

# ULI Advisory Services Program Mercer County, New Jersey



*Advisory Services Panel Mercer County, New Jersey*



# Acknowledgements

- Mercer County
  - County Executive Brian Hughes
  - Donna Lewis and staff
- Lawrence Township
  - Bill Guhl and Phil Caton
- Ewing Township
  - Bill Bennett, Don Meisel, and Janet McLaughlin
- City of Trenton
  - Andrew Carten and Bill Valocchi





# Acknowledgements

- New Jersey Office of Smart Growth
- The College of New Jersey
  - President Gitenstein
  - Dr. Bierbaum and Linda Rosner
- Interviewees





# About ULI

Mission – To provide responsible leadership in the use of the land to enhance the total environment



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# The Panelists

## Chair

- Alex Rose

## Market Potential

- Kathleen Rose

## Development Strategies

- Mary Beth Corrigan
- Paula Konikoff

## Planning and Design

- Alan Folks
- Ken Voight

## Implementation

- John Hixenbaugh
- Sakura Namioka





# ULI Staff

- Carmen McCormack
- Nicole Witenstein





# Overview

- The hole and the edges
- Opportunities
- Leadership
- Infrastructure





# Mercer Crossings Study Area



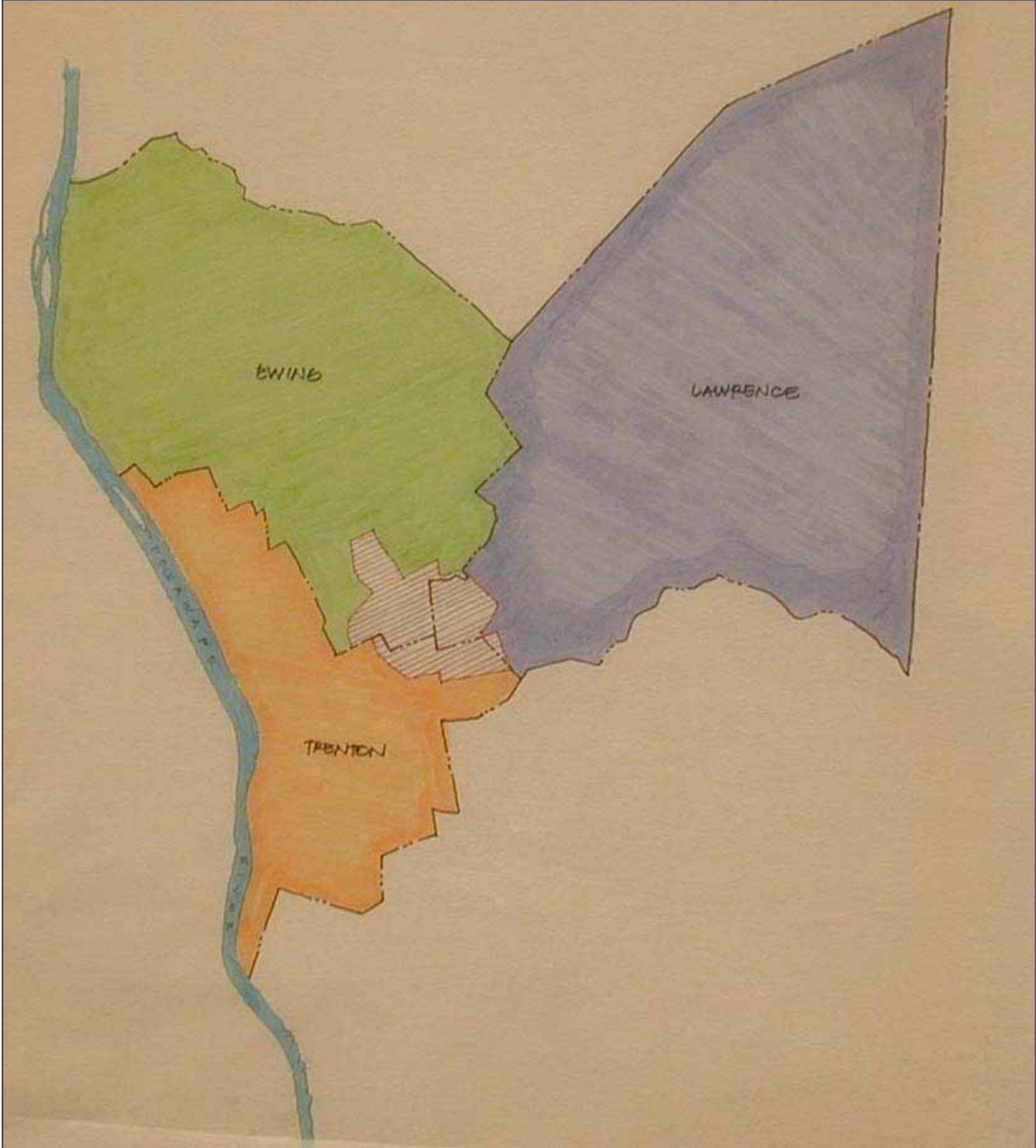
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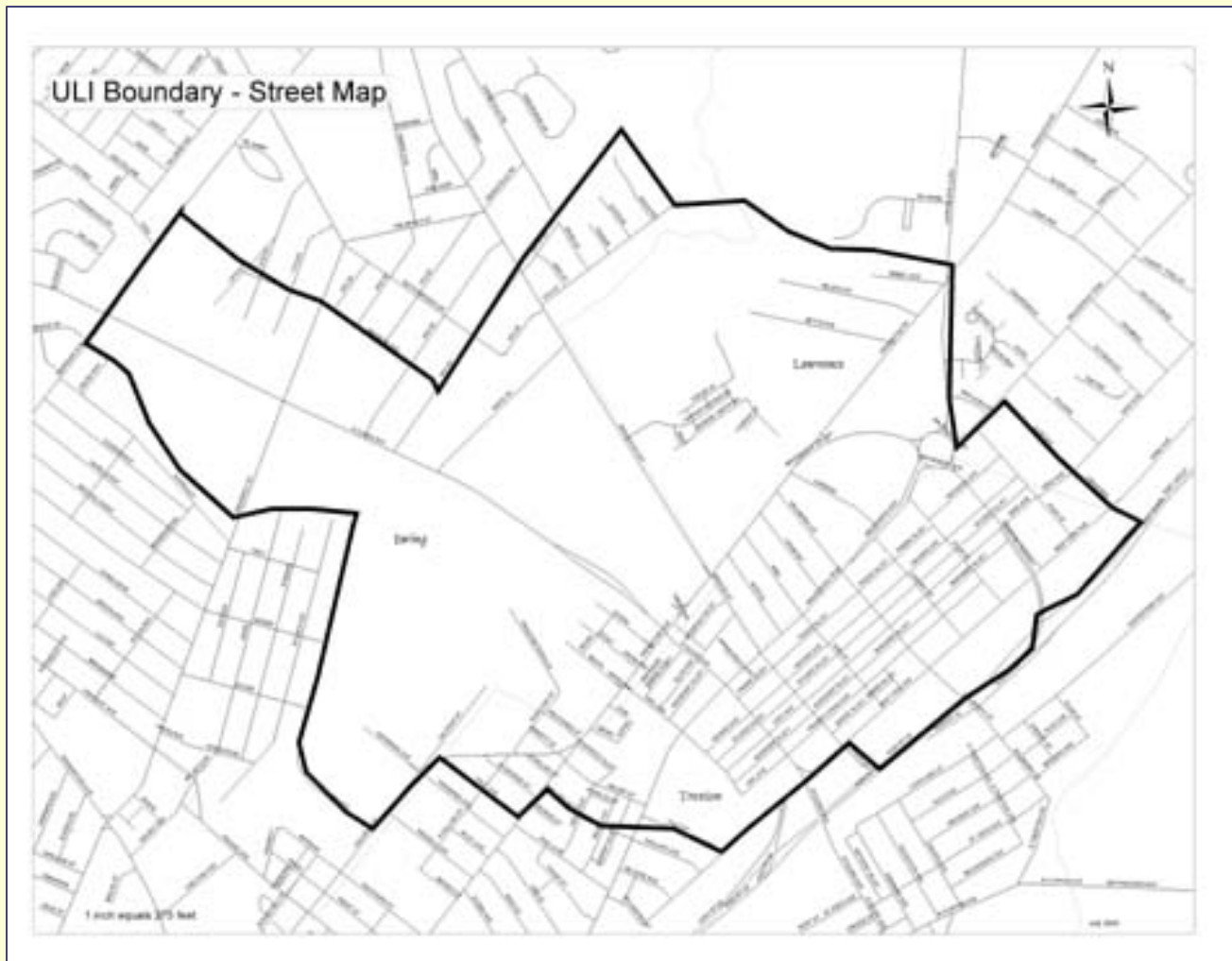
# Market Potential



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# Overview





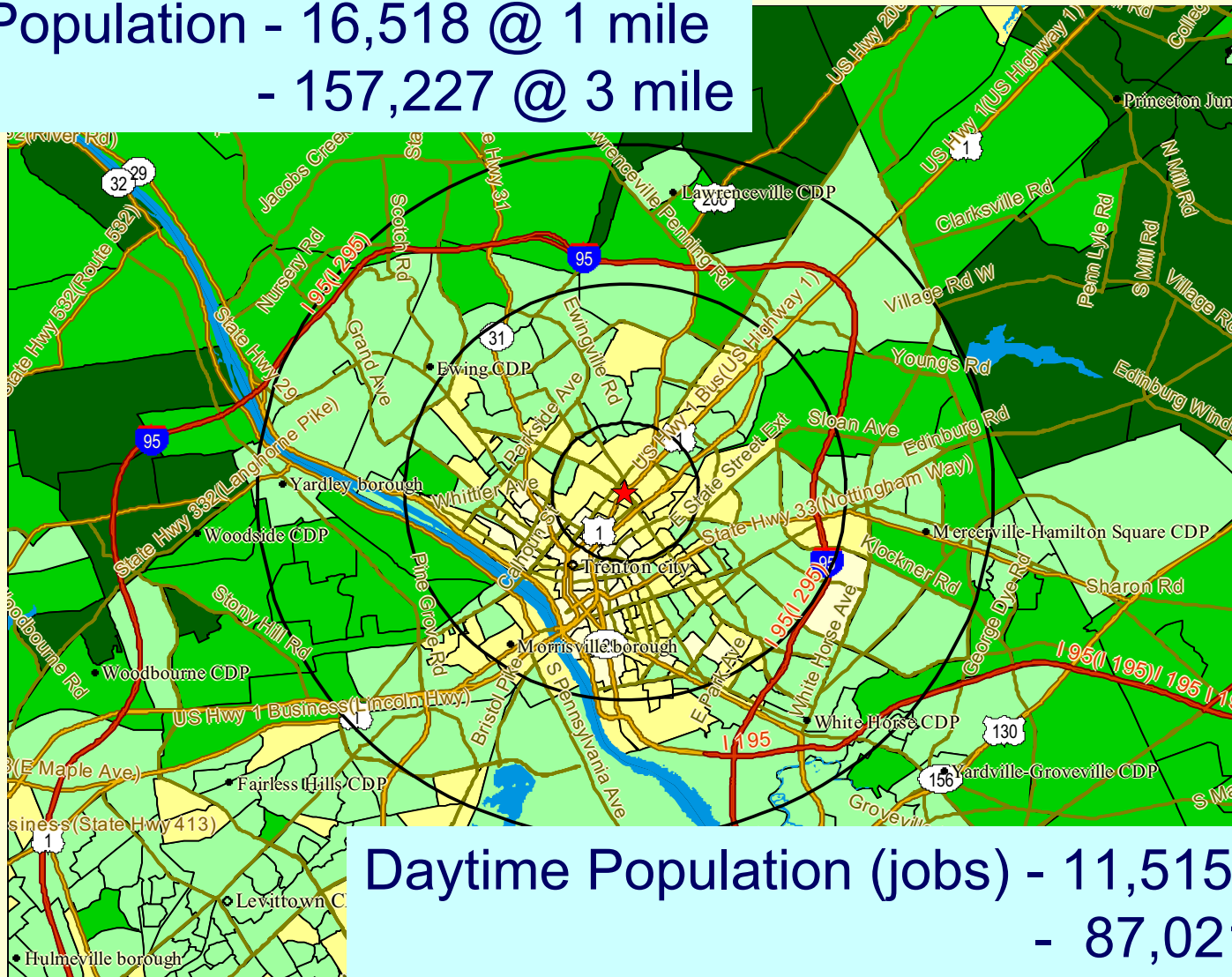
# Methodologies

- Highest and best use
- Demographic modeling
- Economic base analysis
- Central place theory

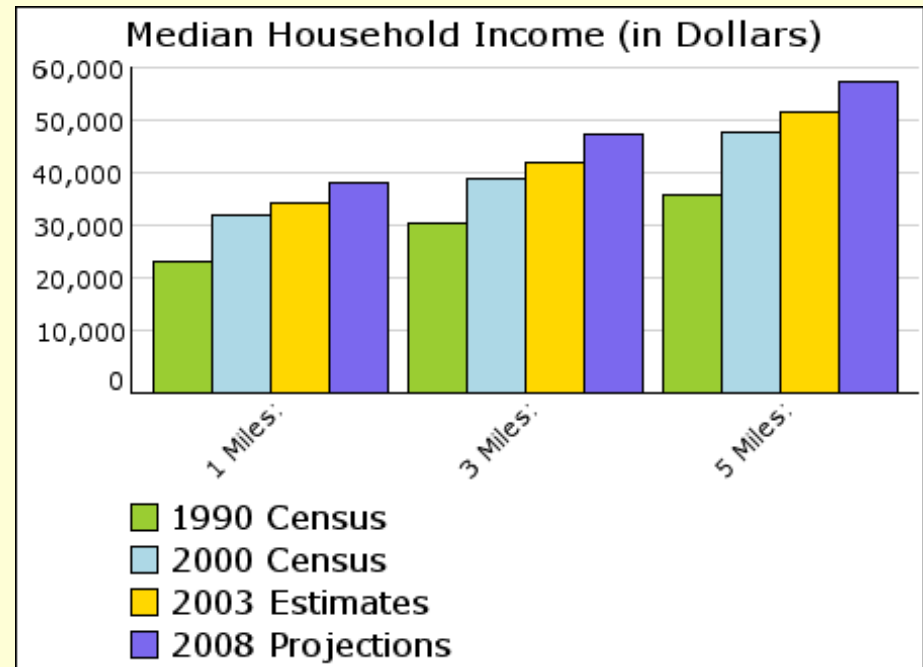
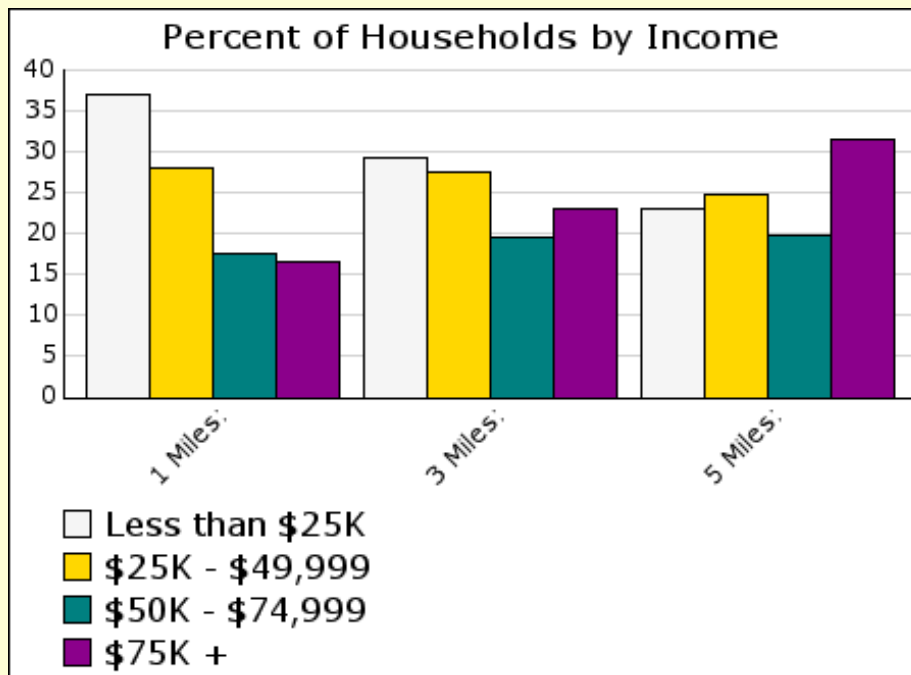
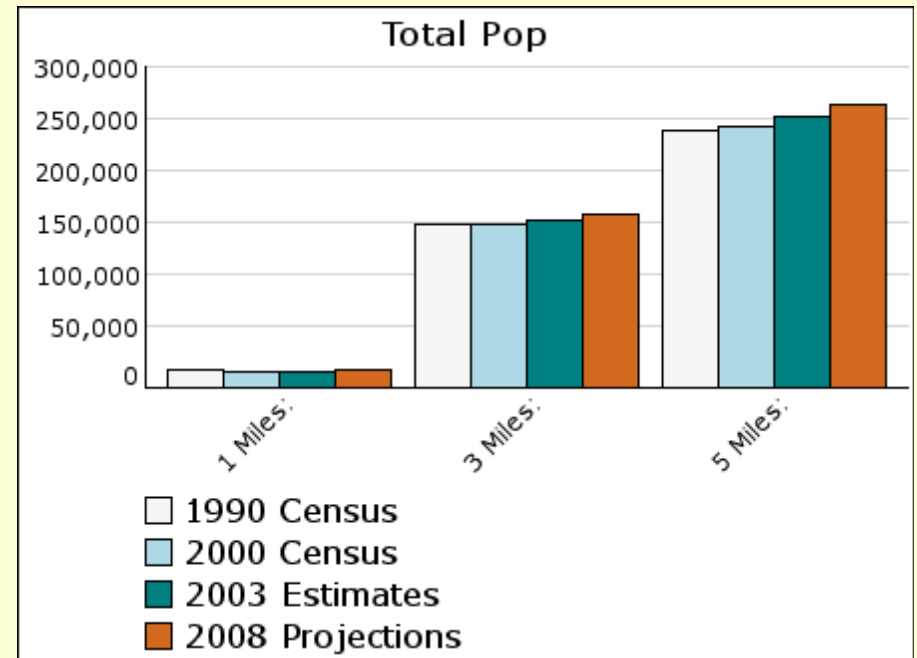
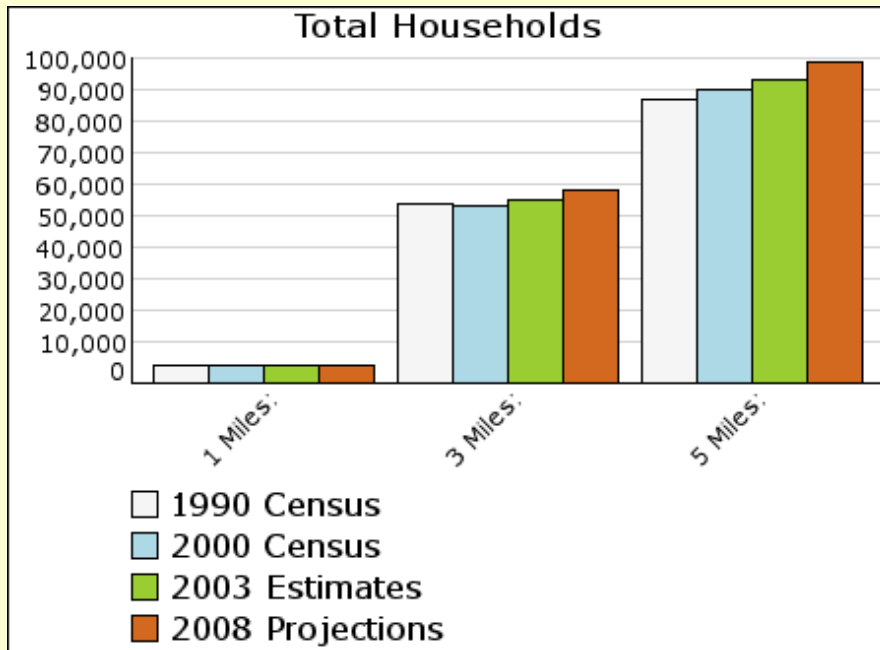


# Market Area

Resident Population - 16,518 @ 1 mile  
- 157,227 @ 3 mile



Daytime Population (jobs) - 11,515 @ 1 m  
- 87,021 @ 3 m



# ECONOMIC BASE MODEL

**Basic Employment**

**Total Employment**

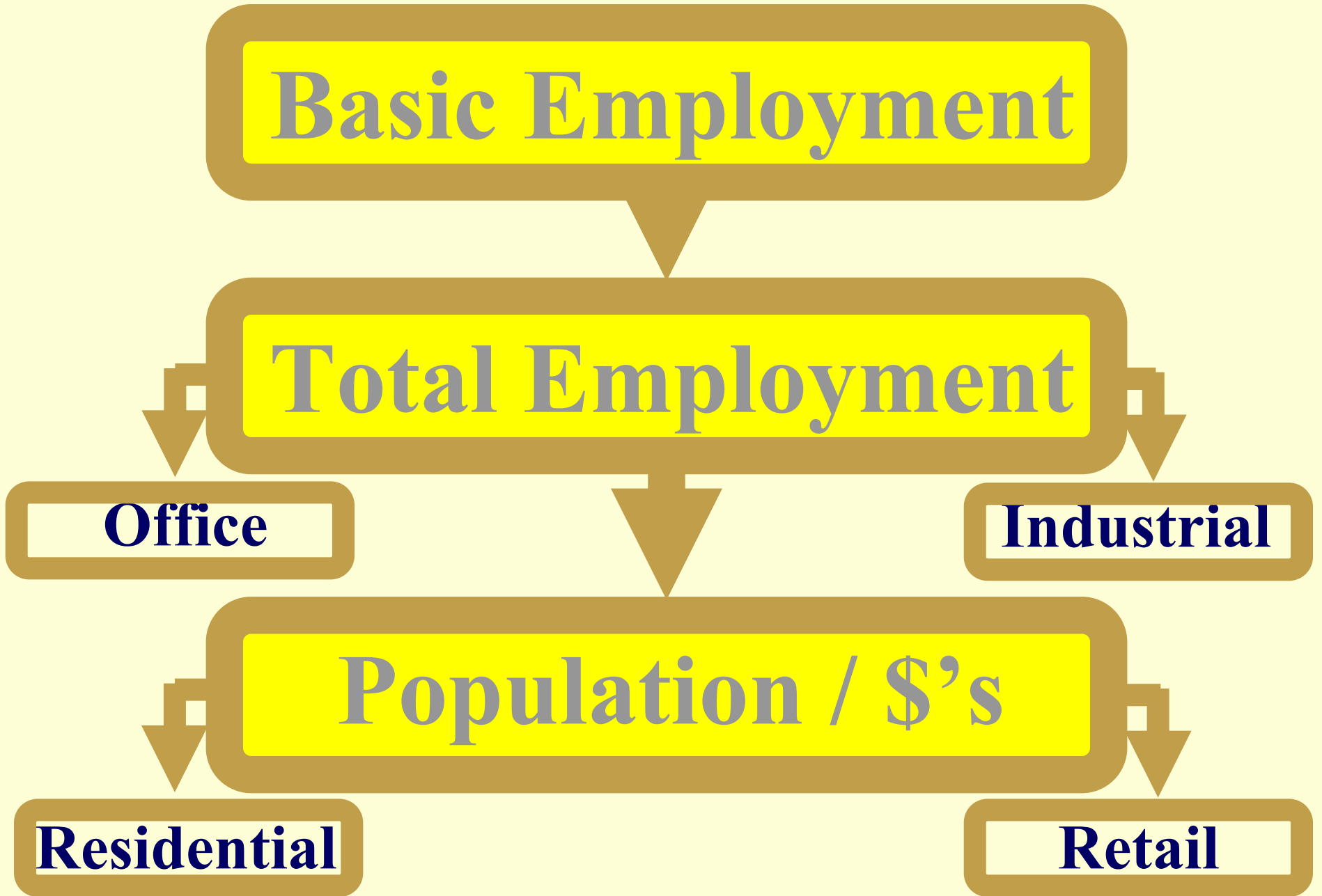
**Office**

**Industrial**

**Population / \$'s**

**Residential**

**Retail**





# Findings

- Transitioning demographic - from blue collar to white collar; ethnic/cultural diversity
- Transition area - from urban to suburban; between major employment centers & educational institutions; barrier of I-295 loop
- Housing options for lease/sale limited for “workforce” housing (60% to 80% of median income)
- Local shopping and social gathering places scattered/incongruent



# Recommendations

- Create gathering places for people to “go do” and to “go buy”
- Create opportunities for workforce housing
- Mix medium - high density neighborhood residential, retail & office uses
- Make Structural changes
- Make Non-Structural changes
- Change the perception...  
change the reality



# Recommendations

- Retail/Entertainment  
100,000 s.f.; clustered around civic/gathering places
- Civic/Public space - useable & inviting to create synergy
- Residential - 1,000 +/- units; to include both rental & equity housing (maintain balance) - mix to be determined
- Office/Industrial - 30,000 s.f.; small office and warehouse for local business



# Development Strategies



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# Challenges

- Strong negative perception
- Incongruent existing uses
- Lax code enforcement
- Lure of the big box



# Opportunities

- Farmers Market
- Thriving residential communities
- Park, wetlands, and open space
- Successful retail development





# Planting the Seeds

- Begin by working together
- Make area more attractive
- Bring better transit connections to the area
- Identify near term areas for development, redevelopment, and enhancement
  - South of Olden and Capital Plaza
  - Spruce and Princeton



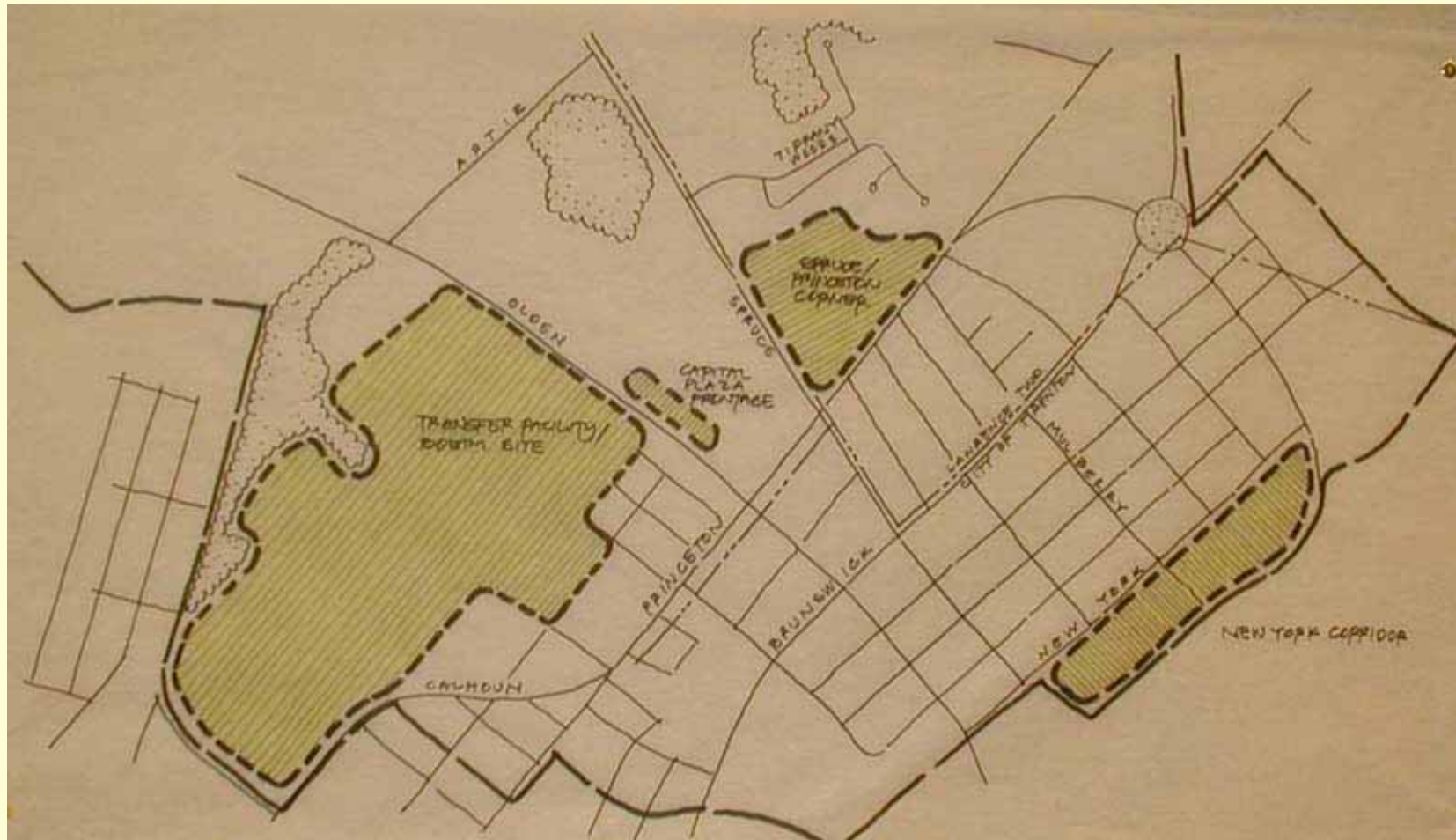


# Planting the Seeds

- Bring the college to Mercer Crossings
  - Residential
  - Entertainment
- Long term opportunity sites



# Opportunity Sites



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# Achieving the Market Potential

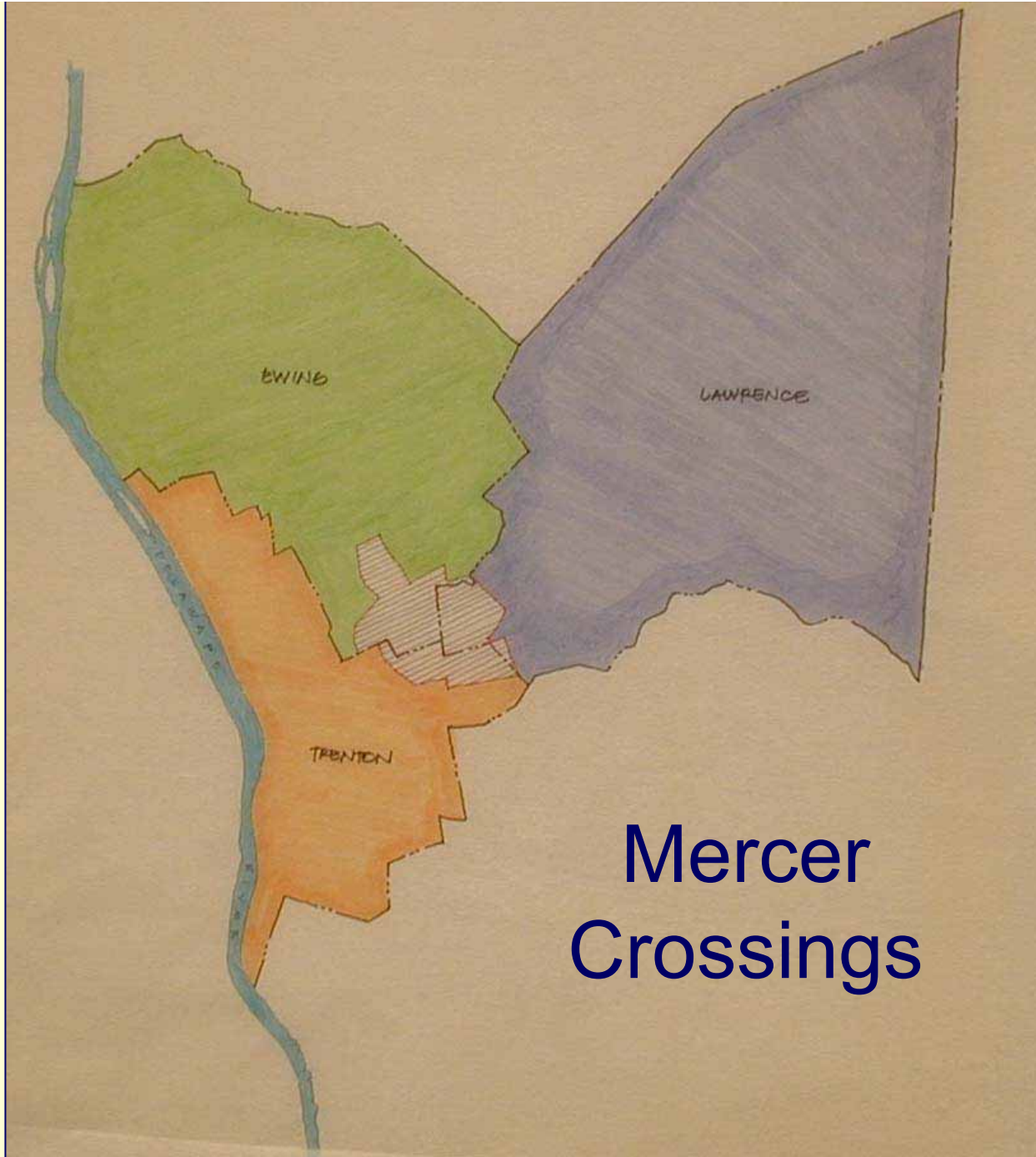
- Branding the area
- Traffic calming
- Creating and maintaining green infrastructure
- Consistent code enforcement
- Greening of Olden, Spruce, and Brunswick
- Reconsider the big box strategy



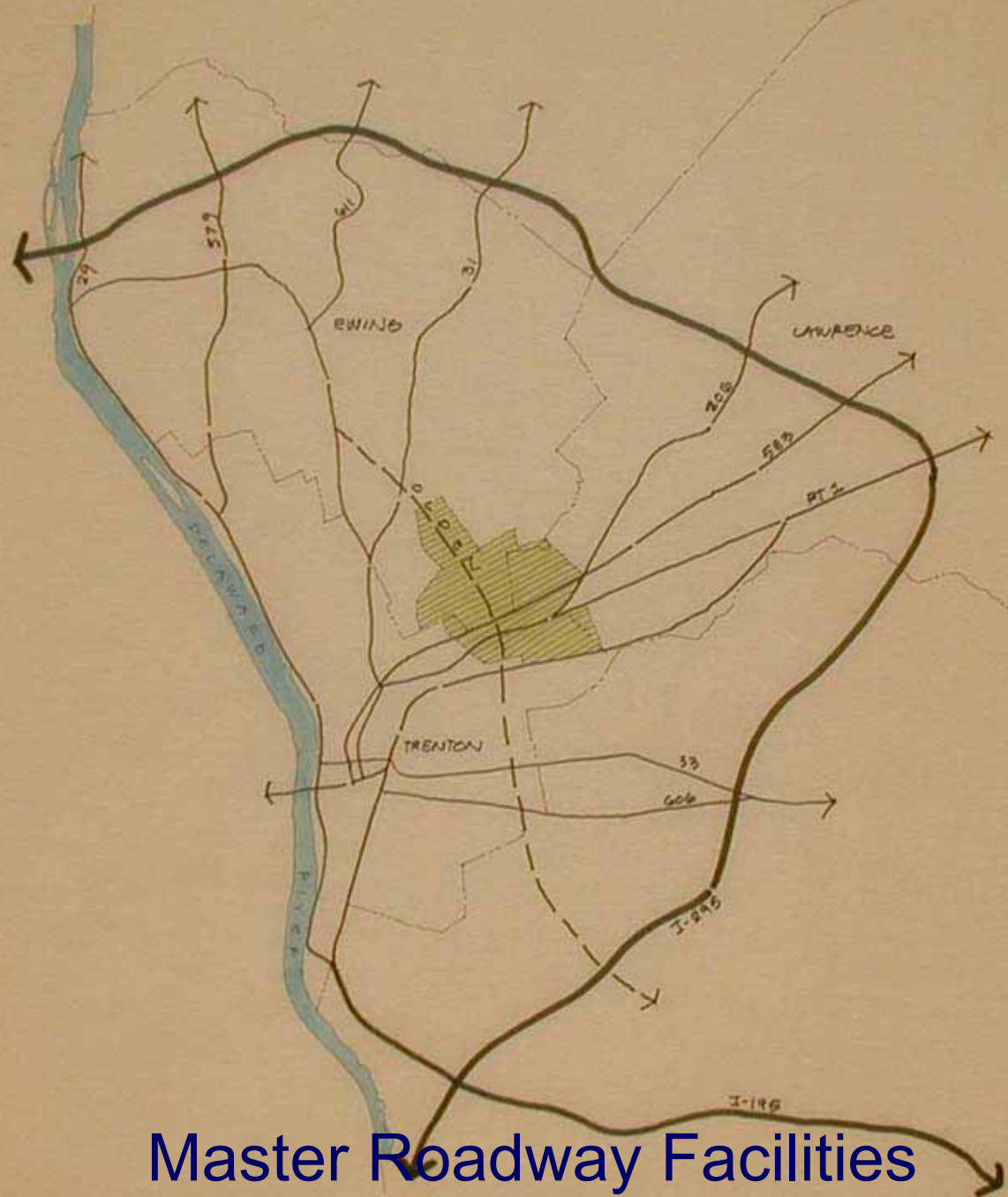
# Planning and Design



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# Mercer Crossings



Master Roadway Facilities



# Design Control Needs

- Aesthetics
- Access Management
- Signage
- Code enforcement





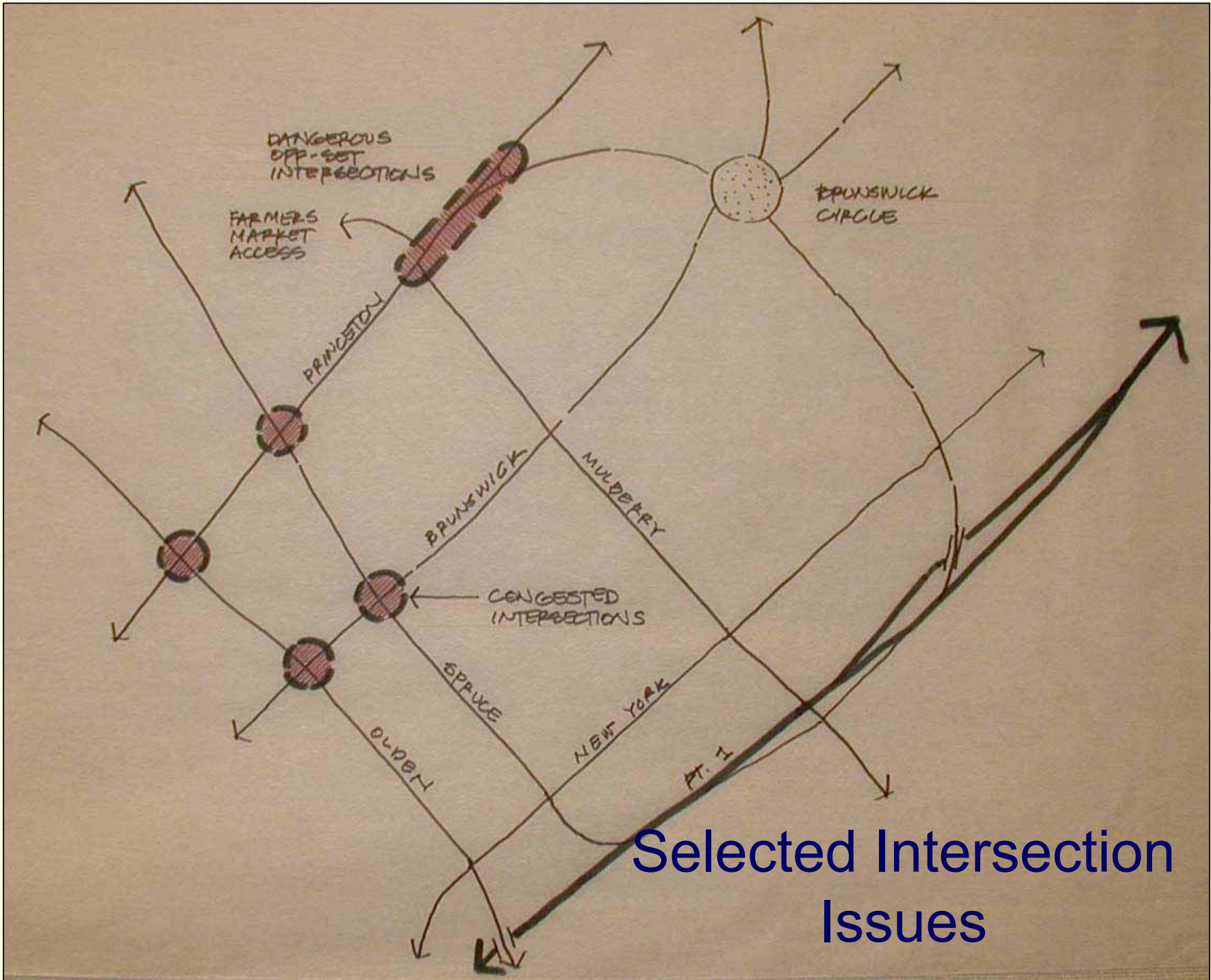
# Circulation Issues

- Local traffic circulation and destination oriented travel
- Change in local travel patterns from pedestrian to auto dependent
- Lack of a strong street continuity network



# Existing Street System





## Selected Intersection Issues



# System Improvements - Facilities

- Calhoun Street extension
- New east-west and north-south Olden Avenue and Spruce Street connections
- 5<sup>th</sup> Street extension north of Spruce Street
- Whitehead Street extension
- Secondary local street extensions



# Local Street Extensions





# System Improvements – Other Recommendations

- Shared site access and circulation
- Concurrent development and implementation of pedestrian and bicycle system plans
- Provision of east-west transit service

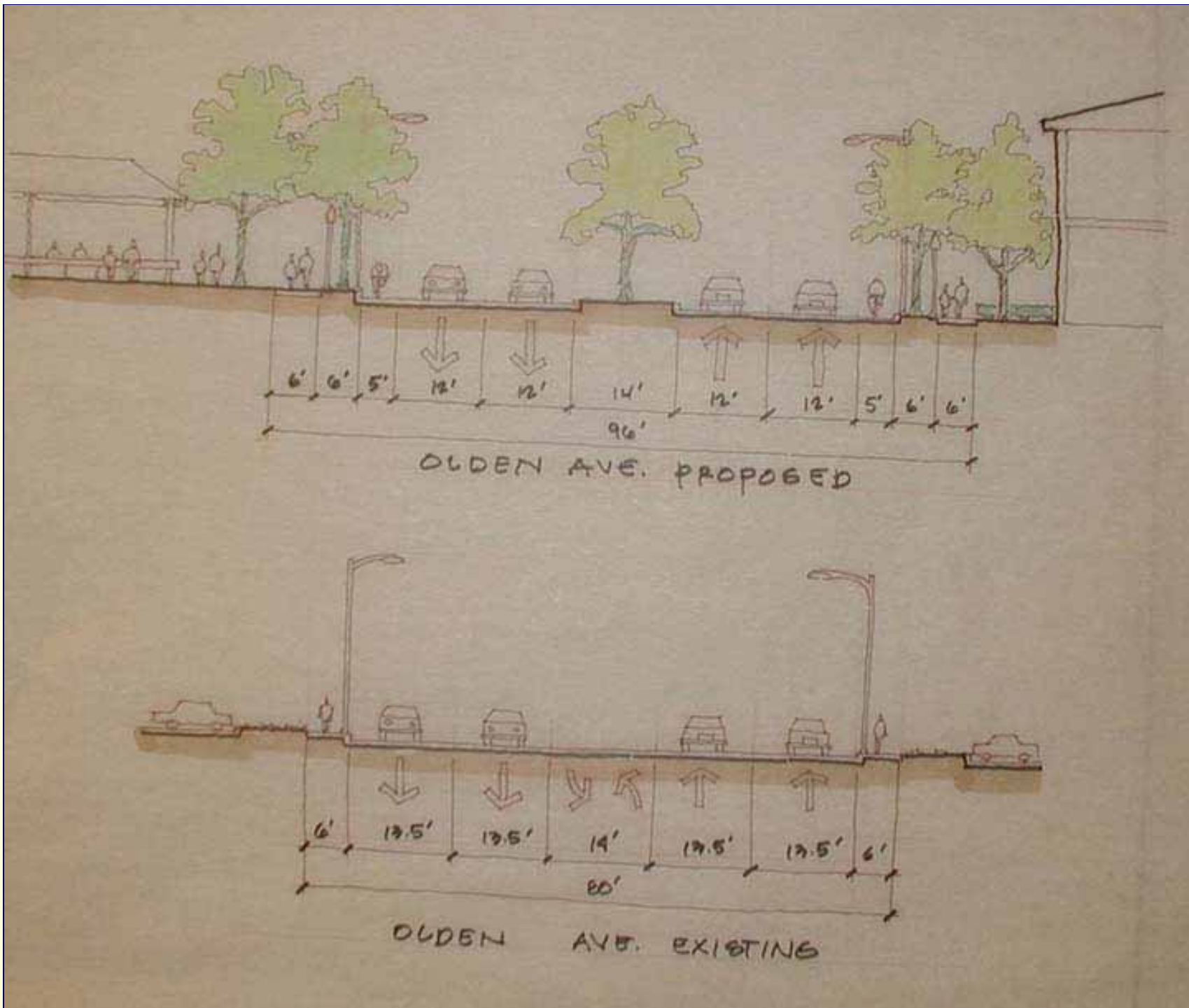




# Aesthetic Design Principles

- Access management controls
- Grassed sidewalk tree planting areas
- Wider sidewalks
- Context related street lighting fixtures
- Utility burial or relocation
- Intersection design improvements
- Pedestrian friendly crosswalks design
- Traffic controls







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# Intersection Improvements





# Improvement Impacts

- Collectively reduce and calm traffic flow
- Priorities

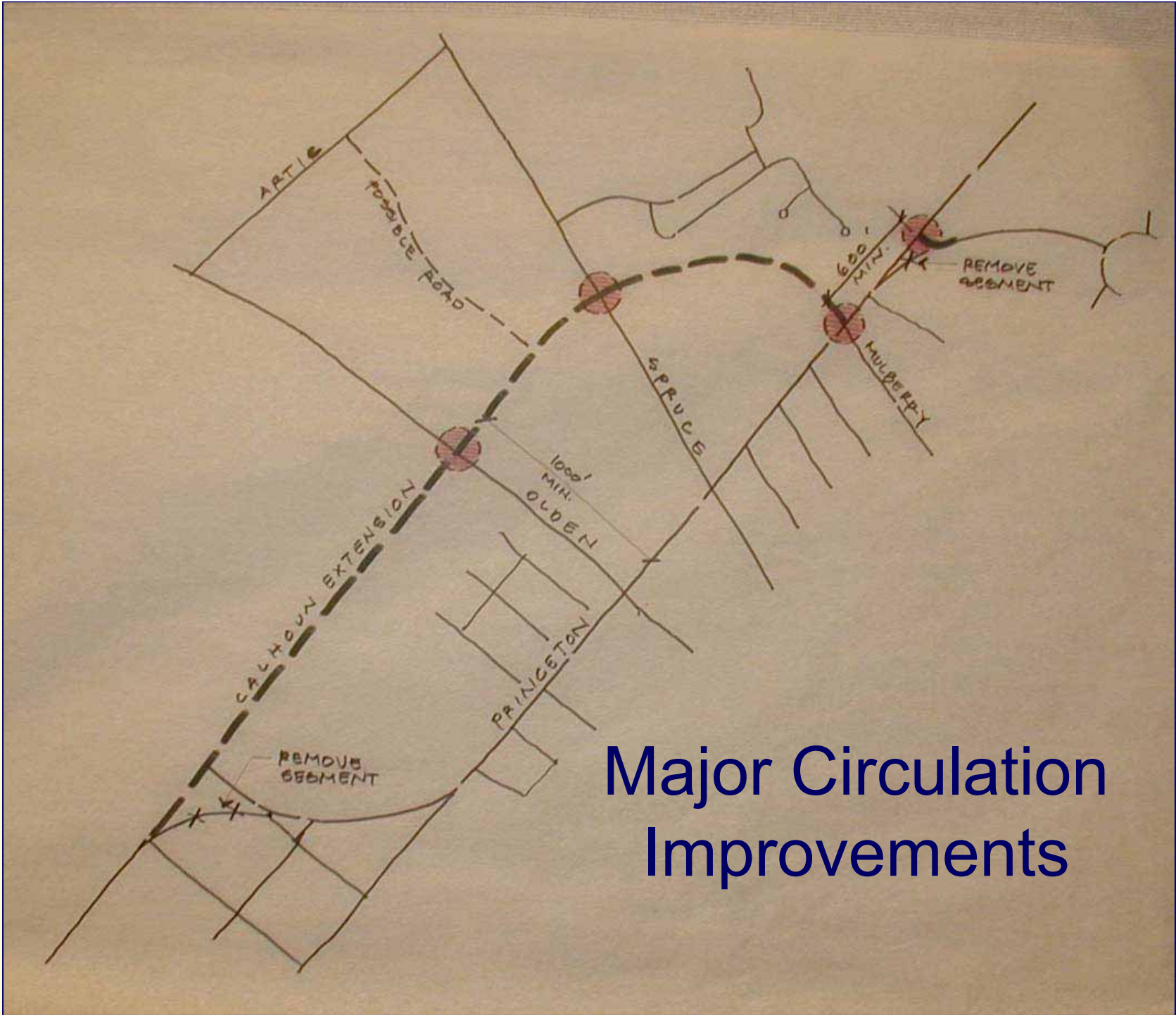




# Big Circulation Moves

- Extend Calhoun Street
- Clean up the Mulberry Street/Princeton intersection
- Realign the Brunswick Circle connection to Princeton
- Add collector roadways where feasible in the Olden-Spruce corridor





# Major Circulation Improvements



# Opportunity Sites

- Transfer Facility/Boehm Site
- Spruce and Princeton Corner
- Capital Plaza Frontage on Olden
- New York Avenue Corridor



# Opportunity Sites



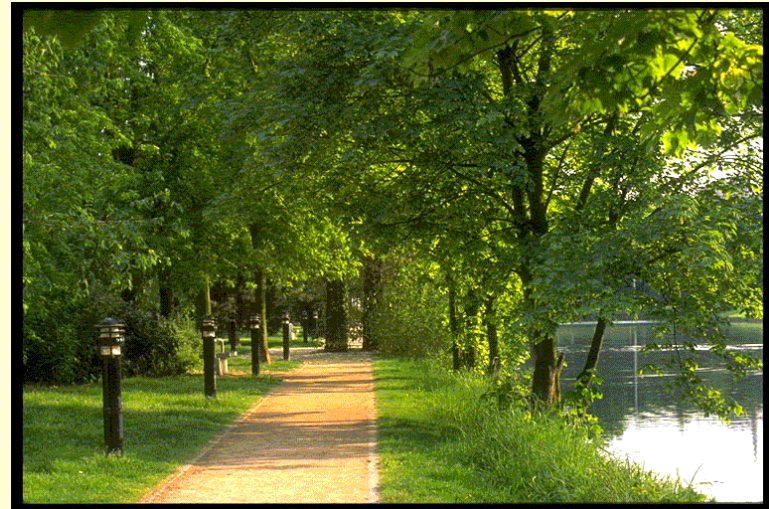
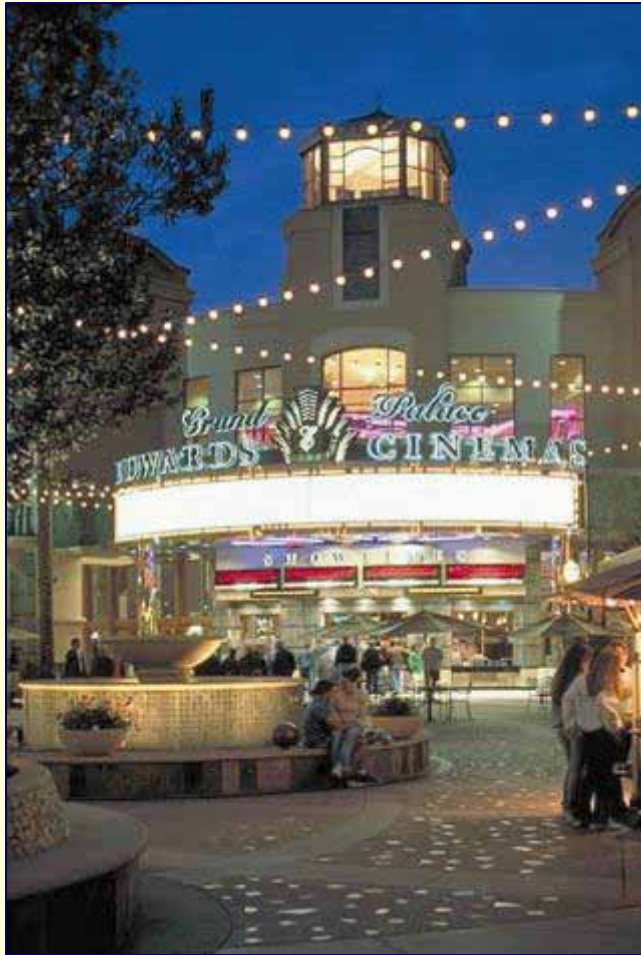
# Transfer Facility/Boehm Site



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# The Possibilities



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# Capital Plaza Frontage on Olden





## Olden and Spruce Opportunity Sites



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# Spruce and Princeton Corner





## Olden and Spruce Opportunity Sites

# The Possibilities



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# Opportunity Sites



# Implementation





# Disconnected Efforts and Disconnected Results

- Historically, little coordinated effort or unified leadership
- Pockets of success but the lack of a unified vision
- Missed opportunities and disjointed development





# Existing Redevelopment Plans

- *Olden Avenue Redevelopment Plan*
- *Brunswick Turnpike South  
Redevelopment Plan*
- No collaboration






# The Current State of Redevelopment in Mercer Crossings

- A shared vision is needed
- No uniform regulations
- A lack of communication and cooperation
- An absence of a single strong leadership
- Three municipalities and the county have come together to develop a plan





When implemented, this effort between Trenton, Ewing, Lawrence, and Mercer County will serve as a model for intergovernmental cooperation in a new era of smart growth in New Jersey.





# An Implementation Strategy

- ADVOCATE
- COOPERATE
- VISION
- IMPLEMENT





# Advocate

- A single leadership
- Leadership role assigned to Mercer County





# Cooperate

## Inter-local Agreements

- A shared vision for the planning area
- A collaborative planning strategy
- A master plan
- Zoning amendments
- A coordination of processes and programs





# Vision

- The New Redevelopment Plan
  - A land use plan
  - Zoning ordinance amendments, including higher urban design standards (site, architecture, transportation, landscaping, and signage)





# Vision

## • Proposed incentives

- Tax abatements and/or tax freezes
- Public investment
- Uniform and consistent development standards and processes
- Streamlined development approval
- Low-interest façade and site improvement loans
- Cost-participation for public improvements

## • Land assembly





# Implement

- The Executive Director of the Mercer Crossings Redevelopment Agency
  - Hired to oversee the coordination of redevelopment
  - Appointee of the County Executive
  - Equally funded by each municipality and the county





# Responsibilities

- Coordinating inter-municipal plan and ordinance amendments
- Coordinating inter-municipal site plan reviews
- Seeking funding sources and grants
- Promoting the redevelopment area and maintaining the website





# Responsibilities

- Securing Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) allocations
- Assisting potential developers and other parties
- Researching and furthering opportunities for the sharing of ratables and the establishment of tax increment financing





# Conclusions

- Looking at the hole and the edges
- Housing and retail
- Leadership
- Infrastructure



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