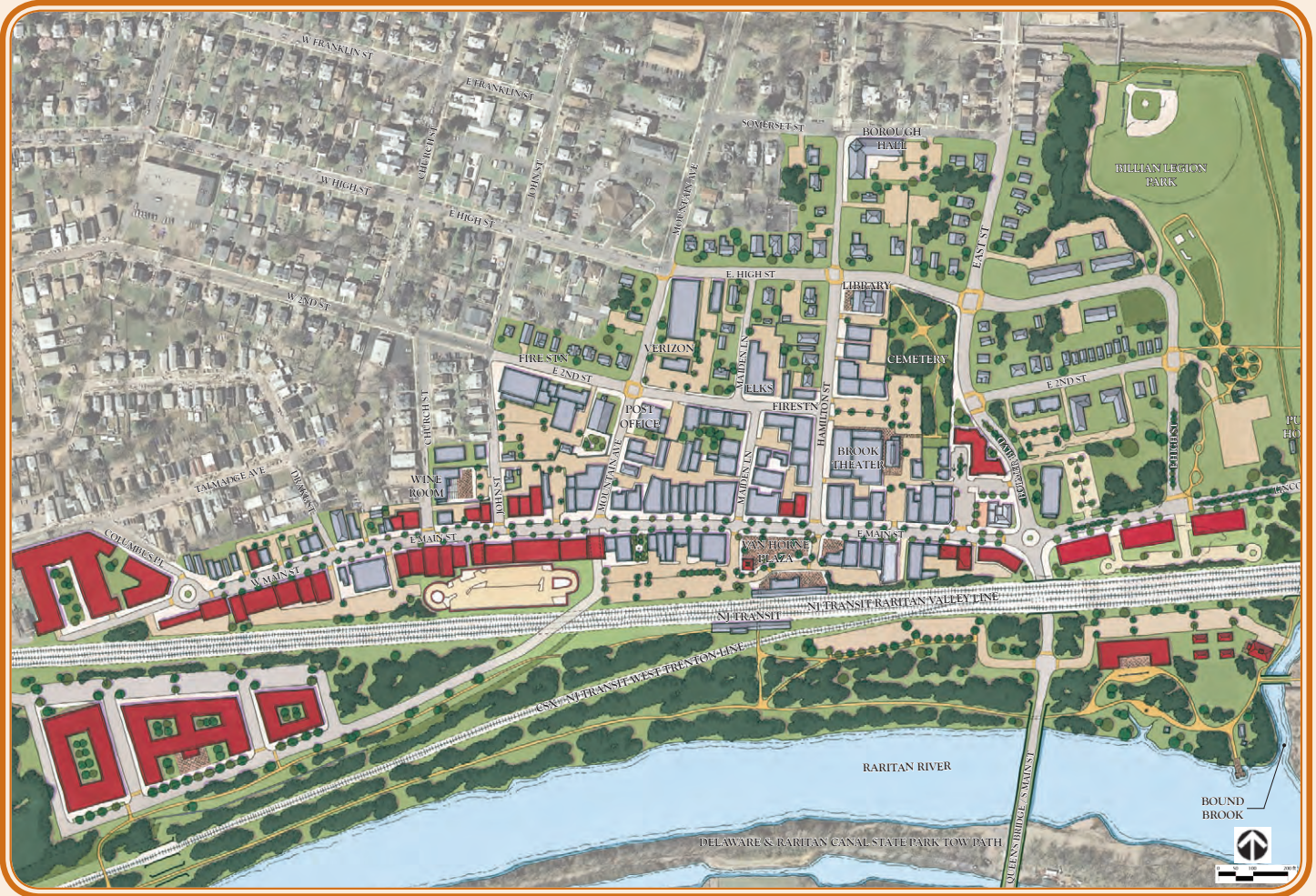


Bound Brook

Downtown Urban Design Plan



December, 2010

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I. Introduction

This downtown urban design plan is the result of a collaboration spanning approximately one year between Regional Plan Association (RPA) and the Borough of Bound Brook. The plan is meant to provide a clear guiding framework for public improvements and policies as well as private investments in and around Bound Brook's downtown area.

Bound Brook's downtown area has suffered from repeated, very serious flooding events over the years, and these in turn have resulted in disinvestment and retail and residential vacancies.

The Borough has sought to revitalize the downtown through a series of planning and downtown management initiatives, so far with limited result.

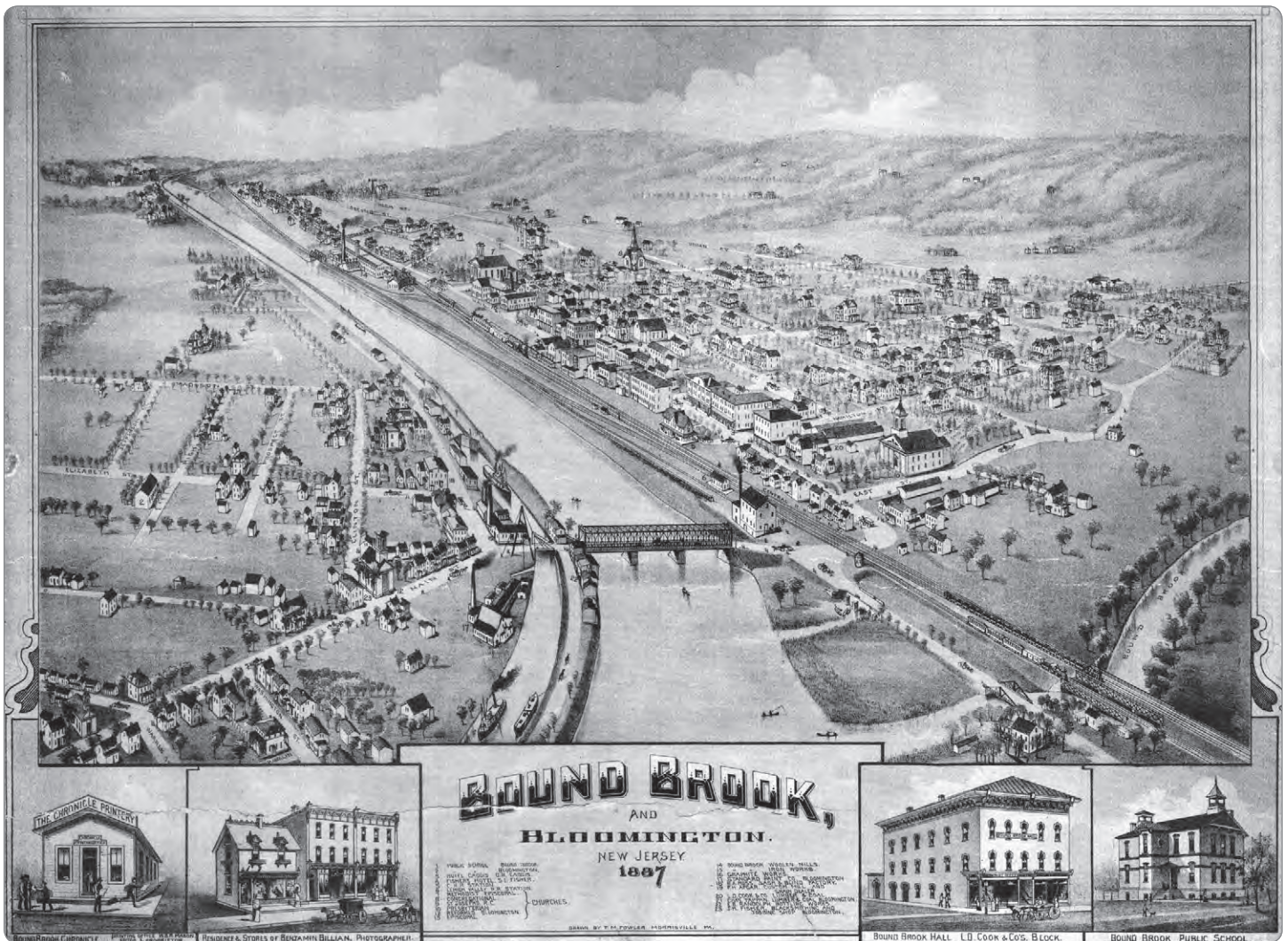
The Borough has also been an active participant for over 10 years in the State of New Jersey's smart growth planning efforts, having received Center Designation (jointly with South Bound Brook) from the State Planning Commission in 2000 as well as Transit Village designation from NJDOT in 2003. These actions – if supported by an appropriate planning and regulatory framework – can direct State resources to the downtown area and in turn help attract private investment.

The upcoming completion of the Army Corps of Engineers' Green Brook Flood Control project will help restore investor confidence in the downtown and set the stage for its resurgence.

In addition, the much anticipated completion in 2018 of the new passenger rail tunnel under the Hudson River – which will provide Bound Brook riders of the New Jersey Transit Raritan Valley line with a one-seat ride into New York Penn station – will significantly increase the downtown area's attraction as a residential market for New York bound transit riders.

New Jersey Transit is also studying the feasibility of restoring passenger rail service on the West Trenton line, which merges with the Raritan Valley line in Bound Brook. This project – if it moves forward – will add further transit service to Bound Brook's downtown and therefore make it more attractive.

This downtown plan seeks to create a local framework for (re) development that will capitalize on these positive developments and provide the Borough once again with a vibrant, attractive and prosperous downtown.



As depicted in this image from 1887, the river was easily reachable and easily visible from the downtown. Bound Brook embraced its riverfront. The river was used for transportation, recreation and economic development. A century later – the intensification of heavy industrial and rail uses, together with the dense vegetation along the riverfront – have largely severed the downtown's relationship with the riverfront.

Objectives

The Borough of Bound Brook's Economic Development Advisory Committee – funded by a grant from the New Jersey Office of Smart Growth – retained Regional Plan Association (RPA) to assist it in developing an urban design plan for the downtown area, with the following objectives:

- a. Create convenient pedestrian access to and along the Raritan River.
- b. Create new and enhance existing public spaces throughout the downtown.
- c. Create opportunities for and encourage active pedestrian-generating land uses in activity centers within ¼ mile walking distance of transit facilities.
- d. Provide a mix of land uses, especially residential (including workforce housing), commercial, and retail, within both activity centers and walking distance of the transit facilities.
- e. Develop land use strategies that allow and encourage convenient retail and service uses on lower levels of buildings near transit facilities and encourage appropriate higher densities supportive of transit facilities.
- f. Develop site planning and design strategies that promote pedestrian and bicycle activity, including traffic calming measures, continuous sidewalks, buildings sited at the street line, walkable block patterns and other relevant streetscape improvements such as clearly marked crosswalks, with a focus on pedestrian access to the train station.
- g. Decrease auto-dependency through inclusion of bicycle lanes, bicycle racks and lockers and convenient access to mass transit.
- h. Develop design standards that allow and encourage architectural variety but also provide continuity.
- i. Develop site planning and design strategies that create and/or enhance pedestrian and vehicular connections.
- j. Develop strategies for on-street, shared and/or structured parking, incorporating appropriate reductions in parking requirements for properties near transit facilities.
- k. Provide adequate mixed-use densities to support Transit-Oriented development which may include mid-rise buildings, townhouses or apartments over first-floor businesses.

The downtown already exhibits many of the physical features described above, so radical transformation is not called for but rather a careful and sensitive enhancement of the existing urban design framework. In addition, there is a need to re-evaluate policies and assumptions regarding pre-existing non-residential uses, and also consider options for the long term use of the area to the south of the rail tracks.

Regional Context

The 1.7-square mile Borough of Bound Brook is located in central Somerset County, part of an industrial belt located along the Raritan River. It was first settled in 1681. A bridge providing a river crossing between Bound Brook and South Bound Brook has been in place since 1761.

Bound Brook's population in 2000 was 10,193. In July of 2009, the Census Bureau's population estimate was 10,433, at the same level as the historic high of 10,450 reached in 1970. Recent population gains have occurred primarily through an expansion in the Borough's Hispanic population, which now accounts for one-third of the overall population. The Borough has a high concentration of immigrants from Costa Rica.

Bound Brook is on the NJ Transit Raritan Valley Line, with service to New York City and High Bridge. The 1913 train station building, which is set back from Main Street, has been recently renovated and now operates as a successful restaurant. On an average weekday in 2007 (the last year for which ridership numbers are available), 737 passengers boarded the train in Bound Brook. Parking is provided in three NJ Transit-owned surface lots located between Main Street and the tracks, to the west of the station. Altogether these lots offer 278 parking spaces, for \$40.00/month or \$3.00/day.

NJ Transit also operates two bus lines – 114 and 117 – with service from Bound Brook to the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York, and another two lines – 65 and 66 – with service to Newark Penn Station. Somerset County also operates local bus transit with service to New Brunswick. Bus service is available along Union Avenue (Route 28) to the north of the downtown, and along Main Street, with pick-up in front of the train station.



Downtown Bound Brook is located where it is for historic reasons: the proximity to the river and its trade and passenger traffic, the presence of the railroads, and the fact that Main Street itself was part of an important early regional connector road.

Historically, Bound Brook's downtown was at the center of a much larger region that included not just Bound Brook but also Middlesex Borough, South Bound Brook, Manville and Bridgewater (including Finderne) as well as northern Franklin Township. All of these areas have since developed their own centers for retail and services and downtown Bound Brook's regional catchment area has shrunk considerably.

Regional Context



The downtown is also at the very southern edge of the Bound Brook community, which over the years grew further and further away from the river. Another commercial and civic spine – one that is more proximate to a majority of Bound Brook households – eventually grew along Route 28, albeit with a greater automobile-orientation, particularly further west, in the vicinity of the intersection with Thompson Avenue. These businesses and institutions create a second axis of activity and compete directly with downtown businesses and institutions. There is very little residential between Main Street and the Raritan. The only other uses in this area are industrial and generate little support for Main Street businesses.

The regional market area offers numerous opportunities for Bound Brook households to spend their retail and entertainment dollars in nearby big box shopping centers such as the Bridgewater Promenade. The bonds linking Bound Brook households with their downtown have weakened over the years, as a result of competition from nearby retail centers, thus both leading to and reinforcing the deterioration of the downtown.

The downtown resident base has also shifted over time – and particularly after Hurricane Floyd – to eventually become a majority Hispanic. Many downtown businesses reflect this shift, and now provide services and offer a product mix that caters to the preferences of this population. This in turn has alienated part of the non-Hispanic community, which no longer perceives the downtown as a convenient and attractive source of needed goods and services.

It seems unlikely that any niche market can provide by itself the critical mass and demographics needed to sustain a downtown the size of Bound Brook's. There is some indication that the downtown may be drawing from a larger Hispanic pool but not large enough to support and grow the commercial area.

The 2009 Downtown Business Assessment Team (DBAT) report points out that there is a cultural divide, that the downtown is commercially “segregated” from the rest of the community and that language is a “real barrier”. This contributes to the perception that the downtown seems paused, mid-way towards a spontaneous re-branding as a Hispanic downtown but without a sufficient customer base to

sustain the full district. Bound Brook has, thus far, not been able to capitalize on this diversity, which should be an asset.

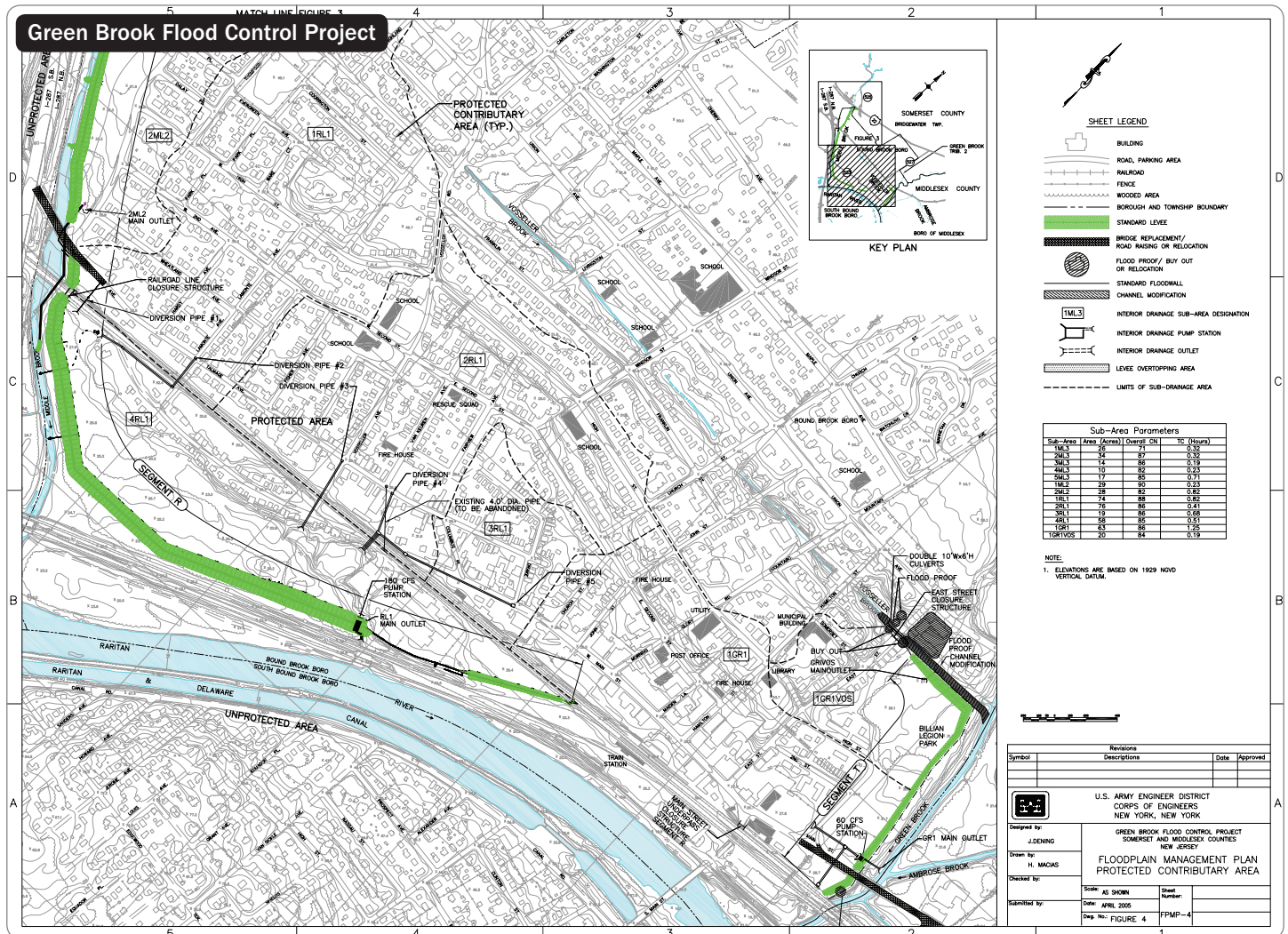
Downtown Bound Brook had at one time a short lived Special Improvement District (SID). It was subsequently abandoned by the merchants after Hurricane Floyd. The reason given at the time was that the SID was not providing sufficient services to justify the added expense. The SID has not been reactivated or replaced by another downtown management mechanism or alliance, but the SID ordinance is still on the books. In response to the DBAT study recommendation, the Borough recently hired a part-time Downtown Coordinator to focus on revitalization of the district. The local Chamber of Commerce is active but mostly represents Route 28 merchants and has few members representing the downtown.

The Green Brook Flood Control Project

At elevation 43, Bound Brook – and in particular its downtown – has been subject to many flooding events over the years, some very serious. The entire southern part of the Borough, including the Main Street area, lies within the Raritan River flood plain which includes its tributaries, the Middle Brook and the Bound Brook, that comprise the western and eastern boundaries of the Borough. In 1999 the downtown was devastated by Hurricane Floyd, when flood waters reached a 42-foot elevation. In 2007 the river reached 38 feet. Flooding occurred again in 2010. The significant uncertainty associated with the downtown’s vulnerability to flooding has no doubt discouraged investment in many downtown buildings and businesses.

The Army Corps of Engineers is addressing these flooding problems through the Green Brook Flood Control Project, which is designed to provide protection from a 150-year flood event. Flood control protection is now in place on either side of the downtown, with a system of levees, flood walls, flood gates, pumping stations and designated “over topping” areas. The levee sections along the southern end (Main Street./Talmage Avenue.) of the borough are also in place. The entire project is expected to be completed in 2012. These flood control measures will re-establish a much needed level of public confidence with respect to flood control and create the right environment for forward-looking real estate investment decisions to be made. There is a need for current, accurate communication to the

public about status of flood improvements, because many of the levees are out of view. The levees also create new physical features in the area, and introduce new limitations in terms of building and development in the “over topping” areas. New development and redevelopment in areas not protected by the flood control measures will continue to be subject to State and local floodplain protection regulations.



Municipal Planning and Regulatory Framework

The Borough's Master Plan was adopted in 1963. The Borough has also adopted Re-Examination Reports in May of 1983, March of 2003 and in August of 2007, including an amended Land Use Element. The 2007 Re-Exam is primarily concerned with flooding, run-off and impervious surfaces. The recommended changes to the land use element are not relevant to the downtown study area. However, the report recommends establishing an Architectural Review Board for the purposes of conducting design review of proposed façade improvements for buildings located in that portion of the downtown (Main Street, from John Street to the Bound Brook Hotel) covered by the design guidelines prepared by Kitchen & Associates and adopted as part of the 2003 Master Plan Re-Examination Report.

None of the recent Re-Examination Reports discuss the area south of the tracks.

This downtown plan's study area is largely contained within two underlying zoning districts. The area to the south of the tracks is all zoned I-(Industrial). The area north of the tracks is largely zoned B-R (Business-Residential).

The rest of the study area north of the B-R district falls within the O-B (Office Business) zoning district, which permits professional offices and single-family housing on lots of ¼ acre or more, as well as a very small section zoned R-4, which permits one and two-family homes on lots of 5,000 square feet or larger. This area is occupied with a mix of small-scale residential and institutional uses, such as churches and schools.

Much of the study area for the downtown plan is contained within the Borough's redevelopment areas. A significant exception is the large area south of the railroad tracks. A much smaller exception is a largely single-family residential area, to the north of Second Street.

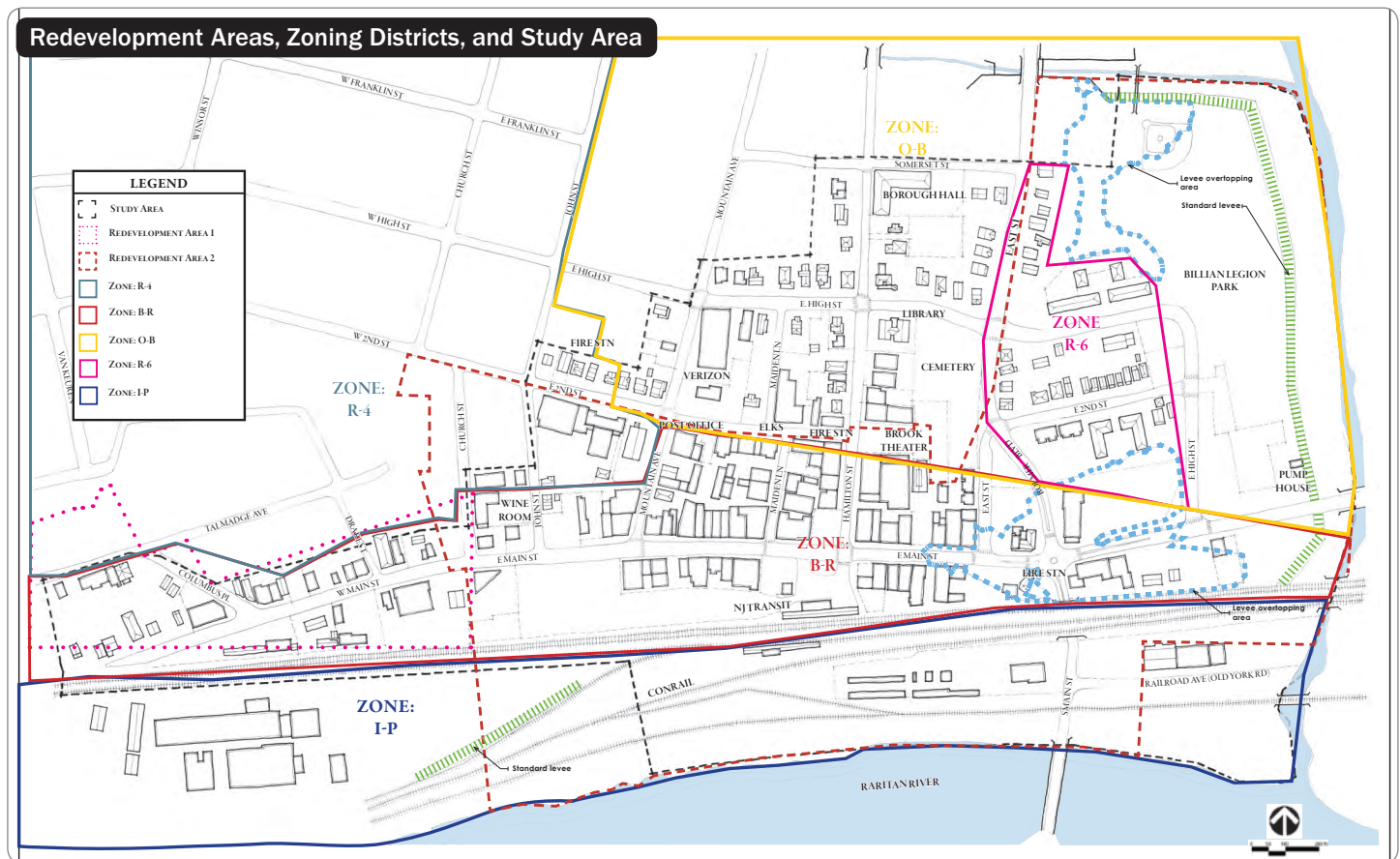
In February of 2000, after Hurricane Floyd, the Borough adopted an expansive Redevelopment Plan – under New Jersey's Local Housing and Redevelopment Law – that defined two Redevelopment Areas. Redevelopment Area 1 corresponds generally to the current study area north of the tracks – with the exception of one block of Church and John Streets, north of Main Street – and includes the core of the downtown. Redevelopment Area 2 was a much larger area, including everything west of Church Street, north of the Raritan and South of High Street.

The standards contained in the Redevelopment Plan supersede the use, bulk and design standards found in the Borough's Land Development Ordinance.

This Redevelopment Plan proposed to essentially double the size of the downtown, by moving the NJ Transit tracks and station closer to the river and redeveloping the area occupied by the railroad right-of-way as well as the various industrial and residential uses located south of the tracks. The Plan for Area 2 also contained a Transit Village Overlay district defined as the area within 1,500 feet of the train station, but it is not apparent how this overlay district modified, if at all, the zoning or bulk standards contained in the Plan.

The Borough's Redevelopment Plan was subject to a civil rights challenge by the US Department of Justice, alleging violations under sections 804(a) and (b) of the Fair Housing Act. The complaint alleged that the Borough had discriminated against Latino residents on the basis of national origin, race and color. The Department of Justice and the Borough subsequently entered into a consent decree requiring, among other actions, that the Borough revise its Redevelopment Plan.

An amended Redevelopment Plan for Area 2 was completed in early 2009. This document significantly reduced the footprint of Redevelopment Area 2, which is now limited essentially to properties with frontage on Talmage and Main Street. All lands south of the NJ Transit rail line, including the Brook Industrial Park site, were removed from Redevelopment Area 2.



The study area for this downtown plan includes only a small portion of the redefined Redevelopment Area 2 (Subareas 1 and 2) along Columbus Place and Main Street. No changes to the Redevelopment Plan for Area 1 have been proposed to date.

The Redevelopment Plan for Area 1 permits the following uses: retail, personal services, offices (second story and above), theaters, restaurants, night clubs, residential units (second story and above, studio and one-bedroom only), assisted living and age-restricted housing. The Plan establishes a three-story or 40 feet height limit, although some confusing provisions may modify this.

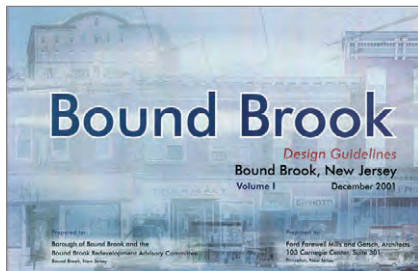
The Redevelopment Plan for Subarea 1 of Redevelopment Area 2 (the area south of West Main Street) calls only for 1.4 acres of open space and a .75 acre surface parking lot. No buildings are contemplated, other than park related structures. The Plan for Subarea 2 calls for mixed-use development – including retail, restaurants, offices, multi-family residential and others – and permits a 50-foot maximum building height. Prohibited uses throughout Redevelopment Area 2 include drive-in or drive-through businesses, automobile uses or auto-related uses, self storage or public storage facilities and industrial or warehouse uses.

Other Planning and Design Studies

Bound Brook’s small downtown area has been the subject of a number of efforts and initiatives in terms of planning and design.

In 1985, Clarke & Caton completed a *Downtown Historic Survey*, which found that while the downtown contained many historically significant buildings, it was not, as a whole, eligible for historic district designation.

In 2000, Bound Brook adopted a *Downtown Redevelopment Plan*, and successfully petitioned to the New Jersey State Planning Commission for Center Designation.

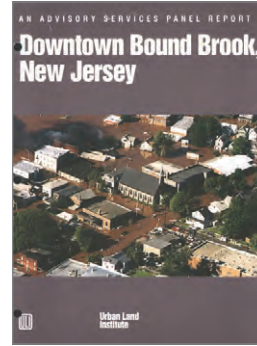


In 2001, shortly after the devastation brought about by Hurricane Floyd, the Urban Land Institute sent a panel of experts to advise the Borough on redevelopment issues; this panel issued its report later that year.

Also in 2001, the architectural firm of Ford Farewell Mills & Gatch confirmed the earlier opinion regarding historic district eligibility, and prepared a set of *Design Guidelines*, Volume 1 for the downtown. This was subsequently complemented in 2003 by Kitchen & Associates’ *Downtown Revitalization Study*, Volume 2.

Also in 2003, the Borough successfully petitioned NJDOT for *Transit Village Designation*.

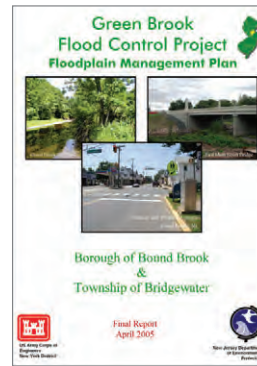
In 2005, Somerset County commissioned Wallace Roberts & Todd to prepare the *Somerset County Transit Oriented Development Study*, which included recommendations for downtown Bound Brook.



In 2008, the Borough adopted amendments to the *Downtown Redevelopment Plan* for area two.

In 2009, the downtown was the subject of a Downtown New Jersey *Downtown Business Assistance Team (DBAT) Assessment*, which focused on downtown management and retail tenancing issues.

Somerset County has recently completed the *Raritan River Greenway Study*, which proposed a riverfront greenway system for the Raritan/Somerville/Bridgewater Regional Center and terminates to the east at the Middle Brook, Bound Brook’s western boundary.



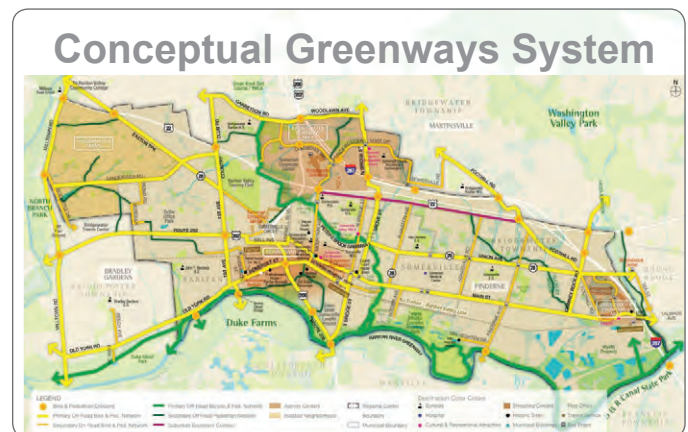
Somerset County has also launched the *Easton Avenue Corridor Study*, which is looking at ways to improve connections, including potential greenway connections, between Bound Brook and New Brunswick.

There is far too much material in these studies to summarize here. Some suggestions – such as the realignment of East Street and South Main Street – have been carried out. Others have not. For example, the creation of a “town square” in front of the train station is mentioned in a number of studies (ULI, FFM&G). This

has not happened, and for economic reasons may remain contingent on the implementation of a larger redevelopment project involving the commuter parking lots.

Redevelopment of the area south of the rail tracks, with removal of current industrial and residential buildings and construction of a significant new mixed-use district as recommended in the 2000 Redevelopment Plan, the 2001 ULI Report, and the 2005 WRT Report has also not taken place. With this area no longer designated as an “area in need of redevelopment” it is less likely that this will happen, unless market forces move decisively in that direction.

Improved access to the riverfront from the downtown and across the train tracks is a recurrent theme in many of these studies. This has also not happened yet, but becomes more viable once the levee system has been fully implemented.



II. The Study Area

The study area, as initially defined with Bound Brook's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) for this plan, is an irregularly shaped area bounded by the Bound Brook and the Borough of Middlesex to the east and the Raritan River to the south. To the west, the study area ends at the intersection of Main Street and the railroad tracks, and to the north it extends to Borough Hall and Somerset Street. This area measures roughly 1,800 feet from the banks of the Raritan to Somerset Street, and 3,800 feet (almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile) from the Bound Brook to the intersection of Main Street and the rail tracks, the area's western edge.

Altogether, this study area encompasses roughly the equivalent of 20 city blocks, plus Billian Legion Park, a municipal park located between East Street and Bound Brook.

After the initial planning analysis was completed, it became apparent that the vast area to the south of the downtown, between the rail tracks and the Raritan River, and between the Bound Brook and the Middle Brook, was appropriate to include in the study. This additional area contains a secluded, one-block residential neighborhood along West Main Street; a number of industrial buildings, including the Brook Industrial Park; a number of active passenger and freight rail lines; seemingly abandoned, rail-related industrial equipment; an underutilized municipal park with a baseball diamond; known locally as Rock Machine Park, and vacant, environmentally-constrained lands along the Raritan riverfront.

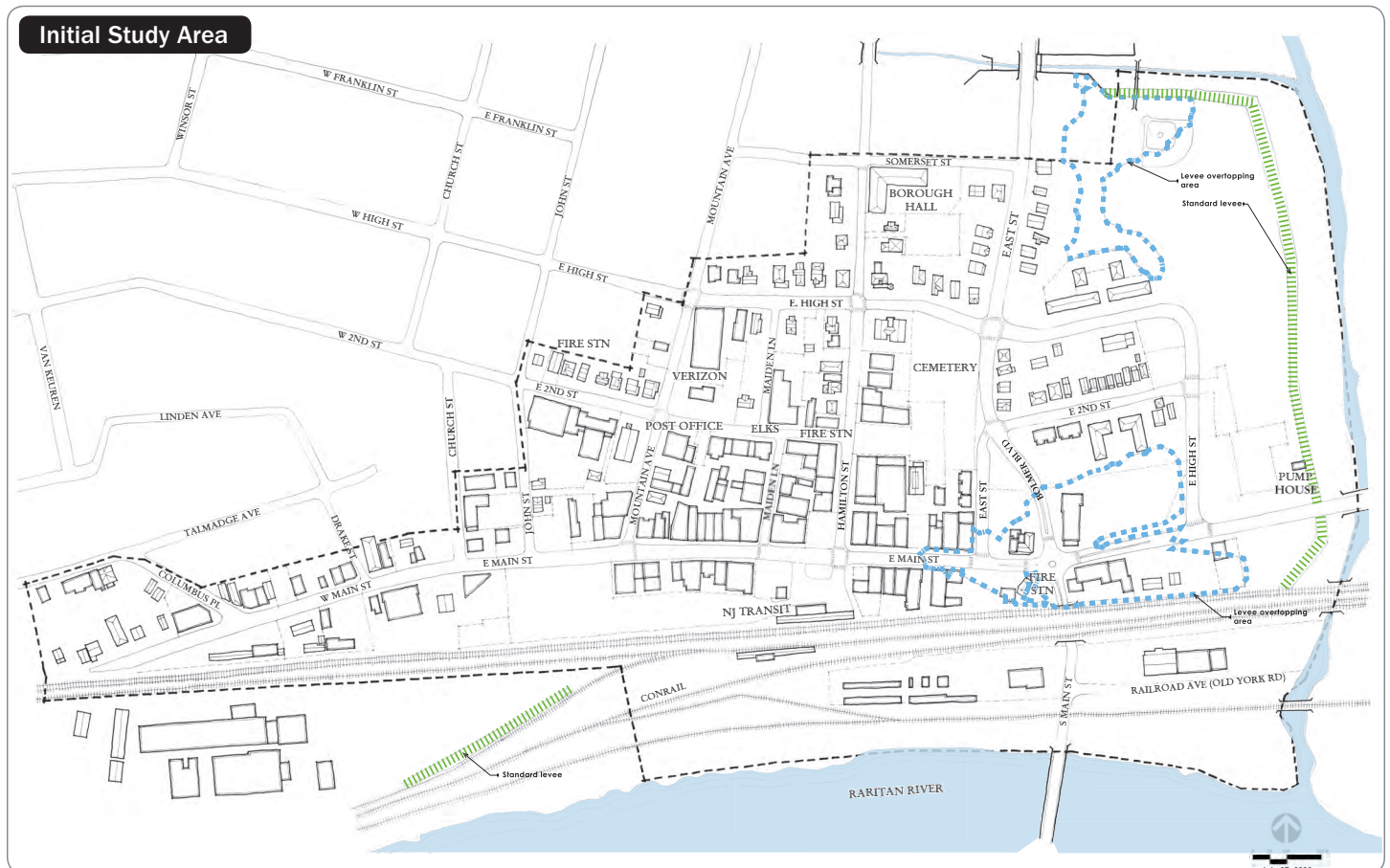
Historic Evolution of the Downtown

Sanborn maps provide an accurate representation of the study area in 1927. When compared with the 2007 aerial photo, we can accurately discern how the area has changed. This is depicted in the graphic showing building demolitions as well as building additions and new construction.

These maps reveal that the study area has not changed dramatically over the last 70 years. The 1927 fabric is mostly intact 70 years later. On the other hand, the area has not remained static either, and change has occurred. There are a number of scattered infill buildings, helping to fill out certain blocks; but also a number of demolitions and losses due to fire at key locations along Main Street, such as the northwest corner of the intersection with Hamilton Street, and also the northeast corner of the intersection with John Street, buildings which have not been replaced and therefore result in a "missing teeth" effect.

We note that the number of railroad tracks has diminished and some of the industrial buildings by the tracks have also been removed, even though industrial buildings maintain a considerable presence within the downtown footprint.

While the downtown contains a number of historic buildings with architectural character and eligible for historic designation, as mentioned earlier the downtown district as a whole was not deemed eligible for a National Register nomination in either of the two studies that considered this possibility.





Character and Scale

The study area is an architecturally eclectic mix of generally two- and three-story buildings. The scale of the streets and buildings is pleasant and suggests a relaxed, traditional small town downtown. Taller buildings generally face Main or Hamilton Streets. The area is truly mixed-use, with a mix of commercial, industrial, residential (both attached and detached, single-family and multi-family) and institutional buildings. There are many traditional Main Street buildings, with ground floor retail and upper level residential or office.

The core of the study area, which is bounded by Church Street to the west and East Street to the east, has a compact footprint. Many of the community's most important civic anchors such as Borough Hall, the public library, the post office, the Brook Theatre, and the Elks Club, are within a few minutes walking distance of each other and of the train station. It is 800 feet from the train station to the library, and 1,200 feet (less than a five-minute walk) from the train station to Borough Hall. This compact footprint is an asset that must be preserved and reinforced.

On the other hand, the downtown also presents many discontinuities in terms of the retail frontage. Experts generally consider this frontage a significant problem. The south side in particular has extensive discontinuities, associated with the train station and commuter parking. Main Street west of Mountain Avenue does not quite feel, nor does it function like a downtown.

The presence of multiple industrial, auto and construction related uses signals a very different physical environment, not oriented towards shopping, entertainment, cultural activities or other civic functions. During the 1980s there was a trend toward conversion of ground floor retail space to residential, indicating a stronger demand for housing than commercial space in this area. This trend may have abated, but those ground floor residential uses persist.

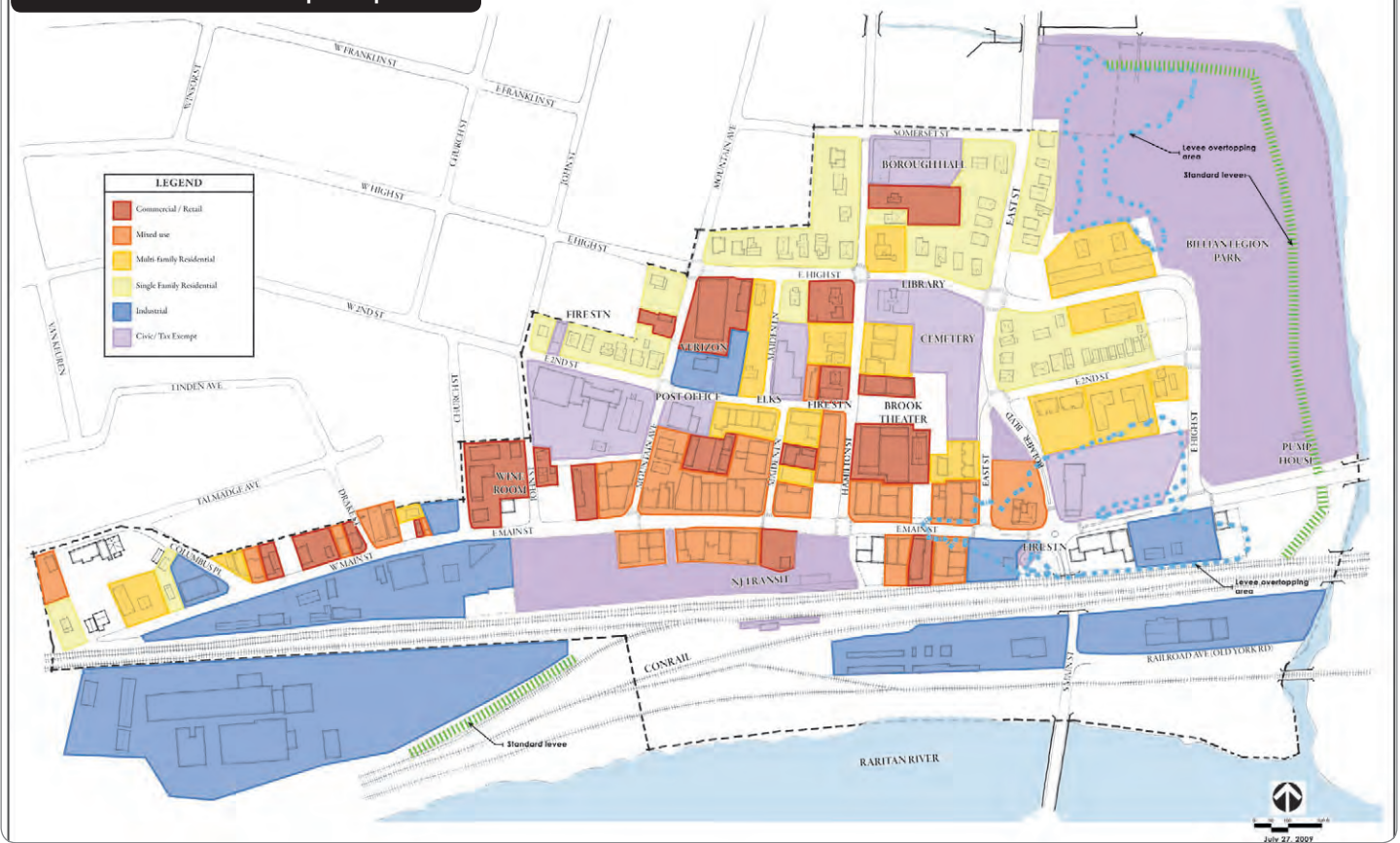


A critical aspect of downtown revitalization is attracting new uses for handsome but currently under-utilized downtown buildings.

In addition, the overall length of Main Street – from the roundabout to the Brass Rail (Talmage Commons) site – is 2,500 feet, well beyond the 1,500 feet considered ideal from a pedestrian perspective. While this is obviously not a fatal flaw – many commercial streets in denser environments may successfully extend for miles – the scale of Bound Brook, combined with the discontinuities in the retail frontage, suggest that the downtown may work better if focused within a more compact footprint, closer to the train station and to the civic anchors.

The area to the south of the tracks does not manifest a clear block structure – with the exception of the West Main Street residential block between LaMonte and Vosseller Avenues – and is occupied instead by industrial buildings located relative to the rail tracks, although no functional connection between their activities and rail freight currently exists. These buildings have a functional, inexpensive architecture and construction and do not exhibit the strong character found in so many older industrial buildings elsewhere.

Land Use and Tax Exempt Properties



Urban Design Analysis

Block Structure

The downtown has a fairly interconnected street system in a modified grid pattern. While most blocks fall within conventionally acceptable block sizes, a few larger blocks defy this pattern and create friction in terms of circulation: the cemetery block (Main/Hamilton/High/East) is 350 by 700 feet; there are a few others in the 400 x 320 feet range; and at the western end of the study area there is a very large and odd-shaped block (Second/Church/Main/Drake) where Talmage Avenue suddenly dead ends. There is driveway or alley access to the interior of these larger blocks where, frequently, parking is provided. There are also a couple of awkward shifts in the grid, with both Maiden Lane and Church Street exhibiting a jog at Second Street.

The figure ground map indicates the significant amount of voids that exist in the study area, and suggest that there is only a relatively small, compact area of a few blocks where existing buildings hold the street edge. This area can be increased through selective infilling, but will require building on lots that are currently dedicated to surface parking or vacant.

The area to the south of the tracks, as mentioned, has no recognizable block structure.

Circulation

Circulation in and around the downtown is generally facilitated by the human scale block structure described above. There are a few one-way systems which may need to be re-evaluated, but in general the network provides a high level of connectivity.

On the other hand, the railroads and river immediately to the south of the downtown create barriers to north-south movement, with the Queen's Bridge providing the only opportunity for local traffic (and the I-287 bridge for regional traffic) to cross the river in this area.



The downtown's alley system requires a specialized plan to upgrade and enhance the quality of these streetscapes.



In addition, the Middle Brook to the west, and the Bound Brook to the east also create major east-west discontinuities. As a result, while circulation within the downtown is generally easy, circulation around the downtown is not always so. Given the high costs inherent to any new vehicular river crossings and the regulatory barriers associated with that type of infrastructure, it seems unlikely that new vehicular crossings can be counted on. This would suggest enhanced justification to pursue new pedestrian and bicycle crossings as a way of taking pressure off the existing crossings by taking people out of their cars.

Alleys

There is an existing mid-block alley system that runs parallel to Main Street for three blocks, between Church Street and Maiden Lane. Direct observations confirm that these alleys are used by pedestrians,

as well as for parking by building residents and shopkeepers. The alleys are not conducive to through traffic. The visual quality of the space in these alleys is generally poor, but this can be remedied. Rear building facades can be enhanced, alley streetscapes can be improved and greened and some buildings may wish to provide pedestrian alley access as an alternative to the primary street entrances. If handled appropriately, the mid-block alleys provide an opportunity to add visual interest and create more intimate pedestrian spaces than might be possible on the street side of these blocks.

Gateways

There are two main gateways into the downtown, east and west.

The eastern gateway involves two bridges: the East Main Street bridge across the Bound Brook, from Middlesex, and the Queens Bridge across the Raritan from South Bound Brook. This gateway – with the stream crossings and the new roundabout – has a powerful visual and symbolic value, conveying a clear sense of arrival. The importance of this gateway is heightened by the pedestrian traffic from South Bound Brook, headed primarily to the train station. If site improvements to the key properties that surround this gateway – the former Bolmer site, the Firehouse, the Bound Brook Hotel and HOPE Church – are executed appropriately, along with appropriate streetscape improvements, this gateway can make a powerful statement. Pedestrian crossings may need to be re-evaluated, to increase a sense of safety.

The western gateway, at Columbus Place and Main Street, is somewhat less dramatic and offers less possibilities from an urban design perspective. However, with redevelopment of the Brass Rail (Talmadge Commons) site, this gateway can also be effective in signaling arrival. The sharp bend in the road, where Columbus Place enters Main Street, offers interesting opportunities for a visual termination and gateway effect.

Parks and Public Spaces

There are a few parks and public spaces in and around the downtown, but they do not read like an integrated system.

Van Horne Plaza, directly in front of the train station, is centrally located and a logical place for public assembly, but in its current configuration it is neither attractive nor functional. The plaza measures roughly 120 x 150 feet, or a little less than 1/2 an acre. However, 90% of it is paved with blacktop and is dedicated to parking or vehicular circulation. There is also a steep grade change between the front of the train station and East Main Street. There are no uses or activities to animate the plaza, other than a small convenience store and the restaurant currently in the train station, which is elevated relative to the plaza and has outdoor seating in the back, towards the tracks, but not in the front.

The old Presbyterian graveyard, located next to the library along East High Street and Bolmer Boulevard, is a quiet and secluded oasis, but is not easily accessible, given the grade change and retaining wall along both Bolmer Boulevard and the area behind the Brook Theatre.

A small pocket park linking East Main Street to the commuter parking lot looks neglected and is rarely used for sitting, although it is used as a pedestrian connection between Main Street and the commuter lots.

The most substantial open space is the 9.8-acre Billian Legion Park, the former municipal landfill located at the very edge of the downtown, across Bolmer Boulevard. The park contains a variety of active and passive recreational uses, but feels disconnected from the rest of the downtown. It is also not accessible to the east, because there are no pedestrian crossings of the Bound Brook. The park is managed by the Borough's Recreation Commission and its development to date has been largely funded by donations from the Billian family. The Billian Family Foundation in 2010 underwrote a \$600,000 improvement project in two phases. Phase one has been completed and includes an irrigation system to water the grass and future plantings. Phase two will consist of walkways and plantings.



There is no central place in the downtown to sit outdoors on a nice day and have a coffee, eat a sandwich, read the newspaper or chat with a friend.

Parking

Conversations with Bound Brook stakeholders suggest that there is a perception that the downtown has a parking deficit. This perception may be contributing towards keeping potential customers away.

This perception notwithstanding, a surprising amount of the downtown is dedicated to surface parking. There are approximately 4.8 acres in public parking lots, and an additional 12.4 acres dedicated to private parking. As a comparison, there are .8 acres in privately-owned vacant land and another .8 acres of publicly-owned vacant land.

The zone for fee-based parking is relatively small, encompassing approximately four blocks downtown along with the train station and its adjacent New Jersey Transit (NJT) owned commuter parking lot. Free on-street parking is available for those willing to walk a block or two. The parking inventory includes

Central Business District (148 spaces)

94 on-street meters @ 50¢ per hour
28 on-street meters @ 10¢ per hour
12 off-street meters @ 10¢ per hour
10 off-street monthly permit spaces
4 free / unsigned (in front of Post office)

Train Station (311 spaces)

35 meters at 10¢ or 20¢ per hour
11 Free / Unsigned
200 permit spaces @ \$40 per month (NJT lot)
65 daily spaces @ \$3 per day (NJT lot)



Valuable downtown real estate is currently occupied by parking for heavy vehicles.

Parking charges are uneven on the streets – some are 50¢ per hour; some only 10¢ per hour. The pricing rationale for metered on-street parking is not clear, nor is it clear what it is trying to achieve. Parking charges should be re-evaluated and standardized. For example, all on- and off-street meters could be converted to 50¢ per hour.

During a January 2010 parking study, vacant spaces were noted on most block sides plus the train station lots indicating that the current parking supply is accommodating the current parking demand. However, the parking situation could easily become stressed when currently vacant buildings in the downtown become occupied, retail

or other uses become more successful and/or redevelopment projects occur.

A parking solution that assumes higher occupancy of current buildings must be recognized when formulating a new parking program for the downtown. The “order of magnitude” estimate is that there will be a demand for 50 to 100 new parking spaces.

It should be noted that vehicle ownership rates for the Hispanic population that lives in the neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown are thought to be quite low. This may be a factor in reducing parking pressure currently, but is likely to change over time as new residents settle in and more existing residents acquire vehicles.

Potential methods to meet this 50 to 100 space “latent” demand estimate include the following:

- a. negotiating revenue-sharing arrangements to convert private parking areas to public-private parking;
- b. interconnecting public and private parking lots to achieve better circulation and more efficient parking design;
- c. creating (and enforcing) a remote parking policy for downtown employees;
- d. converting strategically located “soft” or vacant properties to public parking;
- e. including additional parking capacity as part of redevelopment projects.

Safe and convenient bicycle parking is also lacking in the downtown and should be expanded, including at the train station, as well as at nearby attractions, such as the parks.

The Brook Theatre is a critical downtown resource, and will assume increasing importance as it ramps up its activities after a long renovation. It is likely that the study area will have a number of vacant parking spaces during typical show times. However, a practical parking plan showing the anticipated parking areas for theater guests at various levels of occupancy should be prepared, as a way to reassure potential patrons who may not be familiar with the downtown. The plan should seek to provide parking capacity equal to one space for every three seats.

The parking analysis suggests that the parking “deficit” is only a perception, and that the downtown has enough parking in absolute terms to meet current demand although not future demand. Individual uses may be “under-parked,” – which is the case in most downtowns. This suggests that the solution may require a different approach to parking management, whereby the existing (and potentially new) parking becomes available to multiple uses and is used more efficiently.

There are some discrepancies in parking standards between Redevelopment Areas 1 and 2 which should be reconciled.

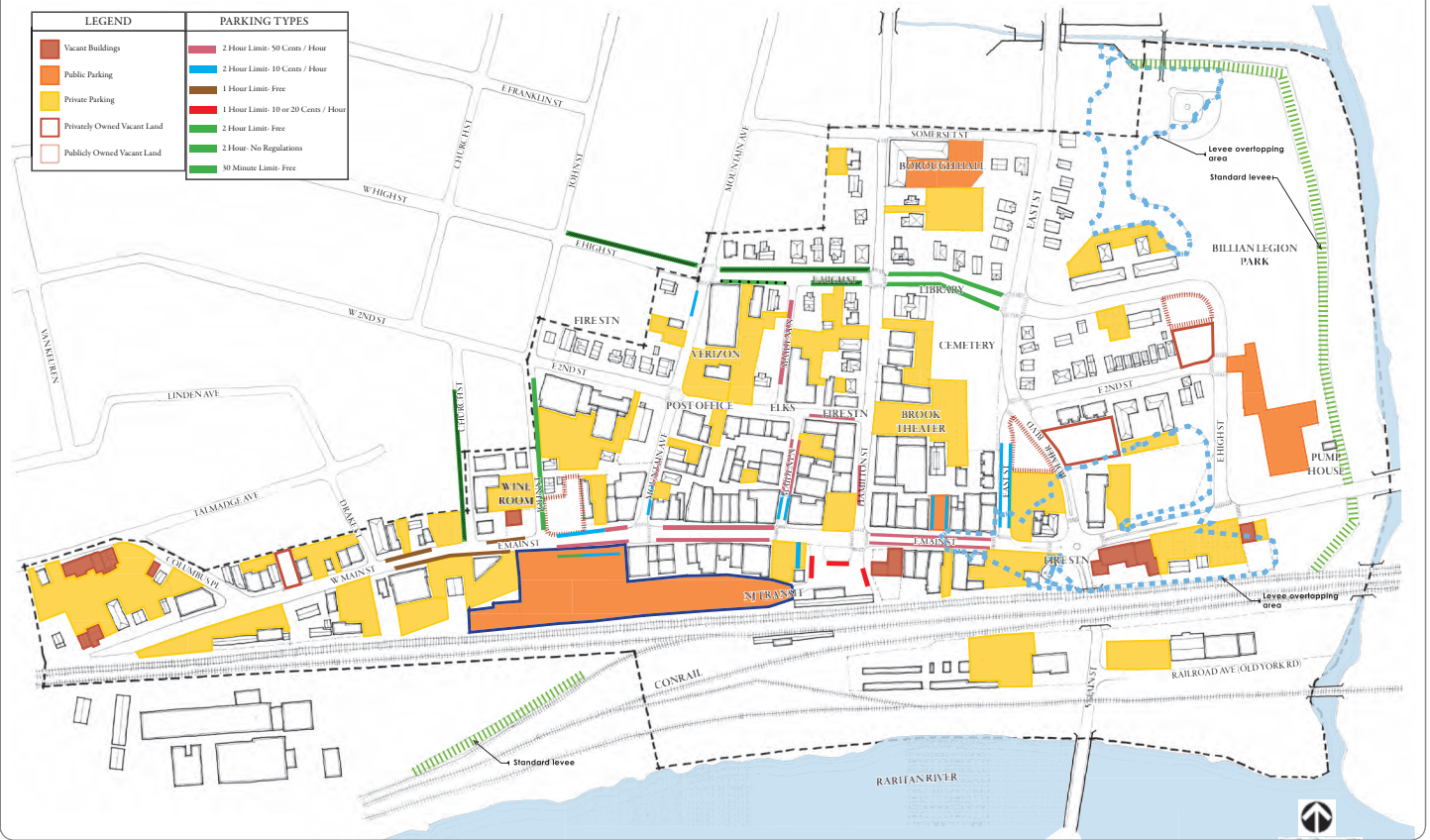
The parking standards defined in the Redevelopment Plan for Area 1 call for 2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of office, four spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail and service uses, one space per five seats in restaurant/bars, one space per four seats for theaters and 1.5 spaces per residential unit. The Redevelopment Plan allows the Planning Board to reduce these ratios and accept parking “credits” under certain shared parking and mixed-use conditions. As previously mentioned, these standards – and those for Area 2 – supersede the parking standards found in the Land Development Ordinance.

The parking standards defined for Redevelopment Area 2 are aggressively lower: for example, only 2.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail and service uses, one parking space per apartment unit and 1.5 per stacked flat or townhouse.

The Redevelopment Plan’s residential parking standards are well below those established under New Jersey’s Residential Site Improvement Standards and will require action by the Planning

Vacant Land and Parking Lots

LEGEND	PARKING TYPES
Vacant Buildings	2 Hour Limit- 50 Cents / Hour
Public Parking	2 Hour Limit- 10 Cents / Hour
Private Parking	1 Hour Limit- Free
Privately Owned Vacant Land	1 Hour Limit- 10 or 20 Cents / Hour
Publicly Owned Vacant Land	2 Hour Limit- Free
	2 Hour- No Regulations
	30 Minute Limit- Free



Board (i.e.; application to the RSIS Advisory Board for a “special area standard”) justifying the differences. The Plan allows even lower parking ratios at the discretion of the Planning Board.

Parking Study

On Wednesday January 27, 2010 a field crew from Level G Associates conducted special parking surveys in downtown Bound Brook in order to ascertain current parking conditions and patterns. Each block or metered row of parking in the core area of the downtown was given a designated number and then every parked car in each numbered block or row was counted repeatedly throughout the day. In addition, license plate numbers of the parked cars were recorded on each pass in order to determine the length of stay, or “duration”, of each parking trip.

The tabular data derived from the parking duration study is presented in Appendix one.

The parking duration study map shows the number designations of each block and parking row included in the survey. The study area included all metered parking areas plus blocks located just outside the metered parking zone. The 311-space train station parking lot was not included in the duration analysis as we know that this lot is filled with “all day” commuter parkers and possibly some local downtown employees.

Attachment two in the Appendix summarizes the parking duration of each car that parked in the core area of the downtown during the survey. Also shown on this table are the number of spaces on each block; type of operation (free or fee); time limits; the “peak” number of cars parked on each block; and the time of the peak observation.

Key Findings:

- Most parking trips in downtown Bound Brook are “short term” (less than two hours). More than ¾ of all parkers (75.7%) had a parking duration of less than two hours and 41.5% of all parkers stayed for less than 30 minutes;

- b. Middle duration parkers (between two and four hours) accounted for 10.8% of all parking trips;
- c. Long duration parkers (over four hours) accounted for 13.5% of all parking trips.

Attachment three in the Appendix breaks down the duration data into five separate regulatory categories:

Category	No. Spaces	% of Total
On-Street / Free / Up to 2 Hr Limit	74	23.5%
On-Street / Free / No Time Limit	57	18.1%
On-Street / Metered / Main Street	60	19.0%
On-Street / Metered / Off Main Street	66	21.0%
Off-Street Spaces	58	18.4%

As indicated, the core area of Bound Brook’s downtown offers a fair and balanced variety of both paid and free parking options for local parkers and, for the most part, parking patterns follow the posted regulations. However, outside of the train station lot, the only public parking available for parking durations of greater than two hours are located in the 57 free curb spaces to the north and west of the downtown core and in 10 municipal “permit” spaces located in the 22-space public lot on the north side of Main Street between Hamilton and East Streets.

Key Finding:

Outside of the train station lot, the public parking supply consists of only 67 spaces that allow a parking duration of more than two hours. However, during our studies, it was determined that 94 parking trips exceeded two hours: 11% of all parking trips were between two and four hours, while 13.5% were greater than four hours. This indicates that demand exceeds supply for both mid-term (two to four hours) and long-term (over four hours) parking trips.

Attachment four in the Appendix shows the number of cars parked at each block side in the study area between 9AM and 2PM. This table and the graph below both indicate that the total curbside parking supply far exceeds the demand as only 122 of the 257 on-street parking spaces in the core downtown area (47.5%) were occupied during the peak condition.

Attachment five in the Appendix shows, in tabular and graphic format, the number of cars parked in each of the four separate on-street parking classification zones. These zones and the peak occupancy observed at each one are as follows:

Category	No. Spaces	Peak Count	Peak Occd.
On-Street / Free / Up to 2 Hr Limit	74	31	41.9%
On-Street / Free / No Time Limit	57	38	66.7%
On-Street / Metered / Main Street	60	33	55.0%
On-Street / Metered / Off Main Street	66	31	47.0%

As shown, during peak operating conditions the on-street parking supply for Bound Brook’s core downtown area operates in a 42 to 67% occupancy range.

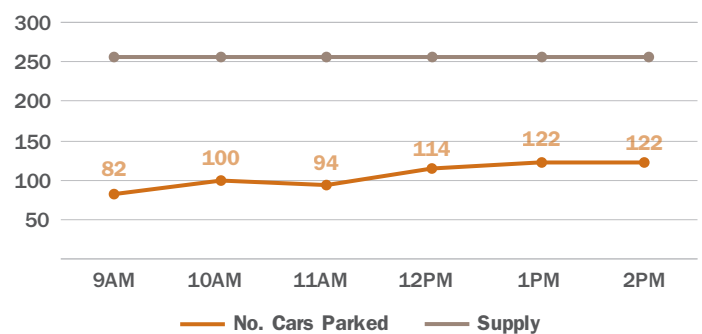
Key Finding:

It is generally accepted that parking deficiencies exist when peak parking space occupancies exceed 90% of capacity. Because Bound Brook’s occupancies are well below this threshold we find that the current parking supply is sufficient to meet the current parking demand.

Parking Enforcement / Compliance

Using the duration study data we are able to determine the number of cars parked beyond the posted time limit on all blocks and rows. Attachment two of the Appendix shows in red numbers those parking trips that were determined to be in violation of the posted time limit. As indicated, 55 parking trips out of the total of 388 recorded trips were time limit violations. This fairly high rate (14.2% of all parking trips) suggests a lack of aggressive enforcement along these blocks and a need for more mid- (two to four hour) and long-range (over four hours) time limits for parking serving the downtown.

A random sampling of metered spaces in the core area of the downtown revealed that 37% of occupied spaces were in violation for parking at an expired meter. Enforcement of parking regulations is an important and sometimes complicated issue and there is a fine balance involving municipal resources, revenue, perception, adjudication, etc. that is different for every city and town. If a municipality is going to set regulations and charge for parking these rules should be reasonably enforced to achieve the desired results.



Key Sites

Both previous studies and our current analysis indicate that there are a number of sites that can – and should – play key roles in the revitalization of the downtown. These properties have either historic significance or occupy key locations, or both. The key sites are the following:

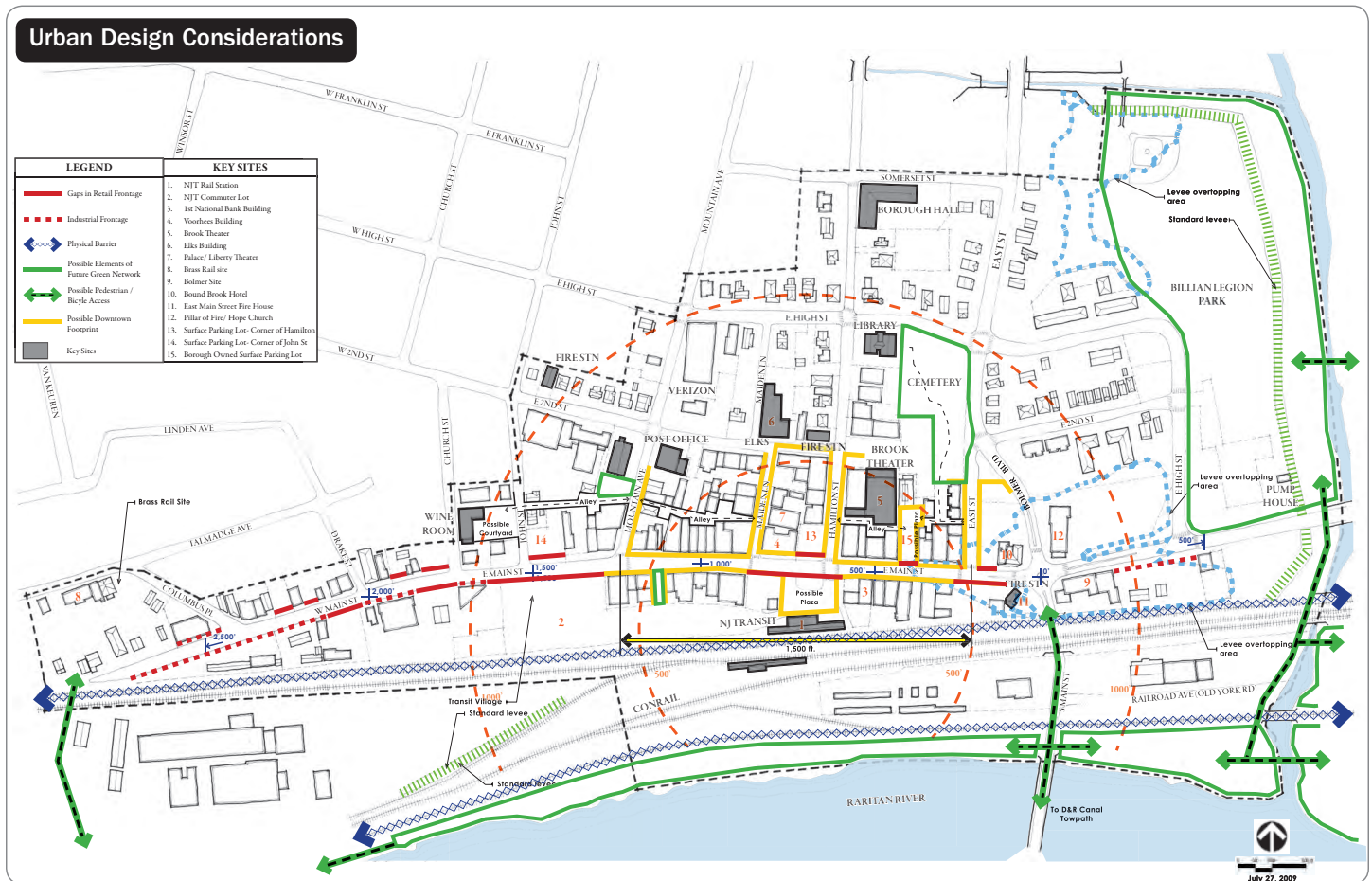
1. NJT rail station – The approximately 3,000 square foot station building is owned by NJ Transit, but controlled, through a long-term lease, by the Borough. It is currently used as a restaurant operated by a local restaurateur.
2. NJT commuter parking lot – A previous proposal for this 2.3-acre lot included 127 housing units, 19,000 square feet of retail, 53,500 square feet of services, 425 structured parking spaces and 68 surface parking spaces. The Borough is currently seeking proposals from developers.
3. 1st National Bank building – Facing Main Street and the train station plaza, this 9,000 square foot building was built in 1913 and expanded in 1950. It is unoccupied and has not been restored post Floyd. It had been slated for retail and office uses as part of the previous Transit Village redevelopment project.
4. Voorhees Building – Located across the street from the train station, this is a handsome mixed-use building with ground floor retail and some upper level housing.
5. Brook Theatre – This important civic institution was significantly damaged during the various recent flood events. The Somerset County Cultural Arts Center, the non-profit organization that owns the theater has restored its interior and reopened it. The theater has 900 seats. If successful, it has the potential to be one of downtown’s most important anchors. The best way to handle

parking for the theater is an important question that needs to be addressed.

6. Elks Building – This 1930 building (301-309 East second Street and Maiden Lane) is located at the visually prominent terminus of the first block of Maiden Lane. The building has not been fully-utilized as a place of assembly for many years.
7. Palace/Liberty Theater – Located at 12 Maiden Lane, just down from the Elks Building, this handsome 1913 building has suffered as a result of an inappropriate façade alteration. Known as “The Lyric” in 1937, it is currently used as the offices for a soccer-related business.
8. Brass Rail (Talmage Commons) site – located at the western gateway into the downtown, at the intersection of Talmage Avenue and Columbus Place, this 1.3 acre redevelopment site has undergone site clearance. The approved site plan, called Talmage Commons, consists of a U-shaped five-story building with ground floor parking, liner retail and services facing Talmage Avenue, and 152 upper-level residential units.

Four key sites – the Bolmer site, the Bound Brook Hotel, Fire House #1 and the Pillar of Fire/HOPE Church site – are prominently located facing the East Main Street roundabout, an important gateway into the downtown:

9. Bolmer site – This 1.2-acre site next to the roundabout housed a car dealer showroom for many years. The entire site is in the floodplain. The 12,000 square feet building, a 1,400 square feet shed and a 2,100 square feet garage formerly occupied by the Borough’s Public Works were recently demolished because they were considered structurally unsound. The Borough currently owns the property and is actively seeking a redeveloper. In the past, developers have expressed an interest in developing



residential uses over at-grade parking. A proposal for 87 rental housing units was discussed at one point.

10. Bound Brook Hotel and Tavern – This handsome but neglected 9,000 square foot building located at 507 East Main Street has a bar and is currently used as a very modest boarding house. It received an opinion of eligibility from the State Historic Preservation Office in 1996. There is a large parking lot adjacent to the building.
11. East Main Street Fire House – Prominently located facing the southwest quadrant of the Main Street roundabout, this tiny building houses the Bound Brook Fire Company #1. The building's exterior has been modified and its character compromised. Given its cramped location and limited size, it is hard to imagine it as a functional community facility in the future. Alternative uses have been discussed.
12. Pillar of Fire/HOPE Church site – This 22,500 square foot structure, dignified but in need of repairs, is located at 519-525 East Main Street. It was built as a house of worship for the Zarephath Christian Church and now houses the HOPE Church congregation. It also occupies a key location relative to the roundabout. It received an opinion of eligibility from the State Historic Preservation Office in 1996. There is a large, unpaved parking lot adjacent to the building. Significant exterior repairs and restoration were carried out during 2010 with the aid of a matching grant from the Borough's Façade Improvement Grant Program. In addition to the exterior renovations, the site also needs more activity. The parking lot is a good candidate for shared public/private use, which might perhaps create funding for needed shade tree plantings and landscaping improvements. Perhaps new uses can also be found for portions of the building that are currently underutilized. Given its size and strategic location this site will become a true asset to the downtown when fully utilized.

There are three other Main Street sites that can also play pivotal roles in downtown revitalization:

13. The surface parking lot across from the train station, on the corner of Hamilton.
14. The surface parking lot on the corner of John.
15. The Borough-owned surface parking lot, between East and Hamilton.

Assets and Challenges

In summary, the downtown has many assets, as follows:

- Rich history
- Pedestrian, small town scale
- Regional location
- Regional demographics
- Existing transit service and the promise of enhanced transit service once the new Trans-Hudson passenger rail tunnel is complete
- Potential re-activation of passenger rail service on the West Trenton line
- Proximity to Raritan riverfront
- Mixed-use character
- Affordable real estate
- Army Cops of Engineers flood control project
- Community spirit
- Diversity

The downtown faces an equally long list of challenges, and finding effective solutions for coping with these will be critical to downtown revitalization:

Raritan waterfront not visible or accessible from downtown

- No pedestrian / bicycle facilities along waterfront
- Downtown not centrally located relative to the rest of the community
- Competition from the nearby Rt 28 commercial strip
- Visible disinvestment in downtown buildings, businesses
- Discontinuities in retail frontage
- Some retail is marginal, undercapitalized
- Retail and upper level vacancies
- No downtown management entity
- Lack of people places / public spaces
- Perception of lack of parking
- NJT station and platforms in need of maintenance / upgrading (some work is anticipated soon on the eastbound station and canopy)

On balance, we believe the downtown is poised to benefit from two critical factors. First, the Army Corps of Engineers flood protection project will bring a much-needed measure of security from the devastating impacts of flood waters. And second the new rail tunnel under the Hudson will significantly increase capacity and improve service and as a result further increase the attractiveness of the downtown as a place to live. In spite of the current downturn in the real estate market, the long term trend towards more walkable, mixed-use communities is expected to continue, and the downtown will benefit from increased consumer demand. These very positive developments create significant opportunities for positive change.



Inappropriate building alterations should be removed, where possible, and the original building facades restored.

III. Case Studies and Precedents

As part of the planning process, we looked at the experience of similar communities with parallel situations in search for clues to revitalization approaches that might be applicable to Bound Brook's downtown. While these case studies may not always fit with the scale, dimensions or particulars of the Bound Brook experience and its downtown, the various case studies and strategies adopted offer a range of ideas and approaches that may be relevant and of interest to Bound Brook.

The case studies focused on three conditions relevant to Bound Brook:

- Downtowns with a significant presence of industrial uses
- Ethnic downtowns
- Sister “river city” downtowns

Industrial Downtowns

The experience in other downtowns with a significant industrial presence suggests ways – good or bad – for dealing with the continued presence of these uses. In many cases, it has been assumed that industrial uses were on the downturn and would eventually become obsolete through market forces. But this has not always been the case, and in some cases industrial uses have survived – indeed thrived – often under adverse circumstances. Contemporary industrial activities have also become much cleaner and, in some cases, better neighbors. There is an important planning and policy determination to be made. Should the planning and regulatory framework assume the industrial uses will eventually leave – and perhaps put in place incentives to encourage them to do so – or should the assumption be that they will stay, in which case there might be incentives to help them become better neighbors, without attempting to displace them?



Brooklyn, NY – In 2005 New York City rezoned large areas of the East River waterfront in Williamsburg and Green Point, Brooklyn from industrial to residential, to capitalize on the magnificent views of the river and of the skyline of Manhattan's East Side. The rezoning was controversial and was resisted by some on the basis that it would further displace the city's industrial activities. The area had long provided inexpensive housing and studio space for artists, attracted to the large floor plates. Viable pre-existing industrial uses were grandfathered and continue to operate, and artist studios also remain, even as new residential uses have prospered. As a result, an interesting coexistence has developed between blue-collar industrial activities, the artist community and a new white collar residential population that fuels trendy white cloth restaurants and quirky boutiques. Because this part of Brooklyn is poorly served by the NYC subway, rents are still relatively low. Many industrial buildings are three and four story and

some have architectural character. The new residential buildings are high rise.

Orange/ West Orange, NJ – The Valley section was the industrial heart of these towns and was a national center for the hat industry. With the decline in local manufacturing the industrial buildings were largely abandoned. A local non-profit community development corporation spearheaded a revitalization effort in partnership with the towns and has been successful in moving the process forward. The plans call for turning the former factories into green buildings and transforming the area into an artist community, with live-work artist lofts, arts related retail and studios. There is no plan to make space available for new industrial activities. The buildings are multi-story brick structures with a great deal of architectural character.

Pawtucket, RI – This town offers another example of a community with an attractive industrial building stock left vacant in the second half of the 20th century by de-industrialization. Proximity to Boston and Providence made this an attractive location for artists. The city embraced this strategy by establishing an artist district, and creating a number of tax incentives, including one to encourage artists to sell their art within the city. The city also organizes a number of special events to support and publicize its arts community.

Ethnic Downtowns

There are many examples of downtowns, both in New Jersey and around the nation, that have been reinvented around an ethnic theme. Bound Brook's downtown has evolved into a predominantly ethnic downtown, although with questionable economic results, so far. Are there lessons to be learned from downtowns that have followed a similar trajectory with more successful outcomes?



East Austin, TX – This section of Austin was the African American neighborhood in the 1920s. Cheap rents also attracted Mexican immigrants. This area was also heavily industrialized. Eventually, cheap rents also attracted an arts community. With a decline in industrial activities, the arts fueled redevelopment. Local non-profit organizations established services to provide affordable housing to existing residents, as well as small business loans to minority and woman-owned businesses to keep them from being priced out of the area. The City also created programs to spur economic development in the area. East Austin now hosts an eclectic mix of older African American and Mexican communities, along with artists, the creative class and young urban professionals. Unlike many of the preceding case studies, the industrial buildings in East Austin have no particular architectural character. Nevertheless, the area has gained character and become more attractive through the creative use of color and other inexpensive makeover strategies.



Woonsocket, RI – Located on the Blackstone River, this was a textile mill town which thrived until the Great Depression. The Stadium Theater was built in the 1920s and was a source of great civic pride. With the closure of the mills, the downtown entered a period of prolonged decline. In 1990, the downtown joined the national trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program and focused on revitalization initiatives. The Museum of Work and Culture opened in 1997 to honor the French Canadian immigrant community which had labored in the mills. In 2001, after years of renovation, the Stadium Theatre re-opened. The Theatre and the Museum constitute the downtown’s two main anchors and attract many visitors. Main Street also organizes special events downtown and manages a grant program for façade and signage improvements.

Perth Amboy and Paterson are larger communities (48,000 and 150,000) with largely Hispanic downtowns. Paterson also has a significant Middle-Eastern population and businesses that serve that population. While both downtowns are dynamic and successful at ground level, both suffer from significant upper-level vacancies. Sister River City Downtowns

Another important dimension to revitalizing Bound Brook’s downtown may lie in its potentially symbiotic relationship with South Bound Brook. South Bound Brook has a small downtown, offering a very limited range of goods and services to its residents. It does have a commuter population that walks across the Queen’s Bridge to access Bound Brook’s train station. And the two towns have a regional school district, with South Bound Brook students attending High School in Bound Brook. This suggests that South Bound Brook commuters, and their families, as well as perhaps South Bound Brook’s high school students are potential patrons for Bound Brook’s downtown businesses.

There are a number of examples of communities with symbiotic relationships located across a river or other body of water from each other, both in NJ and elsewhere. The potential synergies between sister river cities offer additional clues towards more effective strategies for revitalizing Bound Brook’s downtown. There are also examples of sister river cities where synergies are currently not apparent, and in those cases identifying the missing ingredient(s) is of interest.

The following case studies may be of interest:

- Lambertville, NJ / New Hope, PA
- New Brunswick, NJ and Highland Park, NJ
- Trenton, NJ / Morrisville, PA
- Camden, NJ / Philadelphia, PA
- Newark, NJ / Harrison, NJ

Lambertville, NJ and New Hope, PA present one of the more compelling local case studies. The pedestrian and vehicular traffic across the New Hope-Lambertville Bridge over the Delaware is intense and an indicator of the close relationship that exists between the two communities. Out of town visitors treat the two communities as one and are likely to go back and forth as part of a single visit. Both downtowns have specialized in a mix of retail that relies heavily on the arts, antiques, home furnishings, bars and restaurants, and lodging. During the warmer months, businesses cater to the significant bicycle crowd that is attracted by the extensive biking opportunities along the Delaware and Raritan Canal, as well as in rural Hunterdon and Bucks county.

There is another parallel that is noteworthy. Lambertville and New Hope both have access to extensive waterfront trail systems, in the form of the towpaths that are part of the popular and well used Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park. The two towns attract many visitors who use the towpath and indeed access the downtowns in this way, either on foot or on bicycle. The towns also attract long distance bicyclists, who take a break there for a meal or refreshments. If Bound Brook had a riverfront park with bicycle and pedestrian trails linking areas to the east, west and south with the downtown, this would be one other, low impact way of bringing additional visitors and patrons to the downtown.

Lambertville and New Hope present the case study that is perhaps most directly comparable to Bound Brook. The span of the bridge (1,050 feet) is almost identical to the Queens Bridge in Bound Brook (1,100 feet). Both are longer than the span of the Albany Street bridge (700 feet) between New Brunswick and Highland Park. Pedestrians are not significantly deterred by these distances and walking across the bridge is viewed as a pleasant experience except in extreme weather.

Conclusions

These case studies suggest that downtowns can pursue successful revitalization strategies around one, and often more than one of these themes: the arts, cultural activities, historic resources, ethnic retail and ethnic restaurants and active and passive open space and natural features.

While many of the better known success stories of revitalization through the attraction of arts communities have occurred in places with buildings with strong architectural character – particularly conversions of old multi-story mill or other type of high ceiling buildings to artist lofts, studios and gallery and exhibition space – there are also examples of places with more functional architecture that have nevertheless been successful in attracting a vibrant creative class and sparked an arts-fueled local economy.

IV. Public Involvement

The Public Visioning Workshop

This downtown urban design plan was developed with input from a broad range of stakeholders, and working closely with elected and appointed officials in the Borough.

The primary vehicle for broad public involvement in the downtown plan was an all-day visioning workshop, organized by RPA, which took place on Saturday, September 26, 2009 at the Brook Theatre. Approximately 60 people participated.

Working closely with EDAC prior to the workshop, RPA prepared a comprehensive briefing book containing the relevant factual basis and establishing the framework for the visioning. Workshop participants were asked to self-assign themselves to five discussion tables. Each table was assigned a sub-area of the downtown, and supplied with base maps and analytical maps of the area, copies of the briefing book, a list of topics for discussion, a compilation of character images, as well as trace paper and markers for drawing. Each table was staffed with competent designers and facilitators.

The intention behind the visioning session was to allow the participants to productively explore all relevant ideas. For this to happen, experience tells us that it is helpful to establish a framework and define parameters for the discussion. The group discussion process was organized using a series of thematically and geographically defined tables. Each table was provided with a list of questions to help focus and frame the discussions without limiting the creative thinking process.

Table 1: The Big Picture

Questions for Discussion:

- What are the essential character attributes of downtown Bound Brook? How can they be revealed, reinforced and leveraged?
- Is Main Street too long to be sustainable? Should downtown energies be focused on creating and reinforcing a more compact footprint?
- What is the appropriate planning response to the continuing presence of industrial uses on both sides of the tracks? Should we assume that they will leave, in time, or should we encourage them to be better neighbors?
- How can downtown leverage and benefit from future investments in an enhanced Raritan Riverfront / greenway?
- How can Downtown best connect -- and benefit from interactions with -- the surrounding open space assets?
- How should downtown be re-positioned to better compete with uptown Route 28 businesses?
- Is it possible to create greater synergies between the downtown and other nearby destinations, such as the Bridgewater Promenade and South Bound Brooks small downtown? Would a shuttle linking these destinations be feasible?
- Can more special events be brought downtown? Where would they occur?



Bound Brook has the Brook Theatre as a downtown anchor, and perhaps this facility can attract artists and creative types to live and work in the downtown. Because the industrial building stock in Bound Brook is not architecturally significant, the attraction would have to be in the form of lower rents along with whatever other attractions and amenities can be provided. The visioning process that informed development of this plan indicated that the Bound Brook community would support the arts and culture playing a greater role in downtown revitalization.

But a downtown revitalization strategy based largely on attracting the arts and other creative classes may not be the most appropriate for this place and in any case should not be the only strategy.

With this in mind, it becomes increasingly difficult to justify retaining, over the long term, the industrial buildings located in and around the downtown and the lower value-added activities that occupy them. It would appear that a better strategy over time would be to encourage these activities to relocate to a non-downtown location and in turn be replaced by higher intensity uses in new, larger buildings which will bring new residents and patrons to downtown businesses.

New downtown residential uses are certainly part of this strategy. Whether the non-residential uses – which will generally be focused on ground floor space – are oriented towards the arts or towards other activities remains to be seen. The important consideration from the point of view of this urban design plan, and the regulations that will implement it, is that they not preclude these new activities from occurring (and the existing industrial activities from relocating) if there is appropriate market demand.

The plan and attendant regulations should be flexible and market-sensitive and not overly prescriptive and deterministic.

Table 2- East of Bolmer / East Street

Questions for Discussion:

- Billian Legion Park is a recent and largely undeveloped facility. How should it be developed to provide more services to the local population and become a greater asset to the downtown? Should the park contain more active recreational uses? Should it be heavily treed? Should it contain additional buildings?
- What needs to happen to enhance north/south and east/west bicycle / pedestrian circulation through Billian Legion Park?
- What are the options for enhancing pedestrian and bicycle connections from the adjacent neighborhoods in Middlesex Borough to the downtown, across the Bound Brook stream corridor? What services would these people value and draw them into the downtown?
- How should we better take advantage of the new pedestrian bridge that connects the apartments with Billian Legion Park?
- Can the top of the levees be used as part of a circumferential pedestrian / bicycle circulation system?
- How can the HOPE church building and parking lot best support downtown revitalization?
- Is there a better treatment for the vacant parcel immediately to the east of the HOPE church parking lot?
- What type(s) of treatment would further enhance pedestrian safety perceptions at crossings around the roundabout?
- What is the appropriate treatment for the Bolmer site?



Table 3: The Downtown Core

Questions for Discussion:

- How far should the downtown core extend? Should retail uses be discouraged – even if only temporarily – beyond a certain footprint?
- Should vacant parcels / parking lots be redeveloped with buildings, public spaces or both?
- What public spaces, existing or new, should we consider?
- If new public spaces are called for, where should they be located and what should their function be? What should they look like?
- What is the appropriate scale for redevelopment/infill projects in this area? Should there be a maximum building height? What would it be?
- Is a more pedestrian-oriented system of downtown alleys and passageways, offering access to new quality public and private open

spaces, desirable? Are there opportunities to extend it beyond the existing rights-of-way?

- Are there shopping and other synergies to be explored between Bridgewater Commons and the downtown? Between the Route 28 businesses and the downtown? What form should these take? Is a shuttle service realistic?
- Is there a greater role for downtown civic uses – churches, uses, places of assembly?
- What is the appropriate strategy for downtown industrial or heavy commercial uses? Are there ways to dress them up? Does it matter?



Table 4: South of Main Street to the Raritan River

Questions for Discussion

- Should the Borough encourage active redevelopment in this area?
- Is relocation southwards of the NJ Transit and freight rail tracks realistic?
- What are the best (and economically most realistic) options for crossing the railroad tracks and improving access to this area?
- Is the current at-grade crossing sufficient to handle traffic from future (re)development south of the tracks?
- Should commuter parking be considered, as an interim or ultimate use, in this area?
- Should more ambitious redevelopment proposals – including housing, office and perhaps hospitality uses – be encouraged in this area, once the new levees are in place?
- Considering that this area is no longer “in need of redevelopment” what mechanisms should be used to encourage positive change?
- What is the appropriate treatment for the extensive waterfront areas, both along the Raritan and along the two streams?
- Where should connections between the Bound Brook riverfront and the Delaware and Raritan Canal on the south side of the river occur?
- How can the downtown best take advantage of future pedestrian and bicycle activity along the riverfront?
- What are the best locations for boats to access the river? Is it possible for a boat club to locate along the river and where would be the best location for a boat house?

Table 5: Parking

Questions for Discussion:

- How critical is parking to downtown revitalization?
- Assuming there is or will be a parking deficit, what type of parking solution or solutions do you see working in the downtown?
- Would revenue-sharing arrangements to convert private parking areas to public-private parking be advantageous? Where?
- Can the municipal lots in front of train station be re-configured to provide more spaces? How?
- Should the Borough establish and enforce a remote parking policy for downtown employees?
- Should the Borough convert strategically located “soft” or vacant properties to public parking? Which?
- Should the Borough seek to create additional parking capacity in strategic locations as part of redevelopment projects? Which?
- Where should bicycle parking be created?
- What is the most appropriate parking solution for the Brook Theatre?



Summary of Visioning

The following is a summary of the ideas discussed at the visioning workshop. Not all of these ideas have found a place in the downtown plan – some have been considered, and discarded as unfeasible, inappropriate or not timely, while others are simply not appropriate within the scope of an urban design plan.

Downtown: General

- Create a unified design code to reinforce the image of downtown.
- Maintain the mixed use nature of the downtown.
- Maintain the character of the downtown by respecting the scale of adjoining buildings.
- Define the primary downtown as the area between Mountain Avenue to the west, the library to the north, Bolmer Avenue to the east, and the railroad tracks to the south.



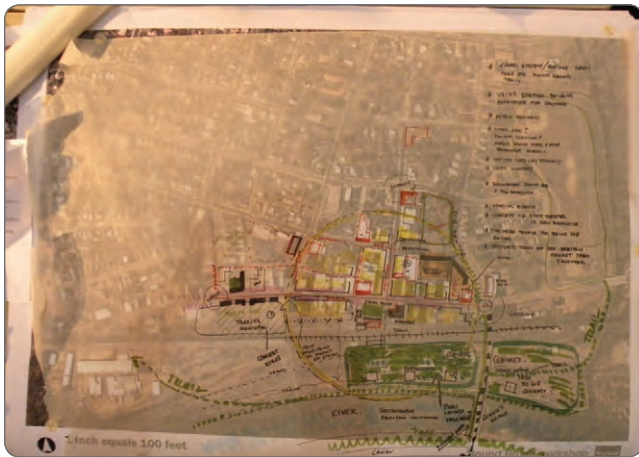
Downtown: Activities

- Suggestions for programming “a year in Bound Brook”:
 - January through February—Classic Film Festival (Brook Theatre?)
 - February through March—Washington Campground (Billian Legion Park?)
 - April through May—Park Planting Days, Raritan River Day, Cinco De Mayo, Battle of Bound Brook
 - June through August—Farmer’s Market
 - September—Community Festival, Bird Watching along Raritan River, Harvest Festival,
 - October—World Cup Soccer and Weekend Tournament
 - November—Day of the Dead
 - December—Wine Festival
- Graham Cracker Festival
- Wine Festival
- What type of businesses should the town be marketing to? (Basic services are provided on Rt. 28).
- Market the Bound Brook Downtown as a Historic Raritan River Downtown along with other Raritan River towns.
- Seek out and encourage the growth of niche businesses in Downtown that do not have to compete with the Bridgewater Commons Mall and Promenade.
- Include a health club near the train station.

- Occasionally close Hamilton Street to vehicular traffic to allow more pedestrian activities.
- Expand the existing reenactment of the Battle of Bound Brook.
- Encourage or seek out the development of a Trader Joe's on Main Street.
- Create a downtown cultural complex/node including the existing theater, as well as a new museum/learning center and other possible cultural/entertainment activities, such as a Raritan River museum.

Downtown Public Spaces

- Van Horne Plaza in front of the train station should be an expanded public space. Treat the train station as a gateway to downtown and make the Plaza a focal point of downtown.
- Create a larger public plaza or green space in front of the Train Station by reclaiming paved area – make it a focal point of downtown.
- Visually enhance to the greatest extent feasible the three gateways into Downtown: Main Street. at Church, intersection of Hamilton and High Street and roundabout.
- Further enhance the southern gateway to downtown with appropriate signage.
- Utilize public art to enhance the downtown.



Downtown Infill / Redevelopment

- Redevelop vacant land adjacent to Dunkin' Donuts with a new mixed-use building.
- Redevelop the vacant parcel at the northwest corner of Main and Church Streets as a gateway into the downtown. Create a public space with or without an associated building.
- The current municipal building is overcrowded and the Borough will need to expand soon – consider moving some municipal services to a currently unoccupied downtown building, such as the 1st National Bank Building.
- Redevelop the vacant lot adjacent to the Voorhees building.
- Repurpose the 1st National Bank Building into a restaurant such as a French restaurant called the “Left Bank”.

Downtown Circulation

- Plant more street trees and create a well signed trail system throughout the Borough that links all public spaces.

- Provide bike lanes throughout town, encourage Middlesex Borough to do the same and link the two systems.
- Create a trail system along the Raritan River and extending throughout town, connecting the Cemetery, the (rehabilitated) old Stone Bridge and other historic or scenic sites.
- Create a pedestrian extension to Second Street east through the Theatre parking lot by the Brook theater and explore possible pedestrian connections through the cemetery.
- Organize the pedestrian network through careful visual linkages, wayfinding and mapping.
- Strongly encourage transit-related pedestrian activity to stay on Main Street. rather than along the backs of buildings and through the parking lot.

Areas South of East Main Street

- Address “Railroad Quiet Zones” issue. Engage Federal Railroad Administration, with NJ Transit as partner.
- Existing land uses such as the truck facility and self storage are not appropriate long term uses for this location and should be removed.
- Restore and enhance the historic Stone Bridge and the area around it.
- Relocate the Brook industrial park south of the railroad tracks that is currently accessed from South Main Street.
- Relocate the railroad tracks located furthest to the South (closest to the river) closer to the other four.
- Create a walkway along the railroad right-of-way, like at Convent Station near Morristown.
- Extend the Train Station tunnel under the tracks to provide access to a riverfront park. This would require some sort of flood control device to be installed in the tunnel. An elevated pedestrian bridge is also viable but a less desirable alternative.
- The area south of the train tracks should include community gardens as well as a celebration of Bound Brook’s rich history.
- Encourage organic agriculture to supply local restaurants.
- The Northeast Community Gardens Association is moving to nearby Duke Farms.
- Create restaurants on stilts adjacent to the Raritan River to take advantage of river views.
- Replace the industrial activities on the South side of the tracks with an Arts Community that would benefit from cheaper rents (the power lines on the South side of the tracks compromise its attractiveness for residential uses other than less expensive artist housing/ studios).

Raritan River

- The Borough has a love hate relationship with the River.
- Get people to the water!
- Rebuild the historic boat house along the Raritan River.
- Study feasibility and location for a possible boat launch access and fishing pier(s).
- Explore a potential new pedestrian bridge over the Raritan River connecting historical trails.
- Get involved with the Rutgers Sustainable Raritan River Initiative.

Parking

- There is a perceived parking deficit in the downtown. As vacant buildings find new uses and new users, that perceived deficit may become a real deficit. This is a good time to develop and implement a long-term parking strategy which should focus on both making better use of existing parking resources and creating new parking in strategic locations.
- Create a revenue sharing agreement to encourage land owners to convert private parking to public parking.
- Conduct a driveway consolidation study to identify where they can be consolidated, thereby gaining additional on-street parking.
- Maximize existing surface parking. Redesign and re-stripe parking, both on-street and off-street, using more up to date standards; create a “parking squad” to evaluate specific opportunities and determine the ideal candidates for restriping.
- Create and enforce better landscaping standards for parking.
- Build a parking deck immediately East of the Brook Theater
- Develop parking solutions for Brook Theatre matinees. Use vacant parking at local churches and hotel during matinees. Develop cooperative agreements, i.e. exchange parking rights for free advertisement in Brook Theatre programs.
- Explore the potential for new parking lots on south side of railroad tracks – perhaps coordinating with reclamation of the Raritan River edge. The potential relocation of a rail freight line in this area would help.
- Seek to maximize on and off-street parking through re-striping or possible elimination of curb cuts. Streamline the implementation process and create a “team” for this purpose.
- Examine parking enforcement practices – are they too aggressive for current economic climate?
- Examine the impact of removing parking meters from the streets.
- Examine the use of fringe or remote parking lots for downtown employees so they don’t park in spaces intended for shoppers / restaurant customers. Or, find other suitable areas downtown for employees to park.
- Seek to use under-utilized parking areas for public / shared parking (i.e. service station across from Post Office, lot on corner of Hamilton and Main).
- Engage the borough’s Parking Commission. Have them share ideas about parking and have a liaison from the borough and the business community attend regular meetings, and vice versa.
- Enhance the current “alley system” to improve access to mid-block parking areas.
- Expand bicycle parking. Also, consider “rent-a-bike” racks around the borough such as in Paris.
- Convert vacant properties to parking lots (i.e. “old diner” and lot next to Dunkin Donuts).
- Focus on the area in front of train station – need to organize and make more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Eliminate both curb cuts in front of train station and relocate all traffic to a point across from Maiden Lane.
- Prepare a parking map / brochure / and web site that includes “lots” of information about parking in Bound Brook – where, how much, regulations, etc.
- Need more landscaping in and around parking lots.



Billian Legion Park

- The park should be multi-use for the varying user communities in Bound Brook.
- The existing informal soccer field should be formalized into either two small soccer fields or on regulation size field.
- Allow / encourage food trucks, and perhaps permanent or seasonal structures for food vendors.
- Music Stage - possible outdoor theater at the northwest corner of Billian Legion Park.
- Appropriate the empty bank building north of the storm water easement for park uses — replace the baseball field that was removed by the outdoor theater.
- Plant various flowering trees.
- Encourage the use of levee tops as a trail system through increased access and possible paved trails.
- Develop a pedestrian bridge across the Bound Brook from Billian Legion Park to Middlesex Borough.

Synthesis of Input

The many ideas contributed during the public process, coupled with the findings and results of the technical analysis, were distilled and evaluated over many months of discussion with the Borough’s EDAC. Additional meetings were held with the Borough’s Recreation Committee – in charge of development of Billian Legion Park – and with the Borough’s Parking Authority.

A draft urban design plan was presented to Borough Council, and subsequently to the Borough’s Planning Board, and additional comments were solicited.

The next chapters summarize the plan, its rationale and its provisions, followed by the actions considered necessary to implement the plan and make it a reality.

V. Downtown Urban Design Plan

An urban design plan is a document that establishes the basic framework for physical development of an area. It is not regulatory, although it can and should be implemented through appropriate local regulations. It addresses the desired general distribution of land uses, but it is not a zoning plan. The illustrative concept plans and other drawings which generally are part of an urban design plan indicate intentions with respect to desired locations of new streets and public spaces, parking, generalized building footprints, building height, location of public buildings and other civic uses, conservations and recreation areas, and so forth.

This plan proposes both large-scale, transformative interventions and small-scale, more intimate changes. The more ambitious changes will likely take longer to be implemented, whereas the smaller-scale changes may occur more quickly; but this could change depending upon the level of public and private resources devoted to plan implementation. Some changes will depend largely on public sector initiative and resources to come about; others will depend entirely on private sector motivation.

This plan recognizes that the scale and texture of Bound Brook's downtown should not be altered in radical ways. The Borough has shown no desire for much taller or bigger buildings or for a dramatic change in character. There is the recognition that some parcels are underutilized and some uses do not have a long-term future in a downtown. Underutilized surface parking lots and single-use, utilitarian industrial or commercial structures can be replaced with benefit as the market strengthens and demand increases.



The downtown plan envisions an outdoor dining area or room for an addition adjacent to a refurbished Brook Hotel.

The plan also recognizes that Bound Brook's downtown needs to attract additional patrons in order to thrive. The downtown is not centrally located within the community and it must compete with nearby Route 28 businesses, which are more central. The downtown must also contend with Main Street's historic location, parallel to the railroad tracks and to the industrial and rail-related activities located on the south side of the tracks. There are only two blocks of residential to the south of the tracks. This means potential downtown patrons come from the north, and the south side of Main Street generates almost no foot traffic. The plan seeks to address this in several ways: by creating new activities and attractions to the south of the tracks, by vastly improving the opportunities to cross the tracks, and by seeking to attract additional patrons from the east (Middlesex Borough), from the south (South Bound Brook) and potentially from further away, ie users of the long distance bicycle trails.

The plan is presented primarily through three graphic representations: a regional open space framework map, a stage one redevelopment map and a stage two redevelopment map.

Regional Open Space Framework

The Regional Open Space Framework map focuses on downtown Bound Brook's strategic location relative to a larger-scale, virtually continuous network of open space and natural systems which are largely in place but are difficult to access and at present actually present barriers in terms of access to the downtown. The map identifies a series of proposals designed to remove these barriers and convert this network of open space and natural systems into pleasant conduits providing enhanced access to the downtown.

The Bound Brook to the east, the Raritan River to the south, and the Middle Brook to the west constitute natural barriers in terms of access to the downtown. The preserved open space on both sides of these stream corridors does not contain a trail system to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle circulation, and opportunities to cross these stream corridors are limited. There are numerous rail crossings, but no pedestrian crossings. For the same reasons, there is no convenient and safe public access to the riverfronts.

The Regional Open Space Framework map indicates a series of proposals intended to place the downtown within a regional trail system and make it more accessible to visitors and patrons coming from the east, south and west. It also seeks to make public access to the water convenient and safe at select locations.



Storefront design can be informative, playful and attractive.

Rails to Trails

Perhaps the boldest and potentially most consequential proposal is to vacate the southernmost CSX freight rail line (Port Reading Secondary) and repurpose it as a bicycle and pedestrian trail. Ideally, this line would merge in Bridgewater with the CSX line immediately to the north and regain its current right-of-way once it has crossed the Bound Brook in the Borough of Middlesex. The existing rail line would be repurposed as a rails-to-trails project and the two rail crossings would be repurposed as pedestrian and bicycle crossings.

Somerset County has been investigating the viability of vacating a portion of this freight rail right-of-way, a proposal first discussed in the County's 2007 freight study Advancing Inter-Modal Freight Opportunities Within Central Somerset County. The County's objective is to eliminate the current grade crossing at South Main Street. Bound Brook's proposal is highly compatible with the County's, regardless of the exact locations where the two lines would merge and then separate.

An additional benefit derived from vacating this section of rail line is that it is necessary in order to have access to the 1730's stone bridge,



March 14, 2010
 Proposed Illustration, Exhibit 2.0a.mxd
 Proposed Park Land Improvements 19.2.ac

BOUND BROOK URBAN DESIGN PLAN
 SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
 Regional Open Space Framework

- 1. Convert existing rail bridge to ped/bike use & connect trail system to Bridgewater Township
- 2. Existing at-grade crossing
- 3. Existing at-grade crossing
- 4. Existing levee system
- 5. Proposed ped/bike rail crossing
- 6. Convert existing rail line & convert to ped/bike trail
- 7. Proposed ped/bike rail crossing
- 8. Proposed access road
- 9. Proposed gateway feature
- 10. Existing flood wall
- 11. Proposed at-grade crossing
- 12. Proposed redesign of Van Horne Plaza
- 13. Reclaimed Park Land - +5.7 ac
- 14. Connect ped/bike trail under Queen's Bridge
- 15. Proposed commuter parking - 94 spaces
- 16. Proposed at-grade pedestrian crossing
- 17. Stone Bridge Park - +5.4 ac
- 18. Proposed Museum/ Amphitheater/ Exhibit space
- 19. Unearth historic stone bridge
- 20. Proposed parking - 87 spaces
- 21. Proposed picnic pavilions
- 22. Open lawn area
- 23. Proposed boating facility
- 24. Convert existing rail bridge to ped/bike use & connect to Middlesex Borough
- 25. Picnic
- 26. Connect proposed ped/bike trail to South Bound Brook
- 27. Connect proposed trail to existing Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park Tow Path
- 28. Connect proposed ped/bike trail under rail bridge
- 29. Billianton Park
- 30. Approved park enhancements
- 31. Existing Levee
- 32. Utilize levee system to continue ped/bike trail
- 33. Connect ped/bike system to Middlesex Borough with proposed bridge
- 34. Community Gardens (municipally owned)

BOUND BROOK DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN
 SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
 Regional Open Space Framework

part of which is buried under the track. The proposed Stone Bridge Park (see below) would be considerably enhanced, as a result.

This action, if implemented will yield over one mile of new riverfront trail. The long term intention is to link this trail, to the west, with the Regional Center Greenway, a Somerset County project which seeks to create a greenway from Raritan Borough, through Somerville and on to Bridgewater. This greenway would link the following places and activities:

- **In Raritan** – the proposed Willow Walk development in the northwestern corner of the borough and the Somerset Shopping Center with downtown Raritan and the Raritan train station.
- **In Somerville** – the Torpey Athletic Complex with residential neighborhoods; Somerville High School and VanDerveer Elementary School along the Peters Brook Greenway; and the Somerville Train Station, Downtown Somerville, Exchange Field and the Cornell Skate Park along the Peters Brook Greenway.
- **In Bridgewater** – Vanderhaven Farms, the 4-H Center and North Branch Park; Bridgewater-Raritan High School, Bridgewater Commons, Recreational Fields at Prince Rogers Avenue and the Somerset County/Bridgewater Library; and the Bridgewater Promenade, TD Bank Ballpark and Bridgewater Train Station.



Raritan River Park

Vacating the CSX (Port Reading Secondary) freight rail right-of-way is instrumental to creating a linear park along the Raritan riverfront, not because an active freight rail line is necessarily always incompatible with passive and active recreational uses, or even civic uses, but rather because it occupies a strategic location along the riverfront. The Port Reading Secondary freight rail line, in some locations, runs less than 50 feet from the top of the Raritan River bank. The 100-foot right-of-way extends all the way to the water, according to the Borough's tax maps. Even if the Borough were able to acquire an easement along the waterfront, there would not be enough room for a meaningful park, even if linear. Vacating the Port Reading right-of-way will expand the park such that, at its narrowest, it will be over 100 feet from top of bank. It will also significantly open up the eastern end of the proposed park, near the mouth of the Bound Brook.

Given the linear nature of the proposed park, no active recreation facilities are proposed, other than the existing ball field which is currently accessed from West Main Street. A proposed trail and proposed pedestrian grade crossing will connect this facility with the riverfront trail. Another proposed pedestrian grade crossing would link the Eastbound NJ Transit platform with the riverfront trail, thereby providing the most direct route to and from the downtown.

Altogether, it is estimated that the Raritan River Park could comprise close to 60 acres, including lands on both sides of the tracks and the existing ball field.

This plan lays out only the broad framework and does not attempt to program the park. The park could provide a dignified setting for a public art and sculpture garden, if so desired, or for a variety of other uses.

The much disturbed natural landscape, after centuries of occupation by industrial and railroad activities, will require considerable attention. Once land acquisition has concluded, it is recommended that a careful planning process – engaging the community and informed by qualified landscape architects, naturalists, historians and civic leaders – take place to design the park in ways that remediate current disturbance, restore potential habitat and provide an appropriate setting for human enjoyment.



Existing vegetation should be carefully re-evaluated, and removed or replaced where appropriate. Natural water quality management techniques, such as bio-swales and rain gardens should be implemented along the riverfront and in other appropriate locations along the park to improve the quality of stormwater run-off. These regenerative efforts should be combined and reinforced with careful habitat restoration strategies in ways that combine a high quality nature experience with high quality cultural and recreational experiences: civic buildings and historic sites in a landscaped setting of lush gardens and productive habitat.

Conditions along the right-of-way for the CSX / NJ Transit West Trenton line – which the plan does not propose changes to – should also be carefully evaluated, with a view towards achieving both visual and environmental improvements, where possible.

Stone Bridge Park

The eastern end of the park, east of South Main Street, is envisioned as a historic and cultural area. Somerset County is pursuing the rehabilitation of the historic stone bridge, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites. Bound Brook's plan seeks to create a dignified setting for this important historic artifact, by removing the existing industrial building, relocating the Port Reading right-of-way and dedicating this area of approximately four acres to civic uses. The plan also identifies a site for a possible Raritan River museum / amphitheater / exhibit space and foresees picnic pavilions and open lawn.

The plan also anticipates water-dependent recreational uses in this general area in the form of a proposed public boating facility with storage for the local boat club, high school and other rowers; a put-in for kayaks, skulls and other small recreational boats; an observation platform / fishing pier; and 87 spaces of additional parking for park users, rowers and museum visitors.

It should be noted that a portion of the area reserved by the plan for the Stone Bridge Park is actually located in Middlesex Borough, even though it is on the western side of the Bound Brook. As such, Bound Brook will need to work cooperatively with its neighbor to pursue implementation. Similarly, the proposed pedestrian crossings

of the Bound Brook and the proposed extensions of the trail system to the east would also require active cooperation on the part of Middlesex Borough.

Access to the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park and towpath, located on the south side of the Raritan river in South Bound Brook, will continue to occur by way of Queen's Bridge and South Main Street. The plan anticipates a bicycle and pedestrian connection to Billian Legion Park, to the north, under the NJ Transit rail bridge over the Bound Brook. This trail would be extended on top of the levee that rings the east and north sides of the park.

Stage One Improvements

The Stage One map shows a number of public improvements and infill / redevelopment projects which are either already underway or can be accomplished without demolitions other than those required by projects already in the pipeline. This includes possible infill projects on vacant parcels or surface parking lots and public improvements, such as enhanced public spaces, improved circulation, parking and new park land.

The plan does not imply that Stage One improvements will necessarily precede Stage Two improvements. Depending upon market conditions, changes in the Borough's regulations and other relevant circumstances, some Stage Two actions may proceed sooner rather than later. Market-driven redevelopment of some industrial buildings, and their replacement with higher intensity and higher quality mixed-use structures can proceed immediately, under the right set of conditions. The distinction between Stages One and Two is simply a convenient way to distinguish those projects that are either already underway in some form or that would take place on vacant lots, from those projects that will first require demolition of existing structures and site clearance.

Stage One recognizes the Talmage Commons project where the Brass Rail restaurant was located at the western end of the downtown. A gateway feature (roundabout) is proposed for the intersection of Columbus Place with West Main Street. This gateway would mirror the existing eastern gateway, and facilitate access to and from Talmage Commons.

Infill sites that have been identified include:

- Two sites on the West Main Street
- One site on Easy Main Street
- One site on the corner of Main and John Streets
- One site on the corner of Main and Church Streets
- One site on the corner of Main and Hamilton Streets

The plan also recognizes the proposed "transit village" redevelopment project on East Main Street. This mixed-use project would be supported by a parking structure located along the tracks,



Community gardens take advantage of left-over parcels of land to strengthen neighborhood spirit and provide a local source of fresh produce. They can also play a role in food education, in partnership with local schools.

on the existing commuter surface parking lot. The parking structure would be shared by commuters, tenants and downtown patrons.

A new grade crossing of the NJ Transit tracks is proposed as an extension of Mountain Avenue. This crossing would provide more direct access from the downtown to the Brook Industrial Park property, which the plan proposes for eventual conversion to a green flex space/office employment center. A pedestrian connection from NJ Transit's eastbound platform to the Mountain Avenue extension is also proposed.

Stage One proposes the closure of East Street, between East Second and East Main Street. This right-of-way was made redundant with the construction of Bolmer Boulevard. Vacating this right-of-way will allow for the creation of a new building site anchoring the west side of Bolmer Boulevard. A lot fronting on Main Street is targeted for either outdoor dining or for a potential addition to the Brook Hotel.

Stage One also recognizes the redevelopment of the Bolmer site. A concept plan for parcels in this location shows three buildings, with two stories over ground floor parking. This site is in the floodplain and must abide by State and local restrictions regarding development on floodplains.

Altogether, and assuming current land development regulations – such as maximum building height – stay in place, it is estimated that Stage One could result in close to 300,000 square feet of new construction.



Railroad underpasses need not be dark and dingy. Creative visual treatments and appropriate lighting can make these otherwise dark spaces very attractive.

Stage Two Improvements

The Stage Two map is cumulative with respect to the Stage One map, that is to say, it incorporates all actions shown in Stage One. In addition, it contemplates market driven demolitions of a number of functional buildings with scant architectural or historic value, and their replacement with mixed-use buildings of a scale compatible with the existing downtown.

To reiterate, State One and Stage Two are not intended as sequential, and Stage Two actions can precede Stage One actions.

Stage Two assumes market-driven demolitions of approximately 145,000 square feet of industrial space on both sides of the tracks. It is anticipated that new construction in Stage Two – again assuming current development parameters, such as maximum building height, are maintained – could result in up to 480,000 square feet of new mixed-use (residential/retail/office/others) construction. These calculations take into account the rezoning and redevelopment of the industrial area south of the railroad tracks, as recommended in the section on implementation, which could accommodate up to 300,000 square feet of new research/ office/lab/flex space.

BOUND BROOK URBAN DESIGN PLAN

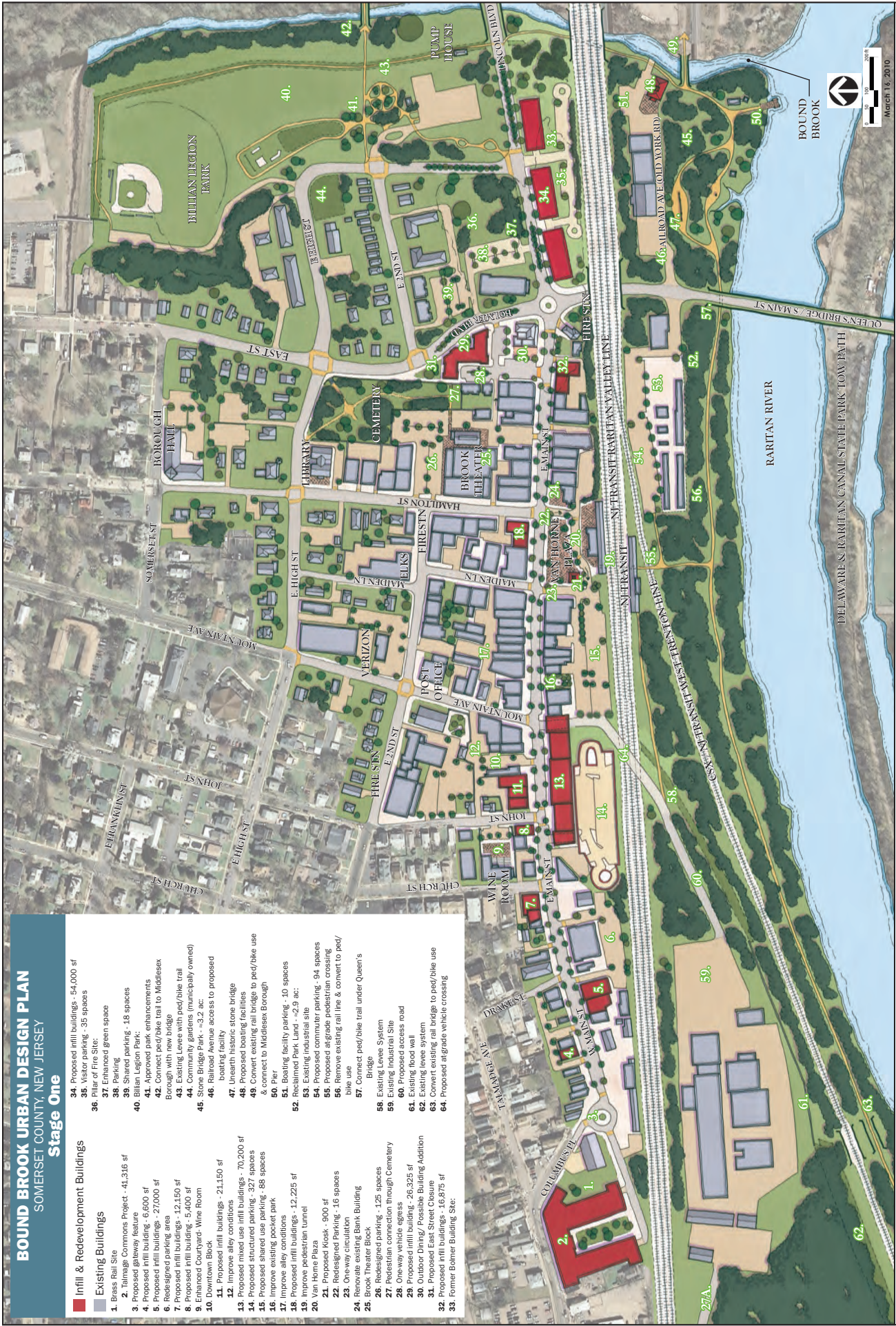
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Stage One

Infill & Redevelopment Buildings

Existing Buildings

1. Brass Rail Site
2. Tainage Commons Project - 41,316 sf
3. Proposed gateway feature
4. Proposed infill building - 6,600 sf
5. Proposed infill buildings - 27,000 sf
6. Redesignated parking area
7. Proposed infill buildings - 121,150 sf
8. Proposed infill building - 5,400 sf
9. Enhanced Courtyard - Wine Room
10. Downtown Block
11. Proposed infill buildings - 21,150 sf
12. Proposed alley conditions
13. Proposed mixed use infill buildings - 70,200 sf
14. Proposed structured parking - 327 spaces
15. Proposed shared use parking - 88 spaces
16. Improve existing pocket park
17. Improve alley conditions
18. Proposed infill buildings - 12,225 sf
19. Proposed pedestrian tunnel
20. Van Home Plaza
21. Proposed Kiosk - 900 sf
22. Redesignated Parking - 16 spaces
23. One-way circulation
24. Renovate existing Bank Building
25. Brook Theater Block
26. Redesignated parking - 125 spaces
27. Pedestrian connection through Cemetery
28. One-way vehicle egress
29. Proposed infill building - 26,325 sf
30. Outdoor Dining / Possible Building Addition
31. Proposed East Street Closure
32. Proposed infill buildings - 16,875 sf
33. Former Bolmer Building Site
34. Proposed infill buildings - 54,000 sf
35. Visitor parking - 35 spaces
36. Pillar of Fire Site
37. Enhanced green space
38. Shared parking - 18 spaces
39. Shared parking - 18 spaces
40. Billian Legion Park
41. Approved park enhancements
42. Connect ped/bike trail to Middlesex Borough with new bridge
43. Existing levee with ped/bike trail
44. Community gardens (municipally owned)
45. Stone Bridge Park - 3.2 ac
46. Railroad Avenue access to proposed boating facility
47. Unearth historic stone bridge
48. Proposed boating facilities
49. Convert existing rail bridge to ped/bike use
50. Ped. connect to Middlesex Borough
51. Boating facility parking - 10 spaces
52. Reclaimed Park Land - 2.9 ac
53. Existing industrial site
54. Proposed commuter parking - 94 spaces
55. Proposed at-grade pedestrian crossing
56. Remove existing rail line & convert to ped/bike use
57. Connect ped/bike trail under Queen's Bridge
58. Existing Levee System
59. Existing Industrial Site
60. Proposed access road
61. Existing flood wall
62. Existing levee system
63. Convert existing rail bridge to ped/bike use
64. Proposed at-grade vehicle crossing



RegionalPlanAssociation
 NCT

BOUND BROOK DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN
 SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
 Stage One

March 16, 2010
 0 50 100 200 ft
 Proposed Infill: 6,600 sf
 Proposed Redevelopment / Bldg. Trail: 24 miles
 Proposed Park Land Improvements: 15.3 ac
 Proposed Parking: 129 spaces



Regional Plan Association

BOUND BROOK URBAN DESIGN PLAN
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Stage Two

BOUND BROOK DOWNTOWN URBAN DESIGN PLAN
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Stage Two

Possible Demolition: 443,220 sf
Proposed Infill: 750,041 sf
Proposed Park, Land Improvements: 192,000 sf
Proposed Parking: 549 additional spaces

March 16, 2010

- Infill & Redevelopment Buildings**
- Existing Buildings**
- 1. Brass Rail Site
- 2. Talmage Commons Project - 41,316 sf
- 3. Proposed infill building - 6,600 sf
- 4. Proposed gateway feature
- 5. Proposed infill building - 9,375 sf
- 6. Proposed infill building - 81,300 sf
- 7. Proposed infill buildings - 12,150 sf
- 8. Proposed infill buildings - 45,675 sf
- 9. Enhanced courtyard - Wine Room
- 10. Proposed infill buildings - 5,400 sf
- 11. Downtown Block
- 12. Proposed infill buildings - 21,150 sf
- 13. Improve alley conditions
- 14. Proposed infill buildings - 70,200 sf
- 15. Proposed structured parking - 327 spaces
- 16. Improve alley conditions
- 17. Improve alley conditions - 12,225 sf
- 18. Improve existing pocket park spaces
- 19. New Home Plaza - 900 sf
- 20. Proposed parking - 168 spaces
- 21. Redesignated parking - 16 spaces
- 22. One-way circulation
- 23. Improve Theater Block
- 24. Redesignated parking - 125 spaces
- 25. Pedestrian connection through Cemetery
- 26. One-way vehicle access
- 27. Proposed infill building - 26,325 sf
- 28. Outdoor dining / possible building addition
- 29. East Street Closure
- 30. Proposed infill building - 16,875 sf
- 31. Proposed infill building - 15,000 sf
- 32. Former Bomber Building Site - 54,000 sf
- 33. Visitor parking - 35 spaces
- 34. Pillar of Fire Site
- 35. Enhanced green space
- 36. Shared parking - 18 spaces
- 37. Open lawn
- 38. Proposed building facility
- 39. Proposed parking - 87 spaces
- 40. Connect existing rail bridge to ped/bike use & connect to Middlesex Borough
- 41. Pie
- 42. Reclaimed Park Land - 5.7 ac
- 43. Connect ped/bike trail under Queen's Bridge
- 44. Proposed commuter parking - 94 spaces
- 45. Proposed at-grade pedestrian crossing
- 46. Remove existing rail line & convert to ped/bike use
- 47. Al-Grade vehicle crossing
- 48. Redeveloped Industrial Park - 6.9 ac
- 49. Proposed mixed use buildings - 261,150 sf
- 50. Parking - 152 spaces
- 51. Connect pedestrian trail
- 52. Proposed Access Road
- 53. Existing levee system
- 54. Convert existing rail bridge to ped/bike use
- 55. Existing flood wall
- 56. Former Bommer Building Site - 54,000 sf
- 57. Visitor parking - 35 spaces
- 58. Pillar of Fire Site
- 59. Enhanced green space
- 60. Shared parking - 18 spaces
- 61. Open lawn
- 62. Proposed building facility
- 63. Proposed parking - 87 spaces
- 64. Connect existing rail bridge to ped/bike use & connect to Middlesex Borough
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- 66. Reclaimed Park Land - 5.7 ac
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- 70. Remove existing rail line & convert to ped/bike use
- 71. Al-Grade vehicle crossing
- 72. Redeveloped Industrial Park - 6.9 ac
- 73. Proposed mixed use buildings - 261,150 sf
- 74. Parking - 152 spaces
- 75. Connect pedestrian trail
- 76. Proposed Access Road
- 77. Existing levee system
- 78. Convert existing rail bridge to ped/bike use
- 79. Existing flood wall

Stage Two anticipates the removal of all existing industrial buildings from the south side of the tracks. The single-story buildings which make up the Brook Industrial Park will be replaced by three blocks of three-story commercial buildings designed to attract a variety of high-skill, high value-added employment activities. This area is protected by the levee system. With a direct vehicular connection to the downtown core, by way of the proposed Mountain Avenue extension and the proposed new grade crossing, as well as a direct pedestrian connection to the eastbound platform of the NJ Transit train station, this new, high prestige employment center will be easily accessible to the downtown businesses and to both rail and bus transit. With direct access to miles of riverfront trails and a riverfront park, this location is ideal for businesses looking for a green location. This project could place 1,000 high paid jobs within a five-minute walk from downtown businesses.

Stage Two also anticipates the improvements to the Raritan River Park discussed previously.

Areas of Greater Detail

The plan contains more detailed proposals for two critically important areas of the downtown: Van Horne Plaza and the block surrounding Brook Theatre. These improvements can be executed as part of Stage One.

Van Horne Plaza

Van Horne Plaza is the ideal location for the Borough's most important downtown public space. It is centrally located within the downtown core and is pivotal in terms of both bus and rail transit, which are important generators of pedestrian activity. The tunnel leading to NJ Transit's eastbound platform, which is badly in need of upgrading, is also the most centrally located way to cross the tracks in the downtown. If an upgraded tunnel is extended under the CSX /

NJ Transit West Trenton line, or a pedestrian rail crossing is created at this location, this will also provide convenient access to the riverfront from the downtown and further underscore the importance of this public gathering and meeting place.

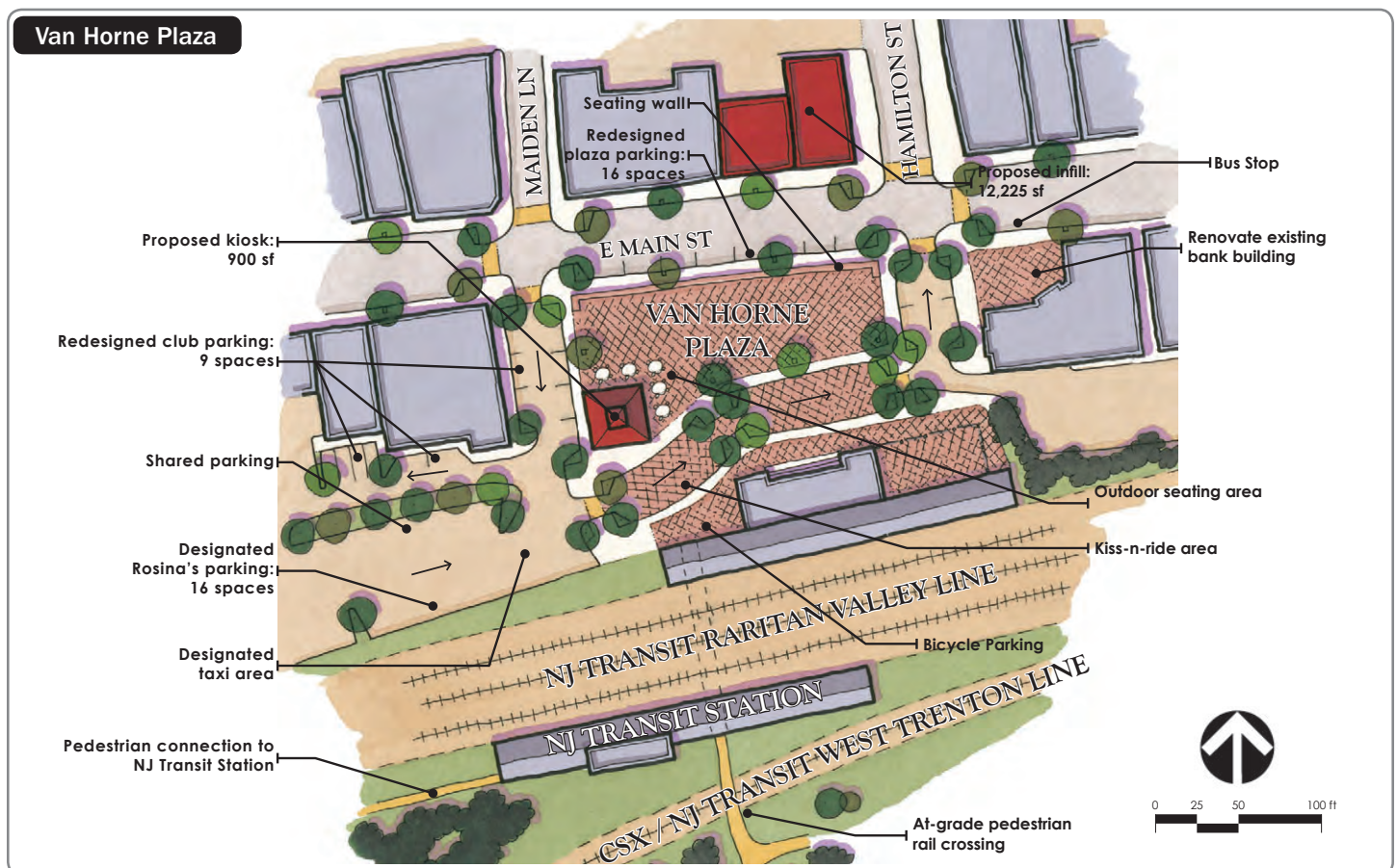
The plan seeks to create a people place where in the future important civic functions occur. Memorial Day parades, Halloween parades, holiday tree lighting, New Year's Eve and other special occasions might be celebrated there. The successful farmer's market can relocate there when the commuter parking lots are redeveloped. In addition, the future Van Horne Plaza should provide a pleasant and functional public space to be enjoyed by residents and visitors at all times and not just on special occasions.

The redesigned Van Horner Plaza will create about 1/3 of an acre of functional public space. It expands the existing plaza westward, removing a convenience store and incorporating some existing parking. The plan proposes to significantly reduce the existing blacktop and reclaim as much space as possible for the pedestrian.

The redesigned plaza will have a one-way circulation system, with entrance across from Maiden Lane and egress across from Hamilton Street. A textured pavement treatment applied both to the plaza, to the right-of-way between the plaza and the train station, and to the area around the train station building seeks to unify both sides of the street and create a "shared space" condition.

A kiss-n-ride area is created directly in front of the station, with a designated area for taxis immediately to the west. An expanded (and potentially covered) bicycle parking area is identified. The eastbound bus stop would be moved slightly to a location in front of the adjacent bank building. The plaza's textured paving would extend to the corner area in front of the bank, which would read as an extension to the plaza. An appropriate, publicly-oriented use should be encouraged to occupy the ground floor of the vacant bank building.

This plan encourages and supports the Borough's request to NJ Transit to upgrade handicap access to the station platforms and all transit facilities.



Brook Theater Block

The 900-seat Brook Theatre is a critical downtown anchor. When fully functioning, it has the potential to become a major player in the revitalization of the downtown. Located a scarce few hundred feet from the train station and Van Horne Plaza, it is ideally placed to help activate the downtown. However, it faces challenges, in terms of parking, accessibility and visibility.

The downtown urban design plan proposes to redesign the circulation system and parking in the vicinity of the Brook Theatre. The main thrust of the proposal is to empower the Borough to maximize parking resources by consolidating the management of existing public and privately-owned parking in the vicinity of the theater and to redesign the integrated system to improve circulation and increase parking.

At present, there is a considerable amount of parking around the theater. But much of it is private parking, associated with the shopping strip to the north. And a small pocket of public parking to the south is only accessible from East Main Street.

The proposal is to link all existing public and private parking around the theater. A redesigned circulation pattern would allow users to access the parking from both Hamilton Street and East Main Street, by way of a loop system. This redesigned parking scheme would increase the number of parking spaces available to a total of 125 spaces. In addition, a unified management would best take advantage of the efficiencies available as a result of the different peak demand times for the various uses served.

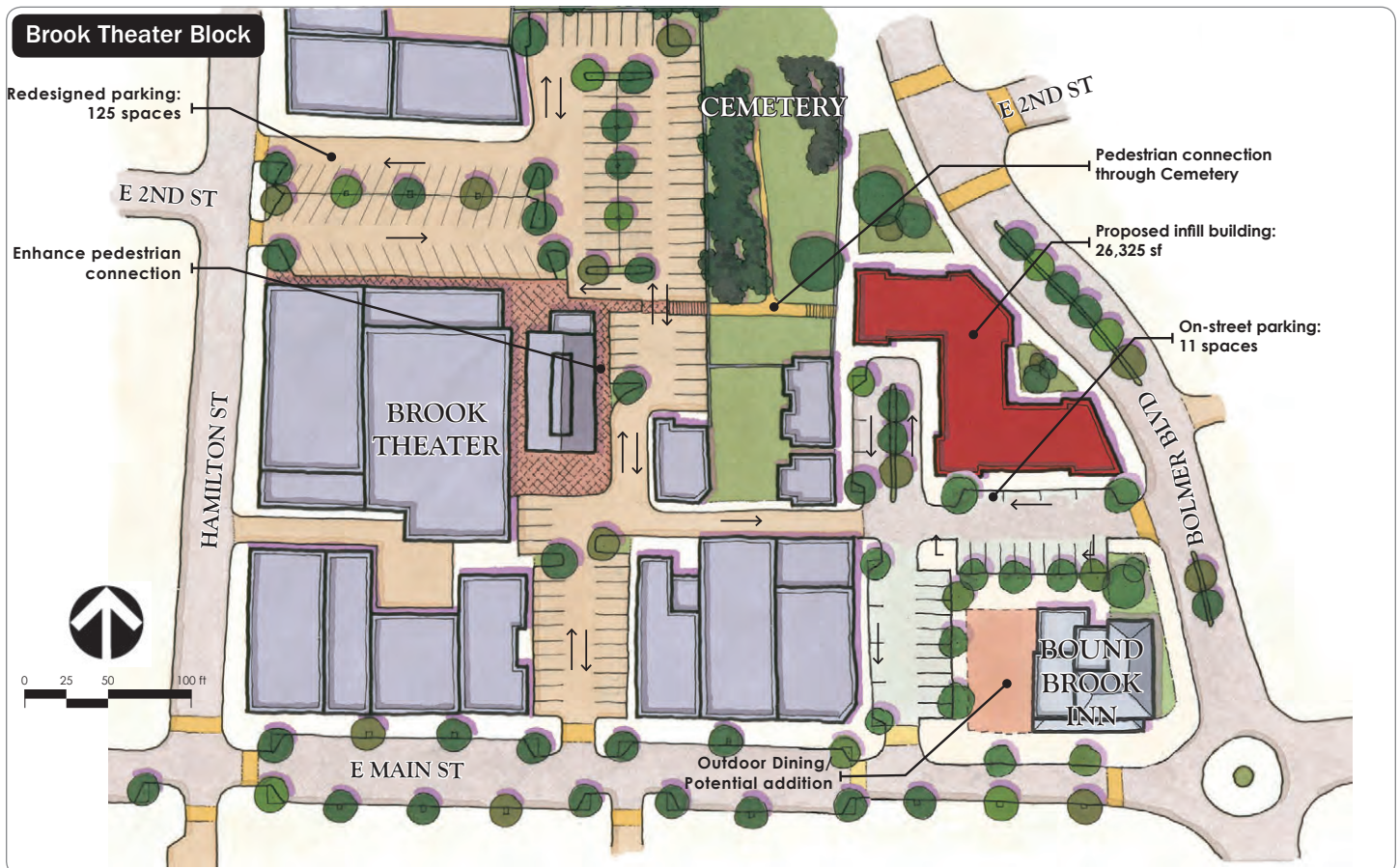
Not all of the Brook Theatre's parking needs will be satisfied by this proposal. On occasions when the theater is fully booked up, in particular for matinee events, there will be conflicts with other uses. The theater needs a parking plan that takes advantage of other parking resources, namely the significant amount of commuter parking on the south side of East Main Street which becomes available off-peak. However we are confident that with proper management the requisite

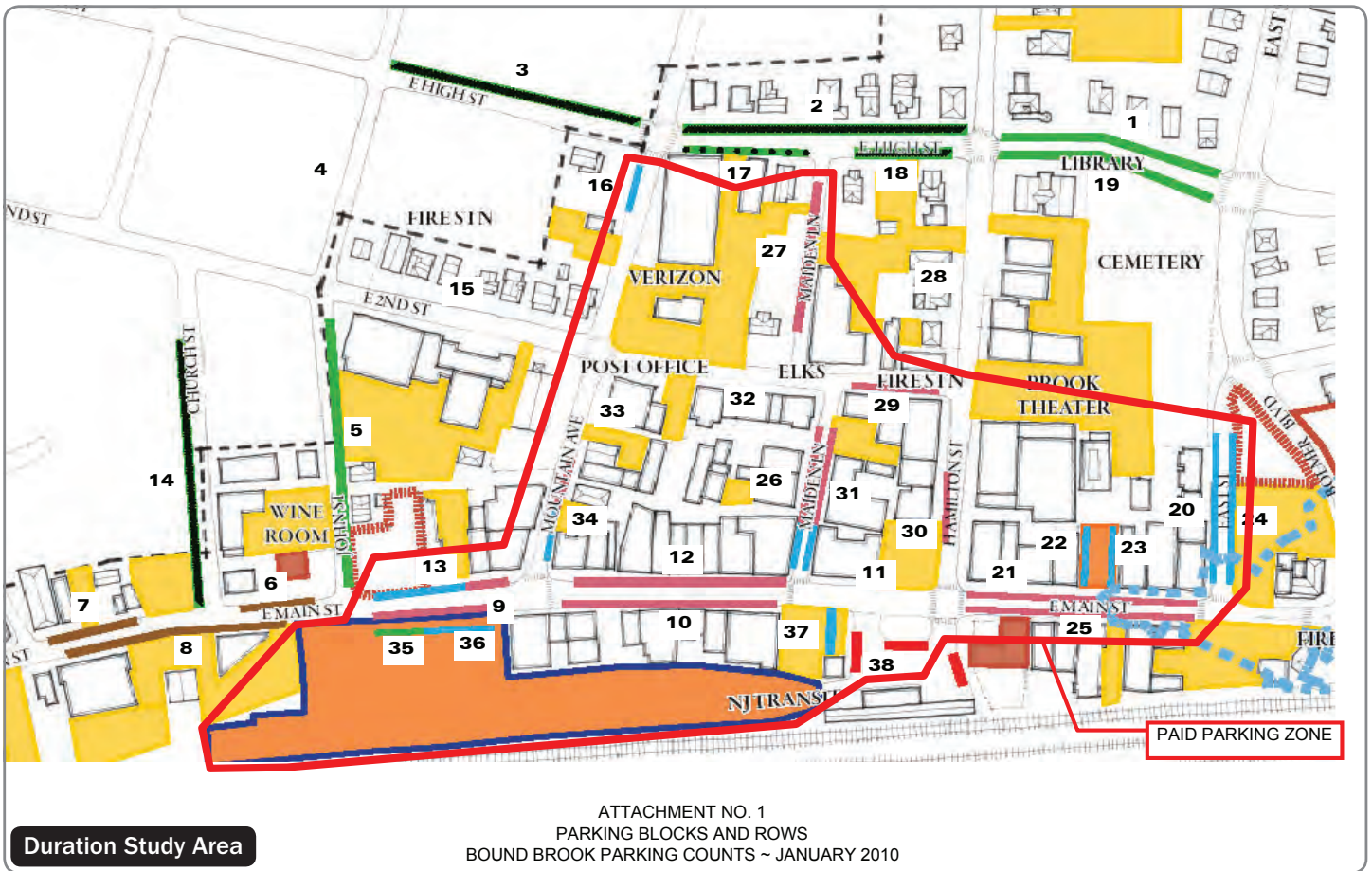
number of parking spaces can be made available to Brook Theatre patrons within a five-minute walk of the box office.

The conceptual plan for this block also includes a number of proposals designed to enhance pedestrian circulation. The area around the rear entrance to the theater is viewed as a new public place, with enhanced sidewalk space and textured paving. A new crosswalk linking Hamilton Street to the cemetery, again using textured paving, is viewed as a way to open up a dignified pedestrian access from the neighborhoods to the north and east. The cemetery's retaining wall along the theater's rear parking would be pierced, and a staircase introduced, to allow access from the higher level. (One parking stall will be sacrificed for this purpose.) The retaining wall, which is owned by the Borough, should be upgraded and enhanced with public art, perhaps a mural depicting a theme or themes relevant to the theater. Another option would be to turn it into a green, living wall to improve stormwater runoff and help soften the parking area.



Sidewalk displays of flowers and plants – either permanent or temporary – turn an otherwise sterile environment into a lush landscape.





Parking

The downtown urban design plan’s key parking strategy is to optimize existing public and private parking resources, by redesigning them with more functional layouts and creating seven shared public/private parking facilities providing a total of 771 spaces. The shared parking locations will be managed by the Borough, through the Parking Commission, with parking revenue shared by the Borough and the private property owners.

Some of these facilities already exist, some exist in separate public and private ownership and some need to be built, and will therefore require land acquisition and capital investment.

Some of these facilities are quite central to the core downtown area, while others are more remote. The plan suggests establishing a peripheral parking strategy for downtown employees, which might include providing free employee parking (with parking sticker or hang tag) at one of the parking lots located a few blocks from the downtown core. Prime downtown parking should be available to visitors, residents and commuters.

The downtown plan proposes the following shared parking facilities:

- 327 spaces in a parking deck associated with the “transit village” redevelopment project.
- 88 spaces in a redesigned NJ Transit surface commuter parking lot.
- 16 spaces in and around a redesigned Van Horne Plaza.
- 125 spaces behind The Brook Theatre, created by merging currently disconnected public and private parking lots.
- A new commuter parking lot with 94 spaces on the south side of the tracks and accessed from South Main Street.
- A new parking lot with 87 spaces for visitors to the Raritan River Park and Stone Bridge Park accessed from South Main Street.
- 18 spaces in a small lot to the north of Pillar of Fire building.

- 52 spaces at Billian Legion Park.

Our studies indicate that, overall, there are a sufficient number of parking spaces in the core area of Bound Brook’s downtown to accommodate current levels of parking demand. However, the demand for mid- (two to four hours) and long-term (greater than four hours) parking in the downtown exceeds the current supply.



Kiosks animate public spaces and provide convenient shopping and services.

To address this, it is recommend that 30 to 35 parking spaces that are currently free or metered with a “two hour limit” be converted to “four hour limit” or “10 hour limit” to accommodate the measured demand in downtown Bound Brook created by both employers and employees of downtown businesses. The final number and location of these spaces should be developed with community input, but they should not displace prime customer parking. Commuters

generally require 12-hour parking, so the 10-hour limit should target downtown employers and employees, not additional commuters.

It is recommended that the Borough's enforcement program be revisited and that policy decisions be made regarding same including: who provides it; at what levels; where; amount (\$) of fines; etc.

The Borough should consider establishing a revised pricing policy, with recommendations on a comprehensive, consistent pricing and enforcement strategy for the downtown (i.e. standardize meter fees throughout portions of the downtown and provide guidelines for collecting consistent data that will help to evaluate pricing and enforcement policies).

The Borough may also wish to consider establishing a different management strategy for the NJ Transit lot, including overnight parking.

The Borough should undertake a comprehensive inventory of driveways and driveway easements in the downtown core, with a view towards indentifying opportunities for driveway consolidation. The Parking Authority should engage the relevant property owners and, working with legal counsel and engineering support, secure shared driveway agreements.

The Borough may consider in certain locations converting from the current system of individual parking meters, which are unsightly and constitute obstructions on the sidewalks, to a centralized system akin to the "muni-meter" system used in New York City and elsewhere. In this system, a centrally-located payment station collects fares for a finite number of parking spaces. The receipt is then displayed on the inside of the vehicle's windshield. This system can be designed to accept both credit cards and a pre-paid "smart card", freeing the users from the need to have change. A careful cost-benefit analysis should be conducted to assess the financial feasibility of this option, since "muni-meters" usually require a minimum of 75 cents or \$1 dollar per hour rates for the machines to "pay for themselves".



Redevelopment of the industrial area to the south of the rail tracks should seek to attract a high-quality, high-tech employment center that will put 1,000 high-skilled jobs within a short walk from the downtown.

VI. Implementation

Master Plan

It is recommended that the Borough's Land Use Board adopt this Downtown Urban Design Plan as an element of the Borough Master Plan. Incorporating the Downtown Plan into the Master Plan will indicate support from the Board, create a guiding framework for public actions and provide an immediate benchmark against which to evaluate development proposals directed to the Land Use Board.

Redevelopment Plan

To facilitate implementation of the downtown urban design plan, it is recommended that the Borough's Redevelopment Plan be amended in a number of ways.

The following modifications to the existing Redevelopment Area 1 provisions are proposed:

- Residential uses should be limited to the second floor or above.
- Eliminate the requirement that residential uses be limited to studios and one-bedrooms.
- Clarify maximum building height. Currently the Redevelopment Plan provisions still in place for Area 1 indicates three stories as both the minimum and the maximum building height; but confusingly also refers to housing above the third story. It establishes 40 feet as the minimum building height and 45 feet as the maximum. And it does not appear to consider buildings with flat roofs. The Redevelopment Plan provisions for Area 2 establish different maximum building heights for each of the sub-areas.
- Eliminate the requirement that the third story of all buildings be set back 10 feet from the front facade.
- Re-evaluate minimum required parking ratios and clarify rules for shared parking and mechanisms for satisfying parking requirements off-site.

The following are proposed modifications to the Redevelopment Area 2 provisions:

- Eliminate the requirement that uses in Sub-Area 1 be limited to 1.4 acres of open space and .75 acres of surface parking.
- Clarify, re-evaluate and amend as necessary the "transit village overlay" district and transfer its applicability to Redevelopment Area 1.
- Consider re-including the industrial district south of the tracks within Redevelopment Area 2.

Land Use Ordinance

The downtown plan's study area is largely contained within two underlying zoning districts. The area to the south of the tracks is all zoned I-Industrial. The area north of the tracks is largely zoned B-R Business-Residential. The rest of the study area north of the B-R district falls within the O-B (Office Business) zoning districts, which permits professional offices and single-family housing on lots of ¼ acre or more, as well as a very small section zoned R-4, which permits one and two-family homes on lots of 5,000 square feet or larger. This area is occupied with a mix of small-scale residential and institutional uses,

such as churches and schools. No changes are proposed for the O-B or R-4 portions of the study area.

The downtown urban design plan proposes the following modifications to the Land Use Ordinance:

- The I-P Industrial Park district (section 21-10.17) should be eliminated in its entirety. There is no public support or planning rationale to justify the continued, long term presence of industrial activities in the area south of the tracks. Two reasons explain this historic location: proximity to the river and access to the rail freight. Neither is valid today. The types of industrial activities which take place in this area today could just as easily locate elsewhere. These activities should be encouraged to relocate, to make room for both the new riverfront park as well as for higher value-added, higher skilled economic activities.
- In lieu of the current I-P district, the Borough should create a new GE – Green Employment district, allowing a variety of permitted uses, such as office, labs, R+D and flex space. This district would be limited to the general area currently occupied by the Brook Industrial Park. The new district would allow building heights up to three stories or 45 feet and would have minimum required parking ratios to match the permitted new uses.
- The Borough should also create a new RRP - Raritan River Park zone encompassing the rest of the former I-P district. Permitted uses in this district would include civic buildings, public art, park-related structures, kiosks, and other similar public uses. Conditional uses might include seasonal activities, such as arts fairs or book fairs, vendor food trucks and other similar activities.



Ample bicycle parking at key destinations encourages non-motorized travel.

- The B/R - Business/Residential District (Section 21-10.15) should be adjusted to expand the range of permitted uses to include housing (as a permitted, not a conditional, use); hotels; bed and breakfasts; and potentially others. The Borough should re-evaluate the justification for certain housing requirements currently in place; and may also seek to change some of the bulk standards and other such requirements.
- The Borough should re-evaluate and adjust, as needed, the parking standards applicable to these districts (section 21-10.9c). These should be made more consistent and brought up to date, recognizing that all uses benefit from a pedestrian-oriented, transit-friendly downtown location and, as such, lower standards can be justified. The parking section should recognize the benefits of shared parking and encourage shared parking solutions, both on-site and off-site.

- Finally, and in order to promote the increasingly popular green energy systems and other green approaches to buildings and both public and private spaces, the Borough should conduct a general audit of its Land Use Ordinance to determine whether there are provisions that would discourage or penalize the application of these systems in appropriate locations. Most municipal land use ordinances pre-date the widespread interest in roof-mounted solar collectors, wind powered generators and other clean energy systems and do not recognize them, often leading to the need to obtain variances.

Other Development Standards

New Jersey has statewide uniform Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS), which were adopted as part of the Municipal Land Use Law and supersede local standards.

The RSIS determine residential parking standards, residential street widths and cross-section configurations and many other design aspects, including stormwater management in residential projects. The RSIS are generally not appropriate to older, more compact communities and downtowns such as Bound Brook.

Fortunately, the statute contains a procedure that allows a municipality, under certain circumstances, to petition for a “special area standard” from the Site Improvement Advisory Board. Bound Brook qualifies for a special area standard with respect to parking and other design standards.

The Planning Board should carefully evaluate the extent to which the RSIS have jurisdiction in the downtown – they do not have jurisdiction over mixed-use environments, for example – and determine whether an application for a special area standard is warranted. While parking is perhaps the most obvious issue, stormwater management may also be critical, as the RSIS do not recognize the current trend toward non-engineered systems that rely increasingly on green roofs; bio-swales; pervious surfaces in streets, parking lots, courtyards and other shared common spaces; rain barrels; and other strategies to increase on-site retention, infiltration and re-use of rain, decrease run-off and improve water quality.



Rain gardens and permeable pavements soften the built environment and perform valuable water quality and recharge functions.

Design Guidelines

The Borough has adopted two sets of design guidelines as part of its master plan: the 2001 Design Guidelines prepared by Ford Farewell Mills and Gatsch Architects; and the guidelines contained in the 2003 Downtown Revitalization Study by Kitchen and Associates. Together, these documents offer a sound general design framework, as well as specific ideas about façade studies, streetscape improvements and signage.

The Borough has also recently adopted a historic preservation ordinance and created a historic preservation commission, which may create its own design guidelines.

It is recommended that these documents be reviewed and reconciled with the design criteria contained in the Land Development Ordinance and in the Redevelopment Plan. In addition, all documents should be scrutinized with respect to whether they help or hinder the application in Bound Brook of emerging green technologies, such as renewable energy systems and non-engineered storm water management techniques.

In particular, the streetscape design standards should be updated to incorporate the latest best practices in terms of both street tree planting – specifying structural soils in tree planters, where appropriate, to provide load-bearing capacity for sidewalks and a better growing medium for deep tree root systems – as well as non-structural stormwater management techniques, such as rain gardens, cisterns, green roofs and pervious pavements. The entire alley system, and associated parking areas, should be targeted for conversion to pervious pavement, as the opportunities arise.

The Borough should have a coherent set of regulations and guidelines that are consistent with each other and with the Borough’s stated policy objectives.



Living walls help conceal large blank walls and soften the built landscape.

Wayfinding

A new wayfinding scheme will greatly assist new visitors to circulate within the downtown and adjacent area and easily find their desired locations. The wayfinding scheme should be graphically compelling and relate to Bound Brook's history and character. The system should be designed to serve both motorists and pedestrians. In addition to identifying and guiding visitors to key features, the wayfinding system should be designed to be expandable, allowing new features and destinations to be easily added, as they come on-line.

The "wayfinding district" should have an expansive geographic scope, reaching up to Route 28, in order to draw patrons arriving from that direction. An emphasis on wayfinding should be placed at the downtown's eastern and western gateways, as well as at the train station and bus stops.

The wayfinding scheme (directional signs, maps and diagrams) should be reinforced by distinctive streetscape treatments in and around the downtown, including special landscaping and public art installations.



Well designed and easy to interpret wayfinding systems are very helpful to visitors seeking to navigate an unfamiliar landscape. The elements of the wayfinding system – with either a historic or contemporary flair – should constitute an attractive streetscape presence.

Capital Improvements

The downtown urban design plan calls for a variety of capital improvements – such as new pedestrian and bicycle bridges and new pedestrian and vehicular rail crossings. These are expensive and will require time-consuming regulatory approvals from State and Federal agencies. It is not anticipated that these improvements will all be carried out at once; and they will likely require a combination of Federal and State funding sources, in addition to whatever local contributions can be found.

The public expressed strong support for having the Borough pursue "quiet zone" designation for the area of the downtown served by rail grade crossings of NJ Transit's Raritan Valley line. The Borough should engage the relevant local, State and Federal agencies – in this case the NJDOT, NJ Transit, Somerset County, NJTPA and the Federal Railroad Administration – along with competent professional assistance to initiate the process of negotiating the regulatory approvals.

The Borough should work with NJ Transit to pursue the proposed commuter parking on the south side of the tracks.

Vacating all or part of the southernmost CSX (Port Reading) rail track and redirecting existing freight movements to the CSX/NJ Transit West Trenton line immediately to the north will present a considerable challenge and will require persistence and discipline. If the rail operator can be convinced to accept this action, it is likely that CSX will require the acquisition of the right-of-way and associated rail crossings.

The engineering studies and capital improvements associated with track removal and bridge re-purposing, and the design and construction of a new pedestrian and bicycle trail will likely rely largely on public funding. Federal funding may be available through a reauthorized federal Surface Transportation Act, in particular the Transportation Enhancement set-aside funding, if available in the future. The Borough should work with the non-profit Rails to Trails Conservancy and other knowledgeable advisors to devise a strategy for acquiring funding for these purposes.

The improvements associated with the proposed Raritan River Park will be almost entirely publicly funded and will almost certainly occur over an extended timeframe. There will be costs associated with land acquisition or with the purchase of conservation easements; the purchase of existing industrial buildings, business relocation and building demolition; as well as park design, construction and maintenance. The State of New Jersey has funding programs to assist local governments and non-profits with open space acquisition and park development. Federal funding may also be available. Somerset County may provide funding to advance the Stone Bridge Historic Park concept. The Borough may wish to pursue institutional or non-profit partnerships to develop the Raritan River museum and/or other civic buildings which may locate in the park.

The Borough should continue to pursue grant funding for streetscape improvements for Main Street and key side streets.

Finally, the Borough should establish a close working relationship and partnership with the Borough of Middlesex and Middlesex County to pursue funding and regulatory approval for the proposed bicycle and pedestrian improvements across the Bound Brook linking the two municipalities.



High quality public art that doubles as street furniture animates the landscape and helps create a strong sense of place.

