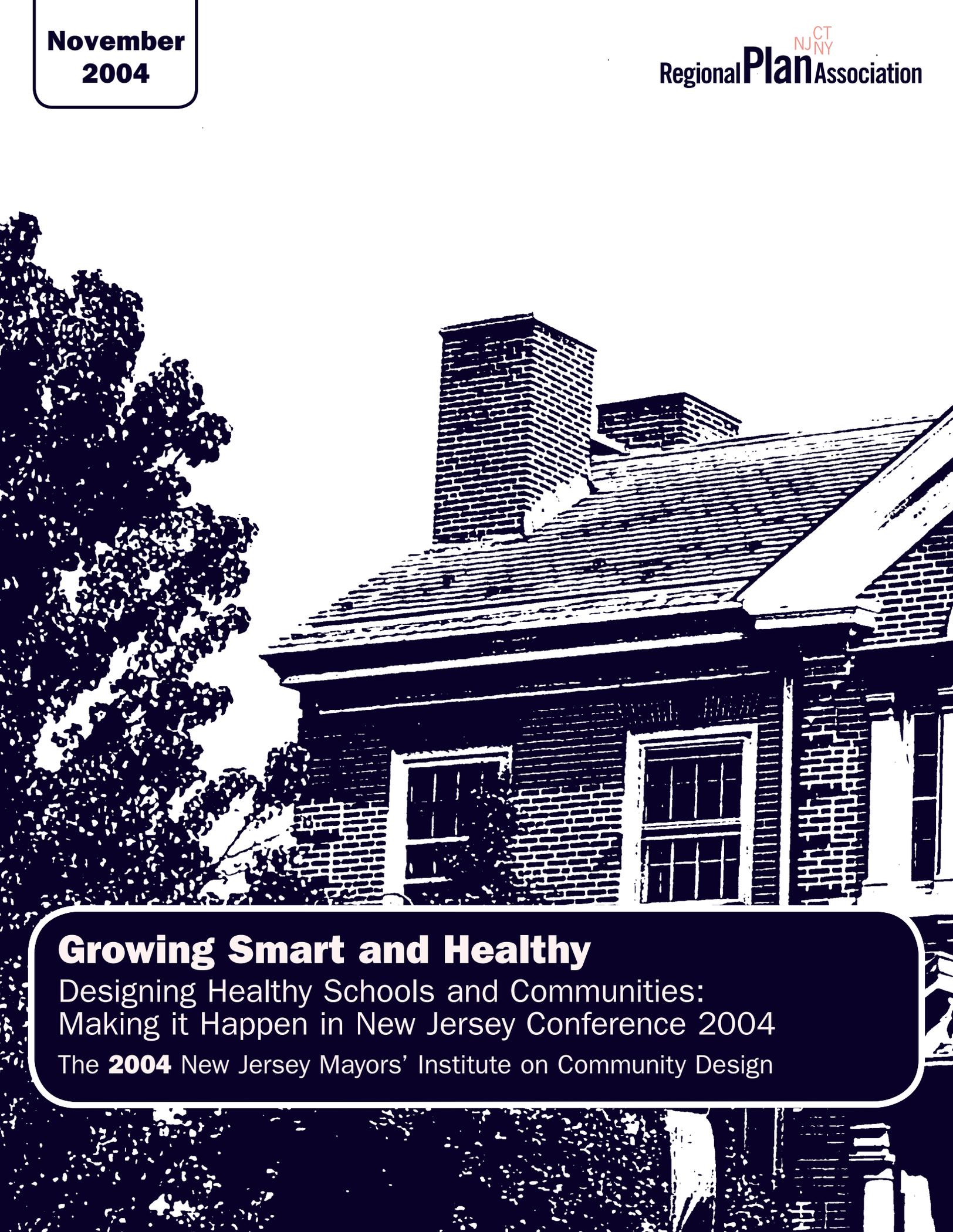


**November
2004**

Regional **Plan** Association
CT
NJ
NY



Growing Smart and Healthy

Designing Healthy Schools and Communities:
Making it Happen in New Jersey Conference 2004

The **2004** New Jersey Mayors' Institute on Community Design

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Regional Plan Association

Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent, not-for-profit regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. For more than 80 years, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

The nation's most influential independent regional planning organization since 1922, RPA has a storied history but is more relevant than ever in the 21st Century. RPA's First Plan in 1929 provided the blueprint for the transportation and open space networks that we take for granted today. The Second Plan, completed in 1968, was instrumental in restoring our deteriorated mass transit system, preserving threatened natural resources and revitalizing our urban centers. Released in 1996, RPA's Third Regional Plan, *A Region at Risk*, warned that new global trends had fundamentally altered New York's national and global position. The plan called for building a seamless 21st Century mass transit system, creating a three-million acre Greensward network of protected natural resource systems, maintaining half the region's employment in urban centers, and assisting minority and immigrant communities to fully participate in the economic mainstream. RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing.

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The **New Jersey Mayors' Institute on Community Design** is a program organized

by RPA with the assistance of the N.J. Office of Smart Growth (OSG) to promote and implement better design and planning in communities throughout New Jersey. Major funders include the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. Additional support was received from the N.J. State League of Municipalities, Princeton University, and the N.J. Chapter of the American Planning Association.

The 2004 New Jersey Mayors' Institute was made possible by the participation and support of a number of individuals. Special thanks to the mayors and their staffs for their time, attention and interest; Dr. M. Katherine Kraft from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; Commissioner Susan Bass Levin and Chief of Staff Marge Della Vecchia from the N.J. Department of Community Affairs; Stan Allen, Blanche Scioli, Pam Hersh, and Tracey Story from Princeton University; Adam Zellner and Wendy McVicker from the N.J. Office of Smart Growth; and the ongoing support of NJ Transit, represented by Ken Snapp, Planning Director, and Vivian E. Baker, Principal Planner.

Special thanks go to the Resource Team members at the June 2004 Mayors' Institute, and to the presenters at the October 2004 Designing Healthy Communities & Healthy Schools conference.

June 2004 New Jersey Mayors' Institute Resource Team

Brent C. Barnes, Director of Transportation Systems Planning, NJDOT; J. Max Bond, Jr., Davis, Brody & Bond, LLP; Colin Cathcart, Kiss & Cathcart Architects; Dr. Reid Ewing, Research and Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Planning, National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, University of Maryland; Robert S. Goldsmith, Greenbaum Rowe Smith Ravin Davis & Himmel; M. Katherine Kraft Ph.D., Senior Program Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; Margie Ruddick, Margie Ruddick Landscape; and Roy J. Strickland, Associate Professor and Director of Urban Design, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan.

Designing Healthy Schools & Healthy Communities Presenters

Barbara Bohi, School Construction Corporation; Andrew Carten, Director of Planning, City of Trenton; Jeanne Perantoni, SSP Architects; Roy J. Strickland, Associate Professor and Director of Urban Design, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan; and William Valocchi, Assistant Planning Director, City of Trenton.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Modeled on the national Mayors' Institute on City Design, the New Jersey Institute provides a multi-day retreat for six mayors and a resource team of design and planning professionals. The mayors present planning and design issues that each community is facing, and then participate in a wide-ranging discussion. While addressing the specific concerns raised by the mayors, the resource team members also describe in broader terms how they have approached similar problems. Using examples from other communities, the mayors and resource team members learn from each other.

The Mayors' Institute offers public officials the rare opportunity to discuss a planning issue facing their community with a group of peers and some of the most respected designers and planners in the country. These institutes focus particular attention on the relationship between community planning and public health, and how better design and development can create healthy, livable communities. Experts in public health participate in the Institute discussions, providing presentations and analyses of how alternative development patterns impact the health of communities.

In 2004, the N.J. Mayors' Institute was held at Princeton University on June 23-25. This Institute focused particular attention on how better design can promote both smart growth and healthy communities. For those municipalities with downtowns, the Institute emphasized the opportunities for redevelopment as well as a more active lifestyle.

The Mayors

To date, mayors from thirty-eight municipalities throughout New Jersey have participated in the program. These communities include: Asbury Park, Bordentown, Burlington City, Collingswood, Commercial, Denville, East Orange, Eatontown, Greenwich, Hackensack, Highland Park, Hightstown, Hope, Lambertville, Lindenwold, Lumberton, Maplewood, Metuchen, Montgomery, Mount Holly, New Milford, Old Bridge, Paterson, Plainfield, Pleasantville, Princeton Township, Red Bank, River Vale, Rutherford, Somerville, South Amboy, South Bound Brook, Stafford, Tinton Falls, Vineland, Washington Township (Bergen County), West Amwell, and West Windsor.

2004 N.J. Mayoral Participants

Hon. Joan Boas, Mount Holly Township

Hon. Frank DeBari, New Milford Borough

Hon. Eugene F. Feyl, Denville Township

Hon. Brian G. Gallagher, Borough of Somerville

Hon. Bernadette P. McPherson,

Borough of Rutherford

Hon. Gerald J. Tarantolo, Borough of Eatontown

Case Studies

The six case studies presented by the mayors were organized into the following categories, which are described in greater detail further in this report:

- making connections;
- creating mixed-use centers;
- linking community design and rehabilitation/infill

The most basic lesson for the mayors is to think beyond the confines of their problem, beyond the boundaries of the individual development sites or problem areas to the larger neighborhood or community planning framework. This emphasis on making connections – physical and programmatic – to the larger context is also a fundamental precept of healthy community design.

Resource Team Presentations

Each Institute begins with presentations by members of the resource team. These presentations introduce the mayors to the concepts of community design, educate them in the tools employed by professional planners, and frame the subsequent discussion.

J. Max Bond, Jr., a partner in the architectural firm **Davis Brody and Bond**, began the Institute with a lecture on the principles of urban design. Using photos and other graphics, Mr. Bond reminded the mayors of the opportunities each community can experience through redevelopment.

M. Katherine Kraft Ph.D., a Senior Program Officer at the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**, emphasized the connection between land use and public health. Dr. Kraft shared the experiences she had gained from working with communities and professionals to better understand the impacts of community design on public health. Her key points were that behavior had an impact on health, and that environments were key to promoting physical activity for health

benefits. Making New Jersey the most bikable and walkable state, along with creating healthy schools, are the priorities of the Foundation.

Roy J. Strickland, Associate Professor and Director of Urban Design at the University of Michigan's Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning spoke of his "City of Learning" concept, whereby communities work together to identify, plan, and build schools that are seamlessly integrated into the community. With photographs and drawings showing successful applications around the country, Professor Strickland challenged the mayors to consider opportunities to redevelop communities around educational facilities.

CITY OF LEARNING™ TOP 10 PRINCIPLES

1. Integrate stakeholders
2. Break out of the "traditional school" box
3. Coordinate school projects as part of a strategic plan
4. Inventory learning opportunities
5. Inventory neighborhood and town sites and buildings
6. Mix uses at school sites
7. Coordinate agencies, programs and funding
8. Integrate learning and economic development
9. Include learning in buildings of all types
10. Use technology to support City of Learning™

Margie Ruddick, Principal of Margie Ruddick Landscape; gave a presentation on the benefits of integrating sustainable landscape design into community planning efforts. By incorporating sustainability as a principle into smart growth efforts, mayors can capture the support and imagination of their community while protecting natural resources.

Reid Ewing, Research and Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland, gave a primer on techniques for pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly communities. With drawings and photographs, Dr. Ewing reminded mayors that engineering standards could be used flexibly to create more livable communities.

Robert S. Goldsmith, a Partner at the law firm Greenbaum, Rowe, Smith, Ravin, Davis & Himmel presented the benefits of redevelopment to municipalities. Using case studies from works in progress, Mr. Goldsmith emphasized the importance of leadership and vision to creating opportunities to remake downtowns and areas that might be economically underutilized.

Brent C. Barnes, NJDOT Transportation Systems Planning Director and President of the N.J. Chapter of the American Planning Association, distributed reports on redevelopment, transportation planning and other land use applications to the mayors. He offered them the assistance of NJDOT wherever opportunities were presented to improve pedestrian or bicycle activity through better transportation infrastructure planning.

Keynote Addresses

The keynote address at the Institute, the highlight of the program, is delivered by a distinguished figure in the field of planning and design. Open to the public, it draws a wide audience of elected officials, business leaders, civic activists, experts and the media, in addition to the Institute's participants and resource team. Its goal is to introduce the mayors to the best community design practices in the world.

The keynote address for the June Institute was provided by **Kennedy Lawson Smith,** former director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program. Ms. Smith provided a number of innovative ways listed below to make downtowns relevant and exciting. Based on her experience working with hundreds of communities across the country, she urged the audience not only to think "outside the box," but recycle the box to create new opportunities for businesses to grow and smart growth to flourish.

Going back to the creation of the Interstate Highway Act, it has taken several decades for America's downtowns to get in the situation they find themselves in. Market catchment areas have increased from 15 miles to 50 miles, cannibalizing local downtown businesses. And as a result of increased depreciation rates, retail space has soared from 4 to 38 square feet per person, way beyond the average floor areas found in older downtown areas. (In England, it is 2.5 sq. ft./person.) Ironically, the newest forms of

retail development mimic the best of downtowns, but fail to capture their history and grit.

So, how do you change the "drive-thru" culture of the last half century? Design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring are necessary. Slow and steady wins the race, and partnerships are key. Most importantly, we need to make downtowns easier to redevelop. This can be done by developing a vision and linking town planning and that vision to regulations.

New federal programs – such as Main Street/HOPE VI, championed by Congressman Jim Leach (R-Iowa) – encourage the conversion of upper-floor spaces downtown into affordable housing. Using federal funds to renovate or construct homes above shops can revitalize main street communities or create new centers of commerce and activity. With \$7.5 million in the FY04 federal budget for towns under 50,000 population, this program is starting to produce results that can unite such disparate groups as housing advocates and businesses. The New Markets Tax Credit, the biggest federal urban program ever, is creating incentives for business development in downtowns. With the second round of allocations recently announced, new construction is expected shortly. Look to Frankfort, Kentucky, and Walla Walla, Washington, for examples of success.

Some federal programs, however, could have detrimental effects on downtowns, including the expected closing of more federal postal offices throughout the country over the next 6 years. The challenge here will be to ensure that downtowns retain some postal services and that the most valuable architecture be retained and reused. Ms. Smith conceived the idea of a mock soap opera as a way to get workers in Charlottesville, Virginia, to stay downtown for lunch. Her small but attainable goal was 50 people who left the area of 21 eateries to go to the fast food and chain restaurants in strip malls down the road. Almost immediately, it was up to 500, and grew exponentially thereafter. As more people stayed downtown during lunchtime, more restaurants and other businesses participated in the promotion.

Not every downtown should have a soap opera; nor are all downtowns in trouble. But we should all value main streets and their potential for economic development, smart growth and community life. They are the keys to improving quality of life and creating livable, healthy communities.

THE CASE FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Then and Now

The disciplines of urban planning and public health have common origins. More than a century ago came the recognition that the design and management of cities had a direct relationship with the public health concerns of American city-dwellers. At that time, widespread epidemics of dysentery were caused by sewage contamination of the water supply. In addition, poverty and close living quarters fostered tuberculosis. Coal smoke and particulates blocked the sunlight necessary for the synthesis of vitamin D in skin. As a result, over 20% of urban children had rickets.

As early as 1870, in his essay *Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns*, pioneer urban and park planner Frederick Law Olmsted identified the strong link between good public health and community design, opportunities for exercise and access to fresh air and sunlight. Olmsted built these attributes into his plans for New York's Central Park, Atlanta's Piedmont Park

and dozens of other urban park systems across the country. Later, the urban planning and public health professions

Frederick Law Olmsted's greensward plans, including New York City's Central Park, created healthier communities in the 19th century



developed around efforts to reduce the incidence of these diseases through the principles of improved planning, design and management of America's urban communities.

That was then. Now obesity is epidemic in the United States. More than 50% of U.S. adults are overweight. Furthermore, 22% of the U.S. adult population is obese, equivalent to approximately 30 pounds overweight. Obesity is not simply a cosmetic disorder. Approximately 60% of overweight 5- to 10-year-old children already have one associated biochemical or clinical cardiovascular risk factor, or elevated blood pressure or insulin levels, and 25% have two.

The risk factors observed in children will become chronic diseases in adults. Almost 80% of obese adults have diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, gall bladder disease or osteoarthritis, and almost 40% have two conditions or more. Only smoking exceeds obesity in its contribution to total mortality rates in the United States. A recent estimate that suggested that the direct and indirect costs of obesity in the United States approximated 10% of the national health care budget underscores why we can no longer afford to ignore obesity as a major medical problem in this country.

Although the behaviors related to food intake that contribute to the epidemic remain unclear, data from children have demonstrated an apparently causal relationship between sedentary behavior and the onset and persistence of obesity. Furthermore, although physical activity may not substantially improve rates of weight loss among the obese, activity appears to improve many of the diseases associated with obesity, such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. These observations suggest that the most effective approach to begin to control the obesity epidemic and its adverse effects is to promote physical activity.

However, until now there has been little serious attention paid to the relationship between public health and the societal shift to suburban low density, automobile-oriented settlement patterns over the past fifty years.

Today, most people live in low-density environments and are largely reliant on automobiles for their mobility. The use of the automobile requires little physical activity and burns few calories. Transit, on the other hand, requires walking at both ends of a trip, and it often requires stair-climbing and additional walking to access goods and services.

It is reasonable to believe that the shift from transit toward driving to carry out daily activities is a plausible factor in the health of our citizens. The link between the relative use of various modes of transportation and land use patterns is well known, and it is therefore a rationale that there is a cause-effect relationship between land use patterns and obesity.

Can Planners and Developers Help Fill a Prescription for Public Health and Accommodate Growth at the Same Time?

The Census Bureau forecasts that the nation's population will grow by 60 million by 2020 – which would be the equivalent of adding two states with the population and service demand of California. This growth will require the construction of approximately 1 million new housing units per year for the next two decades. Much of this growth will be concentrated in the country's major metropolitan areas – SuperCities, such as the Boston to Washington Northeast Corridor.

While the New York metropolitan region is expected to grow at a slower rate it will add two million new residents by 2020, a 10% increase over current levels. In New Jersey, the State Development and Redevelopment Plan projects that a million more people and almost a million new jobs will be created by 2020.

During

this same period, the region's economy could grow by as much as a third, creating greater buying power and a higher standard of living. However, growing highway congestion in New York and other metropolitan regions could severely constrain forecasted growth. For this reason, RPA's Third Regional Plan concluded that the region's capacity for growth and its quality of life will be best served by focusing development in New York City and other transit- and pedestrian-oriented centers. This growth will require that the region's transit system, already the nation's largest, be modernized and expanded.

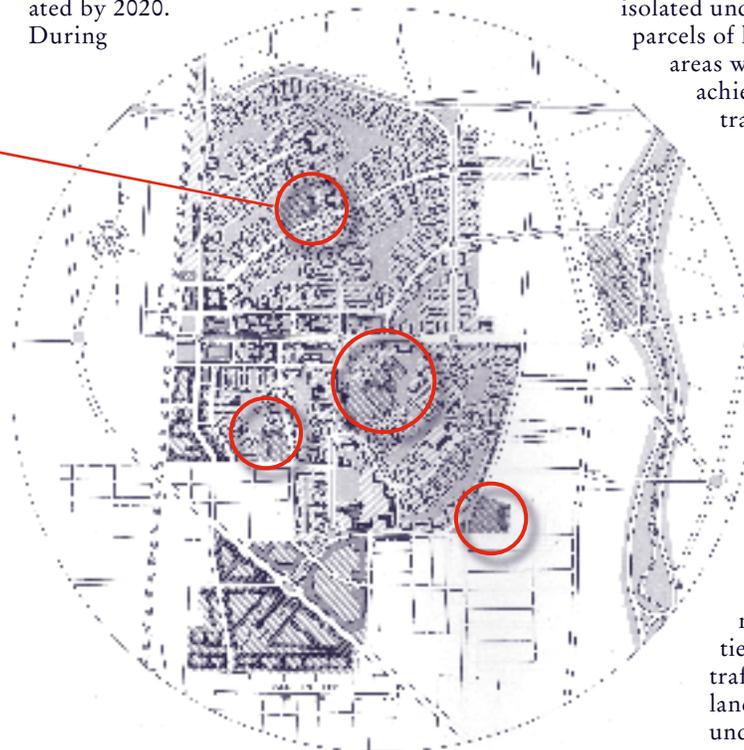
Many suburban centers are reaching the carrying capacity limits of their highway systems, because they lack the concentration and mix of activities to support any mode of transportation other than single-occupant vehicles. At the same time, most suburban centers contain extensive but isolated undeveloped, abandoned or underutilized parcels of land. Promoting reuse of these areas with infill development is the key to achieving more compact pedestrian and transit-oriented development patterns.

Only 30% of children who live within a mile of school walk to school. Although 25% of all trips are less than one mile, 75% of these trips are by car. To have a significant impact on public health, the goal must be to increase personal activity rates on a daily basis:

- Walking or biking to school and work should be a regular, daily activity.
- Walking or biking to shopping and recreational features should be a regular, weekly activity.

Many communities in our region do not have enough open space opportunities per capita. At the same time, heavily trafficked roadways and neighborhood land use patterns render some spaces underutilized. There is a growing and

Schools



TOWN PLAN
RADBURN, N.J.
LEGEND
SCHOOL
RESIDENTIAL
COMMERCIAL
INDUSTRIAL
PARKS
OPEN SPACE
WATER
RAILROADS
STREETS
COURT YARDS
RECREATION
UTILITIES
UNDEVELOPED
1929
RADBURN, N.J. - 1929 - RADBURN, N.J. - 1929

Radburn, New Jersey, an early American suburban community, created an open space network to encourage walking and biking. Most contemporary American suburbs lack this thoughtful planning and connectivity

distinct lack of connection between where we live, work and play. Parks, gardens and neighborhood greenways should be used to connect isolated communities and encourage physical activity.

The extent of growth to be accommodated both in the nation and in the New York region, combined with the strong groundswell of interest in smarter patterns of development, create a unique opportunity to plan, build and rebuild communities that are conducive to healthier, more active lifestyles. In short, smarter growth is healthier growth. RPA has calculated that failure to promote these new patterns of growth and mobility could constrict expansion of the New York region's economy by hundreds of billions of dollars annually by 2020. It can be expected that similar outcomes would be experienced in other regions across the country.

The Promise of Healthy Schools

Since public education first began to be a right for all Americans in the early 1800s, public schools have been central to their communities, both physically and socially. The neighborhood school was where a child might make his or her first best friend; it was where children gained a sense of independence while walking or bicycling to and from class. The journeys to and from the school building could be as important for children as what they learned inside the classroom. Historically, that has been the role of the public school, but it's too often not the case anymore.

Schools, both in their architecture and their placement, have become monolithic, dully-built concrete-and-brick structures apart from a community, as if children needed to be separated from their neighborhoods. In urban areas, finding new school sites is viewed as secondary to promoting income-producing ratables, leaving brownfields and other less desirable areas as the only option. Often surrounded by a moat of parking lots and suburban highways, the isolation of the public school has made school a more limited experience for children, and has led to a list of related ill effects. The fact that we have designed schools and communities that make it difficult for children to walk or bicycle has contributed to a sedentary lifestyle, which in turn is a contributing factor to the epidemic of childhood obesity. Fortunately, the idea of making schools once again part of a neighborhood, community and city is starting to gain ground.

With the State of New Jersey requiring each school district to undertake and complete a Long Range Facilities Plan by October 2005, the

time is right to begin considering opportunities for making our schools the heart of a healthy community. New Jersey's school construction program, one of the largest in the country, is focused on investing billions of dollars in newly constructed, renovated, and expanded school facilities in the State's neediest districts, the Abbott districts, as well as providing supplemental funds for suburban and rural districts to meet growing facility needs. In New Jersey, communities that have been historically neglected now have the chance to build community schools, schools capable of enhancing the economic, social, and physical health of the neighborhood. Rather than building schools on the periphery of a community, community schools are built in the centers of neighborhoods. They are integrated into civic life through community facilities and programs such as libraries that are open to the public, continuing education centers, and health clinics. However, the challenge remains: how can we link school planning to the larger town planning agenda?

Building on Regional Plan Association's white paper "Designing Healthy Communities/Schools: The Heart of a Healthy Community" by Rob Lane and Amy Decker, RPA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation hosted a conference on October 14, 2004, to encourage mayors, planning board officials and school superintendents to explore several related issues: how designing schools in conjunction with their environs can help create healthy and active communities; the unique opportunity that exists in New Jersey's Abbott districts to build exemplary schools and school-centered neighborhoods; and specific examples of community schools and the creative processes behind their development.

Presenters at the conference discussed efforts to combine community planning and school construction. Dr. M. Katherine Kraft and her staff at Robert Wood Johnson Foundation described the conditions that lead to obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases, and questioned whether we could incorporate physical activity into our daily lives through enhanced land use and school facility planning. Robert Lane described RPA's Healthy Communities initiative, and Roy Strickland from the University of Michigan talked about his work with school districts to create facilities that were integrated into community fabric. In a panel discussion, planners from Trenton and Neptune demonstrated how community design programs had informed plans for new schools.

Afternoon workshops

In the afternoon, participants broke into four workshop sessions. In each session, participants discussed the challenges of linking school planning to community revitalization. The following questions were raised in each session: What can the State and the municipalities do to help communities plan for healthy schools? What institutional barriers exist between the municipality and school district? How can one connect long range school planning and the larger town planning process? What partnerships might be created to facilitate the planning process?

Workshop One:

Renaissance Districts: Untapped Potential?

As a result of a recent State commitment for significant funding for new or upgraded public schools, the promise of combining school facility planning and overall community development and revitalization has loomed large throughout the state. A number of projects have begun that hold the promise of leveraging school investments in neighborhoods most in need of community development and revitalization. The workshop examined whether the model could be applied more broadly, and if there were opportunities to “tweak” it to be more successful. Although unsure how to define Renaissance Districts and unable to agree on the program’s effect to-date, the consensus was that there needed to be affirmation, validation and a seal of approval for the model.

Recommendations included greater use of Smart Growth Planning Grants to provide the catalyst for support efforts, a modification of school district’s Long Range Facilities Plans to incorporate these ideas, and a need to tie these efforts to the community. A common purpose is needed between the school board and the planning board, along with other mechanisms to achieve success. The workshop participants concluded that if the Renaissance District program continues, it will need real incentives as well as performance measures.

Workshop Two:

New Strategies for New Sites: Innovative Techniques for School Siting

Delving deep into the process of school siting, participants put aside their preconceptions of buildings, sites, and international school models. Most important, it was realized, was the need to look to the long term when selecting sites for school facilities.

School consolidation issues led some to view the process as a vicious cycle that leads to increased bussing and other actions antithetical to a healthy community. If facilities are made smaller, other costs could be reduced, and the school itself would fit better in the community. Also, it could provide decision makers with more choices and the possibility of giving the school a cultural identification. The workshop also explored the use of outdoor spaces, and encouraged the design of the public realm to be organically interwoven into the overall facility design.

Workshop Three:

New Dimensions for Long Range Planning: Breaking the Box

The interaction between a town’s planning board and the school board was explored, with most concluding that the norm is very insufficient for community involvement. Noting that school boards were originally set up to separate them from local politics, many concluded that these bodies are often separated from local governance. Sharing information and personnel on boards, as well as strong, educated leadership are key to changing the system.

Most interesting was a recommendation to change the Municipal Land Use Law to require educational facilities in a town’s Master Plan. Also suggested was for the N.J. Department of Education to revise its guidelines to encourage more interaction as part of the district’s Long Range Facilities Plan. And the group identified the opportunity to have communities use the Official Map to reserve land for at least one year to hold key sites for potential school facilities.



Millville City is in many ways typical of many small towns in New Jersey that have suddenly found themselves rediscovered, in the path of urban sprawl and its seemingly bottomless need for new housing. This pressure is evidenced by the more than five new residential developments which collectively will account for some 3,400 new dwelling units (roughly 1,000 of these will likely be age-restricted). It is typical in another way as well – it is subject to the centripetal forces that seem to favor development at the edges of town at the expense of a once vital compact downtown.

Millville is designated an Abbott District, reflecting the social and economic challenges that this city faces. Abbott Districts receive State financial assistance for facilities and operational needs, according to a State program that seeks to ensure a “thorough and efficient” education for all students.

City Plan as Lesson Plan

In keeping with the “City of Learning” (COL) philosophy, a first step is to map the resources in the municipality that could support the school curriculum – broadly conceived. Two features of this place stand out. First, there is a significant industrial heritage here. Millville was a major textile manufacturing location and also a significant glass manufacturer. Several artifacts of this history remain, including some historic buildings. There is also an historic village recreation, Wheaton Village, which has not been fully exploited either as a visitor destination or as a learning tool. Curriculum tie-in possibilities include history, technology and the arts.

The second major opportunity for the town plan to support the curriculum in the environment: “Water is everywhere”, in the form of lakes, rivers, streams and riparian areas that are ubiquitous. This is an unexploited resource in two ways, active living and school curriculum development. The tributaries and river banks can be used as the framework for a system of greenways. As it happens, quite a few of the existing schools are close to these tributaries and so an additional set of bicycle and pedestrian linkages could be developed between the schools. This has a potential health and activity benefit and also suggests that school facilities could be shared in a more flexibly. In terms of curriculum development, the water resources have an obvious connection to the science-related subjects of ecology, environment, earth science, and biology.

New Strategies for New Sites

While several new school facilities need to be built, the resource team focused on the location for a new regional high school. Not surprisingly, and in keeping with some of the problematic trends that have plagued school planning everywhere, the currently preferred location was on the outskirts of town, some distance from downtown Millville on a large greenfield site. At first, this location seemed to make sense. But if the prejudices about conventional school planning were overcome, several intriguing alternative sites emerged which offered more integration with the community, synergy with other community redevelopment objectives, better access for walking and biking, and proximity to other community-based resources. Worth noting in particular were the following:

Library Site There is some property between the library and the edge of the Maurice River. This has the advantage of being close to the water and a potential greenway link to other resources in town. The problem was that there was not enough property to accommodate playing fields. However, nearby was City Hall and ball fields behind it. If a satisfactory way could be found to cross this area, the school could use those ball fields.

Former Housing Site Another potential downtown site is a marginally used apartment complex. This was right in the heart of the oldest part of town and within a block of one of the original school buildings, which itself had been subject to speculation about re-use. In fact, there had been discussion about tearing down the old building. Because this old school building had symbolic as well as practical value, it should be maintained in any case, even if it was re-programmed to function as a special educational facility of some kind.

A new school could be built on the former apartment complex site, but there were still some residents there whose needs must be accounted for even if this is a largely transient population. Thus, this is an ideal neighborhood for a Renaissance District strategy: the redevelopment of the apartment complex site could be linked to a larger neighborhood revitalization effort that could include new, affordable housing in the neighborhood, with some units set aside for anyone negatively impacted by the school site project.

Former Shopping Center Site The most intriguing possibility was a dying strip mall site at the western edge of the downtown on High Street. Perhaps more than any of the other sites, this one had the greatest synergy with a variety of other community-supporting objectives: the opportunity to

re-claim a grey-field site; to create a signature civic building as a gateway to downtown; and to site a community destination in a highly visible location that was accessible by public transportation.

Interestingly, the site offered two other advantages: it was near to one of the proposed residential developments (1,000 dwelling units), existing ball fields and, by way of several large sites, accessible by greenway to the Lake.

Implementation Considerations:

Communication There is not much communication between the school board and the municipality. However, this was thought to be more a matter of institutional inertia than political dysfunction. It is possible that both parties would be receptive to more communication and shared brainstorming.

Community Expectations A bigger obstacle may be the fairly strong pre-conceptions about what a school site should be, in particular the ideal of the school in a pristine – if otherwise isolated – natural setting nestled into rolling hills and surrounded by playing fields and gardens.

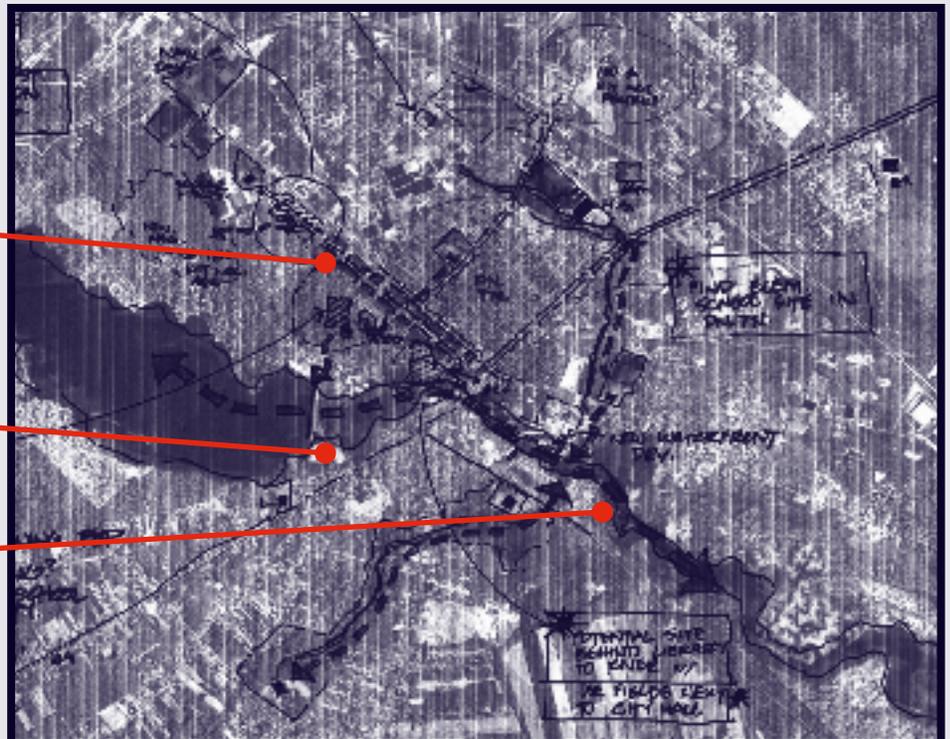
As appealing as the image is, it may come at too high a price if the other community building goals described above are accounted for. It will be necessary to educate not only the school board and the municipal government, but the community at large about alternative models for in-town school designs.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider alternative sites for new high school in downtown locations, including near the library, a former housing project, and especially, a former shopping center site.

Use natural and historic resources for curriculum development

Use water resources as armature for greenway network, linking schools and other resources



CASE STUDIES:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The six case studies were organized into the following categories: making connections, creating mixed-use centers, and linking community design and rehabilitation or infill opportunities. The most basic lesson for each of the mayors is to think beyond the confines of their problem – beyond the boundaries of the individual development sites or problem areas to the larger neighborhood or community. In a number of case studies, two or more categories are applicable, and the recommendations sought to implement the vision of a comprehensive approach to creating healthier communities and a higher quality of life.

Making Connections

The healthy communities agenda is represented in various ways in each of the problems the mayors present. In the broadest sense, the healthy communities agenda is represented in that most fundamental of urban design principles – the need to establish a relationship to context. This emphasis on making connections – physical and programmatic – to a larger context is also a fundamental precept of healthy community design. The physical connections – the new sidewalks, connecting streets, greenways – are not just physical relationships but ways of promoting alternative forms of mobility, including biking and walking that are fundamental to active community design. The programmatic connections are equally important, demonstrating the ways in which single-purpose facilities can be used by different constituencies at different times of the day, enabling these facilities to be mixed-use in time as well as space. It is clear that the larger urban design and healthy community agendas share a reliance on new and unorthodox partnerships which are the key to the complex implementation strategies needed to bring them about.

Denville The challenge is to enhance a successful downtown by considering appropriate redevelopment, and build linkages between St. Claire’s Hospital, the train station and the high school.

Rutherford This case study raises similar issues about the potential ability to connect the downtown and two major public facilities – the high school and a new skateboard park. Increasing connections to public and private schools within the area and creating a vision that can result in behavioral change are key objectives of this effort.

Creating Mixed-Use Centers

Another related urban design theme that is also a principal precept of a healthy community design is the creation of mixed use centers – again, mixed use broadly conceived in time and space – and the connections from these centers to the surrounding neighborhoods.

Eatontown Here, the redevelopment of a key gateway into the borough, an area surrounded by the municipal building, police station, library and park, can make a redevelopment site with infill retail and housing in order to bring life at different times of the day to a marginal part of the borough. The design studies demonstrate how to consider the design of a State Highway that connects this area to the rest of the municipality, nearby Fort Monmouth and other towns in the region.

Somerville This case study raises similar issues about the ability to link resources in ways that create complete centers for larger communities. In Somerville as in Eatontown, the focus is on mixed-use infill development

and on creating a complete pedestrian network that connects public transit and the downtown. In addition, a former landfill site is at a strategic location where a well thought-out design has the potential to knit together several different but complementary conditions, including a declining residential neighborhood and a potential transit-oriented development. A senior housing complex near the crossroads of this center and public schools a few blocks away raise the issue of how to create an active environment for aging and school-aged populations who, if the design enables them, will walk to shop and get services.

Linking Community Design and Rehabilitation/Infill

Finally, several of the case studies at the Mayors’ Institute are in communities where the rehabilitation or infill projects can transform the neighborhood. Often, these projects are proposed for areas with high concentrations of poverty or disrepair; other times, they evolve from market forces or a reuse of property. Sometimes, these projects occur in the least likely of places. However, in just about every case, the healthy communities agenda is appropriate in meeting the challenges of auto dependency and neighborhood design.

Mount Holly Rehabilitation of a 1950’s neighborhood that’s seen better days provides the Township with the chance to address land use as well as social challenges. This case study of Mount Holly Gardens confirmed the Mayor’s desire to take a fresh look at condemnation efforts, and propose a new vision for community renewal. Linking this neighborhood to the rest of the Township and strengthening community services within the Gardens are also key objectives.

New Milford A former residual lagoon provides the fully-developed New Milford with the opportunity to promote smart growth and link public facilities with adjacent residential neighborhoods. This case study shows how infill development can link the river and the adjacent high school, parklands, and homes. Key to this discussion is the recognition, as found in the other case studies, that density can be an advantage to achieving a common vision and enhancing the quality of life for all in the community. Most important is the “how” – that is, the importance of community design to the overall success of each project.

CASE STUDIES

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS





DENVILLE TOWNSHIP

Mayor Eugene F. Feyl
Morris County

1

Square Miles 12.63
Population (2000) 15,932

KEY ISSUES

Opportunities for redevelopment that enhance businesses and rail ridership

Transfer development from areas in the Highlands that deserve preservation to the downtown

Streetscape improvements to connect the Train Station and medical complex to downtown

PROBLEM STATEMENT Enhance the downtown by considering appropriate redevelopment, and build linkages between St. Claire’s Hospital, the train station and the high school.

BACKGROUND Denville, the “Hub of Morris County”, presents a situation where a successful downtown can be enhanced by improving connections from existing transit and health facilities, and creating new opportunities for smart growth redevelopment. Broadway serves as the spine of the central business district, where multi-story buildings with shops and residential units are interspersed with single-story buildings that do not maximize the value of the land. A short distance away is a major medical complex, with St. Claire’s Hospital and facilities for the aged. While the walk from the train station to downtown is about 10 minutes, there are sidewalks and shops just beyond the station. A significant portion of this area is in the flood plain. Any new development would need to consider the ramifications of building to counter these constraints. A regional high school is a good distance away from the downtown. However, connections could be contemplated to encourage greater connectivity.

Significant open space acquisitions have enabled the town to preserve its suburban quality, and streetscape improvements such as sidewalk and crosswalk designs and textures, and a new clock tower indicate a willingness to improve the downtown. At the foot of the Highlands, are there opportunities to build upon these efforts and promote smart growth appropriate for the town and region?

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenge in Denville is that there are many resources that seem to be just beyond reach of each other. While there are no new roads proposed, there are several opportunities to reinforce existing connections or create new ones. One of these is a new greenway along the Rockaway River. At the eastern end of town, a new bicycle and pedestrian route could be mapped across the flood plain to the hospital complex.

Another opportunity is to create a greenway/pedestrian connection from the high school to downtown. This can be accomplished by using open space adjacent to the high school. This in turn can connect to new green space in the area bounded by Interstate 80 and Route 46. There is also an abandoned railroad right-of-way that could provide a greenway alternative to Route 46. Designing a natural greenway between

Interstate 80 and Route 46, through the use of a boardwalk, causeway, trails and “green streets” would promote a more holistic and sustainable approach to development. Connecting this area to downtown and the train station via a meandering path, a rotary and other improvements to narrow Broadway St. would create visual interest and potentially a larger market for local merchants.

The train station area, unfortunately, is disconnected from downtown. For walking and bicycling, the issue is not distance as much as the nature of the experience: the route is alongside a high volume road, has to pass by a turn onto an entrance ramp to Route 80, and then go under two dark overpasses for Route 80 and Route 46. Still it is worth investing in additional pedestrian improvements – better street crossings, lighting and landscaping.

A complementary strategy is to make the train station area a sub-center in its own right. There is some commercial development in the area of the station now, although it tends to be auto-oriented. However, there are sites that could accommodate new housing. Political opposition to this idea could likely be overcome if a build-out analysis of the municipality showed that significant amounts of as-of-right housing development throughout the Borough could be retired and transferred to this location. New housing could integrate the edges of existing neighborhoods with a new mixed-use station area.

As for the downtown, there is a significant amount of land devoted to surface parking. These should be considered opportunity sites for new mixed-use downtown development with parking consolidated in several small parking structures. Focusing on the downtown and train station areas could improve the chances that infill and redevelopment efforts there will reflect a higher quality of community design.

While acknowledging the need for property tax reform and other ways to reduce the fiscal impacts of residential development, there are benefits to encouraging more housing downtown to accommodate growth pressures and possibly enable the transfer of development that would otherwise occur in greenfields elsewhere in the Township or beyond in the Highlands. Greater density could also result in behavior modification by encouraging more walking and slowing down traffic downtown. If development does occur on the greenfields, a woodland/natural world development connected to an institution would distinguish it from the downtown. Retail, an arts facility or a theater could round out the mix of uses.



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

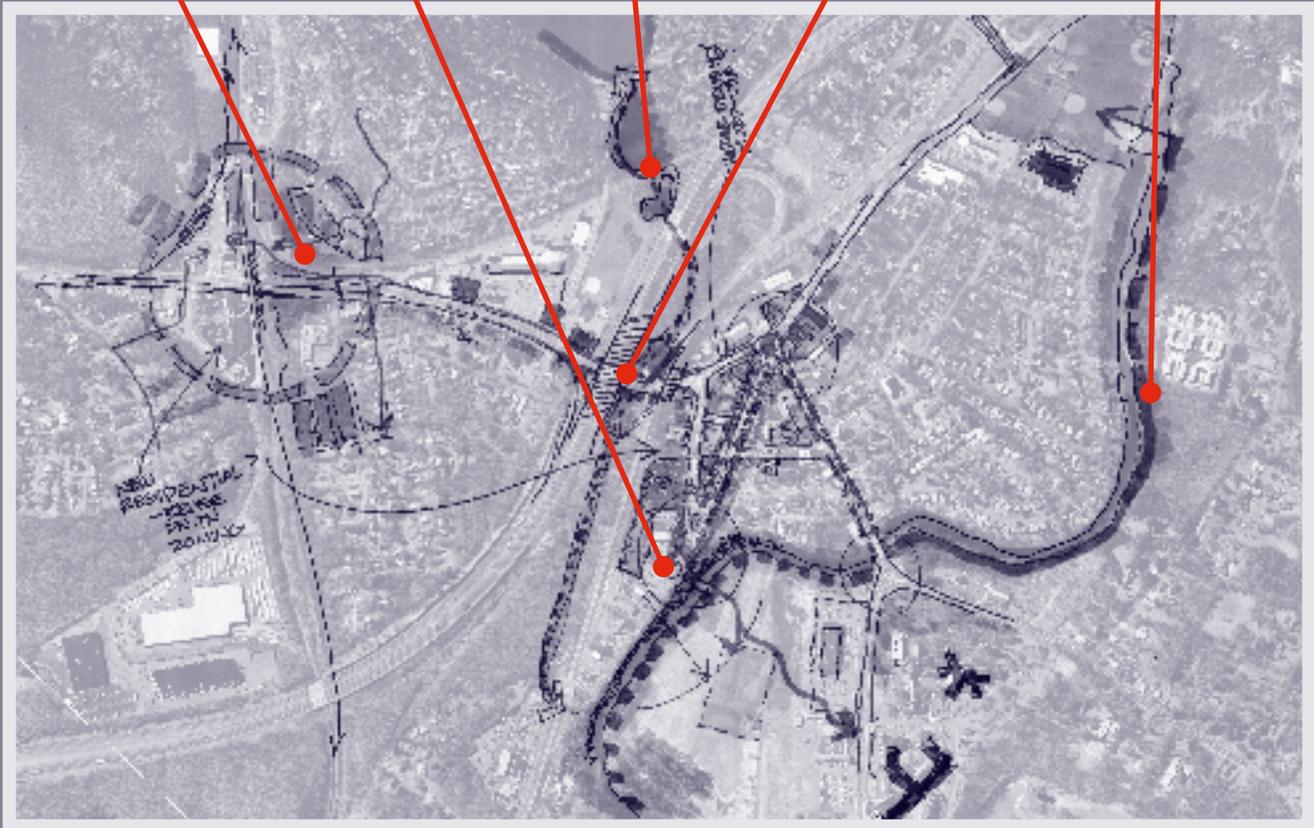
Direct new development to the greater station area.

Create a new gateway at the south end of Broadway that also engages a Rockaway River Greenway and its connection to the St. Claire's Hospital campus.

Create greenway linkages to the high school.

Redesign highway underpasses to facilitate pedestrian connections between downtown and the station area, including potential new greenways.

Create a new Rockaway River greenway.



- Consider creating a Special Improvement District.
- Open up viewsheds to the Rockaway River.
- Focus on entry treatment at the start of the business district.
- Encourage hospital to relocate professional offices in the downtown.



RUTHERFORD BOROUGH

Mayor Bernadette P. McPherson
Bergen County

Square Miles 2.92
Population 18,020

2

KEY ISSUES

Physical improvements that can increase connectivity and spur more healthy lifestyles

Redevelopment opportunities to support downtown businesses, public transit and other public facilities

Programmatic changes in school curriculum, municipal programs, etc. to encourage greater walking and biking between key activity areas

PROBLEM STATEMENT Enhance connections between the downtown and two major public facilities – the high school and a new skateboard park. Increase connections to public and private schools within this area. Create a vision that can result in behavioral change.

BACKGROUND Rutherford is a town in southern Bergen County that recognizes its future, and is searching for ways to enhance an already successful existence. (RPA worked with Mayor McPherson and Rutherford in the Transit-Friendly Community project, and documented findings and recommendations in the report *Building a Transit-Friendly Community*.)

Building on mass transit improvements and housing demands, Rutherford officials sought to improve the downtown by promoting new businesses, housing and better pedestrian connections. Key to this Institute are finding ways to link school and recreation improvements with the downtown, and developing design solutions that result in behavior change – enabling people to be more active in their daily lives.

With this Institute, a new chapter begins, with the potential to enhance connections and enlist the local school district in efforts to encourage a more healthy community. Perhaps unique in New Jersey, the Mayor and School Superintendent have adjacent offices in the municipal building. At a meeting with both, it became clear that significant resources are planned to enhance school facilities, a number of which are within the study area. These enhancements can be shared with the community and leveraged to enhance quality of life. In addition, there may be ways to increase foot traffic to downtown during lunch and after school, building on district policy that doesn't provide bus service or a cafeteria.

Because of its diagonal orientation, Park Avenue, Rutherford's "main street", creates several oversized and irregular blocks, several idiosyncratic corners and spaces. The design challenge is to exploit the potential interest that these spaces can create and to link them in ways that enhance the pedestrian experience and make connections to destinations within and just beyond the downtown.

The best opportunity for this is the irregular space behind Park Avenue. This is currently a dysfunctional mix of surface parking, rear service entrances to stores on Park Avenue and a marginal building with a night club. The space in the interior of this block is especially strategic because from here it is possible to make connections to Park Avenue, as well as between the parking garage and Park Avenue, both of which lead to the train station. Connections can also be made to a senior housing complex on the block and, just a few blocks beyond, the high school.

Additional connections can be made across Park Avenue. In particular, a new pedestrian

network could connect to the small public plaza in front of the theater, another leftover space created by the diagonal intersection of Park Avenue. This space has never quite worked, despite its strong relationship to Park Avenue and its proximity to a destination. One possibility is to enclose it in a light, glazed structure.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus is on how to eliminate barriers (e.g., parking garage, underutilized sites) between the downtown area and students and teachers from nearby schools. Accommodating the interests and activities of both children and adults will require capitalizing on the downtown area, the abandoned train line and park space along Park Avenue to create a better downtown community.

The parking challenge is how to best predict demand from existing uses and new development. Ideas suggested include shared parking and linking needs to population density. In addition, connecting the parking garage to shopping areas, and integrating it into the community, will make it more supportive and useful. A Special Improvement District (SID) could be used to manage combined parking. Unwanted commuter parking along residential streets can turn into a revenue opportunity through permits or centralized, computerized meters that serve a limited number of spaces.

Another goal to consider is creating pedestrian access from the rear of the existing parking garage to the street. The challenge is to convince people that such a passageway would be an economic stimulus. Making alleyways more pleasant is key. If this space was treated as an intimate pedestrian area, it could be repositioned as an "alley way" – not a dark and intimidating "back alley", but a "pedestrian pocket" space – well lit, well landscaped, rich with surface textures and colors – enlivened by businesses opening out onto the space. There are precedents for this kind of alleyway in numerous cities and towns, including many in New Jersey. Compiling a photobank of successful New Jersey and regional alleyways could assist in this effort.

Encouraging bicycling or walking to schools and the downtown can improve public health and the economic vitality of the community. Traffic calming throughout the area through curb extensions, roundabouts, rumble strips and other techniques can enhance safety while encouraging bicycle and pedestrian movement through the downtown. Raising awareness can be done through a "Bike to Work" day or a bicycle race. And, reducing the speed limit in school areas before and after school hours can enhance safety and quality of life.

With only 50 acres of open space throughout the town, and most of the parks not well integrated into the community, there's a prime opportunity to open up recreation space on school grounds and encourage more community activities at school facilities. Continuing efforts to encourage recreation along the Passaic River can produce multiple benefits for the town.

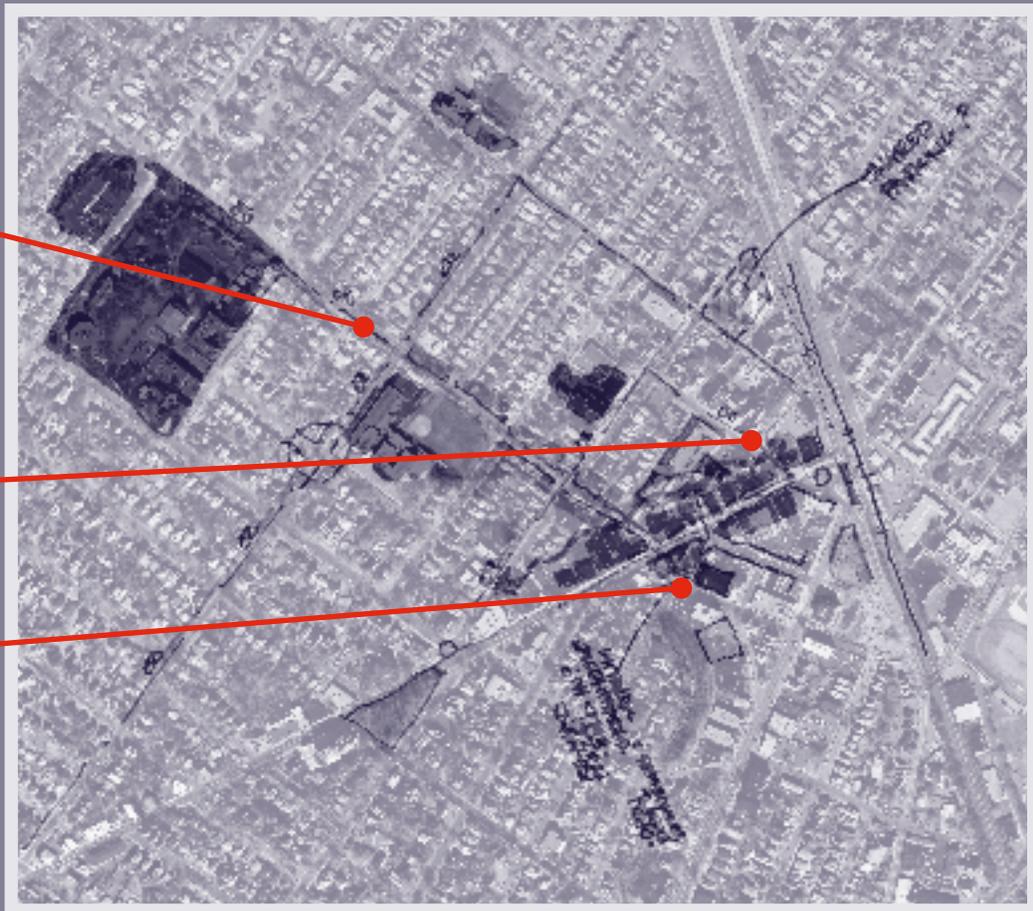


SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Give Fairview Avenue an identity as a corridor linking several educational institutions.

Redesign and link the “leftover” spaces in the interior of the irregular blocks along Park Avenue.

Redesign and link the underutilized public space in front of the theater.



FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Frame open spaces better.
- Concentrate centers of activity that have a synergy with local commercial establishments.
- Consider a “Bicycle Boulevard” restricting vehicular traffic.



EATONTOWN

Mayor Gerald J. Tarantolo
Monmouth County

3

Square Miles 5.93
Population 14,124

KEY ISSUES

Opportunities for redevelopment in the downtown that include housing, retail and business services

Park improvements and connections to encourage more use

Streetscape and other improvements to Main and Broad Streets to encourage more pedestrian and bicycle activity

Impacts of Fort Monmouth and new commercial development along Route 35

PROBLEM STATEMENT Create a vision for the downtown of Eatontown that redevelops parking lots and underutilized buildings, enhances the park and other natural resources, and creates connections that encourage walking and biking.

BACKGROUND Redevelopment and open space are not often thought about together. Eatontown, however, has recognized the potential value of its commercial and public land uses, and seeks design guidelines that will enhance plans to redevelop an area that once served as its prime commercial downtown. Building on a study identifying the downtown area in need of redevelopment, Eatontown is working to create a vision whereby surface parking lots and underutilized buildings are transformed into a vibrant, mixed-use center. Connections to the nearby park and Fort Monmouth, as well as State Highway Route 35, which becomes Main Street in this area, provide both challenges and opportunities.

For at least two hundred years prior to 1950, Eatontown was a markedly rural community defined by farmlands and a small population supporting one school. After World War II, Eatontown's economy boomed, and in 1960 the largest mall in the area, Monmouth Mall, opened 1.5 miles from the downtown. Sprawling development has made Eatontown a developed suburb, and Route 35 a heavily trafficked road. Walking along the sidewalks and crosswalks is challenging and oftentimes unpleasant. Yet, the trip from the municipal building or shops to the park is one to be encouraged to create a more healthy community. Recent investments in the park make the area likely to be used more in the future.

Because so much of the land in the redevelopment area is underutilized – marginally occupied, poorly maintained structures, and huge amounts of surface parking – it is possible to speculate about new roadway alignments, new street and block patterns, and new networks of open spaces and connections between them. The point of departure is to restore the historic role of Route 35 as the principal civic and commercial axis of a new downtown center. This involves the most aggressive traffic calming strategies for Route 35. However successful, traffic volumes suggest that it will be a “suburban boulevard” that at best strikes a balance between cars and pedestrians. In fact, the overall disposition of the area relative to Route 35 can be reexamined. A complementary possibility is to create a new civic and commercial spine along Throckmorton or Broad Streets as a way of establishing a strong east-west link across Route 35 and linking neighborhoods to Wampum Park.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding a way to replace highways as the centers of development challenges us to link public facilities and opportunities for redevelopment in what was once the undisputed downtown of Eatontown. A newly developed park, underutilized buildings and parking lots, and the potential for a redesigned State highway can create benefits for the town and the surrounding region.

Among the suggestions for “fixing” Main Street were reducing the speed limit to 55 mph, making crosswalks of different materials to encourage vehicles to stop, shortening the cycle so pedestrian traffic has shorter waits, and moving the centers of pedestrian activity away from the highway by concentrating activity on one side, reducing the need to cross. Thinking outside the box, the possibility exists to build a tunnel to separate pedestrians and highways altogether. A vertical solution could include pedestrian overpasses.

Two solutions were offered: 1) widen sidewalks, to make the entire area marginally safer, and 2) pick one overpass area, moving buildings away from the highway, and expanding development vertically. Connecting civic buildings to retail centers across what is now a parking lot would allow the conversion into a pedestrian thoroughfare. This could create a platform for civic identity. Creating new uses or parking demand and new revenue potential through meters or permits can make use of existing parking lots that are inefficient and underutilized. Congestion could be relieved around the interchange area by moving the park-n-ride center out to a big retail outlet.

The potential for a new commuter rail station or a multi-functional center, at a site owned by NJ Transit, would create a triangular framework. Fears of traffic congestion could be addressed through community design techniques and mixing uses.



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

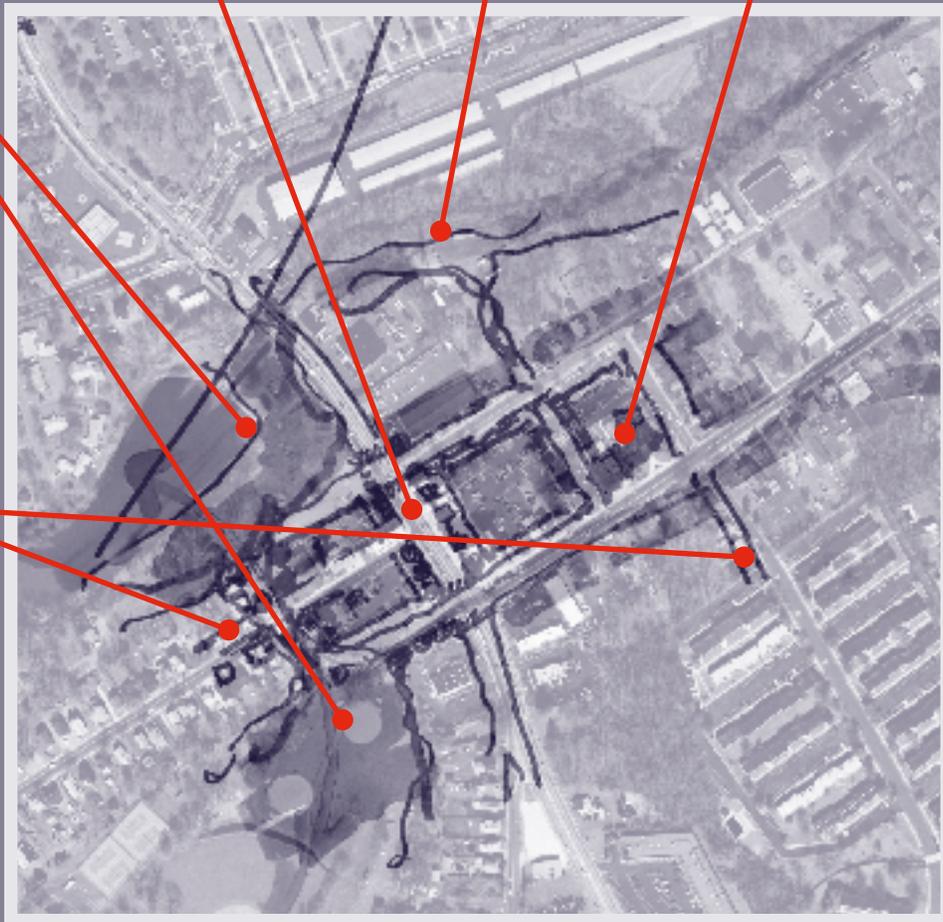
Link Wampum Park and Wolcott Park.

Create a pedestrian environment along Route 35.

Create a Wampum Brook Greenway.

Intensify and reorganize the under-utilized blocks on either side of Route 35.

Develop connections to surrounding neighborhoods.



FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with NJDOT to study off-system grids.
- Reorganize the area around new open spaces and connections through the middle of the blocks.
- Consider biofilters to clean heavy metal pollution in the streams, above which a park could be constructed.
- Create linkages to a potential greenway. A former Conrail right-of-way would allow a connection westward to the currently abandoned spur of NJ Transit's North Jersey Coast Line.
- Link the two parks and create an edge to the existing neighborhood to the west.
- All of these strategies rely on promoting compact mixed use development in most of the area.



SOMERVILLE

Mayor Brian G. Gallagher
Somerset County

4

Square Miles 2.36
Population 12,391

KEY QUESTIONS

Design techniques to encourage redevelopment of the East Central District consistent with the overall vision of the town

Connections to the other redevelopment areas and the schools

Innovative techniques to address the flood plain, and proximity to parkland, neighborhoods and rail stop

Methods to encourage redevelopment of individual parcels in a comprehensive manner

PROBLEM STATEMENT Provide design guidance for the East Central Business District, while connecting the West Main Street Redevelopment Area, the former landfill site and potential development of the middle and junior high school sites.

BACKGROUND Geographically, politically and socially, Somerville is the heart of Somerset County. Although encompassing only 2 square miles and a population of around 10,000 people, this pedestrian-friendly town has experienced a renaissance in the last decade by attracting visitors and professionals who seek an alternative to the regional malls or restaurant chains. With a long history and an even longer Main Street, new commercial development, significant undeveloped or underdeveloped sites, an active train station, and efforts to create transit-oriented development, Somerville has the potential to become an even more strategic place in the county and region.

Three major redevelopment projects are attracting attention, as are the linkages among these and potential nearby school facility construction. These projects include the redevelopment of a former municipal landfill, the downtown shopping center and a portion of the business district. This Mayors' Institute case study was presented to better understand the challenges and potential opportunities of these redevelopment projects by focusing on one of them, the East Central Business District, as well as looking at potential linkages to the contemplated educational district.

In Somerville, the "landfill site" is at a strategic location where a well thought out design has the potential to knit together several different complementary conditions including marginal neighborhoods, potential transit-oriented development, and new road and natural resource corridors. A cultural use could be located at the point of conversion of these context conditions.

Despite concerns about the burdens of more residential development, the eastern redevelopment area is best saved by new housing for two reasons. First, residential uses are most synergistic with the parks along Peters Brook; and second, keeping commercial uses out of this area supports a strategy of consolidating retail and office uses along the most important stretch of Main Street from Doughty Avenue to the County municipal complex. New office uses are more appropriate for this area, which is closer to the tracks and connects to Veterans Boulevard.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

A focus on the East Redevelopment Area and potential flooding from Peters Brook led to greater attention to the larger area. Between the

East and West Redevelopment Areas, successful commercial development has occurred. While the regional mall used to "steal" downtown stores, the trend is changing back to a vibrant central business district. The landfill, which was decommissioned 20 years ago, provides significant opportunities for redevelopment as well as a true connection to the downtown. A growing school-age population provides further challenges for utilizing existing and potential facilities, as well as connections among these facilities, the downtown and redevelopment areas.

Connecting the various opportunities for development requires new thinking. A north-south road between the landfill and the downtown could go under the railroad embankment. Several different loops are possible to accommodate cars, pedestrians and bikes. The town is initiating a bicycle program to encourage more cycling through the downtown. Reducing the widths of Main Street and Veterans Memorial Drive to encourage more pedestrian and bike use is key to its success. One suggestion was to consider park paths as the lateral axes to Main Street. Last, with the potential electrification of the commuter railroad, Somerville could experience some of the successful redevelopment seen in New Brunswick or Morristown.

With few cultural facilities in Somerville, the old cluster of schools a short distance from Main Street could serve as a cultural center. Or the municipal government and the board of education could share building space here, downtown or at the landfill site. A survey of cultural centers in the area could help determine the character of a Somerville cultural center. Most important was the need for a plan that uses the cultural and natural resources available, including potential facilities, the riverbanks, wetlands, parks, forests, etc. Interaction between river communities could increase possibilities through cultural festivals.

Reconfiguring existing and planned streets would facilitate beneficial development and a more active lifestyle. Shifting a residential road in the West Redevelopment Area and scaling landfill site streets to better fit their functions were discussed. The county should reconsider its office complex to reduce the width of the block road. Two adjacent "T" intersections in the East Redevelopment Area should be reconfigured so that the triangular block reconnects grids.

The landfill site should be discussed, in particular whether new development should have a different character than the downtown. Wetlands and other environmental constraints call for the mayor to consider ways to use natural resources and connections to the downtown/redevelopment areas to shape development.



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Reestablish wetlands and other natural systems in the landfill site and connect them to the Raritan River greenway and riparian areas.

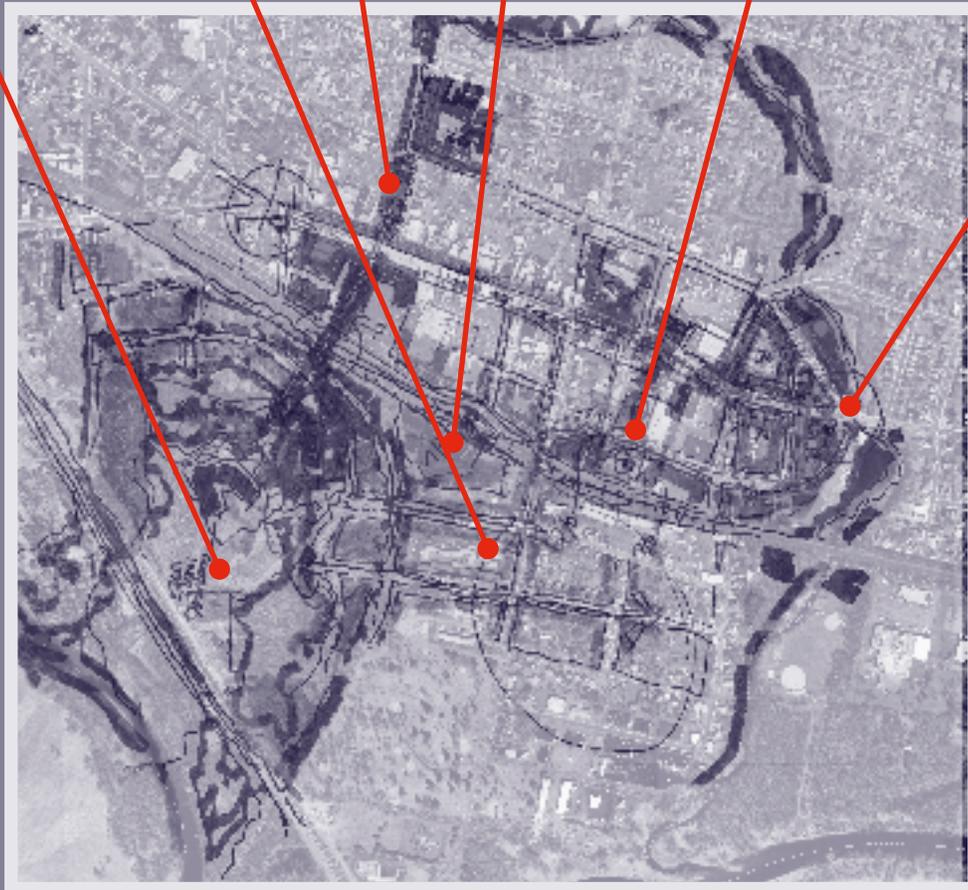
Extend the existing neighborhood street and block pattern into the former landfill site.

Establish a “civic corridor” along Davenport Street linking the school, the Landmark Shopping Center redevelopment project and the landfill area.

Promote new mixed-use, transit oriented development adjacent to the train station.

Promote new commercial development along Franklin Street.

Promote new residential development at the Eastern Central Business District adjacent to the Peters Brook Greenway.



FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider downtown residential development for the East Redevelopment Area.
- Plan for potential for a new parking garage along Veterans Memorial Drive, as well as a public works facility.
- Work with the State to plan for more community uses of expanded or new school facilities.



MOUNT HOLLY

Mayor Joan Boas
Bergen County

Square Miles 2.88
Population 10,771

5

KEY ISSUES

Opportunities to enhance the Redevelopment Plan through increased development, improved design or infrastructure investments

Alternatives to demolition of the entire site

Linkages to the Middle School and commercial development

Ways to incorporate natural resources into the design and redevelopment of the site

PROBLEM STATEMENT Create a design program for Mount Holly Gardens that builds on the Redevelopment Study by including connections to the Middle School and incorporating natural features. Redevelopment of a 1950's neighborhood that has seen better days provides Mount Holly with the chance to address land use as well as social challenges.

BACKGROUND Mount Holly Gardens, located in the northwest corner of the Township, is a residential neighborhood in decline, comprised of 379 attached housing units. Designed as a low-rise, garden apartment complex of 1-3 bedroom/1 bath units, it is accessed by a system of roadways and alleys. With eight to ten attached housing units per block under fee simple ownership, the Gardens differ from condominium developments in that there is no common property among homeowners. Adjacent to the Gardens is a middle school, as well as a former elementary school that now serves as the school systems administration building. The Mount Holly By-pass, a four lane limited access highway, forms an edge to the site, and separates the Gardens from other residential developments.

A redevelopment plan for Mount Holly Gardens calling for complete demolition and reconstruction was drafted in 2003 and has been accepted by the Planning Board and governing body. A legal challenge has ensued, with a local community group, Citizens in Action, opposing the demolition and rebuilding effort. A Superior Court judge stopped township officials from purchasing and demolishing any additional homes beyond the 60 already acquired. The group accused the Township of discrimination because the residents of the largely minority neighborhood would not be able to afford the replacement homes under the redevelopment plan. Some residents would rather the town give local residents funds to repair existing units.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Recognizing that complete demolition would be deeply traumatizing to children residing in the complex, the long-term impact of this decision must be considered. While the cost of rehabilitating individual units far exceeds the existing sale price, it is important to consider ways to increase market value in the community, including creating more green spaces, improving streetscapes and facades, and earmarking places for community gatherings, houses of worship or educational facilities.

Creating more activity within Mount Holly Gardens was a key objective. Good uses should crowdout the bad. With over 70 of the units held by one owner, the mayor should negotiate the rehabilitation or sale of run-down units. Barring success, the town needs to consider eminent

domain to take control of the situation. In addition, the town should reconfigure those uses bordering the by-pass.

Critical to the success of this case study is the opportunity to go beyond defining this as an area in need of redevelopment, and consider the neighborhood in need of rehabilitation. Meeting with a core group of owners and renters will help the town identify the units most likely to be rehabilitated, as well as suggest soft physical improvements (e.g., streets, trees, etc.). Outcomes should include developing a rehabilitation plan, seeking grants for community design efforts, and conducting public charrettes in Spanish as well as English to solicit the maximum amount of local participation. Obtaining funding from other communities through "Regional Contribution Agreements" (RCAs) as well as seeking grants from the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA) could help pay for critical housing improvements and key sites, infilling to restore the community fabric. Selling township-owned units for a minimal price to encourage homesteading could enhance community appearance and security.

A variety of creative landscape strategies can create an attractive public realm that will spur reinvestment in this neighborhood. This new landscape has several components: a network of small parks for community gatherings, green courtyards in the middle of the blocks to replace the paved alleyways and parking areas; and natural plantings in the front yards instead of the traditional manicured lawn. Collectively, all of these improvements support a larger strategy, applicable to many public housing "projects," of establishing a clearly defined public realm of which residents take ownership and creates "defensible space" with benefits for community maintenance, passive security surveillance by residents, and social interaction.

Once this armature of well-defined public spaces has been created, new connections to surrounding resources are more viable. Building a "casetta" or a gazebo could replace the alleys and ensure more people and activity; it could also empower residents if constructed as a community building project.

Incremental solutions include rebuilding or creating new open spaces and parks, making new connections through improved circulation systems, and rehabbing existing units or building new units as part of a strategic infill effort. Most important is the need to change the dynamic of the situation quickly; town officials should not wait for the plan to be completed to show neighborhood improvement. For example, a concerted effort at community gardens, painting of boarded-up windows or cleaning of the stream would signal that improvements are underway.

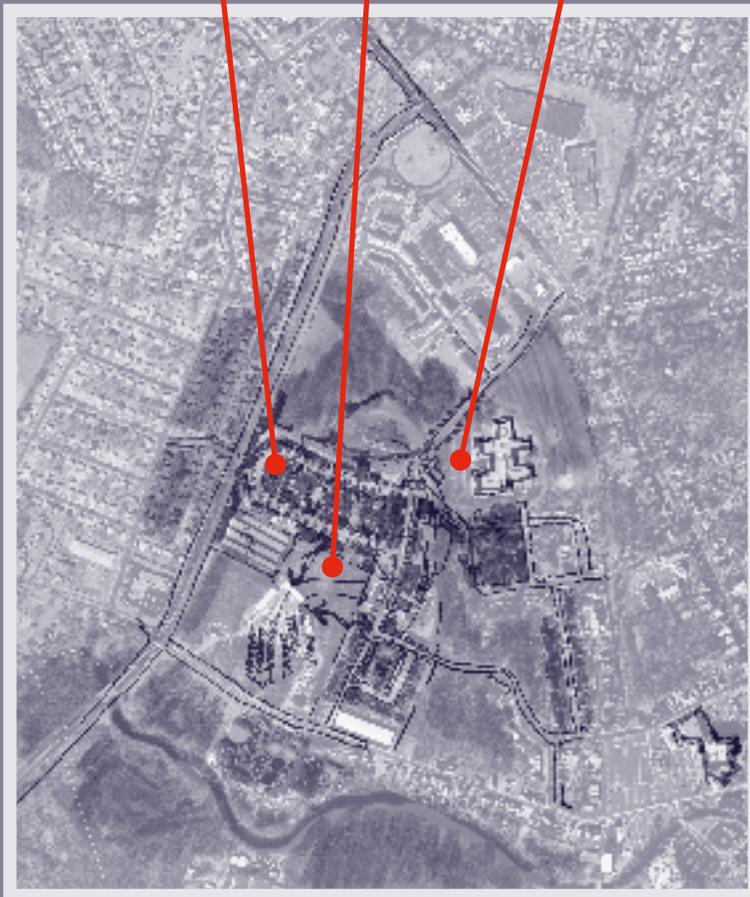


SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Better define the public and private realms, improving the design of the streetscape by reorganizing the interiors of the blocks.

Identify points of connection to the major redevelopment site at corner of the Mount Holly By-pass and Rancocas Road.

Create a gateway in the area of the Levis Drive/N. Martin intersection with clear connections to the school, play ground and nearby neighborhood.



FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Remove some alleys and create green spaces.
- Relocate the school administrative offices and reuse the school.
- Encourage community gardens and an on-going maintenance program.
- Consider areas around end units as local parks.
- Subdivide long blocks.



NEW MILFORD

Mayor Frank DeBari
Bergen County

Square Miles 2.31
Population 16,367

6

KEY QUESTIONS

Appropriate redevelopment mix

Natural resource and recreational opportunities within and adjacent to site

Multiple uses of site to meet multiple objectives (e.g. how to accommodate high school parking, as well as housing, retail and recreation)

PROBLEM STATEMENT Create a vision for the redevelopment of the former United Water site, to promote smart growth and recreational opportunities.

BACKGROUND A former residual lagoon provides fully-developed New Milford with the opportunity to promote smart growth and link public facilities with adjacent residential neighborhoods. The 14-acre site, adjacent to county parkland and the Hackensack River, is currently owned by United Water Company and is expected to be fully cleaned by October 2005. Nearby in Oradell Borough are the original water filtration plants, impressive brick structures that the County and State have been reviewing for possible reuse. From the site, views of these buildings, the river, the high school and the diverse neighborhoods are plentiful.

Across River Road are single and multi-family housing that are a staple of this bedroom community. New, reasonably-priced housing would be very attractive to new homeowners and seniors looking to stay in the community without the headaches of home maintenance. The adjacent high school does not have adequate parking; this site is eyed for a 100-car parking lot. In addition, any development should consider the impact on a relatively stable school population. Local planning officials have identified the opportunity for 140-200 units at 2-3 stories on the site. First floor retail would complement other nearby development, and plans to subdivide 1 acre in the rear to link the site to the County Park and trail system have been considered. With the current reexamination of the Borough's Master Plan, this Institute provides an opportunity to test ideas and gain insights to strengthen the vision for New Milford.

From an urban design point of view, the former United Water site is an extraordinary opportunity because if the site is planned in a creative way, to engage each of the very different edges, it can link a variety of resources.

- New development along the eastern/River Road edge of the site can create an edge to the existing neighborhood and reinforce the role of River Road as a corridor linking the high school area to the "main street" commercial district. This development can extend to the block pattern in the existing neighborhood.
- New greenway connections in the site can link the school, the neighborhood and the shopping areas to a potential Hackensack River greenway and the former water works buildings. These are extraordinary historic structures that anchor the connections from the north end of the site.
- The southern edges of the site can engage the high school property by providing some needed

parking. More important is extending the landscape of the school campus into the site, where the environmental science curriculum could be expanded to outdoor gardens and perhaps even a new science center.

Overlaying all these strategies is the opportunity to respond to a variety of natural landscape resources. These include: several stands of mature trees including the trees that line the edge of the site along River Road; significant topography and the opportunity to retain water in new wetlands which can be part of a larger remediation strategy for ground water; and the opportunity to create greenway connections to the Hackensack River and landscape connections to the forested areas that line the river. The ability to use the topography to create new land forms can reinforce the interesting connections through the site.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Encouraging infill development as well as greater connections to local schools and surrounding neighborhoods provides New Milford with a unique opportunity. In addition, the town has the chance to extend parkland and incorporate natural features, a prescription for a more healthy community.

With wonderful trees surrounding the site and a topography that enables multiple uses, including parking for the adjacent high school, the parcel calls for a very special design. A more varied site plan that enables an open space program to connect to surrounding parks is encouraged.

Extending the neighborhood grid into the site, and continuing adjacent paths will encourage more pedestrian and bicycle activity. The plan would also connect adjacent historic sites and the Hackensack Park with a greenway. These physical improvements could support nature education programs as well as restoration efforts along the river.

The aging population creates a demand for senior services and activities, including a lifestyle or wellness center. Another compatible use might include a restaurant.

Key to this effort is a process for identifying design ideas. A public charrette at the high school could engage local students and residents who might have ideas worthy of consideration. Students could research the details before and after the charrette, generating grass-roots support for the effort. Drafting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the site based on the charrette would encourage builders to provide solutions most desired by the community. One way to ensure this outcome is to gain an option to buy the contract with the owners so that it won't be purchased by an entity with alternate plans.



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

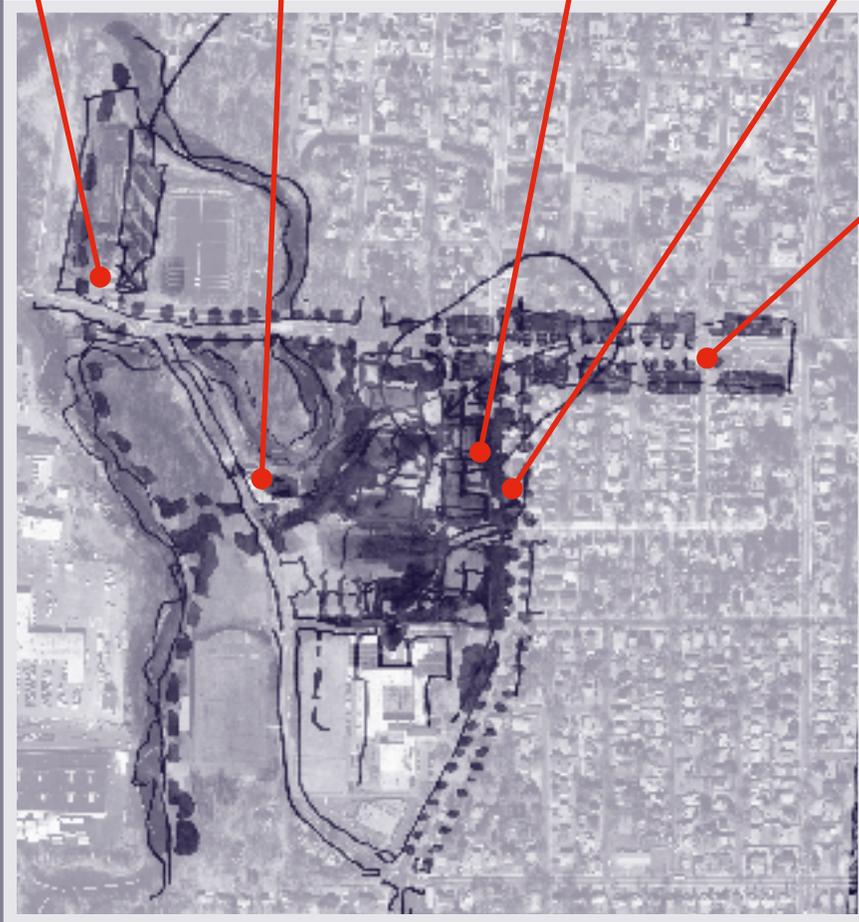
Create a Hackensack River Greenway linking the site and the school to the historic waterworks.

Bring natural systems adjacent to the Hackensack River into the site for amenity and interpretation.

Concentrate new residential development at northeast corner of the site, close to the intersection of River Road and Main Street/ New Milford Avenue.

Design River Road to reinforce the edge of the existing neighborhood.

Link through the site and along River Road to "Main Street"/New Milford Avenue.



FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Generate a new high school curriculum based on a wetlands park and tie into the redevelopment effort.
- Keep the high school parking separate from parking for senior units.

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Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent regional planning organization that improves the quality of life and the economic competitiveness of the 31-county, New York-New Jersey-Connecticut region through research, planning, and advocacy. Since 1922, RPA has been shaping transportation systems, protecting open spaces, and promoting better community design for the region's continued growth. We anticipate the challenges the region will face in the years to come, and we mobilize the region's civic, business, and government sectors to take action.

RPA's current work is aimed largely at implementing the ideas put forth in the Third Regional Plan, with efforts focused in five project areas: community design, open space, transportation, workforce and the economy, and housing. For more information about Regional Plan Association, please visit our website, www.rpa.org.

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