

Master Plan Implementation Strategy

Comprehensive Strategic Revitalization Plan

Qualifying Strategic Planning Areas for Redevelopment Action

Redevelopment Recommendations

- West Collingswood
- Central Business District
- U.S. Route 130

Implementing Master Plan Recommendations

JUNE 1999

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Professional Planners

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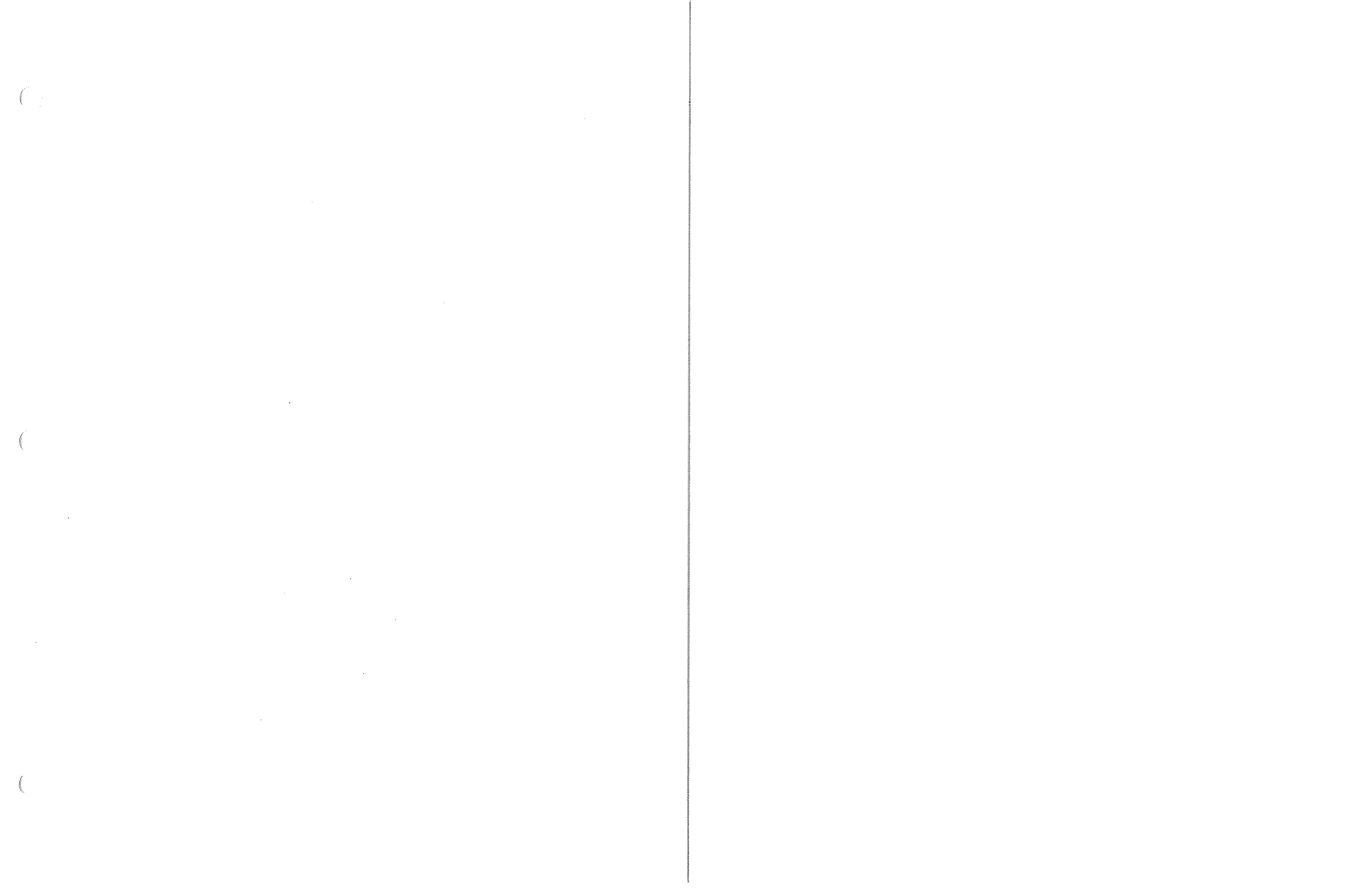
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June, 1999

(The original of this report has been signed and
sealed in accordance with the law)



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Comprehensive Strategic Revitalization Plan

Borough of Collingswood, New Jersey

JUNE 1999

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**MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES
COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC REVITALIZATION PLAN**

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MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC REVITALIZATION PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

Collingswood is a built-up community. It was established in 1888 and has grown to a point where it can be considered to be completely built up. As such, the Comprehensive Strategic Revitalization Plan sets forth a strategy to redefine key areas and thus rebuild and redevelop the community as part of the revitalization process.

As with all older communities, the evolution of Collingswood has led to:

- Mixed and incompatible land uses.
- The extension of regional arterial roads that have prompted obsolete commercial uses along their corridors.
- Highways that have reached capacity and need expansion and redesign.
- Undefined and improperly distributed parking in the Central Business District.
- Obsolete or inadequate sign and aesthetic controls along highway corridors and in the various business districts.
- Conversions of original single-family owner occupied facilities.

Although the issues that require attention are difficult, the Borough of Collingswood has many more positive assets than negative ones. It is around these positive assets that the Comprehensive Strategic Revitalization Plan has been focused. In defining the positive aspects of the community, the following assets must be strongly considered as a viable basis for supporting specific redevelopment efforts. These assets are:

- Physical structure of the Borough is almost classic in form. The Borough is surrounded by a green belt developed by the Cooper River and Newton Creek estuaries, which are both part of the County Park System.
- In the center of the community is Knight Park, a privately reserved 60-acre park for the residents of the Borough.
- Neighborhood elementary schools provide walk-to-school opportunities for youngsters as well as neighborhood recreational focal points.
- An excellent high school system with recreational facilities is highly regarded in the community for its academic excellence.
- The Borough has a defined main street with excellent architectural examples of authentic facades whose restoration would require minimal effort.
- A good merchants' organization has continued to maintain a viable network of retail shops within the core area of the Central Business District.
- The Borough's community facilities and related services rank high among the citizenry.

- Excellent access to the PATCO High Speed Rail System link the residents of the Borough with regional employment and shopping centers.
- The Borough has a pro-active government with a history of redevelopment efforts and public-private partnerships designed to improve the community.
- Lastly, in a survey conducted among the citizens of the Borough, the results indicated a positive self-image of the community.

The following 3 study areas have been established as a foundation for the Strategic Revitalization Plan (See Figure SR-1). However, this does not mean that other areas are not being considered for community-wide improvement. These include housing code enforcement, housing rehabilitation in designated neighborhood development target areas, and similar projects that are on going in the community. The 3 study areas of:

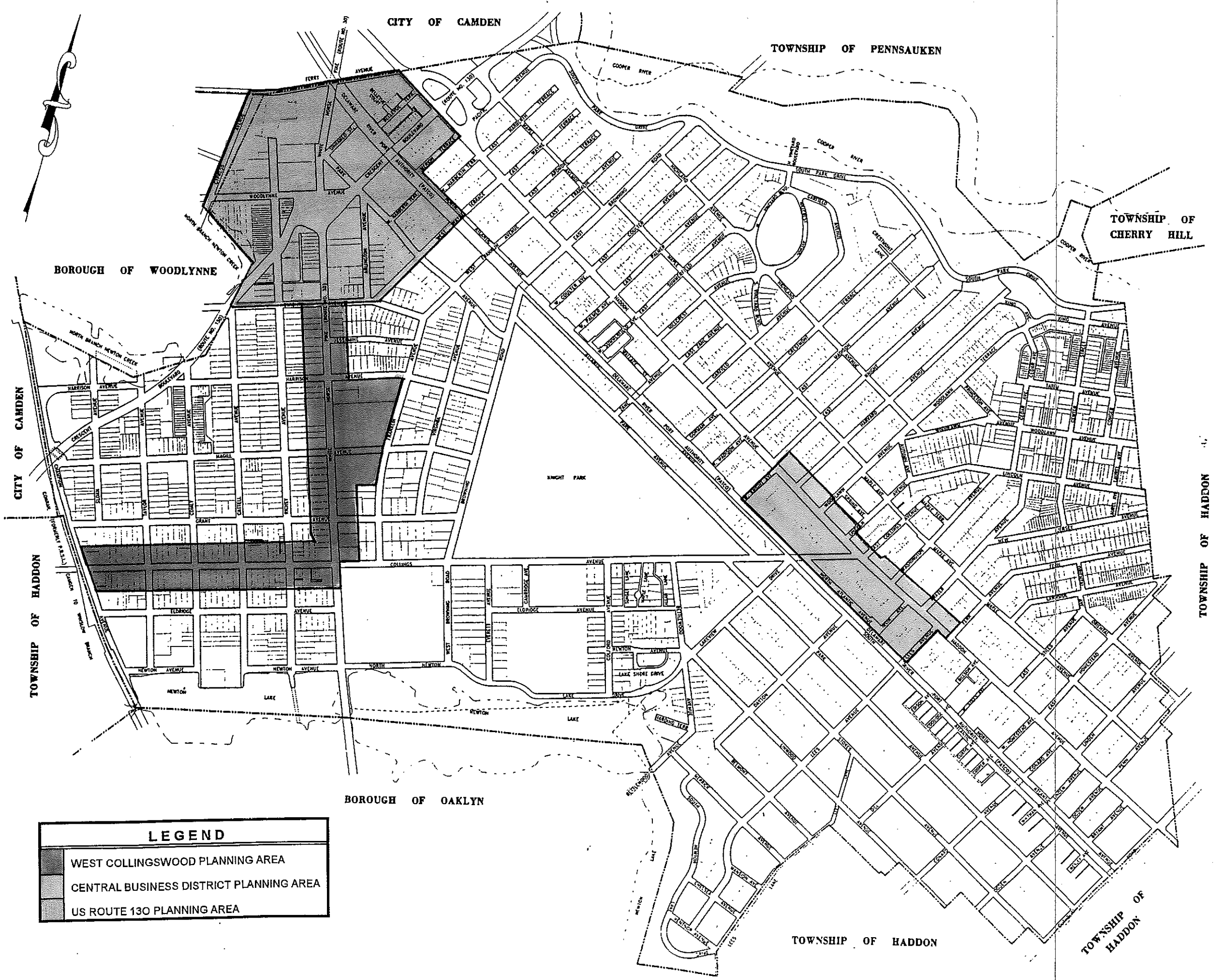
- West Collingswood;
- The Central Business District; and
- Route 130 Corridor,




have been selected for detailed analysis and recommendations for strategic revitalization actions have been provided. The rationale is simple -- improve selected projects within these areas and the long-term benefits from such efforts will spread throughout the Community.

This study is part of a 3-part analysis that deals with:

- The assets and liabilities of each area.
- Strategies for actions that will define and qualify strategic areas for the redevelopment process.
- Redevelopment plan project recommendations showing concept plans for key project areas, and

Lastly, revised land use regulations will provide amended language to support the concepts and recommendations made as part of the Master Plan Land Use Element and Implementation Strategies. This report, however, will be referenced in another section of the Master Plan entitled, "Land Use Regulations" and will not be incorporated as part of the Strategic Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan reports.



| LEGEND | |
|---|---|
|  | WEST COLLINGSWOOD PLANNING AREA |
|  | CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PLANNING AREA |
|  | US ROUTE 130 PLANNING AREA |

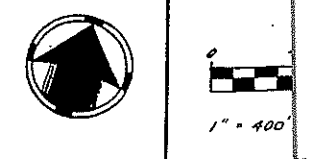


FIGURE SR-1

Borough of Collingswood
 Camden County, New Jersey
STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS
 FOR REDEVELOPMENT

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 Map Source: Remington & Vernick Engineers (10/21/87)

II. STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS' ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

The analysis of the Assets and Liabilities for each of the three Strategic Planning areas is a prerequisite to formulating the redevelopment plan recommendations and developing key concept plans for initiating change. Accordingly, a summary of the attributes for each of these districts has been identified to assist in the process for developing a focused series of concept plans for key project areas.

A. WEST COLLINGSWOOD STUDY AREA

The West Collingswood Study Area is a small neighborhood commercial center located essentially on the south side of Route 30 (White Horse Pike) along either side of Collings Avenue to the border of the Borough with Haddon Township at Champion Avenue. This area encompasses a distance of approximately 2,140 ft. and 10 blocks for a total of 36 acres. Another important corridor in West Collingswood is the area extending from the Route 130 circle along Route 30 (White Horse Pike) to Collings Avenue. Lining the street are architecturally significant residences, offices, churches, and residences converted to offices. The most important structure along this route is the Scottish Rite Temple, which occupies an area of approximately 7-8 acres. Along the northeast corner of Collings Avenue and the White Horse Pike are the Parkview Apartments, which contain 1,036 units on a parcel approximately 12-13 acres in size.

Lastly, the neighborhood commercial core of this area extends for a little less than 2 blocks in a southerly direction from the White Horse Pike along Collings Avenue. Within this area is located a church, vacant bank building, several vacant stores and a variety of retail and service facilities including a pharmacy, florist, barber shop, dry cleaners, and a convenience store.

The area was the subject of a project carried out some years previously which included a revitalization effort resulting in the establishment of landscaped areas, reconfiguration of the right-of-way of Collings Avenue to accommodate redesigned on-street parking and a rear parking lot for use by the area merchants.

Currently, there exist several vacant properties, one of the most significant of which is a bank property located at the corner of Collings Avenue and Richey Avenue.

1. Area Assets

The assets of this area include:

- a. A clearly defined neighborhood retail core that could serve as a visual identity and landmark for the entire area
- b. The existence of "customers" located in the Parkview Apartments.
- c. Excellent access from regional arterials.
- d. Excellent examples of residential architecture, which would qualify for rehabilitation and restoration.
- e. Past history of redevelopment.
- f. The existence of vacant incubator parcels, i.e. the bank and other adjacent properties.
- g. The close proximity to the Scottish Rite Temple, which has a capacity to accommodate full production theater and to serve as an excellent set for community and regional cultural activities. This facility accommodates approximately 2,000 people with adequate parking.
- h. An architecturally significant retail use is found in the form of the Ames pharmacy, which features a town clock and a building that has been restored as part of a previous effort.

2. Existing Conditions Requiring Attention (Liabilities)

In contrast to the assets of the West Collingswood area, the following list identifies some of the conditions that require attention. They are:

- a. The long-term vacancies of critical properties. The bank property located at the corner of Collings Avenue and Richey Avenue has been vacant for a number of years. It represents an architecturally significant building occupying a large piece of land with excellent parking and visibility. It could form a valuable incubator project if properly designed and marketed. Undoubtedly, it will require public/private partnership efforts to initiate such a venture. Fortunately, a Redevelopment Area Analysis has been prepared for the area.
- b. Other vacant storefronts, which indicate a weak, retail market.
- c. The need for facade alterations of existing buildings. There are a variety of buildings with a multiplicity of architectural styles that extend from combination storefront residential buildings constructed around the 1920's to a dry cleaning facility that was designed in the 1950's or early 60's.
- d. The lack of architectural unification in an organized plan for the redevelopment of the entire area including marketing of the vacant buildings hinders the redevelopment of this area.

- e. No existing business organization with adequate funding to contribute towards upkeep of the area (the pending SID proposal should help correct this).
- f. No adherence to an overall sign theme. There are as many excellent examples of well-designed signs as there are examples of poor signs. The overall look generated by mismatched signage does not enhance the visual potential of the area.
- g. No coordinated window treatment for the storefront businesses thereby missing an opportunity to provide an organized retail/service image for the area. Window treatments range from excellent displays to vacant windows. This does not take advantage of the potential visual identity that could be used to enhance the look of the entire group of buildings.
- h. Adjacent residential buildings exhibit a pattern of conversions to multi-family units which overcrowd the area.
- i. There are inadequate or no buffers between existing commercial properties and residential properties creating inappropriate edge conditions between different types of uses.

In subsequent sections of this report, strategies for action and redevelopment plan concept recommendations will be presented.

3. Areas of Recommendations Designed To Highlight the Assets of the Area.

The following recommendations are made for the neighborhood business core located along Collings Avenue between the White Horse Pike and Cattell Avenue:

- a. Office conversion that is compatible with adjoining residential structures and that preserves the architectural identity of significant residential buildings.
- b. Establishing design concepts for the old bank property as well as a variety of concepts for identifying the neighborhood business area as a unified business district.

B. CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The bulk of the Central Business District extends from Knight Street to just east of Lees Avenue along Haddon Avenue and is bounded on the south by the PATCO High Speed Line. The focal point of the CBD is at Haddon and Collings Avenues.

1. Area Assets

The assets of the area include the following:

- a. It is a defined area with well recognized architectural types that readily identify it as the central retail core of the community.
- b. It has a viable structure of businesses with a good variety of retail and service facilities for the residents of the Borough as well as citizens of the region.
- c. There is a good business organization for the area's merchants.
- d. One portion of the area is already within a redevelopment district offering a variety of public/private opportunities through the redevelopment process.
- e. There is excellent access to the retail core via Haddon and Collings Avenues. Both roadways have regional connections.
- f. A pending Special Improvement District program will provide operational as well as management funds to organize and market the business district as a single unit.
- g. PATCO Commuter Station on the High Speed Line provides a linkage to mass transportation.
- h. Over 40,000 commuters see this site daily, giving the area excellent exposure.
- i. A variety of historic storefronts provide an excellent opportunity for facade restoration and treatment.
- j. An existing redevelopment project that will restore the Zane School into professional office space provides an excellent adaptive reuse for this facility.

2. Elements Requiring Attention (Liabilities)

Within the Central Business District there are certain elements or characteristics which have occurred over the evolution of this area that require attention. None of these issues individually are overwhelming, but collectively they require remedy. These conditions are:

- a. Lack of adequate parking in close proximity to existing businesses. Although large parking fields exist in proximity to the PATCO High Speed Line directly at the station and also behind the Public Works and Police Department, there is an uneven distribution of parking spaces throughout the CBD.
- b. There is no overall downtown theme or signage program.
- c. There is a lack of good pedestrian access to existing parking. Pedestrians are forced to go through narrow, unlit and poorly marked alleyways to gain access to the main retail areas along Haddon Avenue.

- d. The presence of uses that do not support retail activities create "dead zones" within the Central Business District. They include the Public Works, an Oil Company, a fraternal lodge, a data processing center and the Peter Lumber site.
- e. The view of the Central Business District from the PATCO High Speed Line is one of the rear of buildings, a drably painted water tower and the Public Works building. It is not a welcome sight for thousands of commuters who pass by this area each day. However, there exists an opportunity to correct this and provide a positive image of the downtown area. These will be described in subsequent sections of this report.

C. ROUTE 130 CORRIDOR

U.S. Route 130 extends along the western edge of Collingswood. It is one of the original north/south connections in the region and for that reason it has seen many years of use and development along its edges.

There are a variety of land uses along either edge of this major arterial. They include residential properties, gas stations, diners, used car lots, restaurants, automobile repair facilities and similar uses.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation is considering the improvement of the original Route 130 circle at the connection of Rt. 130 and U.S. Route 30 and the possible widening of Rt. 130 itself. This is an ongoing project.

1. Area Assets

The following assets characterize U.S. Route 130. They are:

- a. High volumes of traffic, i.e. potential customers.
- b. High visibility for commercial facilities along its right-of-way.
- c. Excellent regional linkages.
- d. Roadway improvements to be initiated by the NJ Department of Transportation which may afford opportunities to create more compatible edge conditions between existing land uses and the roadway right-of-way.
- e. Excellent proximity to PATCO High Speed Line at Ferry Avenue.

2. Elements Requiring Attention

The elements requiring attention along U.S. Route 130 are as follows:

- a. Archaic roadway designed for yesteryear's volume and land uses.
- b. Multiplicity of mixed uses without a theme or highway aesthetic consideration.
- c. Divided highway, which limits access from one side to the other, thereby minimizing the value of commercial real estate along its edges.
- d. Multiple driveway access from many small commercial properties lining the edges of the highway.
- e. Close proximity of residential uses directly onto the highway causing extremely high rate of incompatibility.
- f. Residential streets connecting directly into the highway system without appropriate signalization.
- g. Highway commercial properties directly abutting the highway are not buffered from adjacent residential properties.
- h. Possible noise and air quality issues for adjacent residential properties.

III. SUMMARY

The recognition of the assets and liabilities of the strategic areas in the Borough form the foundation of establishing a Strategic Revitalization Plan. In the next section of this analysis, these areas will be evaluated for redevelopment qualification.