

Vision

Re-Casting Trenton

Trenton has been cut off from its riverfront for many years by roadways, parking lots, neglect, and inaccessible land. The creation of Capital Park will make it possible for people to get back to the riverfront again. People who visit, live, and work in Trenton will have access to this vital landscape, which will improve the quality of life immeasurably.

Vision: Re-Casting Trenton

Residents and visitors to Trenton will be drawn to a great new park, and a great re-casting of the city's and the nation's history. There are many layers of experience to Capital Park, and people will return many times over.

The vision of Re-Casting Trenton is based on five themes:

Government, Environment, Industry, History, and Infrastructure.

Re-Casting Government evokes Trenton's pride as the seat of state government and its connection to all aspects of civic and cultural life.

Re-Casting Environment celebrates the Garden State's agricultural, horticultural, and natural landscapes and the importance of water to the life of a city – where the glory of New Jersey and the city come together.

Re-Casting Industry draws on the products and process that built Trenton's manufacturing prowess. Re-Casting History brands Trenton as a major heritage tourism destination. Re-Casting Infrastructure weaves together existing and proposed infrastructure, creating an interconnected system of roads, paths, bridges, drainage, and utilities that move beyond the pragmatic to create a beautiful landscape. The five themes come together in a park that can serve as a symbol of civic identity and well-being.



Aerial Perspective of Capital Park

The Importance of Capital Park

Capital Park recasts Trenton as a great place to live, work and visit. The city contains a tremendous store of riches that most people don't know about: the water landscape of river, creek and canals; historic sites rivaling those of other state capitals, such as Annapolis, Boston, and Richmond; the city's industrial past, which distinguishes Trenton as a place where American arts, industry, and technology flourished; and an attractive, historic, and affordable housing stock.

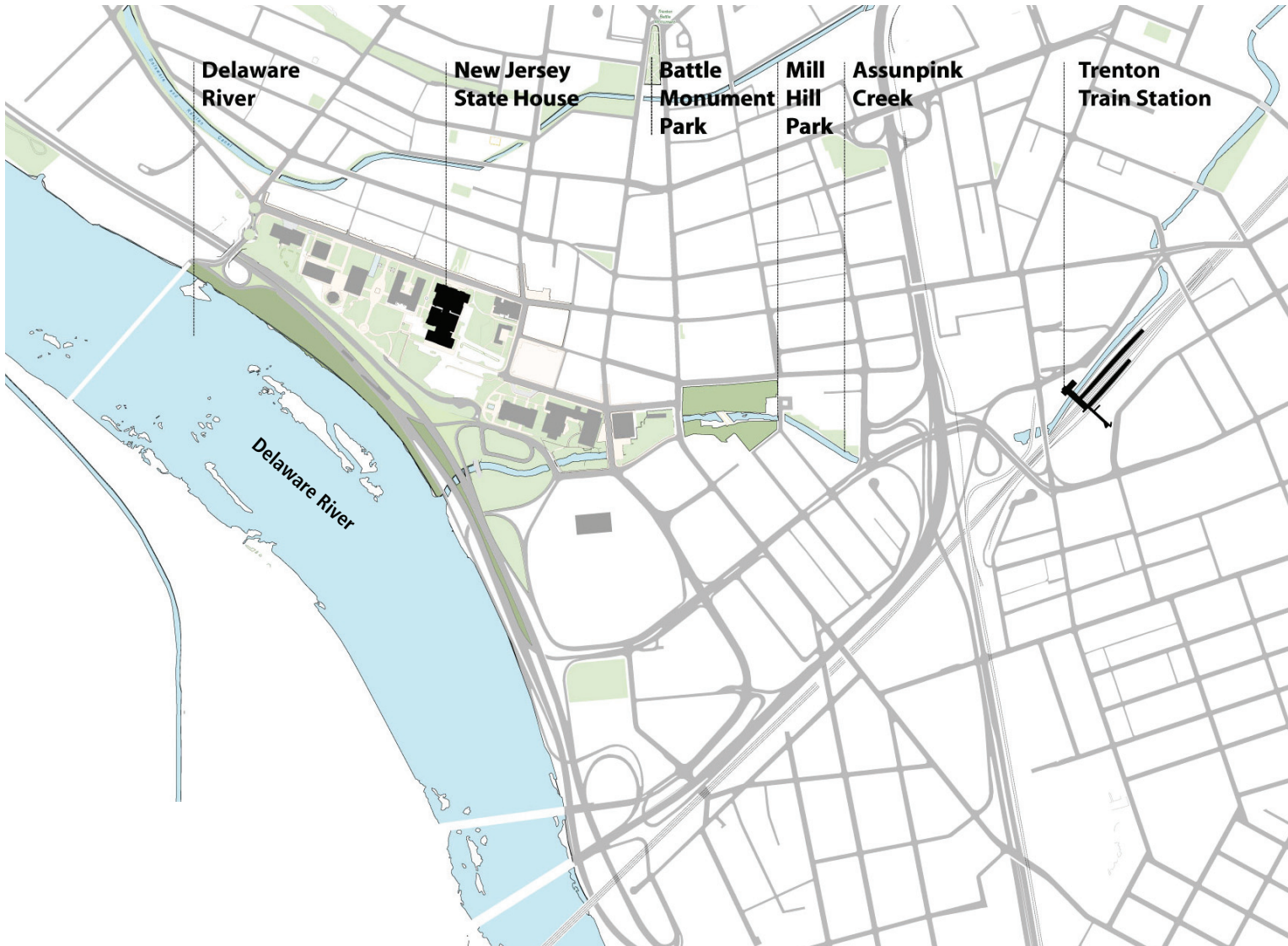
Capital Park recasts Trenton, remaking it as a livable, accessible, and dynamic capital city. This master plan recasts Trenton as a major destination for tourists and a strong magnet for new residents looking for authenticity and energy. Capital Park recasts Trenton as a more livable place for current residents of the downtown area and adjacent neighborhoods, who are now isolated from green space and the river. The park also recasts the city for the employees now living in suburban communities who will be attracted to a beautiful, vibrant city where they can live and work. The focus of this effort is on Capital Park, but its effects will radiate throughout the city.

Capital Park galvanizes the redevelopment of downtown

Trenton. The Capital Park project is one of a series of building blocks in remaking downtown Trenton. The project has been greatly aided by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) which has already garnered support for relocating Route 29 and converting it to a scenic and pedestrian-friendly urban boulevard. The downtown master plan calls for redevelopment of the state office and parking area south of the Assunpink Creek as a mixed-use, sustainable riverfront neighborhood.

Capital Park will catalyze the process of regeneration by setting in motion a rational process of redevelopment.

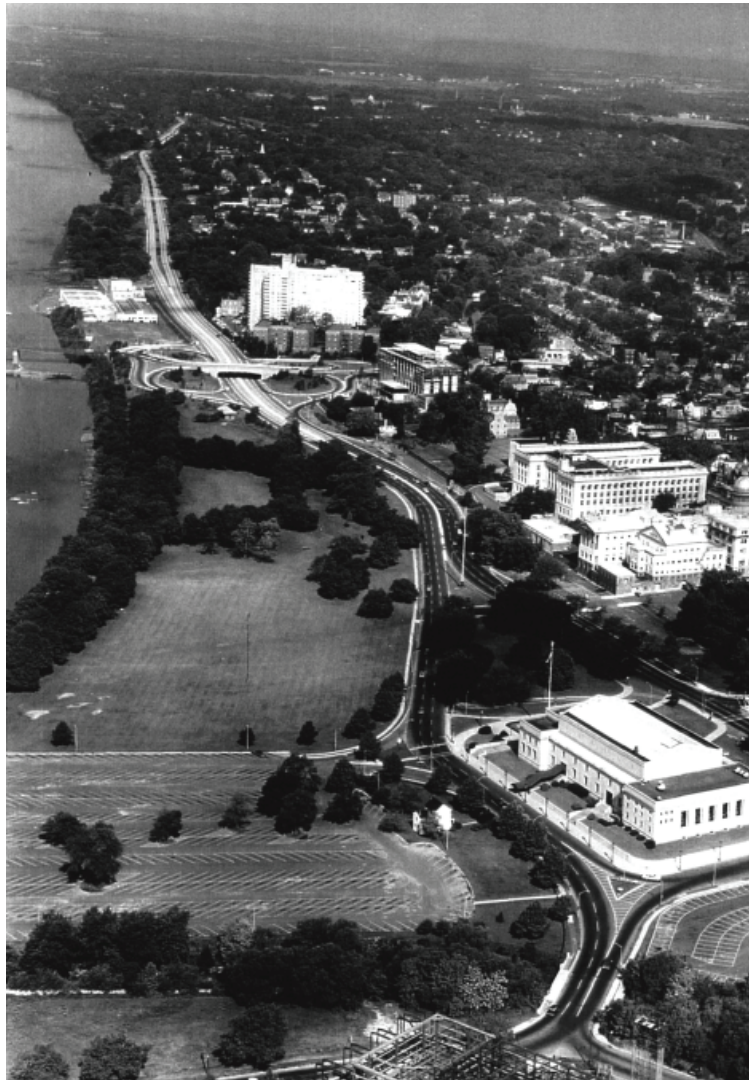
Cooperation among all stakeholders, and a streamlined permitting and approval process, will yield the best results. As the vision of a new, revitalized downtown Trenton becomes clearer, attaining this vision will be made possible only by a realistic strategy of cooperation. The many different initiatives already in motion, as well as those proposed in the Capital Park Master Plan, will be integrated and coordinated, creating increased funding opportunities and streamlined regulatory compliance.



Capital Park Context Map

The riverfront in the 1960s

Automobiles began to encroach on Stacy Park with the opening of Route 29 to the north and the creation of parking lots next to the War Memorial.



A City in Change

Yesterday

Capital Park recaptures Trenton's historic relationship with its waterfront, regenerating life at the river.

Trenton was founded at a strategic point on the Delaware River where the fall line marked the head of navigation and where the Assunpink Creek flowed into the river. In its earliest days, the city depended on its water resources for transportation, industrial power, and food. The waterfront was Trenton's identity. Over time, the city grew increasingly dependent on the more consistent and reliable Delaware and Raritan (D&R) Canal for transportation and the Trenton Water Power canal for energy, still relying on water as the defining feature of the city.

As the state and the city matured in the early 20th century, communities nationwide looked to city planning and civic open space to increase their attractiveness and enhance their identity. At a time when the City Beautiful movement led to the creation of some of the most memorable boulevards and waterfronts in the nation, Trenton looked to its waterfront. Stacy Park was named after Mahlon Stacy, the original settler at the falls of the Delaware who first captured the water power of the Assunpink for industrial use and sowed the seed for the city's later growth. The park was designed in the romantic style; it swept from the mouth of the Assunpink up to the Trenton Water Power canal at the

base of the State House, providing a verdant and tranquil setting for the capitol that could be seen across an expansive lawn and was reflected in the canal. Construction of the Trenton War Memorial soon added another civic destination drawing people to the riverfront park. The park was Trenton's identity, proudly shown in illustrations and photographs, presenting an elegant formal front door at the city's riverfront.

Today

Several major actions have cut Trenton off from its original source of vitality. Like many other cities, during the highway boom of the early 1950s Trenton took advantage of easily commandeered waterfront open space to locate a major highway, Route 29, along the river. With easy access for automobiles, the state redeveloped the former industrial sites and workers' homes south of the Assunpink as a major state office complex surrounded by extensive surface parking lots. All that was left was the William Trent House, an island of heritage hemmed in by asphalt and a high brick wall, cut off from the river and the city.

For several decades now, many have sought a way to reclaim the waterfront. Since the 1980s, a series of well-intentioned proposals have suggested how this could be done, yet no action has been taken until today to address the central obstacle: Route 29.



The riverfront today

The water is walled off from the city by the Route 29 expressway and Stacy Park has become parking lots.

Tomorrow

Capital Park will pull together the disparate spaces and places that make up the Trenton waterfront. It will recast Trenton as a dynamic city with many draws, from the great historic sites and events the city has to offer to the natural habitat at the river.

Capital Park will be a living landscape, full of life and possibility. People will gather at the riverfront for the river festival, as a concert takes place on the State House Common. Visitors will stroll through the sculpture park and arrive at a living history reenactment at the Old Barracks. Students and visitors will be able to view and perhaps participate in an ongoing archaeological dig at Petty's Run.

The River Line train will pull into the capitol station and people will fan out over the riverfront. Visitors will arrive by bus at the State House, and after a stop at the Visitors Center they will filter through exhibits, displays, and places where they can view government in action.

Kayakers will put their boats in the water at Confluence Garden. Fishermen will sit at the water's edge, anticipating a catch as they have since the 1700s. Children will scramble up the terraced banks of the Assunpink and people will stroll across the garden bridges spanning the newly green creek edges. Further upstream, at the South Broad Street crossing, a heritage park will connect visitors to the battles of Trenton and the city's rich industrial past.

Trentonians will be drawn to the park, taking city buses from the surrounding neighborhoods, or biking and walking the Assunpink Greenway path to the river. People will stroll through the new shops lining the street in the new riverfront neighborhood by the Park, crossing the creek at the garden bridges.

On a summer's night, great numbers will gather in the park along the sparkling riverfront esplanade to watch fireworks over the river. Passengers in trains and cars crossing the river will see the flashes lighting up a city renewed, its waterfront reflected in the rediscovered Delaware River.



The vision for Capital Park

WRT's entry for the design competition envisioned a new park that restores the relationship between the city and its river.

Four Prime Actions

Four prime actions will create Capital Park and ensure its funding and logical phasing.

- Reinforce the Capital Core
- Reclaim the Riverfront
- Release the Assunpink
- Reconnect Trenton

These actions relate to geography, land ownership, and jurisdictions and they provide a framework for phasing. They also offer a vision for an array of programs and environments that make up a layered, multifaceted landscape that can operate on many different levels, for many different people, and at different times. For each action there are key steps that are necessary to achieve the vision. Taken together, these actions will recast Trenton as a major urban destination and living environment.

Reinforce the Capital Core

Reinforcing the Capital Core will unite the State House, Annex, Library, Museum, Auditorium, Archives and Department of State along with the Old Barracks, Petty's Run, and Thomas Edison State College in a more unified and dramatic landscape. A new heritage tourism node will be developed around the industrial archaeology of Petty's Run.

The Capital Core, the seat of government, will be made more attractive to visitors coming to visit the State House and nearby historic and cultural landmarks. Where there is now a fragmented and largely undistinguished landscape, the resulting transformation will create a rich variety of places that are rewarding to visit.

Reclaim the Riverfront

Re-casting the riverfront will draw the capital core to the river and create a new civic realm at the river's edge. The highway, railings, walls, fences and parking lots that block people from the great river landscape will be reduced, minimized, or swept away altogether, offering acres of inviting green space and a chance to touch the water again. The form of the capitol dome, now lost within a fragmented landscape, will exert a strong and positive influence on the waterfront, a reflection of its circular shape radiating out toward the water, shaping rings of activity, from civic events to riverfront exploration. The civic riverfront will become a new living room for the city.

Release the Assunpink

Re-casting the Assunpink will release the creek from the concrete walls and culverts that have kept it hidden and bound, and open the area for recreation.

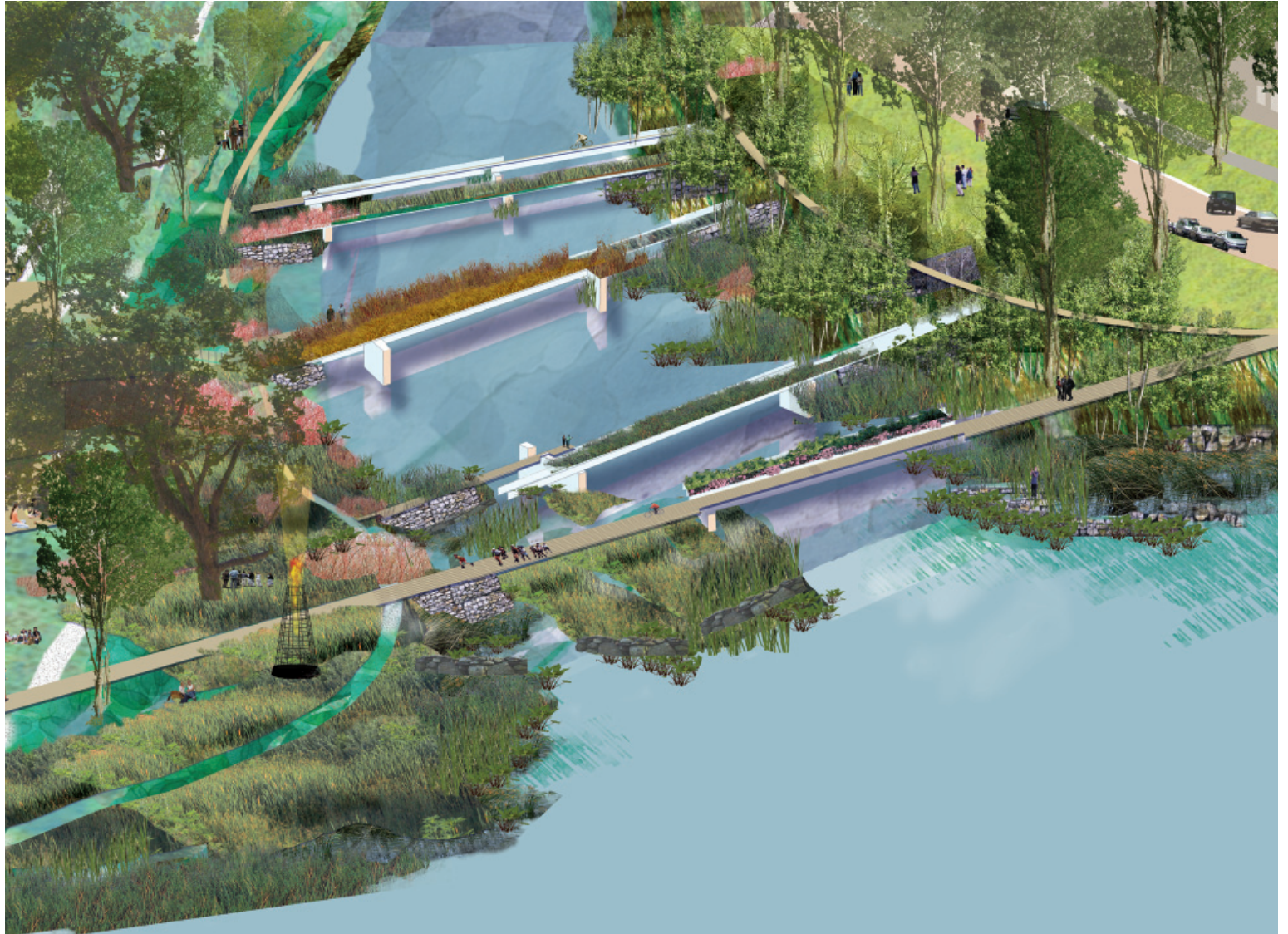
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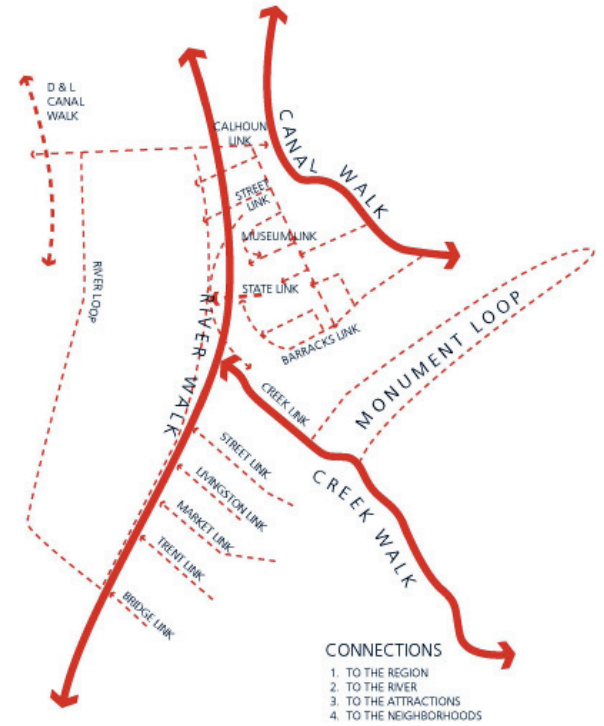
Confluence of the Assunpink and the Delaware

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will be opened from its culvert below the South Broad Street Bridge. Releasing the Assunpink will free it to flow from urban park to rich estuary; it will restore flow to the city. Along its length, but especially at the South Broad Street Bridge and vicinity, the ruins of the formerly bustling milling complexes and the battles of Trenton will be interpreted. Art will find expression in the sculptural forms of highway bridge girders reclaimed as pedestrian walks and hanging gardens, and in the use of ceramic and other steel products that relate to the city's industrial past. Assunpink Park is the place where, like the waters of the river and creek, all of the forces— culture, history, industry and ecology— come together.





Re-connecting Trenton

A new network of connections will link Trenton destinations, neighborhoods, and the new civic realm of Capital Park.

Reconnect Trenton

Reconnecting Trenton will bond the city to its Delaware riverfront and other regional greenways, allowing residents, workers and visitors to arrive at the park conveniently by train, bus, car, bike, on foot, or even by canoe.

Capital Park and its vicinity will be the hub of regional, city, and neighborhood connections for vehicular and pedestrian travel. Re-Casting Trenton will reconnect the city's downtown at many levels. At the scale of the city, the park complex will reach out to the major hubs, open spaces and monuments: to the south, to the new riverfront development, Trent House, Waterfront Park, South River Walk Park, and the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh; to the east, to the Assunpink Greenway, the Sovereign Bank Arena, the Roebling Complex, the Amtrak/NJT train station and the Battle Monument; to the north, to the D&R Canal and Washington Crossing State Parks; and to the west, to the Delaware Canal and the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor.

At the scale of the neighborhood, the park complex will link to the Mill Hill, South Trenton, Greenwood/Hamilton, Downtown, North Trenton, Stuyvesant/Prospect and Central West neighborhoods. Turning to the transit system, the park will potentially link with the existing River Line, allowing people within Trenton and from outside the city to stop at numerous points within the park, at the state office complexes, and the new riverfront neighborhood. All of these linkages will recast and revive

the connection between the city and the river, and pump the lifeblood of people into the parks.

The Master Plan Process

The intention of the master plan is to test the competition design in terms of its implications for stakeholders and its implementation potential, while maintaining the design vision expressed in the competition. As such, the master plan has three primary purposes. These are:

- Confirm and test the validity of the competition design through detailed exploration and analysis of various planning and design components dealing with historic and archeological resources, transportation, security, programming, park maintenance, landscape design, etc.
- Recommend next steps and identify subsequent projects for implementation through an understanding of the existing conditions.
- Recommend an implementation strategy for the short and long term that includes phasing and potential implementation timeline and funding resources.

The plan was created by following a six-month planning process with five major phases guided by the Steering Committee and led by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The NJDEP convened a Steering Committee of major stakeholders and the client group representatives for the master plan. Members of the Steering Committee included representatives of the NJDEP Division of Parks

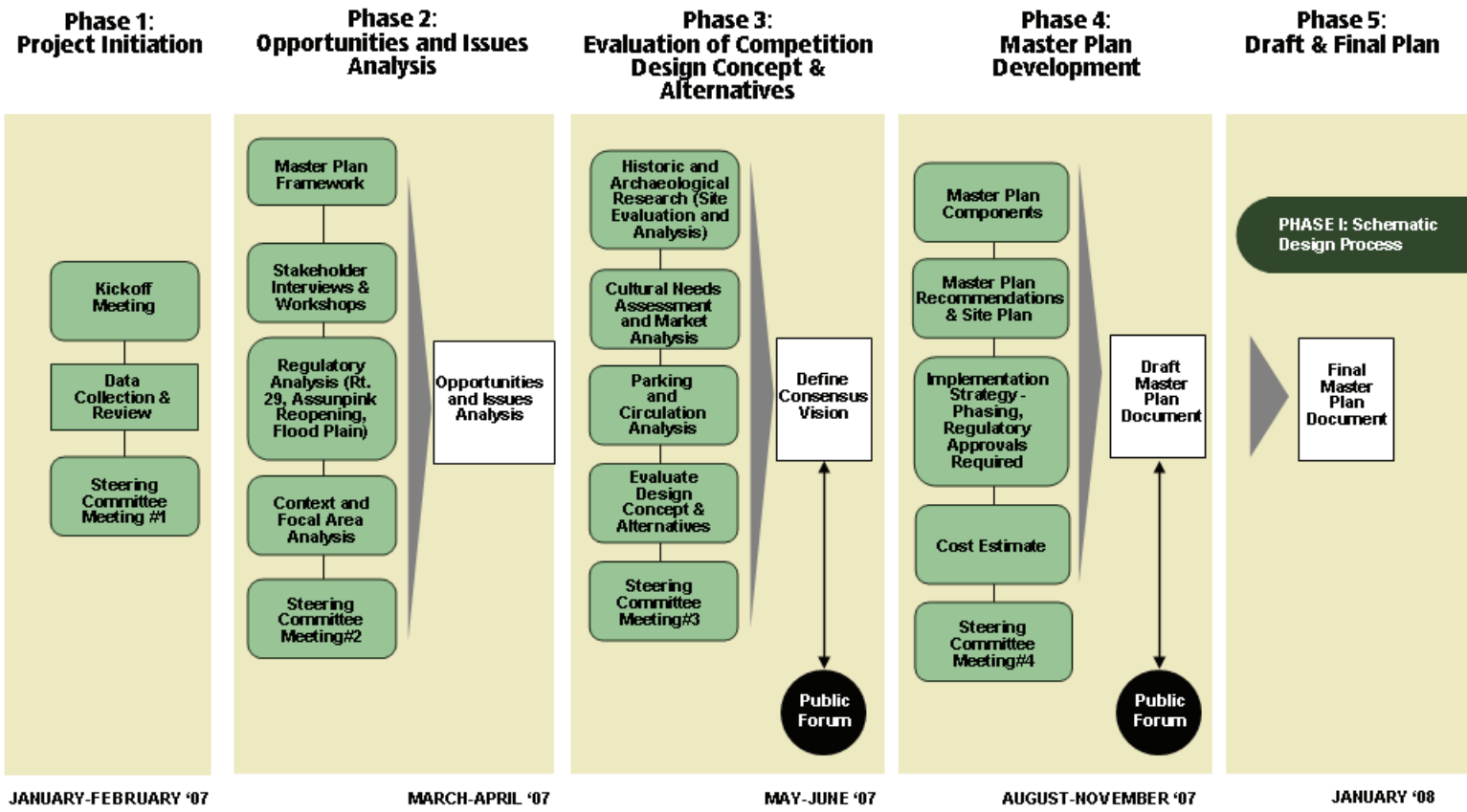
Forestry, Office of Resource Development and Historic Preservation Office representing NJDEP, the State Capitol Joint Management Commission, the City of Trenton, the New Jersey Department of the Treasury, Division of Property Management and Construction, NJDOT, Mercer County, the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation, the Trenton Downtown Association, the State Council on the Arts, and the Department of the Treasury.

Steering Committee meetings were held at the end of each major phase of the master plan for feedback. In the first phase, a kick-off meeting and the first Steering Committee meeting was held to chart out the master plan process. Background data was collected during this phase.

In the second phase, an “opportunities and issues” analysis of the master plan context area and the study area was conducted. Meetings and interviews with various stakeholders and relevant agencies were conducted to ascertain the status of various ongoing projects around the master plan area.

In the third phase, alternative options for various components within the master plan were presented that included historic and archaeological resources, programming, parking and circulation analysis, and regulatory strategy.

A public forum was held at the end of the third phase to inform the public about the status of the project and receive public comments.



Master Plan Process Diagram

The master plan was created by following a process designed to collect information and direction from stakeholders and the public.

Public Involvement

The planning process included meetings and presentations to the public and stakeholders to gather comments and direction for the plan.



Alternatives were presented to the neighborhood residents and citizens interested in the Capital Park project. A cultural resources meeting was held during this phase that included a presentation from the consultant team to representatives of the cultural institutions and museums within the master plan area.

In phase four of the master plan, a draft master plan report was submitted to the Steering Committee members and the NJDEP for comments leading to the submission of the final report and the adoption of the master plan.

Stakeholder Interviews and Workshops

The complexity of design and planning issues involved, the multiplicity of agencies and stakeholders, and the detailed input from NJDEP as a client and manager of the project, and NJDOT as an equal participant for the Route 29 integration, required a systematic review of both a design and an implementation strategy. A critical early conclusion was that a strategic, coordinated approach was needed to define key physical and programmatic elements of the master plan and outline a “critical decisions path” to guide NJDEP’s and NJDOT’s physical and programmatic actions.

The critical decisions path within the planning process was focused on the Steering Committee meetings as well as interviews conducted by

the master plan consultant team. The interview process was designed to determine:

- The “decision points” with each interviewee.
- The process to reach decisions if too complex to resolve in one meeting.
- The information needed to be gathered or work products needed to reach a decision.

Findings of this interview process were presented to the Steering Committee in meetings leading to decisions that informed the master planning process. It was also recognized that some decisions require further effort beyond the master plan phase to achieve resolution, such as the complex engineering work along the river and creek that calls for close coordination with NJDOT when the engineering design phase of the Route 29 project starts.

Master Plan Goals

The goals of the master plan provide the broad framework to guide decisions about what should be included in the plan and how it relates to the overall vision. The goals are grouped as:

Identity

- Create a clear identity for the park that draws upon:
 - The presence of the State House.
 - The presence of water, at the river and creek and within the park.
 - Trenton’s deep and nationally significant history.
 - The new idea of a 21st Century park that integrates ecology, infrastructure, culture, and history.

Civic Heart

- Provide a central focus to Capital Park that will be its heart and honors Trenton’s heritage as the seat of government.

Heritage

- Celebrate Trenton’s Native American, Colonial, Revolutionary War, ethnic, and industrial heritage, branding Trenton as a major heritage tourism destination.

Sculpture Park

The park landscape can accommodate a new sculpture park that celebrates the heritage and progress of New Jersey.



Waterfront Beacons

Fiber-optic lighting using solar energy sources could be developed as another public art opportunity.



Access and Convenience

- Provide waterfront access for all — pedestrians, the disabled, bicyclists, and paddlers.
- Provide a rational circulation system.
- Provide safe and convenient vehicular parking.
- Provide convenient bus access and transit connections to the train station.

Continuity and Connectivity

- Create a continuous ribbon of green space along the riverfront, creek and canal.
- Provide pedestrian connections to regional greenways and trails.
- Provide pedestrian connections to downtown, the riverfront, and inland neighborhoods.

Environmental Sustainability

- Re-establish a green waterfront that prioritizes public recreational access and environmental enhancement.
- Use current technology to show best management practices for environmental design.
- Create demonstration projects that illustrate technical innovation.
- Design the park to be maintainable and provide a maintenance plan.
- Incorporate sustainable design practices such as:
 - Stormwater filtration.
 - Resource conservation and reuse of materials.
 - Urban heat island reduction.
 - Trip reduction.
 - Alternative energy.
 - Use of indigenous plants.

Economic Sustainability

- Provide opportunities for appropriate park-based economic development (e.g., cafes, concessions).
- Create park frontage that enhances the value of adjacent public and private property.

Social Sustainability

- Provide programs that animate the park for public education and enjoyment.
- Serve a diversity of neighborhoods and recreational agendas within the park.
- Respect the diversity of ethnic and racial populations and abilities in the design and programming of the parks.

Safety

- Create a secure environment while providing for public enjoyment.
Provide for:
 - Homeland Security.
 - Public Safety.
 - Flood Security.

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