutory planning framework in New Jersey and a description of the planning tools available to implement community design objectives.

# Creating Places

High quality pocket parks provide opportunities for contemplation and quiet interludes in the heart of higher density areas. Dense plantings and water features are very effective in blocking out background noise. Durable, high quality materials add dignity and longevity.



**T**he most important task of design is to facilitate the creation of places, that is spatially defined entities with a recognizable identity and a distinct character. Places are the physical foundation of community. Places can be predominantly built or left mostly in a naturalized state; they can have an urban, suburban or rural flavor; they can be sophisticated and expensive or simple and functional; but the ways in which the natural and man-made elements are combined always give places a distinct personality. Places are not synonymous with models of land development, such as “planned unit development”

or “golf course community,” although these too can become places. On the other hand, the generic, indistinct landscapes generally associated with sprawl are rarely perceived as places.

Places are built of both standardized and individualized components. Examples of standardized components include highways, jughandles and overpasses; shopping centers; parking lots; utility lines; gas stations; and generic buildings, such as the “plain vanilla” office building, townhouse, post-office, trailer class-room and other examples of “chain-store” architecture. These off-the-shelf

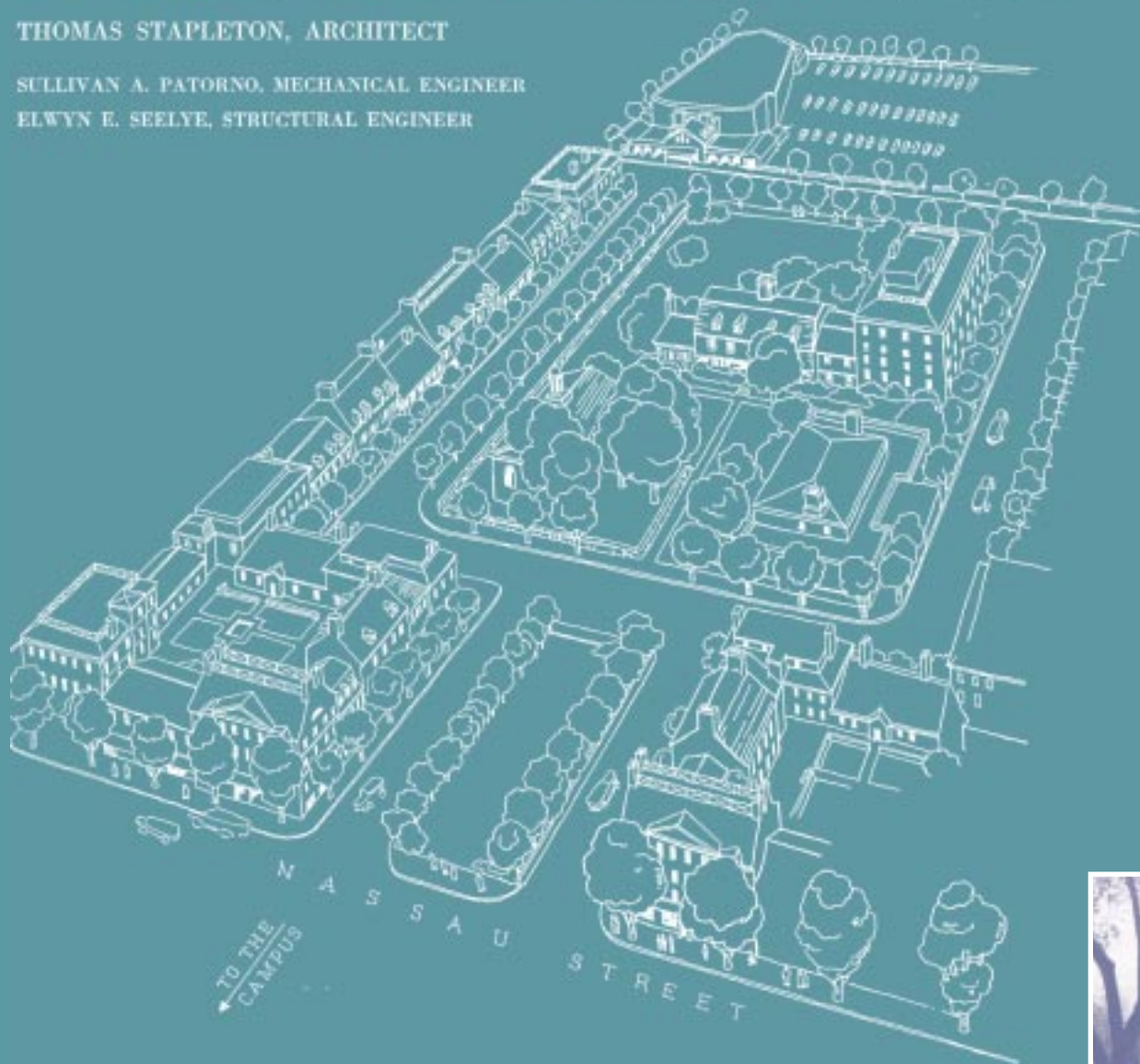


# PALMER SQUARE, PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

THOMAS STAPLETON, ARCHITECT

SULLIVAN A. PATORNO, MECHANICAL ENGINEER

ELWYN E. SEELYE, STRUCTURAL ENGINEER



Architect Thomas Stapleton and industrialist Edgar Palmer's 1931 plan for Palmer Square created a focus for the Princeton community. Containing housing, offices, retail, restaurants, a post office, a theater and a hotel surrounding an inviting public space, Palmer Square provides an enduring model of compact, mixed-use development at the center of town.





components adhere to institutionally adopted standards or constitute corporate images with instant recognition and predictable product lines; often, both the building and the site plan are standardized, subject only to minor modifications in response to local conditions (soils, drainage). Standardized components are functional, economical and predictable.

Individualized components, on the other hand, are conceived for the occasion, tailor-made. They are likely to use indigenous plants and materials and are often better adapted to local conditions. They offer testimony to individual expression and local ingenuity. They are often inspired by elements of local vernacular — a community or region's native architectural language — and can respond to site constraints and local conditions in interesting and unexpected ways, because they are not bound to a pre-existing program or model. Individualized components are the very building blocks of place.

Placemaking in the late 20th century involves a delicate balance between standardized and individualized components. Standardized components are inexpensive and easily accessible, but if assembled indiscriminately they do not create a place, just a group of generic components. Individualized components can be more expensive and time-consuming, but are likely to be rich with diversity, life and character.

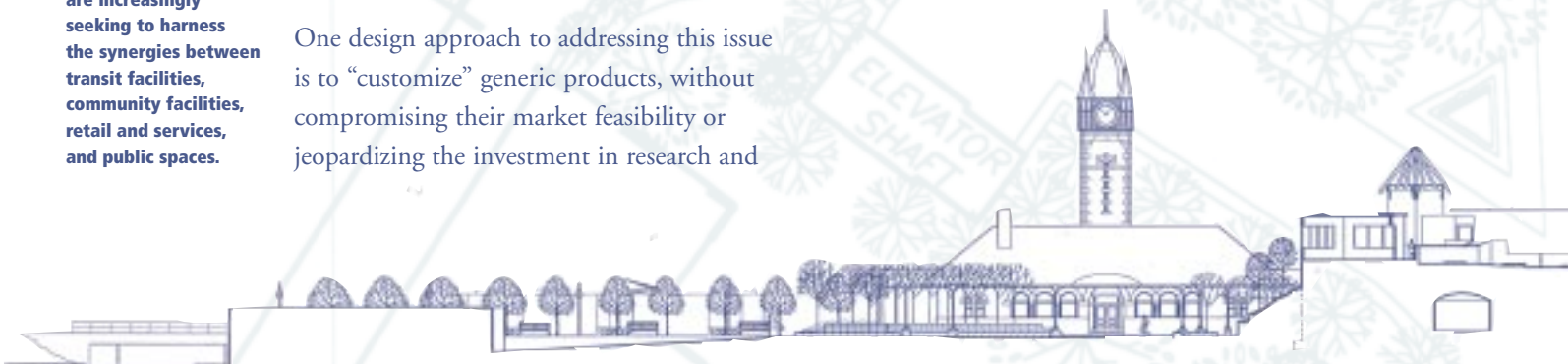
One design approach to addressing this issue is to “customize” generic products, without compromising their market feasibility or jeopardizing the investment in research and

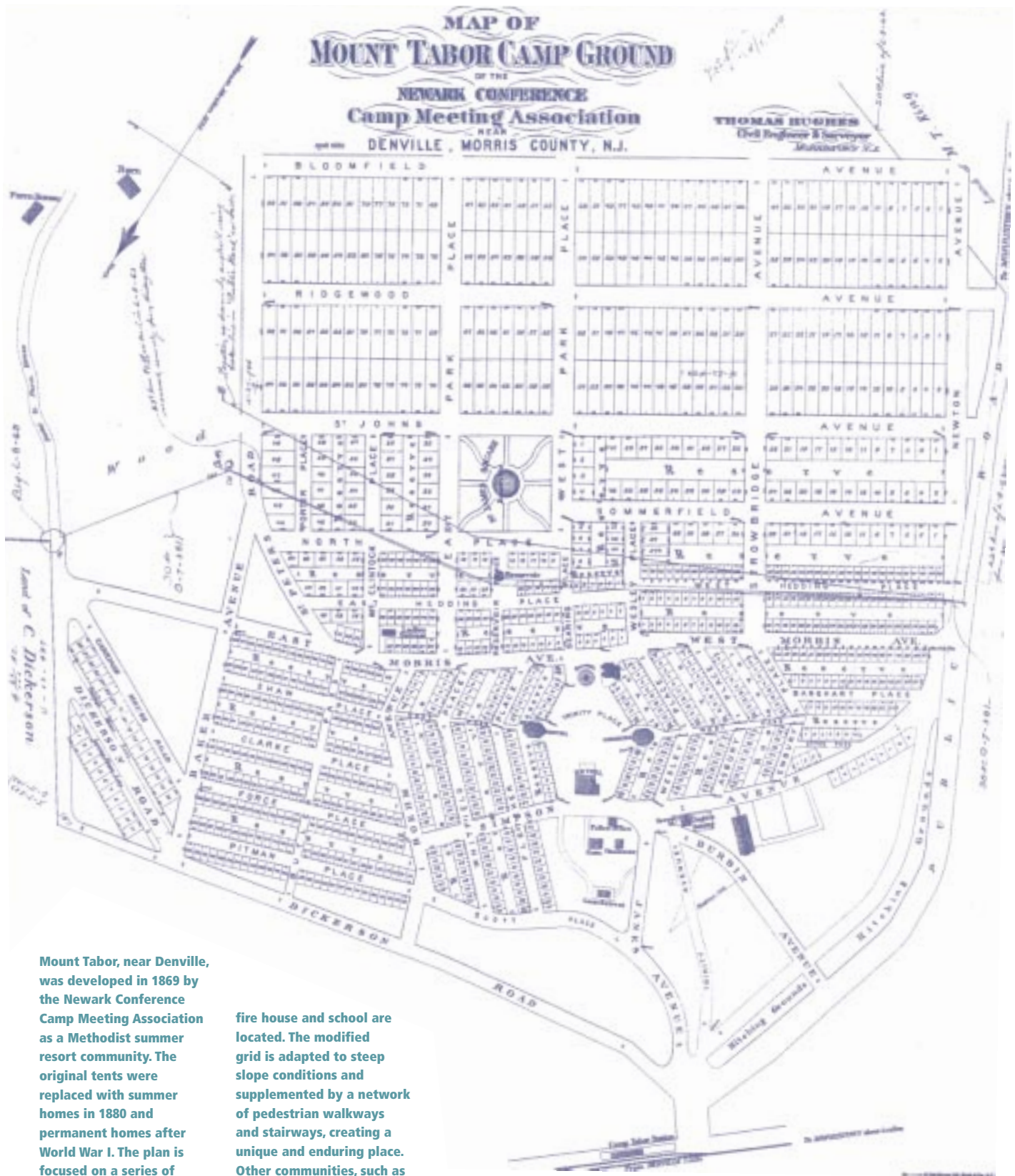
development that goes into creating a template. Customizing can take two tracks. One track is to adapt a generic site plan to real world surroundings in a sensitive way—to make it fit into a preexisting street pattern without bursting the seams. This may involve changing the parking, stormwater detention, location of driveways and/or other site elements. Where the generic site plan is likely to be auto-oriented, the customized site plan might be pedestrian-oriented. This is particularly relevant when attempting to place suburban templates (for example, a drugstore or supermarket) into the type of physical fabric of streets and blocks found in older, traditional communities.

The other track is simply to “dress the box,” that is to combine a standardized floorplan, for example, for a post office or supermarket, with a customized facade and exterior treatment. Columns, cornices, rooflines, fenestration, colors, building materials and other such elements can easily transform a generic box and adapt it to its surroundings.

Adapting development templates to specific surroundings offers a compromise between the totally generic and the completely customized. With a little flexibility, one can fit contemporary floorplates (building footprints) into traditional street and block patterns; and create buildings which combine state-of-the-art floorplans with shells that are responsive to area architectural design guidelines. Taming and customizing generic products is a critical design task at the local level and an important subject to be addressed by local design guidelines.

**The plan for Sojourner's Place envisions a quality public space for pedestrians and transit patrons adjacent to the new train station in Elizabeth. Community revitalization efforts are increasingly seeking to harness the synergies between transit facilities, community facilities, retail and services, and public spaces.**





Mount Tabor, near Denville, was developed in 1869 by the Newark Conference Camp Meeting Association as a Methodist summer resort community. The original tents were replaced with summer homes in 1880 and permanent homes after World War I. The plan is focused on a series of public spaces where a library, post office, church,

fire house and school are located. The modified grid is adapted to steep slope conditions and supplemented by a network of pedestrian walkways and stairways, creating a unique and enduring place. Other communities, such as Pittman and Ocean Grove, had similar origins.





# Promoting Pedestrianism

**P**edestrianism is the most important organizing principle in the design of our communities — the principle that guarantees they are built to human scale and are accessible to all, regardless of age or condition. Average walking distance is the true measure of our communities, and places where walking is discouraged are often lacking a vital dimension of human scale.

Pedestrianism requires a continuous and integrated structure of streets and passageways which does not, as a rule, favor any single mode of transportation over others and which provides considerable mobility options. Pedestrianism makes modes of transportation other than the single-occupancy vehicle both plausible and feasible. Linkages — the degree of continuity and ease with which pedestrian and vehicular circulation occur — are a vital feature of this approach, which strongly favors uninterrupted circulation systems.

Pedestrianism requires a comprehensive network of pedestrian facilities, in the form of sidewalks, pathways, alleys, cut-throughs, short cuts and others which effectively link uses and destinations and offer pedestrians considerable mobility. Pedestrian facilities should be designed for both functional and recreational purposes, should be convenient, attractive and safe, and should provide a meaningful alternative to vehicular trips.

Finally, pedestrianism affects building orientation and location of entranceways. Buildings and building entrances are oriented towards the primary pedestrian means of access, with secondary entrances facing other means of access, such as parking lots. Similarly, physical barriers to pedestrian activity — such as excessive or unnecessary setbacks, buffers and berms; excessive street widths; and overengineered street geometrics, which encourage vehicular speed over pedestrian safety — are eliminated or mitigated. These same principles apply to bicycling, which complements pedestrianism and extends its radius.

It is recognized that in practical terms not every use or every location will be accessible by foot, and that walking is not always feasible, desirable or convenient. In some industrial areas it may be unsafe to circulate on foot. Nevertheless, physical design solutions should not preclude, either deliberately or through oversight, under normal circumstances, the opportunity for pedestrian access.

Clarence Stein's influential 1928 plan for Radburn in Fair Lawn sought to create a new model for neighborhood design that effectively separated vehicular traffic from pedestrians. Cars circulate in cul-de-sacs and collector roads while pedestrians and bicycles are encouraged to use paths through common open space in the middle of superblocks. Radburn introduced the planning concepts of clustered housing and of physically organizing the residential clusters around the elementary school. Some will argue, however, that the Radburn model unintentionally saps the vitality from the street and confuses back yard and front yard functions.



**T**he physical design of our communities should seek to work with, not against, the underlying natural systems — development that is well integrated with the natural environment creates a sense of place, increases real estate values, has a superior functional performance, and is generally less expensive, given the lower life-cycle operating and maintenance costs.

# BALANCING THE NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

As a general principle, physical design should seek to enhance and maximize the workings of natural systems without compromising the quality, integrity and continuity of the built environment. Each location's natural features and natural systems should be approached with considerable respect, as should the physical manifestations of its historic and cultural heritage — these should be embraced for the design opportunities they present, and not viewed as constraints to development, to be overcome by engineering solutions and legal and regulatory gimmickry.

This principle is implemented by following best practices, wherever possible and practicable. For example, adapting building and infrastructure design to a site's topography, rather than choosing a standard layout requiring large volumes of earth movement; preserving existing healthy mature

vegetation, rather than clearing a site and later replanting for ease of construction, even if this means deviating from a standard design template; minimizing impervious surfaces in supportive uses, such as parking lots, rather than creating large detention facilities; and protecting, without hiding, surface water bodies.

Infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, retaining walls, detention and retention facilities, electrical and other utilities and other site facilities should be carefully dimensioned and designed to satisfy their functional purpose while respecting a site's character and features. In general, the design and installation of infrastructure should seek to minimize site disruption — the pursuit of functional performance should not compromise the design of facilities which are visually pleasing and contribute to local character and sense of place.

Design decisions can have important consequences in terms of resource consumption. The layout of streets and the placement of buildings should consider alternative energy sources, and not preclude the application of natural methods of heating and cooling which can replace or complement conventional mechanical methods. The judicious use of indigenous plant materials can reduce the need for water for landscaping, fertilizers and pesticides.

**Andrew Jackson Downing's 1859 plan for Llewellyn Park in West Orange created both one of the very first suburban communities and one of the first gated communities in the country. The picturesque, low-density layout was popular with an affluent clientele retreating from the challenges of the 19th century manufacturing city. While the meandering winding streets and the oversize blocks they create are not conducive to pedestrian movement, the circulation system maintains a high level of connectivity, unlike subsequent suburbs, which idolize the cul-de-sac.**



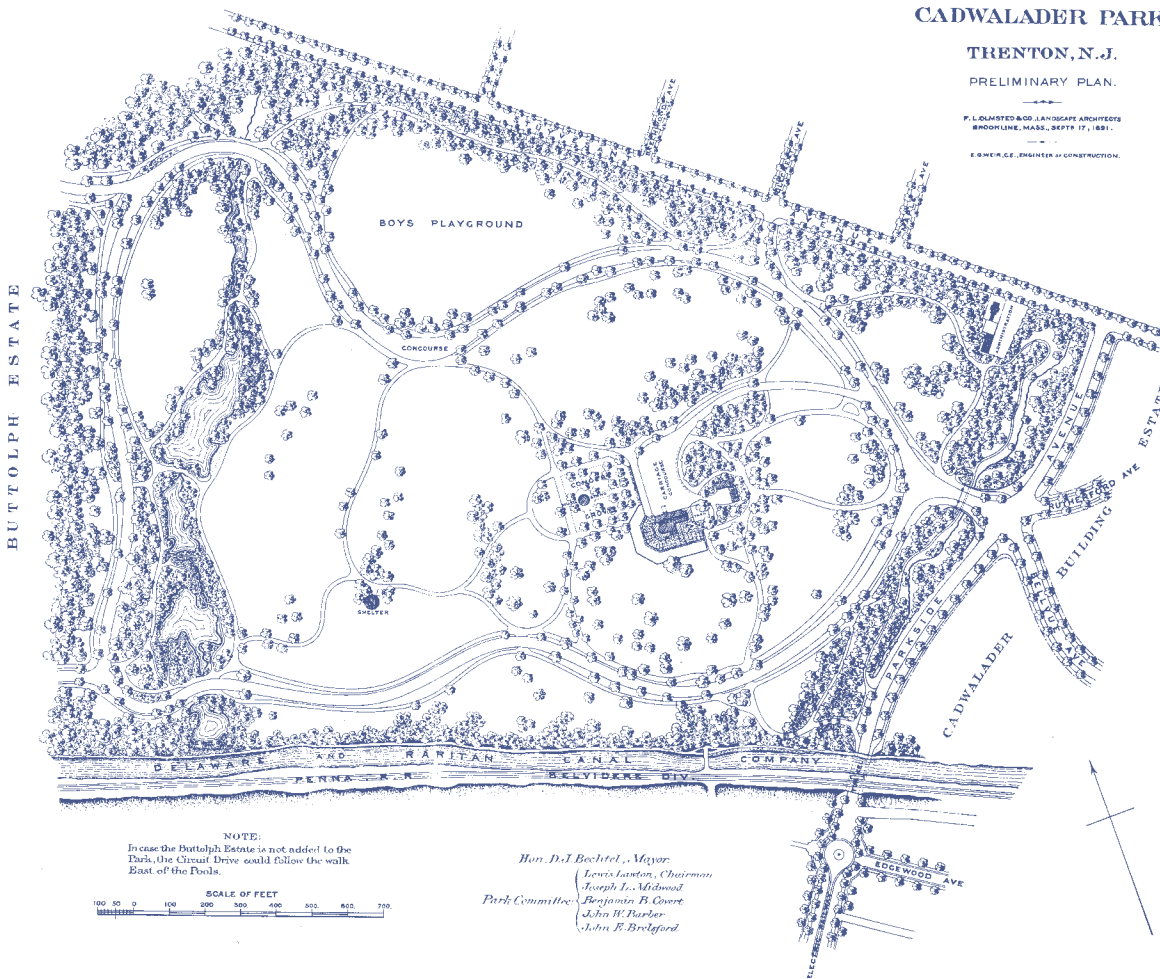


Planning models seeking to provide a balance between the natural and built environments have changed over time. In the second half of the 19th century playgrounds and large urban parks were developed to counter the crowded conditions of industrial cities. Lower density suburbs also became popular along transit lines. In the 20th century, variations on the "Garden City" ideal, such as Roosevelt, were planned and built.

### CADWALADER PARK

TRENTON, N. J.  
PRELIMINARY PLAN.

F. L. OLNSTED & CO. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
BROOKLINE, MASS., SEPT. 17, 1891.  
E. B. MERRILL, ENGINEER IN CONSTRUCTION.



NOTE:  
In case the Buttolph Estate is not added to the Park, the Circuit Drive could follow the walk East of the Ponds.

SCALE OF FEET  
100 200 300 400 500 600 700

Hon. D. J. Boehlert, Mayor  
Lewis Lawton, Chairman  
Joseph L. Mithwood  
Park Committee: Benjamin H. Covert  
John W. Barber  
John F. Bradford

The Olmsted firm developed plans for over 100 projects in New Jersey, including Branch Brook Park in Newark. However, Cadwalader Park in Trenton is the only park in New Jersey designed by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. The 1891 plan for the 109-acre site created a high-quality public open space in a city marked by its gritty, industrial economy. The Olmsted firm's 1890 plan for the adjacent Cadwalader Place created an in-town, lower density neighborhood, capitalizing on the proximity to the park and linked by trolley to downtown Trenton. Note the traffic circles at major intersections and the double row of trees along West State Street. Cadwalader Place is a model of how to provide lower density housing in an urban setting.



Alfred Kastner's 1930's plan for Jersey Homesteads, later Roosevelt, is an experiment in the creation of a free-standing, self-contained community in a rural setting. Developed by the Federal Resettlement Administration for unemployed garment workers from Manhattan's East Side, it contained a clothing factory and 200 homes clustered around a school and community center and surrounded by a greenbelt of conservation areas and a 400-acre farm.



# Respecting Context

The redevelopment plan for Hoboken's waterfront provides a model to emulate both in terms of its design principles and the importance of citizen participation. The plan strikes a balance between new development and new public open space along the waterfront and adheres to traditional

scale and character, extending Hoboken's signature 200 by 400 foot grid, carefully controlling building mass and requiring articulated building facades.

**D**esign should strive to maintain significant existing features, whether natural or manmade, while encouraging and integrating compatible new features. These should build upon and reinforce the best of earlier features, but not necessarily copy or duplicate them. For example, although a sense of continuity — bridging the past and the future — is a key element in responding to context in ways which establish and maintain a sense of identity, it does not imply mindless repetition of existing patterns or subservience to style. Stylistic variety is a universal feature of New Jersey communities which can enrich and add interest to local experience. Continuity of scale, mass, horizontal elements, vertical rhythms and other design features are far more important in defining a cohesive appearance and finding an appropriate response to context, than style.

Respect for context is best demonstrated by understanding the essential elements of a place and its history and devising design solutions, which both build upon and transcend such elements. The community itself is usually an invaluable source in identifying what is essential about a place. This information can be elicited through visioning using surveys, focus groups, workshops, questionnaires and other public participation techniques.





The redevelopment of idle industrial waterfronts such as Hoboken's offers significant opportunities to redress some of the limitations of these older industrial areas, which were developed in ways that typically precluded

public access to the waterfront and provided little public open space. The recently completed South Waterfront Park in Hoboken offers a distinguished design model for waterfront parks throughout the state.



# Respecting the Local Vernacular

**A** community's vernacular — its native design language — reflects its history and culture and is critical in defining local identity. Indigenous building materials, building technologies and stylistic adaptations can provide time-tested responses to climatic features and natural conditions that are often more efficient than the energy-intensive modern technologies. Indigenous plants, building materials and stylistic adaptations, in addition to their functional value, visually reinforce the sense of place.

Opportunities for widespread use of indigenous plants and local building materials should be pursued. For example, in road construction, local stone can be used for retaining walls and/or slope consolidation, instead of generic pre-fabricated, standardized components; and indigenous plants and flowers can be used to landscape the right-of-way and drainage basins. In general, stone and brick should continue to be used in places where they were traditionally available. Institutional buildings, such as post offices and schools, have a particular responsibility towards affirming local identity.

Contemporary development should not, however, be expected to blindly duplicate traditional technologies or express subservience to traditional styles. It should instead be required to offer creative reinterpretations of these elements, in a spirit of respect for the past, while fully utilizing the potential of contemporary technologies and responding to contemporary needs and lifestyles.



## Defining

# Space

**O**ne of the primary tasks of design is to physically define space by skillfully combining the placement of buildings and structures, and their massing, with site work, landscaping and the integration of natural features. Streets and both formal and informal public spaces are of critical importance and should be viewed as “outdoor rooms” in need of definition.



**Central Square is a 75-unit infill project on a 6-acre former industrial site in Metuchen. The plan calls for a mix of small-lot single-family houses, and apartments, sited around a central green. It also features alleys servicing the rear of the single-family lots. After 60 years of disuse, there is a renewed appreciation for the site design opportunities offered by alleys.**



# Maintaini

# Scale

**S**cale is the relationship of built form to the human frame. Like pedestrianism, it is a critical measure of humanism in a community. Buildings and structures are designed to relate to the human scale through the use of modular elements such as doors and windows, through facade treatments and modulation, and through design details. Like the human body, buildings and structures should display modular elements and details in a variety of sizes, from small to large. Modular construction materials, such as bricks, also help maintain a sense of scale.

This principle should not be seen as precluding expressions of monumentalism, where appropriate; nor does it in any way limit the size of buildings. It is in fact particularly relevant to large functional buildings, such as power plants, warehouses, industrial plant, big box retail, wastewater treatment plants and correctional facilities. Other structures and facilities, such as roads, bridges, parking lots, tunnels and overpasses should also be governed by the same principle. Large blank or unmodulated walls, which overwhelm and do not relate to the human frame, should be avoided.



# ng an Appropriate

# able

Infrastructure in general, and large bridges in particular, are defining elements in the landscapes around us. This is reflected in the work of respected New Jersey artists (see facing page). Given their size, scale, high visibility and large volumes of users it is very important that we create elements of infrastructure that celebrate our values and reflect sensitive, context-driven design principles. Even the largest structures can make

positive contributions to our built landscapes. New Jersey has a remarkable collection of historic bridges, which can provide inspiration for new forms. Avoiding the inflexible application of engineering design standards, which result in faceless, placeless landscapes, is an absolute public sector priority.



# Creating Visual Interest

**E**very design action directed at the built and natural environments should preserve and enhance the visual interest — as viewed from the public realm — of a site and its uses.

Visual interest derives from a combination of contrast and conformity, repetition and dissonance, solids and voids, light and shadow, restraint and extravagance. It can be achieved through site design techniques, such as layouts which take advantage of a site's scenic potential, and may define and explore gateways, focal points and terminated vistas or views, resorting to both natural and man-made elements.

Visual interest can result from the skillful manipulation of volumes, colors, proportions and relationships; from the judicious use of elements of visual animation, such as flags, banners and signs; as well as other techniques. Visual interest is not synonymous with visual clutter. Overhead utility lines, poles, and a multitude of signs and billboards can create visual clutter. With rare exceptions, the overstimulation associated with visual clutter is distracting and undesirable and should be avoided.

Design actions directed at the natural and man-made environment may seek to preserve and enhance existing visual qualities rather than create new ones. For example, areas of recognized scenic interest should be treated with considerable respect and subject to stricter design controls. In certain cases, design solutions may seek to efface or minimize intrusion altogether. This principle also applies to infrastructure or telecommunications improvements, and overhead utility lines, cellular towers, roads and highways, bridges and other structures should make every effort to respect the integrity of the natural landscape and maintain an area's scenic qualities. In this regard, a balance is required between design solutions preoccupied only with maintaining and enhancing scenic and natural features, and the more frequent over-engineered design solutions which are driven exclusively by safety and performance concerns and are not sensitive to context or history.

Visual interest should be evaluated primarily from the public realm — the public roads, sidewalks and public spaces — where it is enjoyed by most people. Effective visualization techniques, such as accurate renderings or computer simulations, can play an important role in helping interested parties assess the visual implications of development proposals



# e r e s t

A large mural of sunflowers is painted on a wall overlooking a garden. The mural features several sunflowers with dark centers and bright petals, growing on tall stems with green leaves. The garden in the foreground is filled with various plants and flowers, and a path leads through it. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with a clear blue sky.

Murals and trompe l'oeils can be very effective in animating blank walls. They can be playful or convey serious messages but are always likely to grab our attention. This mural celebrates the very community garden it overlooks and at the height of winter holds a promise of rebirth.





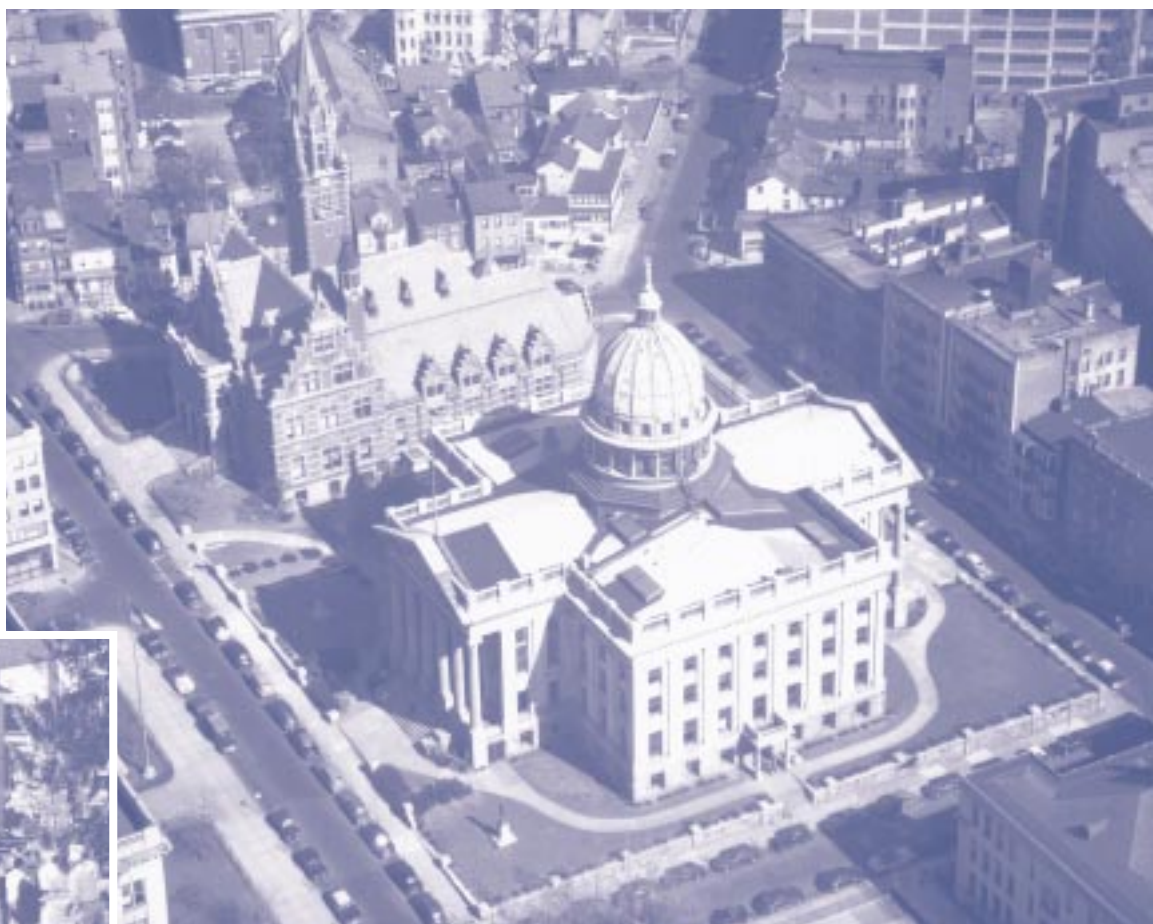
# Creating Civic Spaces

**C**ommunities are defined by their civic activities, and these should be conducted in appropriate settings.

Civic spaces reflect a community's history and identity and further its culture of democracy. Every community should contain one or more places for public congregation, at locations easily accessible to the majority of community members. Civic spaces should be prominently sited, designed with dignity and restraint, and impeccably maintained. The architecture of civic buildings should demonstrate a community's commitment and clearly distinguish them from other uses.

Communities should also foster the development of other public or semi-public gathering places, such as plazas or pocket parks, which can provide a quality setting for cultural events, live entertainment, outdoor dining, live music at lunch time, romance and, in general, promote informal social interaction.

**Handsome, dignified civic structures represent a tangible investment by a community in its own collective identity. Communities that show little pride in their civic institutions face an uncertain future.**





# IMPROVING LEGIBILITY

**L**egibility is the quality that allows even those unfamiliar with a place or a building to orient themselves. Legibility relies upon a set of commonly shared conventions, perceptions or experiences. For example, in many traditional settlements, civic buildings and functions are prominently located, either on higher ground, on a civic space such as the main square, at important intersections or at the terminus of major sight lines. These buildings are often visible throughout the community and function as landmarks. Both longtime residents and casual visitors can more easily find their way around the community by tracking their whereabouts relative to a landmark.

Legibility also requires unambiguous visual cues. For example, the enhanced architectural treatment of a building entrance provides a clear visual cue to a visitor. Clear visual distinctions between the main entrance and secondary entrances provide further information of great interest to users of a building. Well designed street signs, consistently placed and well lighted, help orient street traffic by providing street names, block number and other important information.

Places, as previously defined, are generally legible; non-places, or sprawl, are generally not, because



they lack a coherent structure and do not adhere to commonly shared traditions and conventions. A jumble of directional signs directed at motorists clutters the visual environment and constitutes an inferior approach to spatial orientation. On the other hand, wayfinding systems that build on a legible environment provide a superior form of spatial orientation.

Design should provide a dimension of legibility. This does not imply that design should not be whimsical or mysterious, or that all places should be predictable and straightforward. Many of the most cherished places in our communities — whether enclosed and intimate or open and expansive — are special because of their secret or unexpected nature, and design should always seek to create more “places of the heart” which a community will share and cherish over many generations.

**Wayfinding studies, such as Red Bank’s 1998 plan, can be very effective in clarifying issues of community structure and circulation. Wayfinding extends well beyond signs to include design actions that reinforce local identity.**



# Balancing

## Security and Community

**S**treet design, site layout, building placement and open space design should balance safety and security considerations with the need to maintain accessibility and openness.

Design solutions should maximize the positive security effects of alert and engaged local residents, workers and other community members instead of relying exclusively on institutional law enforcement mechanisms, or turning to exclusionary design techniques (such as cul-de-sacs) or exclusionary development models (such as gated communities). Design solutions should seek to reinforce and take advantage of the benefits of mixed-use environments in making space more “defensible.” Appropriately designed open communities maintain basic principles of accessibility and openness, strengthen our democratic institutions and values, reinforce a sense of community and in many ways outperform closed communities without sacrificing security.

Design elements, such as fences or hedges, which establish a clear demarcation between public, semi-public and private space provide valuable visual cues that influence social behavior. Restricted semi-public areas can be effectively secured in elegant and non-intimidating ways with security devices — such as ornamental metal gates — that allow visual access while denying physical access.

Security devices such as solid metal roll down doors and windows, reflect a siege mentality and instill apprehension and fear. They are counter-productive. Where privacy is not an issue, transparency is generally an important attribute, and security devices that are functional and effective without being obtrusive are more appropriate.

**High-quality public spaces and a mixed-use environment enhance perceptions of security. Different uses with different rhythms and hours of operation generate human activity over the course of the day and into the night, increasing and extending the “eyes on the street.” one of the most effective ways design can act as a deterrent to crime. Activities which front on the public realm invite pedestrian activity. Windows facing the public realm provide a sense of transparency and facilitate informal surveillance. Public spaces where the public has a sense of ownership discourage mischief. A clear delineation between public, semi-public and private space is essential for security purposes. Buildings designed with high-security features create a sense of siege; public spaces easily become a no-man’s land.**





# Designing Compact Communities

**T**his section provides guidance on key aspects of the physical framework that allows existing compact communities to maintain their fundamental qualities, and will allow future compact communities to attain those same qualities. These guidelines are intended to work hand-in-hand with the general design principles presented previously, translating and further detailing many of those principles for compact development forms.

These principles are applicable to planned new compact communities, to planned extensions of existing compact communities, and to existing compact communities that are evolving, through infill or redevelopment. They are also relevant to existing compact communities with little development or redevelopment activity, but where small management decisions made

almost on a daily basis have the potential, over time, to visibly change the character of the place for the better or for the worse. The guidelines apply generally to both downtowns and neighborhoods, unless otherwise stated; to communities of all sizes, large and small; and to small projects as well as large.

Communities that have developed in non-compact forms are also encouraged to apply these guidelines, as appropriate, when planning for infill development, contemplating a town center, or in other relevant projects. Although the guidelines are intended to be used as a whole, partial implementation through application of individual guidelines is often possible and beneficial even if the overall context is not favorable to compact forms — there are many interim steps which can improve the performance of non-compact areas without requiring a radical transformation of their character.

# Circulation

**T**he circulation system connects people, places and activities — but if not sensitively designed it can also establish deep barriers and schisms between neighborhoods, residents and users. The circulation system comprises the full range of means available to all active modes of transportation. While some right-of-ways are dedicated to certain modes — such as bikeways, pedestrian walkways or railroad right-of-ways — most are shared by a variety of modes and users — cars, buses, trucks, pedestrians, bicycles, rollerbladers — and should be designed with this in mind.

The circulation system defines block size and through it a neighborhood's grain. It is also a critical ingredient of neighborhood identity, through the character of the streets. The design of compact communities makes appropriate use of the full range of street types — from high capacity boulevards to service alleys, lanes and paths. Street types are closely matched with the prevalent surrounding land uses.

It is vital that a community's circulation system be a truly interconnected network. This has several beneficial effects. It disperses traffic throughout the network, instead of concentrating it in a few key arterials or collectors. It requires smaller facilities (narrower streets, less dedicated turn lanes, less mechanical traffic control devices). It allows streets to retain a pedestrian-oriented, human scale, as opposed to the over-engineered, auto-oriented collectors and arterials of the suburbs. It allows for many alternate routes and modes of getting from here to there.

The shape of the circulation system need not follow the traditional grid, an expedient platting device that nevertheless has limitations in dealing with irregularities in the natural landscape, but rather the modified grid, which responds to changing natural conditions and other considerations while maintaining a high level of connectivity. These systems contain both local and through streets, and these are spaced no more than 1/2 mile apart, to facilitate access to transit, curb travel speeds and disperse traffic.



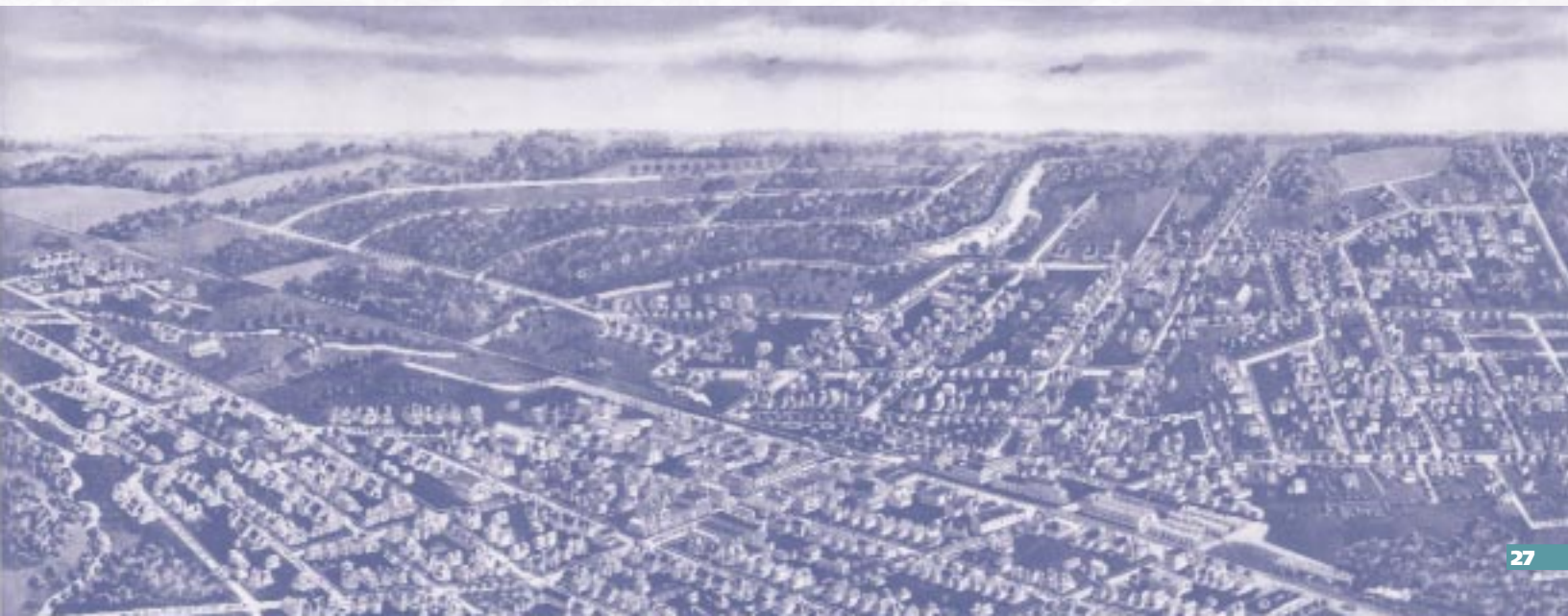
# System

The circulation system accommodates, although it does not promote, cul-de-sacs as a legitimate design response to physical conditions that justify an interruption, or modification, of the circulation pattern — topography (steep slopes), water bodies, wetlands, rail lines and others. In the limited cases where cul-de-sacs are justified, pedestrian and bicycle connections — which from a design standpoint are considerably more flexible than streets designed for vehicular traffic — are maintained, to the extent possible, thereby ensuring partial if not complete connectivity, for some modes if not for all.

The circulation system is responsive to the needs of users of all ages — children, adults and seniors — whether active or disabled, and its continuous sidewalk network equipped with depressed curbs provides barrier-free accessibility throughout the entire community, not just within buildings or

from parking lot to front door. Bicycle racks and lockers at appropriate locations, combined with a comprehensive network of bicycle paths and lanes linking neighborhoods, employment and recreation make cycling a safe, healthy and viable mode of transportation for short trips, including work trips. The pedestrian and bicycle networks are at least as comprehensive as the vehicular network, and are designed to provide shortcuts and alternatives to travel along high speed, high volume streets. Maps, signs and other wayfinding schemes help visitors quickly orient themselves within a development pattern, which provides landmarks, and other visual cues and is conducive to orientation. The bicycle and pedestrian networks, the range, mix and intensity of uses and the physical design support transit use and make it a truly multi-modal system.

**Traditional New Jersey communities — such as Rutherford (previous page), Westwood or Hammonton (in background) — may have very different characters, but they all offer a walkable environment and a circulation system with a high degree of connectivity. Human scale blocks and civilized streetscapes are the defining features.**







The plan for Liberty Harbor North, an 80-acre parcel in Jersey City adjacent to Liberty State Park and directly across from the Statue of Liberty, will create a new high-density, transit-rich, mixed-use urban neighborhood. Carefully linked to the surrounding fabric, the plan creates a series of walkable blocks and public spaces, including a new public walk along the waterfront.



# Form and Structure

**A** compact community's form and structure is determined by the interplay between a number of key ingredients: the layout and character of its circulation system, block size and configuration, the location and function of its public spaces, the disposition of its open spaces and the structure of its green and blue systems (see below). Form and structure can be highlighted by special design elements. In new compact communities, the form and structure should be clearly represented in the regulating plan and reflected in the municipal official map.

**Roebing, a company town on the Delaware River, south of Trenton, was designed and built by Charles Roebing for his labor force. The 1905 plan follows a modified grid with pleasant, human-scale blocks. Main Street terminates symbolically at the front gate to the Roebing steel works, the town's major employer. The plan created a complete**

**community, with a variety of housing types, retail, services, a school, an inn, recreational facilities, an auditorium and parks. Revitalization efforts must build upon the strength of the community's form and structure.**



ROEBLING INN



ROEBLING ROW HOME



**B**locks are the fundamental building block of a neighborhood. They are defined on all sides by streets, and are designed to support and enhance walking. Experience suggests that the most comfortable blocks are 200 to 400 feet long. In longer blocks, mid-block pedestrian and bicycle connections may be justified.

Block size helps define the grain of a neighborhood or area. Small blocks define a tight, more intimate grain, while large blocks establish a more expansive grain. Block size also reflects prevalent uses — residential blocks tend to be smaller, blocks containing large institutional uses (hospitals, high schools) or large commercial or industrial uses may be significantly larger. Some large uses may occupy two or more blocks. Block size can expand or contract to accommodate different size uses while maintaining the same basic structure.

Development forms based on the modified grid can accommodate blocks of many sizes and configurations without losing their fundamental properties in terms of human and pedestrian scale. This maleability is invaluable in accommodating the late 20th century building prototypes, which rely on increasingly large floorplates.



## S T R E E

**S**treets are our most intensely used public spaces — we spend far more time circulating in streets than stationary in public spaces — and it is vital that they be perceived as quality environments. In addition to providing the physical medium for people and vehicles to circulate, streets provide the setting for many equally important but often neglected functions of public space, such as strolling, walking the dog or chatting with neighbors.

In general, street alignments seek to minimize site disturbance and maximize energy efficient building sites. Street design minimizes impervious coverage, and is matched to the prevalent adjacent land use conditions as well as to the volume of

traffic which the street is expected to carry.

Cartway width is kept to a minimum, and never more than four traffic lanes wide. Monumental corridors can contain several two-lane segments separated by landscaped medians.

Streets are designed to provide a comfortable environment for all users, whether pedestrian or vehicular, in a balanced way. Design parameters such as design speed, curb radii, and horizontal and vertical curvatures strongly condition which modes of transportation a street is receptive to. Street geometrics always take into account the pedestrian, the most exposed mode of transportation, and create an environment that is safe and comfortable.



**These maps depicting 1 square mile areas of, from left to right, Hoboken, Madison, Montclair, Princeton, Red Bank, Trenton and Westfield show public space — the circulation system and public open space — in white, with buildings and private open space in black. These analytical maps provide a glimpse of the variety of form and structure, or “grain” found in traditional New Jersey communities.**



# T S

Streets are not designed primarily to accommodate fire trucks, snowplows, moving vans or other vehicles requiring wide clearance — they are only occasional users. Streets are designed for pedestrians, small vehicles and other everyday users. Design speeds are appropriate to the location. In pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and areas, the design speed does not exceed 25 mph; in residential areas, it does not exceed 15 mph. Posted speed limits reflect these design speeds. Speed limits on arterials and collectors do not exceed 35 mph. Higher order streets, such as major and minor arterials, although designed to carry large volumes of traffic, are not designed for high speeds, and do not follow freeway standards.

Traditional (non-mechanical) traffic control devices, such as small traffic circles, plazas and T-intersections offer many advantages over mechanical devices, and constitute valuable community design elements. Traffic calming measures, such as chicanes, shared cartways, speed humps, speed tables, neckdowns and raised pedestrian crosswalks - are strongly encouraged, and should be used liberally, where appropriate.

The perception of streets as spaces is defined by the placement of adjacent buildings and vertical elements, such as street trees, streetlights, utility poles and traffic signs. Successful streets offer a sense of enclosure by maintaining the ratio of average building height to street width within certain ranges. A very comfortable sense of enclosure is achieved when the height-width ratio is 1:1. Height-width ratios in excess of 3:1 are characteristic of denser urban areas, where mid-rise and high-rise buildings are predominant; at height-width ratios below 1:3 the sense of enclosure is lost. Mature, tightly spaced street trees can assist in creating a sense of enclosure by defining a “ceiling” or canopy and bringing the vertical plane closer to the street. The same principles apply to other public spaces, such as plazas or courtyards.

The placement of building walls is critical in defining street space. General consistency in placement of building walls is achieved with build-to-lines, which define a given setback from the public right-of-way. Some flexibility from the build-to-line can be permitted, to allow for special circumstances or conditions, or create public or semi-public spaces at specific locations. In general, however, building massing should reinforce street space, through a continuity of predominant facade lines, building height and scale. Exceptions to this general rule can occur in the placement of buildings which are intentionally more prominent, either because of their use (civic) or location, at corner lots or points of visual termination.

# Public

**E**ach community requires one or more appropriately located and configured public space to provide it with a focal point. An appropriate variety of other, smaller spaces address more limited, or neighborhood needs.

Public spaces provide places for public congregation, to celebrate or mourn, to witness historical events, to participate in the political



# Spaces



discourse, to be entertained, to discuss the weather, to romance or simply to hang out. Public spaces can be formal or informal, but they are always defining elements of a community.

The traditional village green and town green are quintessential public spaces — examples of active, vibrant greens in New Jersey include Newton,

Bloomfield, Belvidere, Wenonah, Cape May Point and Morristown. Two notable greens — Princeton's Palmer Square and Camden's Yorkship Square — were developed as a focus for planned developments in the early 20th century. Greens can take on a variety of configurations — squares,



**Art is very effective in animating public or semi-public spaces, and generally in elevating public discourse. While larger, stand-alone pieces are more appropriate to formal outdoor spaces, sculpture gardens such as this one at 44 S. Clinton Avenue in Trenton can be successfully inserted in side-yard or transitional spaces.**

rectangular, triangular and irregular — no particular configuration is favored. Other types of public and semi-public spaces include squares, parks, courtyards and plazas. Some communities, such as Cranbury, Hightstown or Spring Lake have water features as focal points, and like greens, these are of great importance in defining community identity.

Like streets, public spaces can be viewed as “rooms,” a perception which is reinforced if defined and recognizable edges — buildings, walls, hedges, trees or other devices — provide a sense of enclosure.

Public and semi-public spaces can be reserved or playful, but they should always be dignified. They represent both symbolically and materially the public’s commitment to the community and its built environment. As such, they deserve quality design, good signage, quality furnishings and impeccable maintenance and are appropriate locations for the display of public art. Streetscape features — such as statuary, fountains or other water features, and flag poles — that animate the public and semi-public realm, along with appropriate street furniture (seating, trash receptacles) are important ways for a community



## Key design principles for plazas and other public spaces

- Offer generous opportunities for sitting — on benches, chairs, ledges, steps or other comfortable surfaces — and provide spaces in the sun, shade and in-between.
- Allow users to alter sitting arrangements, with movable chairs, where possible.
- Relate sitting arrangements with shade tree planting.
- Provide both open areas and more sheltered, corner areas that offer protection from the wind and function as suntraps in winter.
- Provide uninterrupted views from the street into the plaza, and of the street from the plaza.
- Allow only modest changes in level from the street (2 feet maximum) — prevent elevated or sunken plazas and design very gentle changes in level, with small risers and generous treads.
- Encourage water features — such as fountains, waterwalls, waterfalls, sluiceways, pools and meandering brooks — and allow access to the water whenever possible.
- Provide generous shade tree plantings, encourage canopies, but maintain accessibility to trees, avoiding fences and wires.
- Provide eating opportunities — through cafes, restaurants, snack-bars, vendors and kiosks — and allow them to expand to satisfy market demand.
- In commercial areas front active ground floor uses with articulated facades on plazas and other public spaces and avoid unarticulated dead walls or low traffic uses.

Source: William H White, "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces", The Conservation Foundation 1980.



to express its individuality and to create a comfortable environment for residents and visitors alike.

Architectural features, such as gazebos or bandstands, can be effective at visually animating a public space, while fulfilling a functional role. Kiosks can provide convenience shopping, function as community bulletin boards, and are appropriate at transit stops. Barrier-free public restrooms with changing tables for infants and facilities for small children indicate that everyone is welcome and make participation in outdoor



**Undoubtedly one of New Jersey's most memorable public spaces, the irregularly shaped Morristown green was flanked by a Presbyterian church, a hotel and a variety of local businesses. The green continues to offer a dignified symbol of public commitment to the ideals of community and to serve as the focus for Morristown and indeed the region.**

community activities more feasible for many people. Outdoor displays, sidewalk cafes and other outdoor activities which often take place within the public right-of-way are appropriate uses of public space and are encouraged, although subject to reasonable regulations controlling safety and appearance.

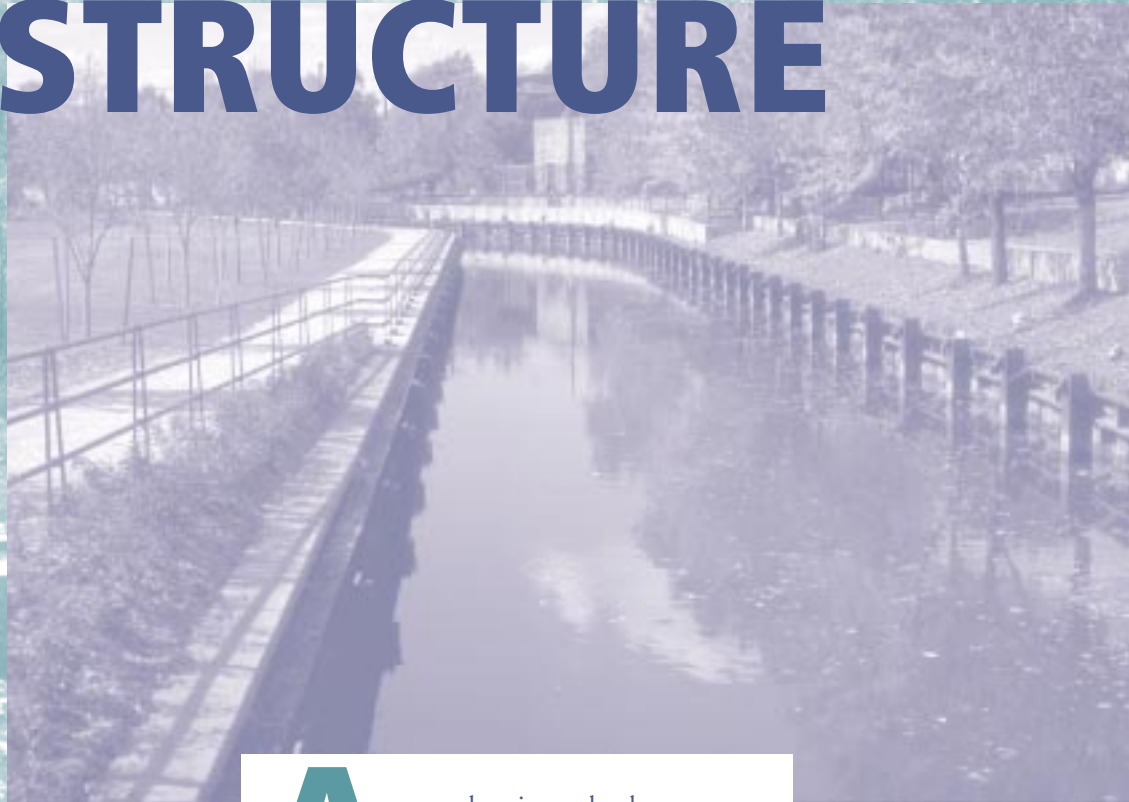


The Delaware and Raritan Canal offers opportunities for walking, bicycling, bird watching and boating on a regional scale. Regional facilities such as these can link communities and provide safe and pleasant alternatives to non-motorized commuting, while preserving a living memory of our recent industrial past.

# GREEN AND



# BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE



**A** comprehensive and, where possible, interlinked network of green (land) and blue (water) infrastructure will mitigate and counterbalance the greater intensity of development found in compact communities and play a defining role in a community's collective quality of life.

Green infrastructure includes both public, semi-public and private open spaces of many different sizes and functions, as well as street trees and large and small landscaped elements. Public and semi-public parks and



open spaces, of both formal and informal nature, along with active and passive recreation areas, community gardens, cemeteries, and private open space are major components of this network. Other components include the green planting strips along streets, the planted medians of boulevards, plantings in the interior of traffic control devices, such as traffic circles, triangles and cul-de-sacs, and street trees.

Blue infrastructure includes canals, streams, rivers, ponds, lakes and intermittent drainage-ways. Green and blue infrastructure systems are interrelated and interdependent and often combined as linear parks. Because of their often linear form, they offer desirable corridors for other more conventional types of infrastructure.

Green and blue infrastructure systems are instrumental in the greening of denser areas and extending regional systems into urbanized areas. As part of a strategy that also includes the careful selection of building materials and colors, they mitigate the adverse impacts (such as “heat islands” and stormwater runoff) of increases in impervious surface and help realize energy efficiencies. Development plans should always consider their own (on-site and off-site) impacts to the broader green and blue infrastructure systems, and incorporate strategic restoration efforts — such as daylighting (re-opening) covered streambeds, streambank restoration, or wetlands or canal restoration — where appropriate and cost-effective.

**Conventional engineering solutions focusing on flood prevention relegated urban waterways to pipes or concrete channels. But healthy waterways in an urban context satisfy functional objectives while providing a high amenity value. An early example of this approach**

**is found in the Olmsted firm's 1907 plan for a greenway along the Assumpink creek in Trenton. The rehabilitation of our urban waterways without loss of urban character is a significant challenge for the 21st century.**







Cemeteries are an important, albeit often neglected, part of a community's open space system. They offer many of the same opportunities for quiet contemplation and reflexion found in secluded parks, as well as significant opportunities for expression by designers.

# Special

## Design Elements

**C**ommunity form and structure are accented and made more legible through the judicious use of special design elements.

Gateways can mark the entrance to a community, downtown, neighborhood or special area, highlighting the transition in much the same way that the front door to a building marks the transition between outdoor and indoor space. Bridges, arches, tunnels and overpasses provide dramatic transitions. Other ways to highlight a gateway include the use of taller buildings or structural elements (such as ornamental pylons) framing the entrance; the consistent use of paving, landscaping and other design elements to establish a distinct identity; or the use of banners, flags and other forms of visual animation, where appropriate. Gateways are justified in certain areas and for certain uses only.

**At the Trenton Battle Monument, a powerful visual element is placed at an important location in the urban grid — the “five points,” where five streets converge — and is complemented by a narrow but elegant park, reflecting the monument’s verticality.**

Significant views or vistas are created by topographical conditions or through deliberate design actions. In either case, they are terminated by focal points or points of visual termination. These locations should be occupied by design elements, which attract interest and can function as landmarks. To that end, these locations are



reserved for special treatment — prominent buildings or structures which are taller, of particular dignity, of distinctive architectural character, or in some other way appropriately designed to fit their special location. Deflected views should receive similar treatment. Buildings or structures which constitute visual landmarks make an area more legible and help visitor orientation in unfamiliar territory.

A community should also protect important views of itself, from its immediate environs and guide development and design decisions affecting its skyline.





# DESIGNING COMPACT COMMUNITIES

**P**arking is an important, albeit supportive land use. Particularly in compact communities, it is critical to provide enough, without providing too much. Aggressive public sector parking policies are a must, given the market's propensity to allocate large amounts of valuable land to parking.

A balanced mix of uses and activities maximizes the potential for shared parking, reducing overall need and freeing land for other uses. In commercial and other non-residential areas, as well as in high-density residential areas, shared off-site parking within a 5-minute walk is desirable. In the core of compact communities shared parking is the rule, not the exception. In lower density areas, shared parking is desirable, but optional.

Central parking facilities, preferably in structured parking if economically feasible, offer a beneficial alternative to individual, on-site parking. A variety of uses can share a parking deck, with the balance available to the general public. Parking decks can be located in the interior of blocks and concealed behind "liner" buildings with retail, offices or housing. The exposed elevations of parking decks are subject to the same design guidelines as any other building. Particular attention is given to the rhythm of solids and voids, considering the predominance of openings. Parking decks can be well integrated with their surroundings in terms of scale, materials, colors and style. The inclusion of grade-level retail/services facing the street masks the deadening effect of long, blank walls. Vehicular entrances are judiciously located to minimize conflicts with pedestrian circulation.

Curbside parking provides convenient access to adjacent uses, and exerts a desirable traffic calming effect. It is provided (including overnight) wherever appropriate. Surface parking is placed underneath or to the rear of buildings, wherever feasible; if placed to the side of a building, it does



**Structured parking is an indispensable component of compact development of any scale. Palmer Square in Princeton is supported by three parking decks, carefully integrated into the community fabric. But poorly designed and executed parking decks can be ruinous, so stringent design guidelines are very important. Careful attention to interior lighting and layout is also important to enhance parking deck user's sense of security.**

not occupy more than 50% of the lot frontage facing a public street. Front yard parking is acceptable in the driveways of single-family or two-family homes or small buildings, or when there is a significant setback from the street, but rarely is considerable front yard parking justifiable. To minimize curb cuts and avoid overwhelming the streetscape with parked cars and garages, rear alley access is usually a viable and desirable alternative.

Efficient management is critical to a successful parking strategy. The total amount of parking can be less important than the strategically located parking available or perceived to be available. Prime parking serving retail and services, for example, is short-term and restricted to customers, with employee and long-term customer parking at other locations. Tandem parking can be justified under certain conditions.

The perimeter of all surface parking areas is appropriately screened and landscaped, while the

interior is planted with a sufficient number of trees to shade each parking space. Alternatively, parking lots can be equipped with solar panels that provide shade and shelter from the rain while producing clean energy.

Large surface parking areas (50+ cars) are divided into smaller units and intensively screened and landscaped. Lighting is shielded and controlled, while providing security. Both the perimeter and the interior of surface parking lots are equipped with sidewalks and other facilities to provide comfortable and safe pedestrian circulation. Parking lot entrances and exits are also strategically placed to minimize disruption to pedestrian circulation, as well as the number of curb cuts. Side street, as opposed to major street locations for access and egress are recommended. Internal connections allowing circulation between adjacent lots are strongly recommended.

Parking lots are notorious contributors to non-point source pollution. Water quality measures incorporated into parking lot design can provide valuable environmental benefits. Permeable pavement treatments can reduce runoff in surface lots of any size.



# Streetscapes

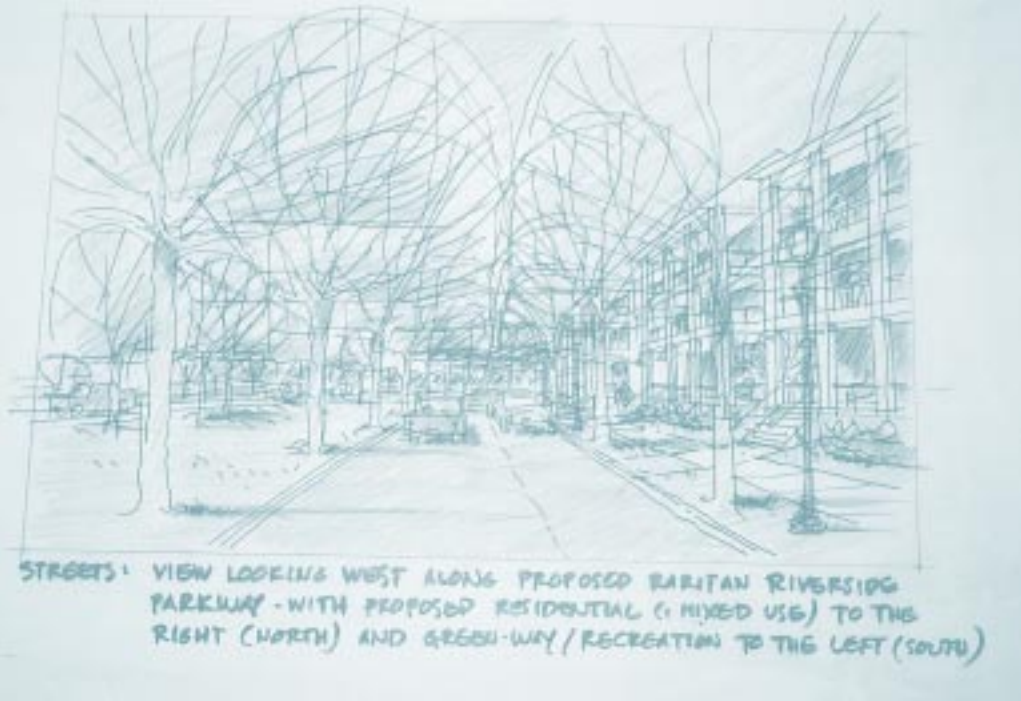
**S**treetscape features include all the elements of street furniture — such as benches, street lights, trash and recycling receptacles — along with street trees and landscaping (planter boxes, planting strips, landscaped areas), sidewalk mounted utility features (telephone poles, traffic control devices, mailboxes, utility boxes, newspaper and other vending machines), public art, statuary, and other symbolic and ornamental elements.

Quality streetscapes define the public and semi-public realm — they are an integral part of a community's identity and a key ingredient in local quality of life. Streetscapes establish a community's commitment to its public realm, and will either invite or discourage civic intercourse, social interaction, public outdoor activities and pedestrian activity in general. Streetscapes can also reflect a community's heritage — public statuary offers a visual celebration of local historic figures or events of local significance, which might otherwise be forgotten by the general public. Streetscape treatments should be commensurate with the desired or anticipated level of public use of a given area, and should be used to encourage (or discourage) specific activities. For example, quality streetscapes can be a powerful feature reinforcing public transit use, and areas around transit stops should receive special treatment, as a tangible manifestation of the public commitment to transit and to improve the transit passenger's trip experience.

A community's investment in streetscapes should not be limited to its downtown or core areas. Downtown streetscape investments may be justified in terms of maintaining the area's appeal relative to competing outlying areas, and in serving a large number of users, but streetscape investments should occur wherever there is the intention to encourage public interaction, which may also include residential neighborhoods and areas of specialized land uses.

Streetscapes need not be lavish or expensive, but they must be both functional and dignified. In general, they should be designed to last, using quality materials that age gracefully, and should not require a high or expensive maintenance. In retail areas, particular attention is required to make sure that street trees and other streetscape treatments do not interfere or compete with the merchandising, or distract shoppers.

Pedestrians are the primary users of our streetscapes, and these should be designed to increase the levels of interest, comfort and security and the overall pedestrian experience. Appropriately located street furniture, such as benches, tables and trash receptacles, help identify places to linger, eat lunch or play chess. Pedestrians are responsive to the visual and tactile stimuli from their surroundings, and the judicious use of textures, colors and patterns enhances the streetscape. For example, the use of modular elements in sidewalks (bricks, pavers,) or the juxtaposition of complimentary materials (grass, stone, gravel) can increase visual interest at appropriate locations. Decorative pedestrian-scale



complements the surrounding architecture, and their own architectural definition, with articulated piers and reinforced corners.

Street trees are extremely important in defining the character of a street, a public space, a neighborhood or even an entire community. Along with other plantings, street trees are also critical in achieving a cooling effect, countering urban heat islands,

lighting, equipped with low wattage incandescent lamps and placed at regular intervals (no more than 80 feet) adds character and helps create a softer, more intimate environment. Oversized, high intensity highway lighting (cobraheads) is discouraged or limited to larger intersections. Lighting is carefully contained (shielded, frosted glass) to limit nightglow, while providing for security and safe circulation.

Streetscape design must also balance the needs of pedestrians with the functional requirements of other users of the public realm. Sidewalk mounted streetscape elements such as newspaper vending machines or mailboxes — if grouped at midblock, away from intersections, where pedestrian traffic concentrates — will not interfere with pedestrian circulation. Utilities and related appurtenances are generally placed underground; if above ground, utility boxes are unobtrusively located and either integrated into building design or, if freestanding, screened or otherwise masked.

Walls, hedges and fences are important ground level design features that define space, demarcate public and semi-public from private space and contribute to overall character. In general, but particularly in public spaces or in visually prominent locations, walls and fences require durable, natural materials, a design that

and generally softening dense environments. A few hardy species adapted to local conditions should be selected and used with consistency, and planted at close, regular intervals (maximum of 30 feet on center) to establish a sense of rhythm. Double rows of street trees (alees) are appropriate in boulevards and more formal spaces.

The maintenance of public spaces and streetscapes is a critical management element in compact communities, with very tangible consequences for both local business and local quality of life. Well-maintained public spaces and streetscapes are a source of community pride and an indication of stability and commitment, whereas poor maintenance suggests lack of interest and disinvestment. Management strategies which encourage residents and businesses to “adopt” public spaces or simple elements (such as street trees) and assume responsibility for some level of maintenance, clean-up and even investment allow the public to share costs in times of financial constraints, engage the private sector, and can be effective tools in improving the appearance of public spaces. Similar functions can be achieved through organizations such as business improvement districts and others which have been instrumental in maintaining, marketing and promoting traditional downtowns.



# Diversity of Uses, Building Types & Design Expressions

**T**here are no strict rules on how to mix, or not mix uses. In general, uses can be mixed as much as the market will allow, while respecting certain minimum quality of life related performance standards, and without compromising the basic features of a community's physical framework of streets and blocks. Fears that proximity between different land uses lead to declining real estate values are misplaced. However, mixed-use environments require quality design to be successful.

Certain uses are complimentary, and combining them allows parking or maintenance costs to be shared. In mixed-use buildings, non-residential

uses are located on the lower levels; in the interest of privacy, residential uses are located above, with separate access, where possible, and if necessary shielded from noise, views of service areas, and other similar impacts. Auto-oriented uses raise special problems, given their emphasis on the automobile, and while some can be "calmed" through site design, others must be separated from pedestrian-oriented environments. In compact communities the variety of uses is paralleled by a wide variety of building sizes, from low rise to taller buildings, and from small to large building footprints. Diversity of uses, building size and building type enriches the community's fabric, provides balance and adds



interest. A common misconception is that compact communities are biased towards small, “mom and pop” businesses or activities, and that large users of space are not accommodated. This historically has not been the case in our compact communities, and the ability to attract and incorporate both large and small uses and users continues to be essential for any healthy, competitive community.

It is very desirable to locate large users of space in compact communities provided they are also large employers. Space intensive uses requiring minimal labor — such as warehousing, distribution centers, automated manufacturing and some types of discount retail — are less appropriate, more difficult to integrate, and unlikely to benefit from a compact location. Large users which can benefit from a compact environment include institutional users such as large educational facilities, hospitals and other health-related facilities, large firms providing professional services (legal, architectural, engineering, accounting, financial, and others), large retail outlets, etc. Large users can help anchor a compact community, generate taxes and income, and provide stability. Large users can be located almost anywhere and certainly in predominantly residential neighborhoods. However, special attention must be given to ways of integrating large, space-intensive users without compromising the compact community’s fabric and character, and sensitive design and appropriate planning are needed particularly if located in predominantly residential neighborhoods.

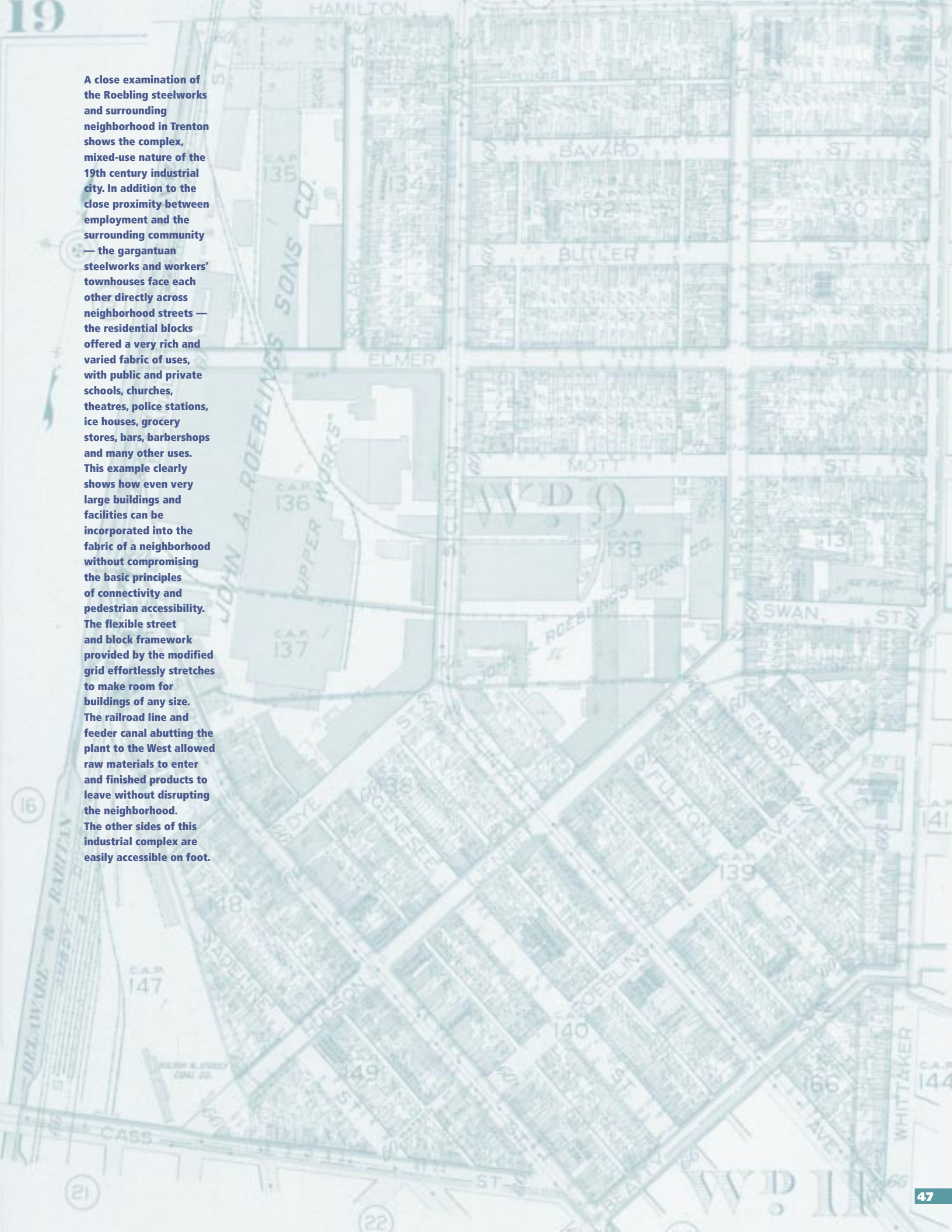
**A mixed use fabric recognizes that buildings may lose their original purpose over time, and facilitates their conversion to new uses — from heavy industry to office (NJHMFA), from office to residential, from firehouse to office (Basking Ridge firehouse; Chambers St firehouse, Princeton), from church to residential, the possibilities are limitless.**

Large areas of specialized land uses, or districts, are found in many compact communities in the form of university campuses, large medical or administrative complexes, governmental districts and others. Districts coexist with each other and with residential and mixed-use areas, often in great harmony, provided their design is sensitive to the scale and character of the surrounding fabric and maintains a pedestrian and transit-supportive orientation. Districts in compact communities require a seamless integration into the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood, continuity in the circulation network, transit- and pedestrian-oriented features, and high-quality public spaces. An important limitation of some of these areas is their often limited schedule of operation, with daytime activity replaced by nighttime idleness. This leads to strong swing movements and peak hour congestion, may raise security concerns at night and on weekends and does not represent the most efficient use of infrastructure. To mitigate these concerns, communities are encouraged to define strategies to diversify uses and activities and extend their hours of operation.

Housing types can also be mixed to the extent supported by the market. A variety of housing types, whether on the same block, street or neighborhood, makes for a more balanced community in terms of both its physical and social fabric. Again, fears that proximity between different housing types will negatively affect housing value are misplaced. However, the challenges found in mixing housing types can only be overcome through sensitive design.



A close examination of the Roebing steelworks and surrounding neighborhood in Trenton shows the complex, mixed-use nature of the 19th century industrial city. In addition to the close proximity between employment and the surrounding community — the gargantuan steelworks and workers' townhouses face each other directly across neighborhood streets — the residential blocks offered a very rich and varied fabric of uses, with public and private schools, theatres, police stations, ice houses, grocery stores, bars, barbershops and many other uses. This example clearly shows how even very large buildings and facilities can be incorporated into the fabric of a neighborhood without compromising the basic principles of connectivity and pedestrian accessibility. The flexible street and block framework provided by the modified grid effortlessly stretches to make room for buildings of any size. The railroad line and feeder canal abutting the plant to the West allowed raw materials to enter and finished products to leave without disrupting the neighborhood. The other sides of this industrial complex are easily accessible on foot.



## Integrating Large Users of Space Into Compact Communities

- Provide incentives for multi-story, not single-story buildings, and for structured parking, not surface lots. This will reduce the building footprint and help contain overall scale. Building height, and its effect on neighborhood character can be balanced with size of building footprint, and its effect on neighborhood grain.
- Explore remote parking options with shuttle service to the complex.
- Require a seamless integration into the surrounding neighborhood. Attempts to insulate uses, with setbacks and buffers, are often counterproductive in that they typically make the use more conspicuous and otherwise fail to provide the desired relief. A successful integration is achieved by judiciously manipulating scale, massing, facade design, building materials and other design techniques.
- Locate supportive uses, such as restaurants and day-care centers nearby. If located within the campus, they should be open to the public.
- Consider complimentary uses to soften transitions. For example, senior housing concealing a multi-story hospital parking deck which would otherwise face a single-family neighborhood.
- Design access to parking decks to minimize disruption to pedestrian circulation and neighborhood life.
- Require inconspicuous loading docks, garbage and recycling storage and pick-up.
- Enforce strict performance standards to maintain acceptable ambient environmental standards. This means that outdoor lighting, HVAC noise, and other environmental byproducts of large buildings are strictly controlled and kept to acceptable levels.
- Schedule activities to minimize disruptions to the surrounding neighborhood, within reason.
- Maintain a constant dialogue with the neighborhood and involve the public in the decisionmaking. Address quality of life issues at once.

Accessory units over detached garages or as part of single-family housing are a low impact technique for diversifying neighborhoods. Small multi-family (three- and four-plex) buildings can be designed to resemble large single-family housing. Small lot (3,500 - 6,000 sq ft) single-family housing offers respectable densities in detached forms. In mixed housing neighborhoods, densities are not obvious, and are usually much higher than one might think, without visible drawbacks. The general rule on how to successfully integrate different building types and sizes is for buildings to be sensitive to the scale and architectural features of adjacent buildings. This does not mean that buildings are all the same size, style or color. However, certain critical features are reflected in a sympathetic way. For example, uniform building height is not required, but taller buildings can acknowledge

the height of neighboring buildings, by echoing important horizontal lines (roof lines, cornice lines, string courses), or by using devices — such as setbacks, recesses, change of color, or change in building materials — to differentiate the taller part of the building.

In the same spirit, changes or additions to existing buildings, particularly those with distinctive architectural character should be sensitive to the original architecture. This does not preclude contemporary additions or changes, even to historic buildings, or in historic districts provided a sense of continuity is established, through the use of setbacks, compatible colors and materials, compatible scales, continuity of rhythms or other techniques. Additions which echo without trivializing design “themes” from the original building are generally more successful.



# Building Location and Design

**B**uildings and main building entrances generally face the street, although side and rear elevations and entrances can also play important roles. Exceptions include primary entrances which face pedestrian-only alleys and pedestrian entrances located to the side of long, narrow lots. A building's primary entrance is clearly marked and framed architecturally with columns, lintels, pediments, porticos, overhangs, canopies or other architectural features. Primary entrances do not face parking lots. Secondary or service entrances may face parking lots or alleys and these receive dignified but more modest architectural treatment.

Buildings and structures relate to the human frame through the modulation and composition of facades or elevations and through the application of modular building components. In general, building facades are most accomplished when following the tri-partite model, with a distinct base, middle and crown. All building elevations are important and blank wall or service area treatment is not recommended for any building or structure visible from the public realm. The primary or main elevation facing the street or public space is emphasized through composition — the manipulation of horizontal and vertical elements. Vertical elements (bays) are defined through columns, pilasters, and



vertically oriented fenestration (windows and other openings); horizontal divisions — which reflect internal changes of level — are achieved through string or belt courses, and cornices. Windows and door patterns are important features of facade composition, and critical in establishing rhythms

The 1919 plan for Fairview, also known as Yorkship Village in Camden, is one of the most important urban design statements in the country. Designed by Electus Litchfield and built by the federal government's Emergency Fleet Corporation for shipyard workers, Fairview combines a beautiful plan with generous amounts of

public open space and careful attention to design details. A mix of uses are grouped around a higher density central square, linked to the surrounding neighborhoods by a radial pattern of streets and pedestrian connections.

of solids and voids, light and shadow. In general, windows with square or vertical proportions and coordinated with the articulation of bays and balconies are preferred; openings framed with a reveal and not flush with the exterior finish offer a greater expression.

Roof shapes are compatible with overall building composition and heighten architectural interest, where appropriate. Modulated roofs — with dormers, chimneys, cupolas, clock towers and other features are recommended. Roof forms incorporate and thoroughly screen from ground level view all HVAC equipment, elevator housing, exhaust pipes and other mechanical equipment. Secondary means of egress, where required, are internal when possible; external fire escapes, if necessary, are located to the side or rear. In general, materials used in exteriors are selected because they are durable, require relatively low maintenance and age gracefully.

Facade treatments distinguish walk-in ground floor uses from upper level uses through storefront and display window design and through arcades, where appropriate. Commercial buildings are required to provide display windows facing all public streets and pedestrian connections. The intent is for display windows to compliment overall building design and offer attractive views of the interiors in order to capture and maintain pedestrian interest. Security devices (gates and roll down windows) create a general feeling of insecurity and should be used sparingly. Security devices offering a sense of transparency, such as the mesh and scissors variety, are preferred.

Signage, awnings, canopies, banners and flags are design features which can further animate facades, add color and provide visual information. These features complement and add character to streetscapes, and are effective provided they are designed to the scale of the building or structure and are sensitively mounted. All should be pedestrian, not automobile scale, fit within facade subdivisions and never cover facade openings or architectural details.

Facade lighting can enhance nighttime interest in buildings and structures and convey a sense of architectural drama. Sensitively mounted lighting fixtures that complement the style of a building or structure provide an added dimension of design. It is best when lighting style and intensity reflect a building or structure's use — for example, a more lively lighting display indicates a place of entertainment.

The purpose of foundation plantings and general landscaping is to complement and accent, but not obscure architectural features. More assertive landscaping is justified when a screening effect is desired, such as around loading docks, in parking lots or around trash or recycling collection areas. But in general architecture should be allowed to speak for itself and attempts at concealing a building or structure with landscaping without a compelling functional purpose are misguided.



# Defining an Identity

**C**ompact communities should seek to establish, affirm or maintain their individuality, or design personality, by identifying and reinforcing those elements which give it a sense of place, and make it distinctive from other areas. Stylistic uniformity, uniform building height, or other measures of absolute conformity are not requirements for establishing a design personality, which can emerge equally from a diverse, richly contrasting environment, provided some unifying elements, or themes, are apparent. Simple unifying elements — such as the consistent use of a shade tree, a consistent sense of building scale, or a consistent approach to streetscape treatments — can be very effective in defining identity and place.

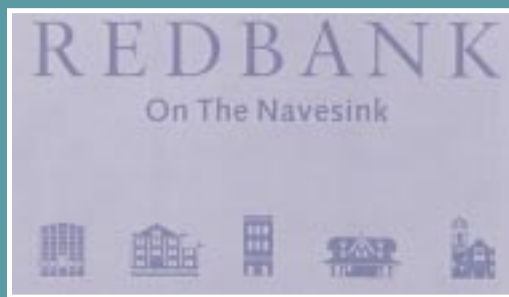
The selection of appropriate design features and treatments is a critical ingredient in establishing visual identity and it should reflect where a given community fits in the spectrum from urban to suburban to rural. Communities that vigorously resist the intrusion of ersatz “suburban” design features and protect their sense of place become ultimate beneficiaries of real estate appreciation and enhanced quality of life. Communities that submit to the reign of the generic become indistinguishable from every other and will ultimately lose their appeal.

Communities with a rural flavor can maintain a more rustic and naturalistic image by developing and enforcing appropriate design measures. Engineering design standards for drainage, streets and driveways, for example, play a decisive role in the distinction between



a more informal “rural” atmosphere and a more stylized “suburban” character. Municipalities should reassess whether their local engineering standards are making a positive contribution towards creating or maintaining the desired image. Likewise, urban areas which allow their identities to be eroded by the suburban chain store imagery of single-story buildings, large front yard setbacks and vast parking lots will lose their defining character

and increasingly resemble second class suburbs. Generic landscapes face a bleak future.



Community design statements, such as siting strong vertical elements at prominent locations; using graphically powerful icons; or implementing a unified architectural vocabulary are tools that assist in defining and reinforcing local identity, and in bridging our cultural and built heritage with the shapes and forms of the future.

# Redes

## New Jersey

**S**prawl is the generic term for a pattern of land development generally characterized by auto-dependency, an overall lack of density, the wasteful use of resources and a strict separation between land uses. Sprawl has become — in New Jersey and indeed across the nation — the prevalent pattern of land development since the 1950s. It is not all cut from the same cloth, however, and the various generations of sprawl development on the ground exhibit many variations in terms of density, form, layout and so forth. And, contrary to popular belief, it is neither unplanned nor unexpected, since most sprawl is carefully scripted and built according to adopted master plans and zoning. Yet it results in profoundly unsatisfying patterns of land use, which are often discontinuous, lack functional open space, erect physical barriers between different uses and activities, create great inefficiencies in mobility and access and are unsustainable and unaffordable in the long term.

One of the main features of sprawl is the emphasis on a strict separation of land uses and on the single-use environments that result therefrom.

The components of daily life — the places of residence, production, consumption, education, recreation, entertainment, worship and others — are spatially segregated and carefully separated. Each specialized activity has a corresponding development prototype — the office park and the industrial park are places of employment and production, the shopping mall is a place of consumption, the single-family subdivision and the townhouse complex are places of residence. Each development prototype “plugs in” to a regional network linked by a road system, and perhaps by public water and sewer. However, the region under sprawl has no formal structure and cannot offer coherent and integrated systems of public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle circulation or public spaces and facilities.

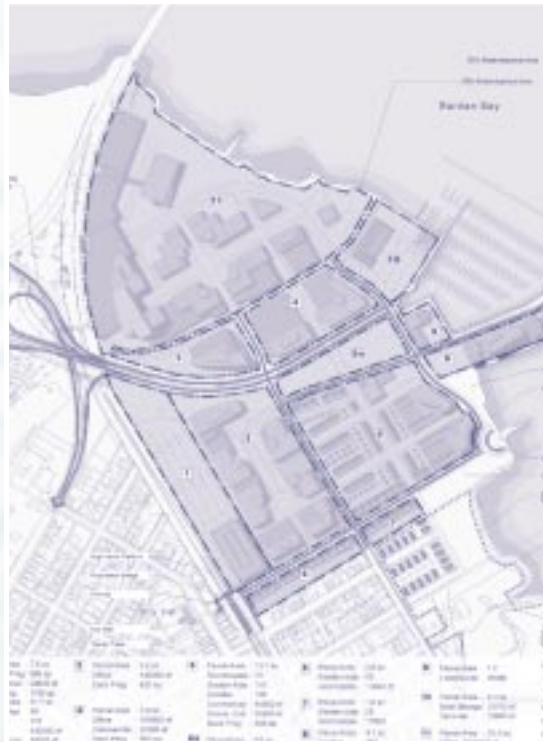
Areas of sprawl are often fully infrastructured. They may contain great concentrations of employment, economic activity, housing and other uses; and they are often dynamic, market-responsive and capable of evolving into new forms. Many if not all of the uses historically found in traditional



# igniting

population centers are now also provided by sprawl. In places without downtowns, these areas have assumed the functional roles traditionally played by the downtown. In areas with traditional downtowns, an increasingly competitive and integrated spatial economy creates a multitude of linkages and interactions between downtowns and surrounding sprawl. The spatial economies of compact communities and sprawl are intertwined and interdependent.

Existing areas of sprawl need to be recognized without prejudice, and strategies promoting better linkages to surrounding areas adopted. Where practicable and to the extent feasible, communities are encouraged to take realistic, proactive measures to redesign sprawl with pedestrian and transit-supportive features.



In South Amboy, an abandoned industrial waterfront on the Raritan Bay is planned for a new, mixed-use transit village comprising over 1,800 housing units, 12,000 jobs, civic uses, public open space and a marina. The new community will have rail, bus and water taxi service.

## Single-use, Multi-use, Mixed-Use

Sprawl is not necessarily all single-use. Much contemporary sprawl is actually multi-use — in addition to the traditional retail and restaurants, shopping malls incorporate personal and business services, entertainment, post offices and even corporate offices; and office parks may include day care, a branch bank or a hotel. Nevertheless, these areas are not mixed-use, since they do not contain housing, and offer only a limited number of complementary uses. A true mixed-use community requires a balance and a variety of different uses within walking distance. It does not require different uses in the same building, although the mixed-use building is a time-honored building prototype which continues to offer important advantages to its owners, occupants and to the larger community.

# Redesigning Sprawl

**A**reas of sprawl can be transformed to look and function differently. Redesign may involve retrofitting, redevelopment, infill or a combination thereof. Retrofitting implies the adaptive reuse of existing buildings, sites and infrastructure in ways not originally intended. Redevelopment implies the demolition and replacement of existing buildings, facilities and infrastructure with new construction. Infill implies site densification with new buildings or additions to existing buildings.

The main thrust of redesign is to change auto-dominated environments into pedestrian- and transit-oriented places and to mix land uses, where possible and appropriate. Because of the diversified nature of sprawl, redesign proposals must be tailored to the particular type of conditions — the density, layout, and other defining features — and must be strategic.

The redesign of commercial areas and the redesign of residential areas raises different challenges. To date, redesign efforts have focused mainly on commercial areas.

There are a growing number of examples from around the nation of how to successfully redesign sprawl, given the right set of conditions. This same body of experience also highlights the difficulties, and limitations, inherent to this process. Sprawl encompasses many well-managed and financially successful uses and areas, and in the absence of significant incentives to the principal stakeholders, landowners and developers have generally been unwilling to take the risk and the initiative to redesign.

## Barriers to Redesigning Sprawl

- zoning ordinances in most New Jersey communities prohibit or inhibit mixed use;
- residents of nearby neighborhoods may question the advantages of redesign;
- municipal fiscal considerations;
- suburban oriented lending institutions may be reluctant to finance what is perceived as an untested product;
- engineering design standards favor auto-oriented environments;
- complacency and lack of knowledge.





**Computer simulations showing steps in the transformation of a dead mall to a mixed-use street. Shared parking in a mixed-use environment makes site intensification possible. Increased real estate values make structured parking feasible. Upper stories are market-driven and may be office, residential or both. Visualization tools, such as these simulations, can be instrumental in conveying planning and design options to the public.**

# Commercial Areas

**S**prawl redesign has focused mainly on commercial projects. The successful models to date have been driven primarily by either:

- the potential for a significant public investment in transit, such as a new light rail or commuter rail station; or
- the desire to create a town center within a suburban fabric where no center exists.

Redesign often involves site intensification and a more efficient use of the site. Given the high suburban parking requirements, parking lots are often prime targets for redevelopment. Many commercial parking lots are overdimensioned by contemporary standards. When commercial parking lots are redeveloped, excess surface parking is replaced by new buildings and public spaces. Surface parking may also be replaced by structured parking. Narrower streets with curbside parking can replace wide driveways and parking aisles. Parking needs may be reduced by shared parking conditions and greater reliance on alternate modes of transportation.

In New Jersey, the redesign of commercial areas has been explored mostly at the level of intentions. In Randolph Township, planning efforts to redevelop an aging shopping center on Route 10 with a more mixed-use town or village center have been on-going for almost a decade, with limited progress thus far. In West Milford, a demonstration study sponsored by the Regional Plan Association's New Jersey office used computer simulations to visually explore traditional alternatives to conventional shopping center development and to present these to residents and local officials in evocative, easy-to-understand graphics. Similar techniques were used in the Princeton Junction section of West Windsor by the Regional Planning Partnership (formerly MSM) to visually simulate the redevelopment opportunities around the existing commuter train station. Redesign of the Willingboro shopping center on Route 130 is the most promising experience to date. If successful, this project could provide an important model for public/private redevelopment of defunct commercial areas (see below).





Proximity between jobs and housing is very desirable, yet inserting housing in auto-oriented commercial areas can be particularly challenging. Many commercial areas are quite consolidated and adding housing would in many cases require wholesale redevelopment; residential uses at such locations may not always be appropriate; housing may not be supported by the market; or it may only occur incrementally, over a long period of time.

Municipalities are encouraged to take proactive measures and examine opportunities to redesign auto-oriented commercial areas. Redesign opportunities should be identified through the master planning process, and discussed with neighbors, landowners, developers, tenants and property managers. Financially healthy areas are less likely candidates for redesign, but obsolete or failing areas may offer rewarding opportunities. New Jersey's redevelopment statutes create opportunities and provide the framework for municipally-driven redevelopment efforts.

## When Is Market-Driven Redesign Likely?

Experience shows that redesign of commercial areas is most likely if:

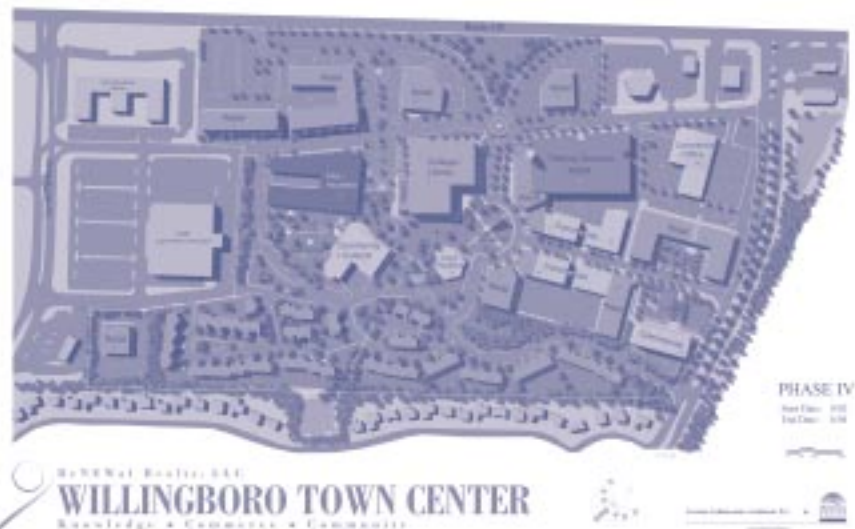
- The physical plant is functionally obsolete and the property-owner or manager is facing significant capital investment.
- Market shifts have significantly depreciated the value of the physical plant.
- The real estate market is strong and there is demand for less conventional products.
- Redevelopment potential is enhanced by a significant investment in new or rehabilitated infrastructure, such as a new train station.
- There is a single owner or management entity, rather than multiple interests.
- There is community support for the redesign.
- There are significant public incentives assisting with clean-up, infrastructure, tax abatements.

## Site Intensification

Sprawl encourages underutilization of land. Artificially low density and floor area ratio requirements, excessive parking and open space requirements, stormwater detention, buffers and setbacks frequently result in very low levels of site utilization, even at build-out. Yet in a dynamic economy, the demand for land increases. Many uses have increased space needs which they would prefer to satisfy on-site, by expanding existing facilities. Communities can provide incentives for site intensification — through rezoning, transfer of development rights, lower parking and other requirements — as a way to encourage both site redesign and job retention. Site intensification also provides an excellent opportunity to upgrade landscaping, improve signage and generally enhance site appearance.

**Many post-war suburbs have undergone the same rounds of disinvestment suffered by older cities. Retail is particularly sensitive to changes in industry formats and patterns of consumer demand. The redevelopment of the 56-acre Willingboro Plaza is a partnership between public and private interests to create a new mixed-use town**

**center from a dead shopping center, while humanizing a largely impervious landscape. It is anticipated that the new town center will have housing, office, industrial and retail in addition to civic uses and public open space.**



# Redesigning Residential Areas

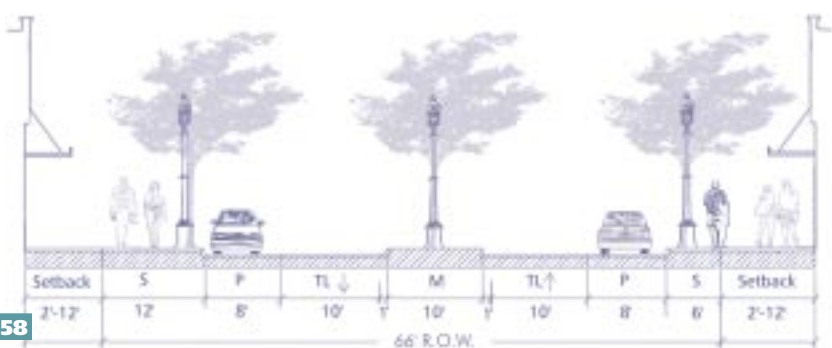
**R**edesigning auto-oriented residential areas is an even more difficult and complex task, and there are few precedents at which to point. Achieving consensus among a potentially vast number of homeowners or tenants is likely to be the key to success. Residential developments where homeowner associations control open space, private streets and/or community facilities may have an organizational advantage over areas with no formal neighborhood leadership structure.

Increasing connectivity in the circulation system, enhancing pedestrian and bicycle safety, increasing density, where appropriate, and diversifying the land use pattern are the primary strategies for residential area redesign.

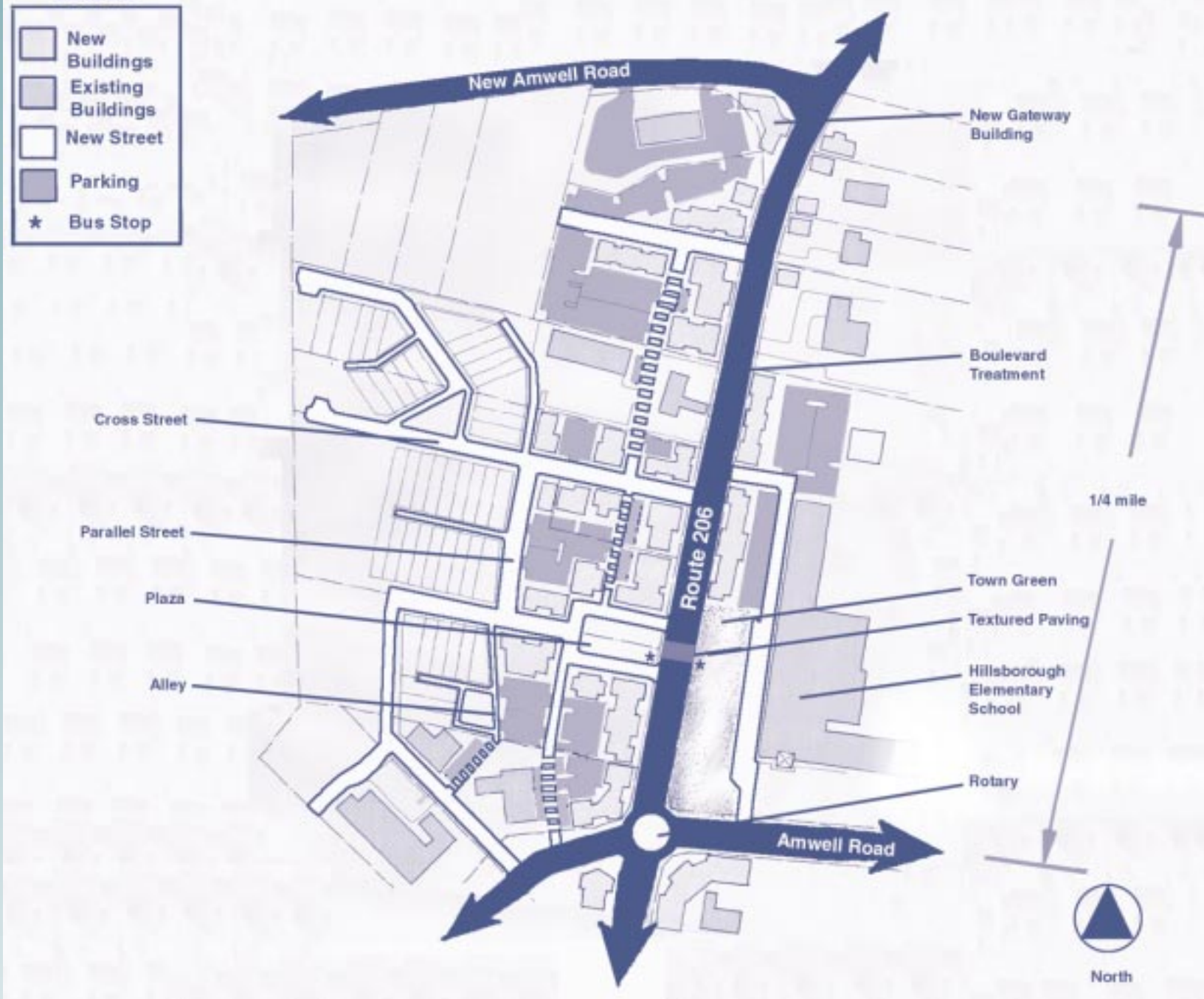
Increasing connectivity in the circulation system helps bring a community closer together and break down sprawl's propensity to create enclaves. While new road construction is politically difficult, creating new pedestrian and bicycle connections is easier. New connections can be made at cul-de-sac or mid-block situations. Nature trails such as greenways or paths along stream corridors are also valuable, even if more likely to be used for recreational purposes than for circulation.

Enhancing safety for pedestrians and bicyclists is critical to mitigating an auto-dependent environment. In auto-oriented subdivisions, cartway and right-of-way widths are often wide enough to comfortably allow a 4-foot sidewalk to be built on one or both sides of the street. If necessary, cartway widths can be reduced to provide additional room for sidewalks, or re-striped for bicycle lanes.

Increasing density is often a controversial measure, given the perception that it may change neighborhood character. In single-family or mixed-housing neighborhoods, density on existing lots can be increased with the least visual impact by creating small units from larger houses through internal partitioning. Another option is to build small, new independent units either over the garage, or through additions to the original building. Municipalities can encourage densification through accessory housing ordinances, and by revising the bulk and density standards in the zoning. If demand is strong,







experience shows that accessory housing is often built through illegal conversions, so it is preferable to act proactively and regulate this process.

In some cases, residential densities can be increased by lowering the minimum lot size requirements and allowing further subdivision of land. Density can also be increased by redeveloping underutilized land, in the form of unnecessary buffers or setbacks, excessive stormwater detention/retention facilities, or other types of “lost space.”

Sensitive design is an absolute prerequisite for any type of densification.

Introducing non-residential uses can be difficult and contentious and should be carefully planned. In residential developments with a “community center” which is often limited to active recreation uses (tennis, pool), it may be possible to add small complimentary uses, such as day care, post-office or convenience retail. Strategically located lots, such as corner lots, can be rezoned for retail, services or other uses. In addition to restrictive zoning, other legal obstacles, such as deed restrictions or restrictive covenants may have to be overcome.

**The Hillsborough Town Center plan retrofits an existing state highway into a new Main Street, forming the backbone of a mixed-use town center for this suburban community. Increased connectivity in the circulation system, traffic calming, civilizing the streetscape, infill building and formal public open space are the cornerstones of this plan.**

# Re-centering





# New Jersey

**T**here is a need — regardless of the physical pattern of development — to provide places for communities to carry out a wide variety of public activities. These activities — social, cultural, recreational and political — strengthen the culture of democracy and the fabric of the community. The underlying physical pattern of development can both encourage and inhibit the expression of community. Compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development facilitates community interaction. Auto-dependent, single-use development inhibits this behavior. Sprawl is not conducive to building community.

“Re-centering” seeks to recreate the rich and diverse fabric of our traditional communities and to organize new communities or retrofit existing communities around the physical expression of public life and public values — our civic spaces and civic buildings. Re-centering is relevant to urban, suburban and exurban conditions.

Re-centering implies a commitment by both public and private sectors towards placing a renewed focus on those elements of the

community that foster the culture of diversity and democracy — those facilities, both public and private, where the broader community can meet, across racial, ethnic, religious and economic divides to express its diverse points of view in a space which, albeit regulated, is so in ways that are responsive to the democratic process, and not just to the imperatives of the marketplace. Traditionally, such places and facilities have been public, although they need not be. These places and facilities should relate to the administrative unit — the municipality — where local democracy is exercised. Each jurisdiction should have facilities commensurate with the role it plays in the regional system.

In a broader context, the concept of re-centering suggests re-using existing infrastructure and facilities, where they exist, to reinvigorate public discourse; and to retrofit or create new infrastructure and facilities where they do not currently exist.

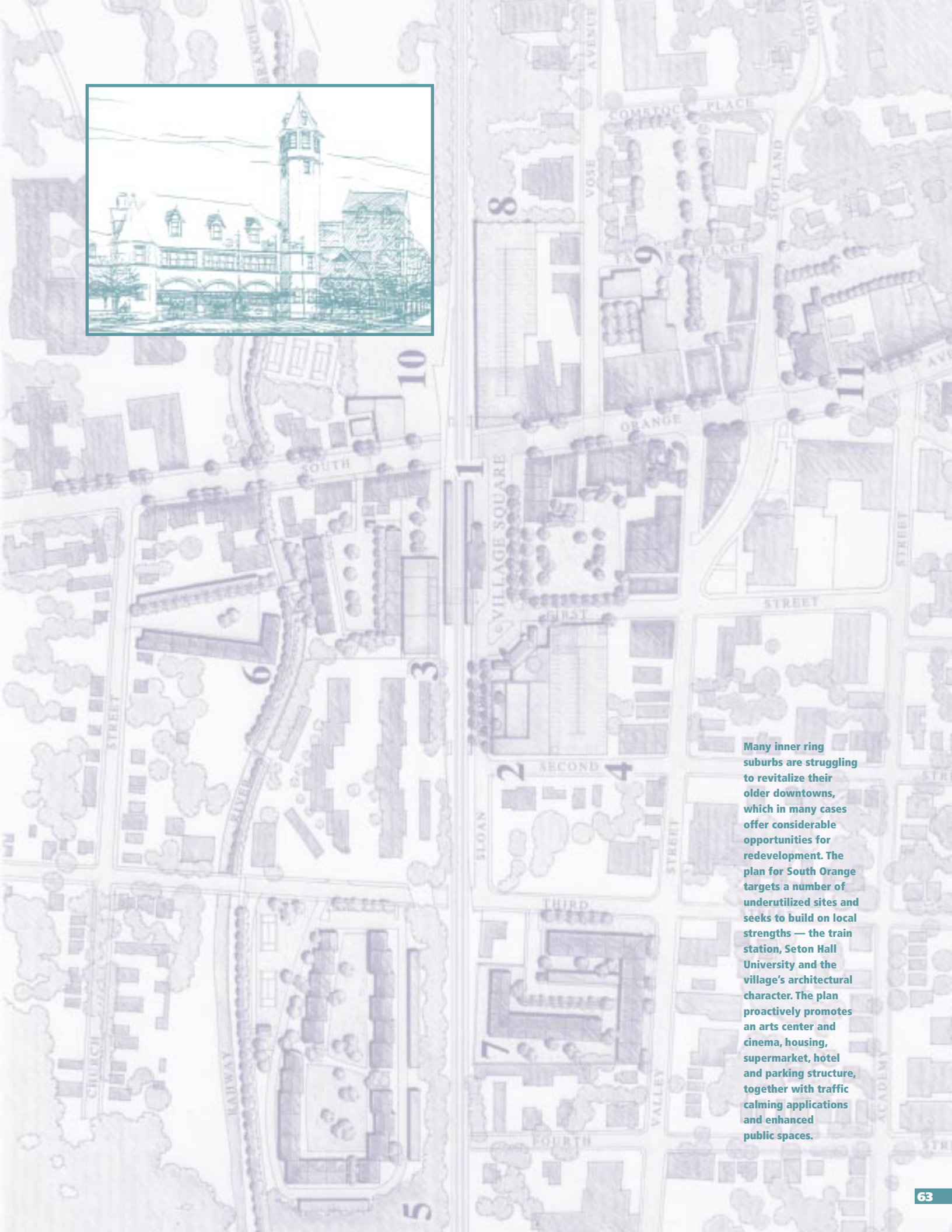
Re-centering is relevant in a variety of physical conditions. It is applicable to New Jersey's cities and inner ring suburbs, where neglect and disinvestment have seriously damaged once thriving neighborhoods and where new investments in the civic realm represent a tangible commitment toward their rebirth. It is applicable to the emerging far-suburbs where a generic landscape of residential subdivisions, retail centers and office parks offers no place to anchor local community-building efforts. And it is applicable to that middle ground, the consolidated but inchoate suburban community, which is largely built-out but

where, as infrastructure, physical plant and population age, there will be opportunities to retrofit.

Re-centering requires appropriate physical facilities and suggests a supportive physical environment. These may vary, depending upon the circumstances. If a central place exists, albeit rundown and neglected, its centrality should be reaffirmed. If this is not a viable option, schools may provide the best opportunity, or the “municipal complex,” or a public park. Shopping centers and other types of private facilities may offer the best opportunity. Retrofitting existing facilities — by adding new uses and activities within the existing shell, and/or by adding to or changing the shell or the site plan — is certainly an option. Another option may be to build new facilities, and this should not be discounted. The municipal complex can provide important opportunities to re-center. Even fairly stable communities may outgrow their municipal facilities; or they may find it cheaper to build new facilities in light of an aging physical plant and the need to comply with a host of new requirements relating to accessibility, construction code, wiring for computers and telecommunications, climate control and others. Public or public/private places for community expression can be programmed into these new or reconfigured facilities.

Re-centering is about finding new anchors and enhancing existing anchors for community expression. Given the wide diversity of conditions found across the state, and the often hostile or unresponsive environments, re-centering needs to be flexible and pragmatic and not attached to a single formula.





Many inner ring suburbs are struggling to revitalize their older downtowns, which in many cases offer considerable opportunities for redevelopment. The plan for South Orange targets a number of underutilized sites and seeks to build on local strengths — the train station, Seton Hall University and the village's architectural character. The plan proactively promotes an arts center and cinema, housing, supermarket, hotel and parking structure, together with traffic calming applications and enhanced public spaces.

# Redesigning Sprawl —

- Selectively infill with new buildings, redevelop parking lots or detention facilities, and intensify existing structures through upper-level additions. For example, office districts can broaden their range of uses, by introducing restaurants, day care facilities, personal and professional services, retail and other non-residential uses previously lacking.
- Redesign internal circulation systems to create more pedestrian- and transit-friendly environments through simple actions such as the addition of sidewalks or walkways linking buildings, and the definition of attractive, convenient and safe outdoor spaces.
- Replace surface parking with structured parking, where economically feasible, and/or implement shared parking arrangements between existing uses and complementary infill uses.
- Improve linkages and transportation options to adjacent uses and to the closest compact community through the addition of bike paths, transit, paratransit or shuttle options.



The redesign of poorly functioning, lower density suburban areas can take on a variety of approaches. Redesign activities can include highway corridors, such as this proposal for a section of NJ Route 22 in Somerville, or brownfields redevelopment, such as this proposal

for the former Somerville landfill. The common thread is to reintroduce human scale and traditional design values to landscapes which have neither and to effectively connect these areas back into the traditional fabric of the community.



# Action Steps

- Reassess unnecessary buffers, berms, fences and other physical devices frequently required by local zoning to physically and visually separate uses, buildings or lots and eliminate these obstacles where possible.
- Use enclosed skywalks and/or underground passageways where justified to allow pedestrians to overcome particularly difficult physical barriers — such as dualized highways or rail lines — between pedestrian generators.
- Calm the internal circulation network, by reducing street widths, allowing on-street parking, through the selective use of traffic calming devices, such as neckdowns or speed tables, and other measures.
- Rationalize the internal circulation network, through access management, driveway consolidation, and agreements between adjoining property owners to provide cross-easements for access.
- Create new service roads as alternatives to high speed arterial or collectors.
- Replace expansive, pesticide- and fertilizer-intensive lawns with low maintenance indigenous species, to minimize run-off and reduce non-point source water pollution.
- Replace large structural stormwater management systems with naturalized, non-structural systems.
- Establish, where appropriate, district-wide management entities which, among other responsibilities, underwrite joint liability insurance for common space.

**W**ith certain exceptions, the redesign of most auto-oriented areas is likely to take one or more generations. In the absence of conditions favorable to large-scale redevelopment, an incremental approach is recommended, so interim or partial redesign actions can be taken. These initiatives can take many forms, but are often directed at correcting the imbalances in the circulation system and, more generally, towards providing greater continuity in the physical environment.

Municipalities in a position to advance the redesign of auto-oriented areas, even with modest, interim steps, are encouraged to consider the full range of incentives at their disposal, including fiscal incentives, zoning incentives, the use of local redevelopment powers, and public/private partnerships. Although a concerted and comprehensive planning approach is preferred, progress in redesign, even if limited, will have positive impacts and should be encouraged.

# MOVING AHEAD

**I**mprovements in the practice of physical planning and design in New Jersey are subject to what is permissible under the state's statutory framework. New Jersey's Municipal Land Use Law is by far the most important statute, providing the legal basis for local planning and defining its scope in some detail. New Jersey's redevelopment statutes are also relevant. These statutes provide broad authority to municipalities to shape growth and control appearance.



# The Municipal Land Use Law

Since its adoption in 1975, New Jersey's Municipal Land Use Law (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D*) has presided over the state's increasingly sprawl-oriented pattern of development as well as over the relative neglect of issues affecting physical form. An important question for achieving better community design is whether the M.L.U.L. grants local government the authority to shape physical form and create compact communities. Conversely, does the M.L.U.L. contain tools which can be used to shape physical form and facilitate a compact development strategy and which have been neglected?

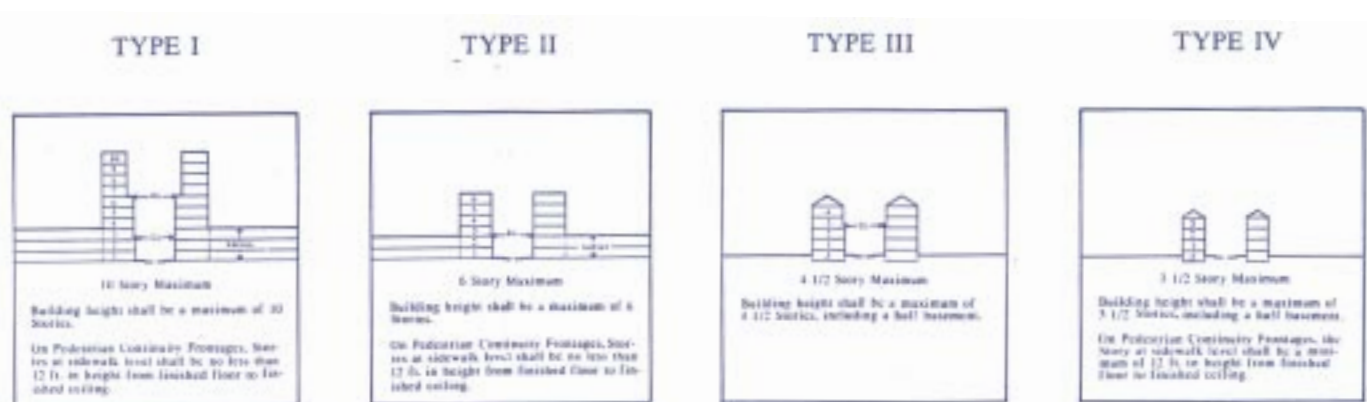
## Authority to Shape Physical Form

In reviewing the M.L.U.L. from this perspective, the statute was found to contain both the authority and the tools to shape physical form. The M.L.U.L. specifically lists the following "Purposes" (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2*):

- "to encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in the State [...]"
- "to promote a desirable visual environment and [...] good civic design and arrangements"
- "to prevent urban sprawl"
- "to encourage [...] more efficient use of the land"

It is clear that these purposes give local governments broad authority to define the features of "appropriate land development" and thus control physical form. The reference to "good civic design and arrangements" suggests that municipalities are encouraged to integrate the planning and design of public buildings, public spaces and community facilities with the planning and design of private development. The explicit reference to the prevention of "urban sprawl" can be interpreted as a specific authorization for municipalities to shape physical form in a distinct direction — to promote compact development forms.

**The urban code for Trenton's 1989 Capitol City Renaissance Plan defines four types of buildings — depending upon their location in the urban structure — and controls aspects of building design such as height, placement and use. Codes that reflect contextual and site-specific conditions, rather than just generic zoning provisions, are critical to achieving community design objectives.**



# Tools for Shaping

In addition to providing authorization for municipalities to control physical form, the M.L.U.L. provides specific tools for shaping physical form. Some tools, such as the bulk standards attached to the zoning ordinance, are widely used by municipalities; others, namely the provisions allowing municipalities to design their street system and reserve public spaces, have generally not been used.



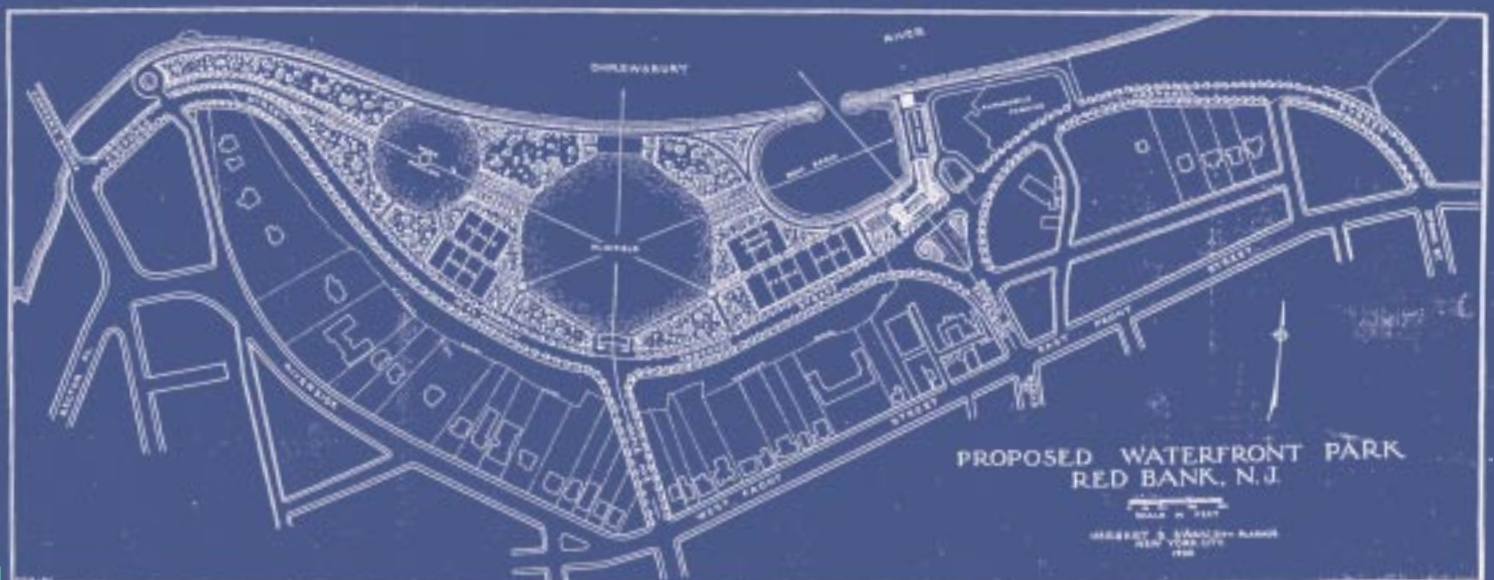
development area that may be occupied by structures; lot sizes and dimensions; and for these purposes may specify floor area ratios and other ratios and regulatory techniques governing the intensity of land use and the provision of adequate light and air, including, but not limited to the potential for utilization of renewable energy sources.” (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-65b)

## Bulk Standards

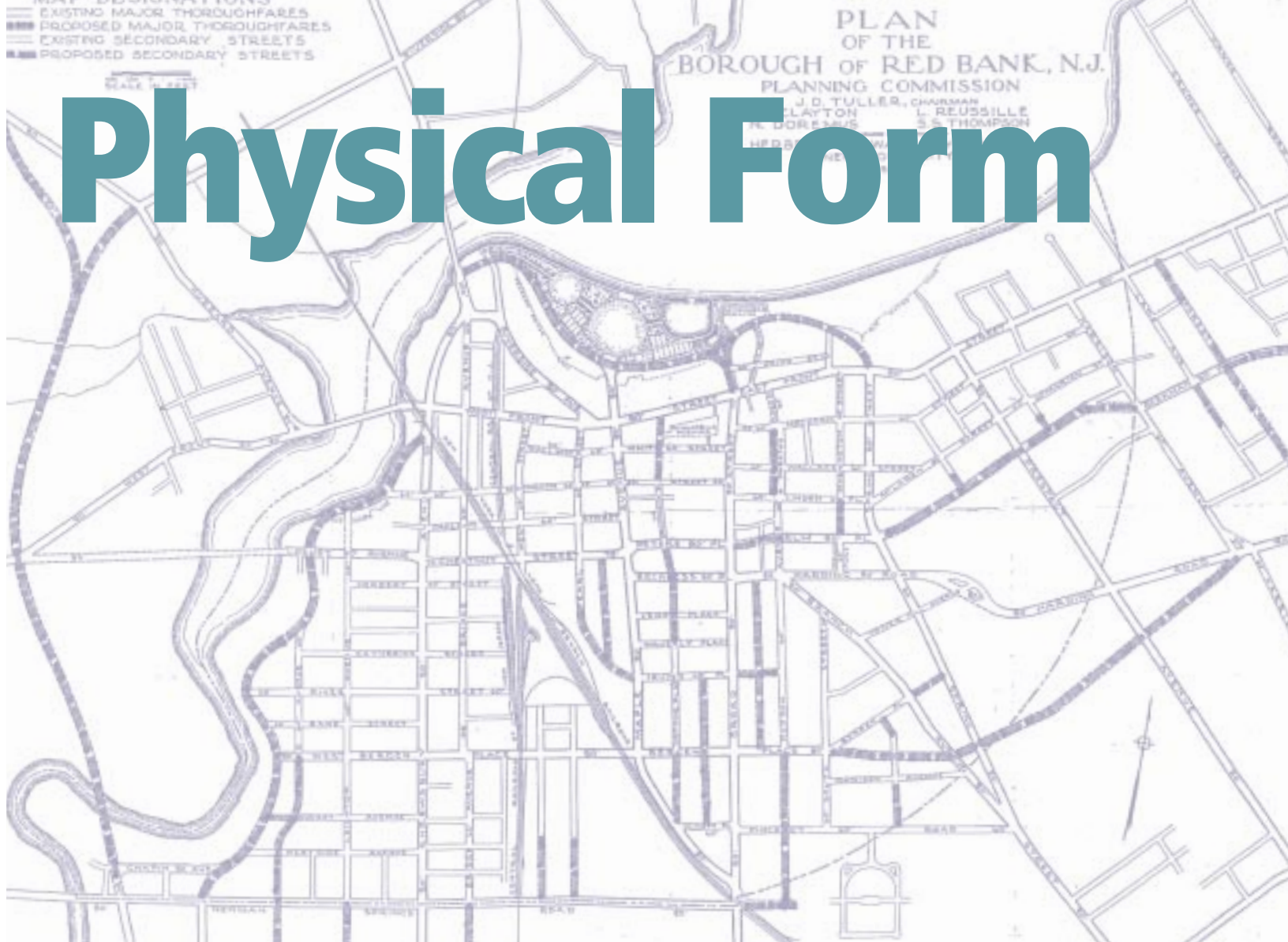
Municipalities impose a variety of “bulk standards” on development through their zoning ordinances. The M.L.U.L. provides that a zoning ordinance may:

Regulate the bulk, height, number of stories, orientation, and size of buildings and other structures; the percentage of lot or

Bulk standards — which are widely used in New Jersey — allow municipalities to regulate, for individual lots, the placement, intensity and character of development, that is to say such things as the amount of open space on the lot, the height of the buildings, the setbacks from property lines and public rights-of-way, the impervious coverage, and so forth. While bulk standards control physical development on individual lots, they do not provide a mechanism







# Physical Form

for shaping overall development form. Reliance on bulk standards as the sole mechanism for controlling development form limits the ability of the community to control issues of physical form.

## The Regulating Plan

At a larger scale, control of physical form is achieved first and foremost through design of the street system and the location of important public spaces, buildings and facilities. These elements were traditionally identified on a plan map, which also indicated private building lots. This map — which represents a detailed development plan — is often called a “regulating plan.” Regulating plans establish the following elements:

- generalized street system
- location of major public spaces
- location of major civic buildings
- generalized distribution of land uses and mix of uses
- generalized distribution of densities and intensities

The regulating plan adds to the conventional land use plan map found in present day municipal master plans specific provisions regarding the shape of development, by depicting street alignments and the location of public spaces and facilities. In doing so it provides a tangible vision and physical backbone for future development. This notwithstanding, it does not necessarily

**The 1931 plan for Red Bank identified specific shortcomings in the circulation network derived from oversized blocks in the downtown, as well as the need for public access to the waterfront. Subsequent planning studies have confirmed this analysis. A reinvigorated municipal leadership is currently working to address these issues.**

establish the number and type of buildings or housing units on individual blocks, and flexibility and market-driven variations can be allowed.

Regulating plans are very seldom used in New Jersey, although they certainly are allowed under the statutes.

## Reservation of Public Rights-of-Way and Public Spaces

The M.L.U.L. provides two vehicles — the municipal master plan and the official map — for municipalities to design their street systems and reserve public spaces, in effect transforming a conventional land use plan map into a regulating plan.

The land use plan element of the municipal master plan (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28*) can designate the “[...] existing and proposed location [...] of land to be used in the future for [...] public and private purposes or combinations of purposes.” The circulation plan element can designate the “[...] existing and proposed circulation facilities.” Public areas are broadly defined by the M.L.U.L. to include:

- (1) public parks, playgrounds, trails, paths and other recreational areas;
- (2) other public open spaces;
- (3) scenic and historic sites; and
- (4) sites for schools and other public buildings and structures.

The M.L.U.L. refers to the official map in the following terms:

“The official map shall be deemed conclusive with respect to the location and width of streets and public drainage ways and the location and extent of flood control basins and public areas, whether or not such streets, ways, basins or areas are improved or unimproved or are in actual physical existence.” (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-32*)

The official map is depicted in the M.L.U.L. as a mechanism to implement the appropriate provisions of the master plan. The integrity of both the official map and the master plan is preserved by the municipality administratively denying permits to build on the reserved areas. The street alignments, and the sites reserved for public uses, as well as for stormwater and flood control purposes provide a clear indication to property owners, developers and to the community at large of the municipality’s intentions regarding the character of growth and open space.







The 1997 plan for a new Town Center in Washington Township (Mercer) epitomizes the return to an approach to community design that stresses human scale, pedestrian orientation, small blocks and a finer grain. The radial plan for this mixed-use town center calls for a variety of residential and non-residential uses focused around an extensive system of public spaces. The town center's regulating plan (previous page) provides a detailed image of future form. Adopted as part of the municipal master plan, it shows the proposed location and character of every street and public space. The municipality has exercised rare design leadership and invested considerably in the detailing of the public realm (see images on this page). These precise design guidelines will shape the character of public spaces in the town center.



Owners of property encumbered by the master plan or official map who choose not to follow their prescriptions can submit alternative plans to the municipality. Ultimately, if an agreement is not reached, the land reserved through either master plan designation or through official map designation must eventually be acquired for the intended purposes through sale, condemnation, or other procedure. Municipalities have one year from the date of approval of a final plat affecting those lands to effectuate these procedures. (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-44)

# Authority to Control Appearance

In addition to shaping physical form, the M.L.U.L. allows municipalities to impose appearance controls, that is to say to regulate or guide the way buildings and development look. The M.L.U.L. grants wide powers to municipalities to control design. Formal design review is one of the functions of the municipal Planning Board, under site plan review (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-37*) or of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, if a variance is involved (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-76B*). More specialized design review functions are often referred to other agencies with advisory capacities, such as the Environmental Commission or the Historic Preservation Commission.

Downtowns with Special Improvement Districts have been particularly aggressive in developing

and implementing downtown design guidelines, an activity that is specifically authorized in the enabling legislation:

[...] criteria to regulate the construction and alteration of facades of buildings and structures in a manner that promotes unified or compatible design (*N.J.S.A. 40:56-70*).

Some such districts have taken a leadership role in developing and implementing design guidelines, offering incentives — such as free design assistance, low-interest loans or matching grants — to participating merchants and property-owners seeking to initiate facade renovations, streetscape improvements or other improvements.

The design guidelines prepared for the Long Branch waterfront redevelopment plan are exemplary in their comprehensiveness, clarity and graphic presentation. Design guidelines are instrumental in clarifying desired community design visions to all interested parties. The generous use of photos, maps, sketches and other illustrations in plans and ordinances makes these often difficult documents more accessible to the public and much easier to understand.





# Tools for Controlling Appearance

New Jersey municipalities are increasingly adopting design controls, although these have often been directed at built areas, such as downtowns or historic districts, with less emphasis placed on shaping new areas of growth. Design guidelines are the generally accepted tool for controlling appearance, although many municipal codes have miscellaneous provisions scattered throughout their sections on zoning and land development procedures.

The scope of what is regulated varies widely. Most municipalities have provisions regulating signs, and these can often be extensive. Landscaping and buffering provisions are also widespread. On the other hand very few municipalities regulate building orientation, the design of building facades, or the type of roof.

## Design Guidelines

Adopted community design guidelines protect community character, both expedite and ensure consistency in local decision-making, and benefit developers by clarifying community expectations. Adopted design guidelines can encourage the adaptation of generic site planning or architectural products to the selected language of the local vernacular, thereby customizing these generic products and contributing to a sense of place. Municipalities and other jurisdictions are encouraged to prepare, adopt and enforce design guidelines governing a wide variety of design-

related issues. Design guidelines should be clear, concise, reasonable, justifiable, well grounded in local conditions and linked to the municipal master plan and development regulations.

In developing local design guidelines, municipalities and other jurisdictions may consider guidelines and standards contained in relevant national models or underwritten by national organizations, but are strongly encouraged to customize these products to reflect local objectives and conditions, without detracting from public health and safety requirements. State, county and regional agencies — which through their investment and permitting decisions, as well as through their capital projects, exert great influence over physical design matters — are encouraged to reexamine their practices, policies and design standards to reflect the principles and values discussed here.

## Urban Form



### Goals

To build a clear relationship between built and open areas by maintaining street frontage, controlling street scales, encouraging pedestrian development, and ensuring marginal utilization of street space in otherwise unusable setback scenarios, appropriate placement, and architectural parking lots.

The Urban Form Diagram illustrates the suitable features and setbacks used in the Urban Form Diagram that are hereby a combination of setbacks and site organization rules, as follows:

- Street walls in Redevelopment areas are defined** (controlled by):
  - Minimum setbacks of land, such as parking lots and buffers
  - Landscaping
  - Exterior elements (controlled by parking buffers, setbacks and architectural built walls)
  - Fencing, security, materials and color
  - How built is completed in street (curb, pattern)
  - Temporary Open Areas or Open Spaces
- 'Subsidiary' elements in these areas are further controlled by:**
  - Frontage of lot
  - Materials and construction
  - Sign requirements
  - Height relationships between existing and proposed
  - Reference to the setback and Displacement
- LAND USE** applicable to these elements is determined by the appropriate land use plan, based on the characteristics of building lots.

### Legend

- In-Situ Redevelopment
- Planned Redevelopment
- Hill Redevelopment
- Residential-Commercial Mix
- HTLI/Recreation
- Buffers
- Beachfront Redevelopment



# How do Communities Develop Design Guidelines?

**S**uccessful design guidelines are developed through open, participatory processes which include representation from all pertinent stakeholders — local officials, residents, property-owners, developers, merchants, interest group representatives and others. Successful design guidelines achieve a balance between the diverse and often competing interests of a community's many users and stakeholders. They promote the interest of the community as a whole and optimize community objectives, rather than maximize any one of them.

A variety of visioning techniques, such as public workshops, slide or other visual presentations, computer imaging, visual preference surveys, and others are available to provide the procedural and substantive framework for developing the guidelines and help the public visualize and better understand the practical implications of what are often highly technical provisions.

Meaningful public participation in planning and design activities is a prerequisite to successful implementation. However, public hearings are often dull, tedious and contentious. Planning and design events should not be viewed as a chore. To attract the public, these events must be well-publicized, festive and dynamic. A suitable venue, the generous use of visualization materials, and plain language presentations combined, where appropriate, with food and music make public participation effective and fun, a celebration of a community's vision for the future.







# PROCEDURAL TOOLS

## BALANCING FLEXIBILITY AND PREDICTABILITY

**B**etter physical planning requires a procedural framework which draws a balance between predictability and flexibility, that is to say it contains enough detail to provide certainty of a desirable outcome for the municipality, while providing enough flexibility for the developer to respond to changes in the marketplace and take advantage of unexpected opportunities.

In New Jersey, flexibility in the land development process is significantly increased for projects qualifying as Planned Developments. The M.L.U.L. identifies four types of planned developments: Planned Commercial Developments (PCD), Planned Industrial Developments (PID), Planned Unit Development (PUD) and Planned Unit Residential Development (PURD).

Planned Developments are mixed-use developments. For example, a Planned Unit Development (PUD) is defined as:

“an area with a specified minimum contiguous acreage of 10 acres or more to be developed as a single entity according to a plan, containing one or more residential clusters or planned unit residential developments and one or more public, quasi-public, commercial or industrial areas in such ranges of ratios of nonresidential uses to residential uses as shall be specified in the zoning ordinance.”

Planned Commercial Developments include commercial and office uses, but also residential; while Planned Unit Residential Developments may include commercial, public and quasi-public, in addition to the residential.

Planned developments can also be quite small — 10 acres for a PUD, 5 acres for a PURD while the minimum acreage for PCD and PID is defined by local ordinance. Minimum acreages for planned developments need not be contiguous.

The mixed-use nature of planned developments and the low land area thresholds required under the statute combine to provide a tool with greater flexibility than conventional single-use zoning designations.

To facilitate the submission, review and approval of larger planned developments (over 100 acres), the M.L.U.L.'s General Development Plan (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-45.1-8*) provisions allow a municipality and a developer to define the key development parameters for an application and a conceptual layout prior to site plan review. These provisions establish a more flexible framework for municipalities and developers to work together, by allowing — through the phasing system — a developer to avoid the up-front submission of final engineering plans and subdivision plats for the entire project. Instead, a developer need only submit the subdivision plat and engineering plans for the phase for which approval is being sought.

# The Redevelo

**R**edevelopment in New Jersey is governed by the 1992 Redevelopment and Housing Law (*N.J.S.A. 40A:12A*).

The redevelopment statutes grant municipalities the power to condemn property — within a redevelopment district, and according to an adopted redevelopment plan — on behalf of a third party, the designated developer. Both the designation of a redevelopment district and the adoption of a redevelopment plan are subject to public hearings and open to public scrutiny. The redevelopment statutes provide municipalities with very powerful tools to effectuate physical planning objectives, including implementation of design guidelines.

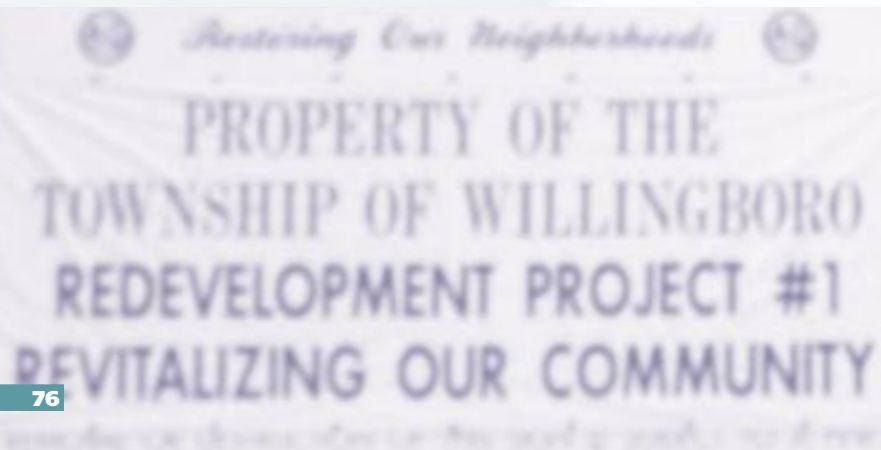
The scope and applicability of the redevelopment statutes in New Jersey have been broadened beyond the traditional dilapidated or blighted conditions commonly found in older urban areas. In addition to these conditions, the current statute also targets for redevelopment areas with buildings or improvements with:

- “... faulty arrangement or design, [...] deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these or other factors detrimental to the safety, health, morals or welfare of the community” (*N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5d*); as well as areas where
- “... a growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real property therein or other conditions resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare.” (*N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5e*)

This broader language can be applied to suburban and rural conditions, in addition to more conventional urban conditions. For example, older suburban arterials with strip commercial development on small parcels, exhibiting poor vehicular and pedestrian circulation, inadequate parking, difficult access and generally a poor layout can be subject to a redevelopment process which assembles land, rationalizes circulation, creates a pedestrian realm and public spaces, enforces access management and redefines building masses.

The redevelopment plan can be structured like the regulating plan discussed previously, in which case it becomes a precise instrument for controlling

**A key element of success in revitalization or redevelopment projects is the willingness of municipal authorities to exercise the leadership provided under New Jersey’s planning statutes, and in particular our redevelopment statutes. This leadership will help to lay out a development and design framework that is predictable, market-responsive and context-sensitive and as such will succeed in attracting private investment.**





# plement Statutes

physical form. The redevelopment statutes provide local authorities with an ideal framework for undertaking — through a redevelopment agency — a variety of initiatives discussed in this publication, such as redeveloping failed shopping centers, brownfield sites or other obsolete land uses into vital, mixed-use projects; restructuring the circulation system to create livable streets, restore a pedestrian atmosphere, or develop

missing links that establish a more integrated network; or carve out new formal public open spaces or sites for important public buildings. There is also a requirement that the redevelopment agency indicate the relationship between the proposed redevelopment plan and the State Plan (*N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-7a5*).

**Redevelopment plans for a 10-acre portion of downtown New Brunswick call for a variety of uses, such as entertainment, housing, office, retail, and public open space including an enhanced riverfront park, supported by structured parking. Careful siting of buildings and open space within a pedestrian scale block structure can rehabilitate a desolate area of surface parking lots and extend the city's fabric to the river.**



# Conclusions





**W**hether using the tools authorized in the Municipal Land Use Law, or acting under the authority granted by the redevelopment statutes, local leadership is a prerequisite to implementing appropriate design and physical planning objectives. New Jersey municipalities have the legal authority and the tools to shape growth — either through infill projects, redevelopment of existing sites or through outward growth into previously undeveloped lands — to an extent rarely seen or practiced today.

As discussed previously, New Jersey communities historically planned for growth through maps showing the future street system and the location of important public buildings and public spaces, in addition to private building lots. These maps provided a clear representation of what was to

come. This tradition has been lost. Today, municipal planning is limited to vague intentions, in the form of permitted land use types and building densities, leaving physical form primarily to developer initiative with planning board input on an ad hoc basis. This practice has not given us appropriate results. Local government has the authority and the tools to take control of physical form. Planning and design professionals can contribute a wide range of visioning techniques — from visual preference surveys, workshops, charrettes, computer simulations, resident surveys and many others — to assist communities in clarifying and articulating their vision for the future in a tangible way. But without the desire

**Landscape architect John Nolen — one of the first planners with a national practice — was commissioned to prepare a plan for Montclair and Glen Ridge in 1909, showing the community's early interest in shaping its future. Nolen's plan identified the need for a central commercial and civic plaza to serve as a focus to the community, proposed the completion of the street network and offered design guidelines for streets and public spaces.**

to do so and undertake yet another responsibility this will not happen. This publication seeks to inspire municipalities to do so.





## Publication Credits

*Designing New Jersey* is a publication of the New Jersey Office of State Planning, Herb Simmens, Executive Director. Carlos Macedo Rodrigues, Manager for Special Projects, was primary author and project manager. Generous funding for printing and layout provided by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, Deborah De Santis, Executive Director. Design and layout by Easy Graphics Creative, Princeton, New Jersey. Printed by Capital Printing Corp.

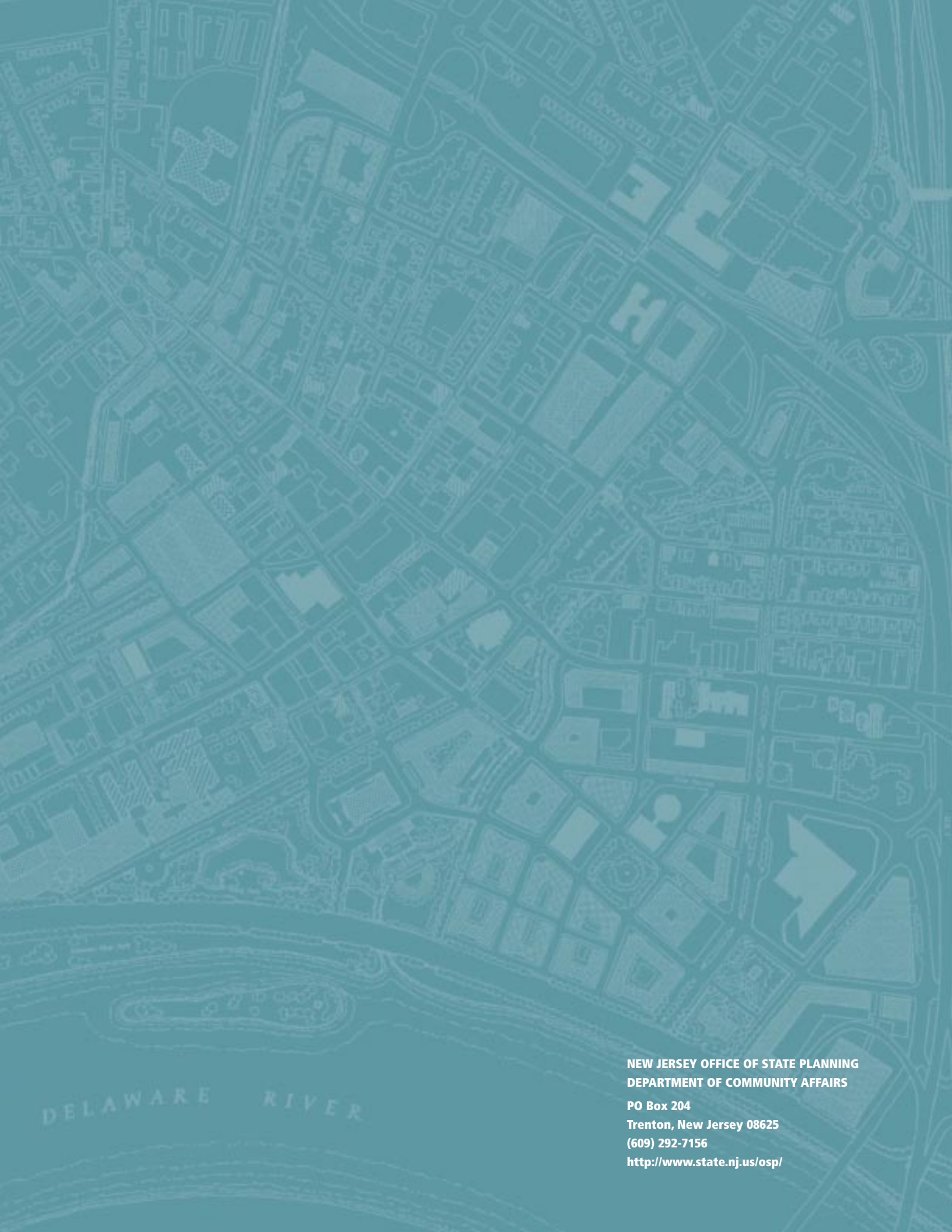
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- 22 — Clockwise, from top left: Jeff Goldberg/Esto/New Jersey Performing Arts Center. Paterson City Hall, New Jersey Historic Trust. Passaic County building, New Jersey Department of State, State Archives, Fairchild Collection. Palmer Square, Princeton.
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DELAWARE RIVER

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