



A recommended

Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors

BALANCE • DIVERSITY • VIABILITY • AFFORDABILITY



The "funky" character of Nassau Street (above, left) is representative of the great variety of uses and buildings downtown. This character is beloved by its neighbors, and so should be "preserved" even though it is not historic. On the right is one of the many historic buildings that also help make the community special.

A Recommended Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors

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This Plan was prepared by Princeton Future for consideration and approval by the Borough of Princeton and the Regional Planning Board of Princeton. It is the hope of Princeton Future that, upon approval, it will become an addendum to the Community Master Plan. We thank you for your consideration and support in this most important matter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors is the result of more than two years of work that included over 100 neighborhood and public meetings. It therefore represents the ideas and recommendations that came from a truly extensive public participation process. Princeton Future would like to thank all of those who took part, and who contributed to this work:

- The volunteers of Princeton Future
- The Mayor and Borough Council
- The Regional Planning Board officials
- The many neighbors who participated in the meetings

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Princeton Future thanks those individuals, corporations, institutions, and foundations who have provided financial support. In particular, we thank Princeton Partners, Summit Bank (now Fleet Bank), Dow Jones, Market Entry, American List Counsel, Curtis McGraw Foundation, Bunbury Company, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Princeton Area Community Foundation, Harbourton Foundation, John & Cynthia Reed Foundation, Pocumtuck Foundation, Drinker Biddle, Princeton University, the Borough of Princeton, and Seward Johnson Charitable Trust. We are proud of this effort, and of the contributions of those who took part; we thank you all.

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This version of Princeton Future's draft 'A recommended Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors' is presented to you as a public service by The Princeton Packet Inc. While the text of this work-in-progress is complete as prepared for review on Feb. 6 by the Princeton Regional Planning Board, elements of the Appendix and numerous illustrations were omitted to accommodate this space and format.

I. STRATEGIC OVERVIEW:

A SUMMARY OF THE PLAN

Introduction

The basic intention of this Plan is to build upon the recommendations that were made for Downtown Princeton by the 1996 Community Master Plan. Therefore the structure of this document is similar to that of the 1996 Plan, and is organized into the same eight planning Elements. Because the “Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors” focuses only on one small part of the larger Princeton community, this Plan addresses the interests of the community in greater detail than the overview of the 1996 Plan. In addition, because a few developments — some quite dramatic — are now taking place, this Plan addresses the detailed impacts of those actions, also.

Seven fundamental and specific conclusions have been reached in the process of completing this Plan. They are the results of two years of thinking about the future of downtown Princeton, and after many, many conversations and meetings with neighbors, the business community, and Borough leaders. These conclusions are the Principles upon which all of the recommendations are made. Both the Principles and recommendations are summarized in this Strategic Overview.

PROCESS: WHO PARTICIPATED, AND THE FOCUS OF THEIR CONSIDERATIONS

The findings and recommendations of this Plan are the result of work begun by Princeton Future in the fall of 2000. Spurred by broad public interest in projects that were being planned for the center of Downtown, Princeton Future helped sponsor a series of neighborhood meetings that focused on issues that extended beyond the specifics of the individual projects being considered. These meetings were held with the objective of advising the Borough of Princeton and the Regional Planning Board regarding the community’s ideas about the future of the entire Downtown, and its environs (its “neighbors”). They therefore intended to place the discussions of those individual projects into the larger framework of the individual neighborhood’s interests as well as an overall community-wide vision. The meetings were extremely well attended, and were conducted in a remarkable spirit of support and optimism for the future of the community.

Five Zones were identified for study; please note that they extend beyond the central portion of Downtown, and into the neighborhoods most affected by Downtown’s growth, change, and preservation.

Zone 1: The core of Downtown, including the area located generally between Washington Road and Bank St., and between Nassau St. and Paul Robeson Place.

Zone 2: The area on either side of Paul Robeson Place, including the portion of Palmer Square that is yet to be developed as residential, Paul Robeson Place itself, and the southern edge of the John/Witherspoon neighborhood that adjoins the backyards of the Green St. homes.

Zone 3: The large green area at the intersection of Paul Robeson Place and Bayard Lane/Route 206 that is occupied by three institutions: the YM/YWCA, Merwick (a division of Princeton Hospital), and Stanworth (low density residential owned by Princeton University). This area is often referred to as “Green Hill.”

Zone 4: Witherspoon St., between Paul Robeson Place/Wiggins St. and Valley Road. This area includes the John/Witherspoon neighborhood, as well as portions of Princeton Township that contain residential neighborhoods, the Community Park, and the Township government complex.

Zone 5: Nassau St. east of the core of Downtown, between Washington Road and Harrison Street. This area borders the “tree streets” neighborhood and other neighborhoods closer to Harrison St.; it also includes a large edge of the University, and the small shopping/business area at Harrison St. known as Jugtown.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE 1996 COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN: THE STRUCTURE OF THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

The recommendations for the five Zones of the “Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors” are organized in the same way as the 1996 Community Master Plan. The Downtown therefore focuses its analyses and recommendations on the eight planning “Elements” of the 1996 Plan: Land Use, Housing, Circulation, Utility Services, Community Facilities, Open Space and Recreation, Historic Preserva-



tion, and Conservation. The fundamental purpose of the Downtown Plan is to build on the work of the Regional Planning Board by addressing issues in a finer detail than can be done in community-wide master plans. Indeed, the foundation of this Plan is the recommendation by the 1996 Plan that “A town center master plan is needed to provide a concise picture of the mix of retail businesses and residential uses required for a viable and dynamic center.”

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES RAISED BY THE COMMUNITY

The discussions with the neighbors, the community at large, and with Borough leaders, identified a wide range of concerns and hopes for both the downtown and the neighborhoods that adjoin downtown:

- Be aware of the impact of “downtown creep” on the adjacent neighborhoods.
- Remember the “wound” created by Paul Robeson Place.
- How can parking for downtown best be provided?
- Remember the needs of the merchants as well as the local community.
- What can be done about the community’s level of reliance on

New developments in downtown must respect the scale and character of the community while providing for a lively mix of uses – residential and retail. Well-designed open spaces and additional parking will create both convenience and vitality, as is illustrated here in the design for a new public square and mixed-use development near the library on Witherspoon Street.

Affordable housing should be a part of every new residential project.



the automobile — which can encourage the desire to park conveniently, and create the inevitability of traffic congestion?

- Remember the importance of walking and biking to the community.
- Green open spaces, green streets, and places to walk and gather, are all important to the community — in the downtown as well as in the neighborhoods.
- How can the shopping in downtown best serve our community — and not merely visitors from elsewhere?
- How can local shopping be provided in the neighborhoods? (Remember that certain areas, in key locations, are now zoned for this use.)
- Remember the value the community places on the human-scale fabric of downtown's shopping streets.
- How can we address the issue of the affordability of places to live? Remember who actually lives and works here.
- Overcrowding is having a negative impact on some neighborhoods.
- How can the community's institutions — the University, the Library, the YM/YWCA, the Arts Council, etc. — best be integrated into the life of the neighborhoods and of downtown? How can they support the quality of life of everyone? What are the impacts of their activities on our quality of life?
- Remember: Princeton is a town that has become a “center” that serves a very large region.

SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES, AND THEIR SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES

Princeton Future has based all of its efforts on a statement — a “credo” — that still holds after the lengthy planning and community involvement process. That statement, which is recorded in the Princeton Future Annual Report for 2002, is based on the belief in the importance of maintaining Princeton's “wonderful vitality.” It is a belief that is important not only to the Borough, but to the Township and to much of central New Jersey:

“A key element in that vitality, and in the healthy and sustainable economy it represents, is diversity in its broadest sense — economic, physical, and social. The future of downtown Princeton depends on creating an ‘affordable balance’ of shops, services, building types, and green spaces that appeal to residents and visitors across the income spectrum. Achieving that goal requires thoughtful planning with meaningful, ongoing input from all members of the community.”

The “Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors” that has resulted from the effort that began with that credo has developed the seven Principles stated here. Each of those Principles is supported by more specific objectives that came directly from the neighborhood and community meetings:

1. Preserve the quality and character of the neighborhoods.
2. Preserve the scale and density of downtown.
3. Subsequent downtown development should be residential, above ground floor retail.
4. Make affordability part of every project.
5. Connect downtown and the neighborhoods by walking and biking.
6. Expand the idea of “preservation,” to include sustaining the way of life of neighborhoods, and retaining the character of groups of buildings, even though they may not be historic.
7. Revenues to the Borough should be increased.

Each of the Principles applies in various ways to the eight planning Elements of the Plan. The Objectives that support the Principles are therefore focused more specifically, on each individual Element. Those Objectives can be summarized as follows:

Objectives Summary: Land Use

- Draw the line between “downtown” and the neighborhoods; maintain the positive interactions between the residential areas and the commercial center, but prevent “downtown creep.”
- Provide new residential uses in downtown, including within the core of Zone 1/downtown.
- Include a mix of retail uses, including “mom and pop” type shops that can serve the real needs of the neighbors.
- Promote added neighborhood-related shopping within the neighborhoods.
- Integrate the uses and circulation in Zone 3 into a single functional plan.
- Preserve the “funky” character of Zone 5.

Objectives Summary: Housing



- Affordable housing should be integrated into the community, and into their individual developments. They must not be isolated from their neighbors.
- 20% of each new residential development should be affordable.

Objectives Summary: Circulation

- Make key improvements to improve walking to downtown, especially across and along Rte 206, and along Paul Robeson Place and Witherspoon St.
- Slow traffic on Paul Robeson Place.
- Create an integrated circulation system in the Zone 3 area.
- Provide adequate parking for commercial and residential uses.

Objectives Summary: Utility Service

- Eliminate overhead wires along the key streets, to preserve the trees and improve the walking and driving experience.
- Evaluate the future possibilities of the PSE&G site, to be part of downtown.

Objectives Summary: Community Facilities

- Support the new Library by completing the proposed public square on Witherspoon St.
- Improve the setting of the First Baptist Church, which is now immediately adjacent to Paul Robeson Place.
- The three institutions in Zone 3 should make a single, coordinated plan for the area.
- The University facilities and plans should be integrated into the downtown — especially in Zone 5, where the town and the campus are the most closely linked.

Objectives Summary: Open Space and Recreation

- Integrate the green areas of Zone 3 into any new developments that take place there.
- Preserve and improve the tree-lined streets, such as Witherspoon St., Paul Robeson Place, Wiggins St., and Nassau St.
- Plan the new public square in the heart of downtown, to provide for a variety of activities, and for a variety of people.

Objectives Summary: Historic Preservation

- Specific neighborhoods (e.g. John/Witherspoon) should be identified and evaluated, so that means can be established to sustain their way of life.
- Groups of buildings that are valued, but are not historic, should also be identified, so that means for protecting them can be established.

Objectives Summary: Conservation

- The goals for conservation of the 1996 Plan remain: protect environmentally sensitive areas, scenic corridors, historic landscapes, etc.

Green Street, in the John/Witherspoon neighborhood, is an example of the quality of that neighborhood that the residents wish to “preserve” – a place where neighbors care about each other, their neighborhood, and their shared history.

‘Princeton Future is an entity that can be called upon to keep the broader vision for the good of the whole community – its citizens, its institutions, and its businesses – as well as for the stability of our neighborhoods.’

James A. Floyd
former mayor
of Princeton Township

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Note that the specific recommendation of the neighborhood discussions are now organized to fit within the outline of the 1996 Community Master Plan, and that they are based on the Principles and Objectives listed above:

LAND USE

Zone 1:

- In general preserve the buildings and open spaces throughout downtown. (See the Historic Preservation Element, regarding the dual meanings of “preservation”: the actual preservation of specific historic structures, and the preservation of the quality of life in the neighborhoods and in downtown.)

- Create a public square that can act as a civic destination, and that can be used by the entire community. This square could be located on Witherspoon St., and therefore act also as a gateway to downtown.

- Increase the parking supply within downtown, but within the limits of the existing zoning regulations.

- Add residential uses, over ground floor retail, to the heart of downtown.

- Three possible developments have been proposed, which support the basic recommendations of this Land Use Plan:

1. The public square, mixed-use, and parking development proposed for Witherspoon St., adjacent to the Library.

2. The opportunities for improvement and development between Spring and Nassau St., including the creation of new public open spaces and mid-block walkways, the reuse of existing buildings for retail purposes, the inclusion of some short-term parking, and the construction of new apartments and retail.

3. A mixed-use (retail/residential) development on the Griggs property, at the corner of Hulfish and Witherspoon streets.

Zone 2:

- Transform Paul Robeson Place from a “highway” to a typical, slow-moving Princeton street.

- Both sides of Paul Robeson Place should become parts of the public realm — as comfortable tree-shaded sidewalks that link the community together.

- New residences should face the rebuilt Paul Robeson Place, to recreate the sense of neighborhood.

- Provide the desired mix of dwelling types, including those that are affordable, as called for in the Housing Element.

Zone 3:

- The three institutions that own the properties should create a single, coordinated, plan for the area, which provides for uses that are supportive of each other, and which links those uses by roads, walkways, and shared open spaces. Included in such a plan should be the consideration of senior housing and more residential development: the area is convenient to downtown, and is surrounded by a variety of residential neighborhoods.

Zone 4:

- Take steps to assure that the overcrowded rental units in the area are improved, so that they are no longer overcrowded, that their appearance is compatible with the rest of Witherspoon St., and that they are generally consistent with the quality of the John/Witherspoon neighborhood.

- Encourage additional shopping on Witherspoon St., especially that which supports the needs of the neighborhood. Note that the existing RB zoning regulations now permit this.

Zone 5:

- Avoid downtown creep — change the CB (“Central Business”) zoning on Nassau St. in this area to NB (“Neighborhood Business”), which has a mix of uses similar to the rest of the shopping streets, and which limits the building height to a compatible three stories.

- Preserve the “funky” character of Nassau St.

- Assure that the existing homes on Nassau St. remain residential; do not permit extension of the shopping area beyond the existing limits of the various existing zoning regulations.

- Permit residential uses in the SB district, as a further reinforcement of the varied character of this Zone.

HOUSING

Affordable housing of all types should be provided, including units which are calculated as “affordable” within the economy of Princeton, and those which are truly affordable to working people and students. Affordable dwellings of all types should be provided in any new developments that are considered, especially in Zones 1, 2, and 3. In any new (or renovated) residential development the target for the number of affordable units should be about 20% of the total project. Each development that includes these affordable units should be designed to be an integral part of its neighborhood; in addition, the affordable units must be integrated into the overall plans of the development and not set aside and isolated from the market-rate dwellings.

Note that the provision of affordable dwelling units is a general policy not only of this Plan, but also of the community at large. The recommendations made here are supplement to those described in the Housing Element of the 1996 Plan.

CIRCULATION

Although the specific recommendations regarding circulation focus on the five Zones of the study process, five general policies evolved, that apply to the entire area and, indeed, to the whole community:

- Continue to encourage walking to downtown; 40 % of the employees now walk to work in downtown (and the University) so the precedent is set.

- Increase the use of public transit, including existing NJT buses plus the possibility of

jitneys to serve remote parking lots and the various neighborhoods.

- Further encourage bicycle use in all parts of the Borough: between the neighborhoods and downtown, between the neighborhoods and the community institutions and recreation areas, and among all the neighborhoods themselves.

- The design of all new streets must reflect the human scale of Princeton, and must slow the traffic.

- Beyond the possibility of an addition to the Chambers Street garage and the construction of a new garage on Spring Street, no more parking should be provided within the Zone 1/downtown area. All future parking should be in remote lots, if more spaces are needed as the downtown changes and continues to improve.

Zone 1:

- The recommended new garage development should include entrances and exits from the parking structure onto both Wiggins and Spring Sts., to distribute the car movement and thereby to reduce congestion (note that the entire existing parking lot now exits only onto a one-way Spring St.)

- Spring St. should be evaluated for two-way traffic, to permit the choice of drivers to head east or west.

- The pattern of traffic on Spring St. should be evaluated to determine if the sidewalks could be widened, and street trees added.

- Resolve all delivery issues, especially in those areas where the new public square, other open spaces, and the mid-block walkways are recommended.

- Manage public parking (especially that which will be provided in the new Spring St. garage) to include adequate short-term parking spaces for shoppers, as well as spaces for Library users, employees, and residents.

- If any additional residential/retail development is considered in the Zone 1/downtown



The neighbors cherished the mix of uses in Zone 5, including this row of historic homes, some of which are still residential, and some of which now include offices.

area, and if additional parking is required by both the zoning regulations and the marketplace, a policy of providing remote parking for downtown employees should be implemented to open up existing downtown parking for the new downtown residents. Note that new parking lots and a jitney service will be needed (to provide access to the new remote lots) to implement this policy.

Zone 2:

- Relocate, and narrow, Paul Robeson Place so that the street looks more like a Princeton residential street, and that the traffic moves more slowly. A redesigned street may also offer the possibility of residential development on the north side of the street, as an extension of the John/Witherspoon neighborhood.

- The new street should include two moving lanes (narrower than the existing lanes) and two parking lanes.

- Make the sidewalks on both sides of Robeson Place comfortable for pedestrians (wider, with street trees at the curbs).

Zone 3:

- Create a roadway system, within the site, that links the uses and their parking areas.
- Use this internal system to create two new signalized intersections on Route 206 and Paul Robeson Place, to make left turns possible from the properties.

- Extend Chambers St. into the property, via a new intersection with Paul Robeson Place; locate the new extension on the original alignment of Chambers Street, which will therefore be set back from the homes on John St. Evaluate the needs and concerns of the neighbors, in considering possible pedestrian linkages between this new street and John St.

- Create pedestrian crosswalks at the new intersections; make safe pedestrian links between the western neighborhoods and downtown.

- Consider closing the John St. intersection with Paul Robeson Place (where Chambers St. will now be located), to eliminate short-cut traffic within the neighborhood.

- Create a north-south bikeway and walkway that parallels the extended Chambers Street, and that will link downtown (at Paul Robeson Place) to these neighborhoods and to Community Park South.

Zone 4:

- Improve the conditions of the sidewalks to make walking safe and comfortable.

- Maintain the on-street parking, to serve both the existing (and new) retail uses, and many of the existing houses.

- See Area 3, regarding the location of a N-S bikeway that parallels Witherspoon St.

Zone 5:

- Create visible crosswalks at key intersections, to make safer opportunities for pedestrian crossings in the shopping area.

UTILITY SERVICE

The Zones that are the subject of this Plan require only a two suggestions regarding utility services. In Zone 1 the PSE&G property on Wiggins St. has long been looked at as a possible location of a downtown-related development, when the cost and technology of removing the existing switching station makes it possible. In Zone 4, the entire appearance of historic Witherspoon St. will be improved by placing the overhead wires underground. The trees are suffering from the trimming for the wires, and the utility poles interrupt pedestrian movement.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Zone 1:

The new Library will add vitality to downtown, and will be convenient for the nearby employees, shoppers, and residents. The public square, which is recommended for Witherspoon St. and would adjoin the Library, will be an essential part of the overall Library operations and design.

Zone 2:

The First Baptist Church at the corner of John St. and Paul Robeson Place is extremely close to the existing roadway. A re-built street — narrower and relocated — will create the opportunity for an outdoor space adjacent to the sanctuary.

Zone 3:

As the three institutions that own this large area — YM/YWCA, the Medical Center/Hospital (at Merwick), and Princeton University (Stanworth) — consider their respective futures, and consider a single coordinated plan for the entire site, certain actions could be evaluated. For example: Housing for seniors would be well located here (as a quiet but convenient place). The Hospital could provide some of its services in other locations (just as the Y's do now), and the University could add more dwellings without diminishing the open and green quality.

Zone 4:

This corridor is the center of many institutional uses. For example: the churches along Witherspoon St. will always need their on-street parking; and the Hospital's plans must be evaluated in terms of impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. The Township offices and schools are already serving the community well. A major issue created by all these institutions, but especially regarding the Hospital, is that they serve the region and that therefore create great demands on the traffic capacity of the street. Access issues are therefore a fundamental part of planning for the institutions, and for the design of the street.

Zone 5:

Nassau St. in this area is the longest seam between the neighborhoods and the University. The discussions with both the neighbors and the University indicated that the relationship between them was a good one. The only issues raised related to the car: parking by students and faculty on some neighborhood streets, and the substantial focus of University traffic on Nassau St.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Zone 1:

- Create a new public square on Witherspoon St., at the Library, as part of the new mixed-use development that will include shops, apartments, and a well-designed parking structure.
- Create a system of new north-south and east-west public walkways that connect to the new square and extend the existing pattern of similar walkways, such as Chambers Walk. Include retail and other businesses along these walkways. The map in the Open Space and Recreation Element indicates the possible locations of these important pedestrian ways.

Zone 2:

- Create new sidewalks, on both sides of Paul Robeson Place, that are safe and comfortable, as part of a pedestrian system that links the western neighborhoods with the rest of town. Include grass edges and street trees (within the green edges) to give the sense of a green walking and residential corridor, and not of an auto-oriented highway.

Zone 3:

- Create a linked open space system that is accessible to the community, and that preserves the existing historic Merwick garden and the existing alley of Plane trees.

Zone 4:

- Preserve the tree-lined quality of Witherspoon Street, by preserving the existing street trees and by planting new trees where possible.

Zone 5:

- Maintain and improve Quarry St. Park, Barbara Boggs Sigmund

Downtown Growth With Remote Parking



★ Lots already in use

★ Possible remote lots

Park and Harrison St. Park.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Preservation can include a variety of buildings and places, including those that are historic and those that are merely a valued part of the community's fabric. The difference in preservation between "history" and "character" was an important point raised in this process.

For example, in Zone 5, the "funky" character of the buildings complements the variety of uses and, although not "historic," should be maintained. Simple guidelines can help preserve the unique nature of what some called the "Village High Street" without making it seem uniform or controlled.

Also for example, in Zone 4, the John/Witherspoon neighborhood values its social and cultural history as well as its physical environment. "Community preservation" was an idea raised in this process, as a result.

In contrast, the three historic districts within this study area — Bank Street, the Central District, and Jugtown — are valued because of the historic and aesthetic qualities of the individual buildings and of the places made by the assemblages of those buildings.

CONSERVATION

There are only two large open green areas within the study area of this Plan: “Green Hill” of Zone 3, and the Cemetery in Zone 4. As development takes place in Zone 3, the guiding principles of conservation that are described in the Community Master Plan should be followed, such as the preservation of visual resources, scenic corridors, wetlands, and various habitats. Valued stands of trees should be preserved; other landscapes (both native and the formal garden) should be part of the planning. The Cemetery, as it considers means for expanding its business, should preserve its grand landscape — especially the trees.

SUMMARY: PLAN RELATIONSHIPS

Borough Zoning Regulations:

The recommendations of this Plan are intended to reinforce the basic intentions of the Zoning Regulations by making suggestions for changes that reflect the community’s intentions. The details of those changes are described in detail in III. Land Use.

Community Master Plan:

As stated in the introductory sections of this Strategic Overview (Relationship to the 1996 Community Master Plan), the entire Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors is organized to supplement the eight Elements of the 1996 Plan. The recommendations reflect the goals of the 1996 Plan; it is the intention that they will supplement, rather than change, the recommendations of the earlier Plan.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN, AND ITS NEIGHBORS

- The fundamental understanding that was reached by the application of these Principles was that the downtown is approaching full build out. This Plan therefore declares that the existing zoning definition of the development capacity (height, density) of downtown (Zone 1) is exactly right. Any further expansion beyond those limits should take place in mixed-use centers elsewhere in the Township and the Borough, as “satellites” of downtown.

- The vision for the future is of a downtown that remains active and that thrives economically, but that does not impose its uses and developments on the neighbors — and indeed clarifies and improves the line between downtown and the neighborhoods.

- The vision for the nearby neighborhoods is that they remain stable, handsome, and well cared for as they reinforce a real sense of community among the residents.

- The human-scale quality of the entire community — downtown and neighborhoods alike — is cherished, and therefore any change to Princeton as an important regional center should reinforce that quality. Increased density is acceptable, but only if it supports the other goals of affordability, diversity, and appropriate development of shopping that serves the neighbors.

- Details matter, so that the health of street trees, the types of shops, the exact location and design of parking, the ability to walk and ride bicycles around the community, the design quality of the buildings, and the design of the walking and open space environment in downtown, are as important as larger regional planning policies. This is a personal, intimate community, and it must remain that way.

II. PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES

As stated in the Strategic Overview, the area of study for the Plan extended beyond the limits of the “CBD” — Central Business District, or downtown — to include those adjacent areas and neighborhoods that are most affected by change and growth of downtown. In so doing, five specific Zones were identified as the subject of detailed consideration:

Zone 1: Approximately the area of the CBD, and the historic center of Princeton.

Zone 2: The sites on either side of Paul Robeson Place, including the unfinished Palmer Square development and the southern edge of the John/Witherspoon neighborhood. This is the area where a block of residences in that neighborhood was demolished to create a larger site for the overall Palmer Square development — and is still thought of as a “wound” in the fabric of the community.

Zone 3: The large green area commonly known as “Green Hill,” which includes the YM/YWCA, Merwick (used by the Hospital), and Stanworth (the residential community owned by the University). The low density of development at the three institutions makes it the single largest opportunity for change within the entire study area of this Plan.

37-31 JACKSON STREET



27 JACKSON STREET



23-21 JACKSON STREET

17-5 JACKSON STREET



AERIAL OF JACKSON STREET



82 WITHERSPOON

Zone 4: Witherspoon St., between downtown and the Township offices, which links the Borough and the Township, and which passes the Hospital and several older residential areas, including the John/Witherspoon neighborhood.

Zone 5: East Nassau St. between Washington Road and Harrison St., including a distinctive retail area, the “Tree Streets” Neighborhood, “Jugtown” at Harrison St., and a major edge of the University.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Strategic Overview lists these seven “Principles” which guide the recommendations of this Plan, and which evolved from the extensive citizen input of the planning process:

1. Preserve the quality and character of the neighborhoods.

- “Draw the line” between downtown and the residential areas.

Keep the positive interactions between downtown and the neighborhoods.

- Prevent downtown creep, of commercial uses, buildings, and parking into the neighborhoods.

- The existing zoning regulations include various districts that now act as “transitions” between the commercial center and the neighborhoods. They can be an effective tool in “drawing the line.”

- Eliminate overcrowded residential situations.

- Heal the “wound” that was identified by the neighbors, by correcting the physical and social separation (and the political injustice) created by Paul Robeson Place.

2. Preserve the scale and density of downtown.

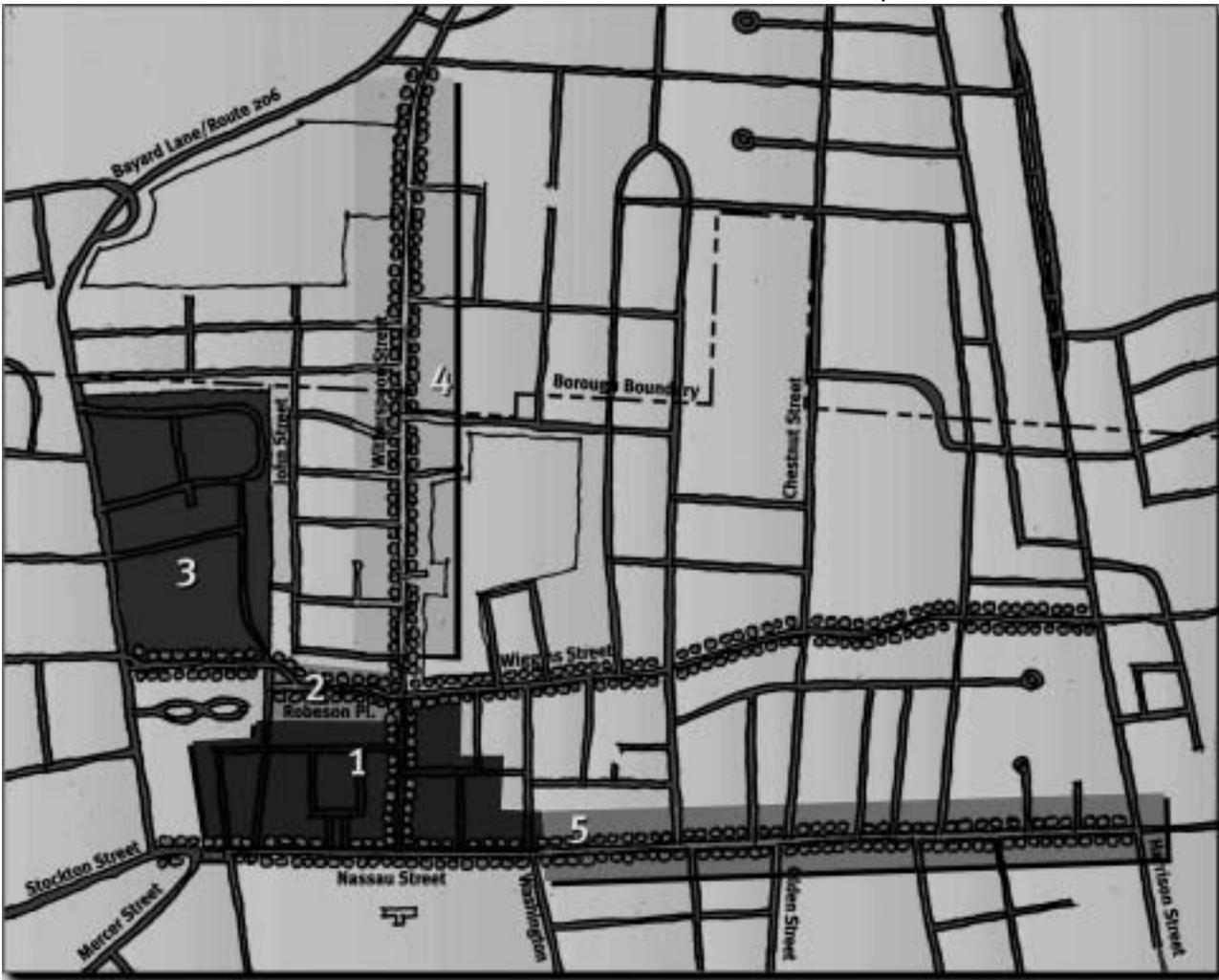
- Downtown need not grow vertically. Buildings need not be taller than the 65’ permitted now.

- Provide adequate parking, but be imaginative: provide remote parking for employees, and reduce the need to drive.

3. Subsequent downtown development should be residential, above ground floor retail.

- Residents add life to downtown, but create less parking and

Pictures of the former Jackson Street homes, from the 1950s. Courtesy of Hank Pannell.



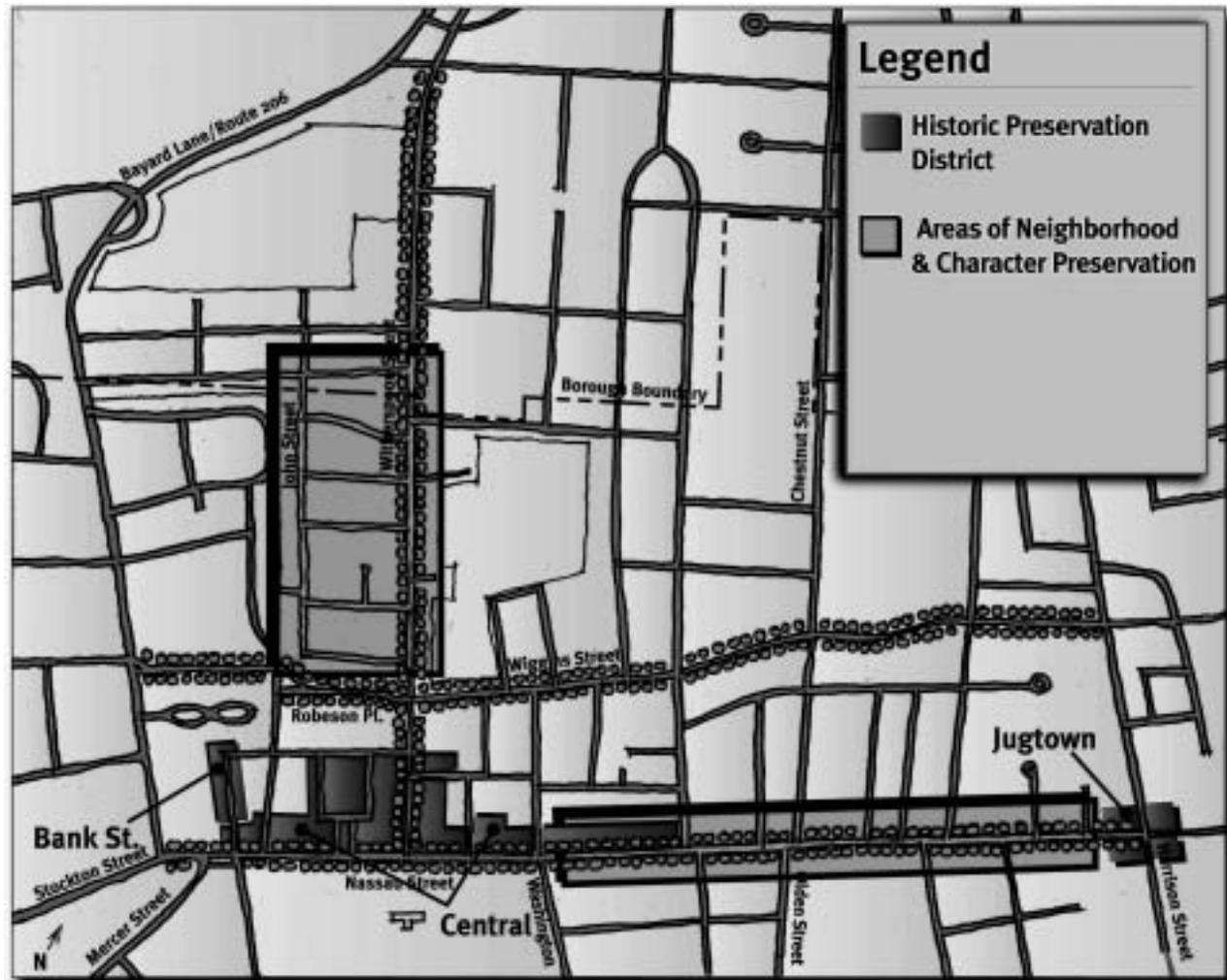
A Recommended Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors

The Five Zones

The process of planning for downtown led to the realization that there were five distinct planning Zones to be considered, whose locations and limits are illustrated here.

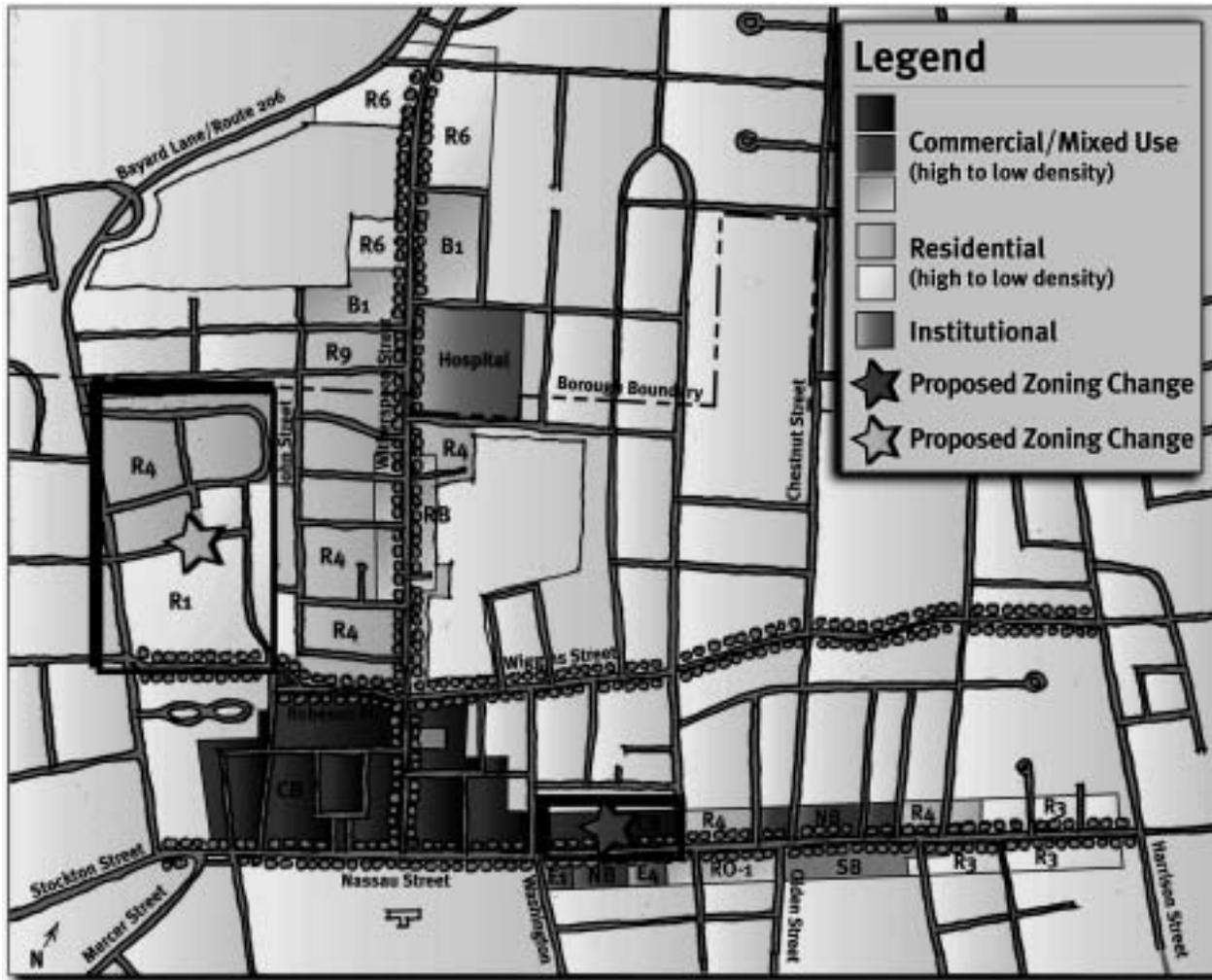
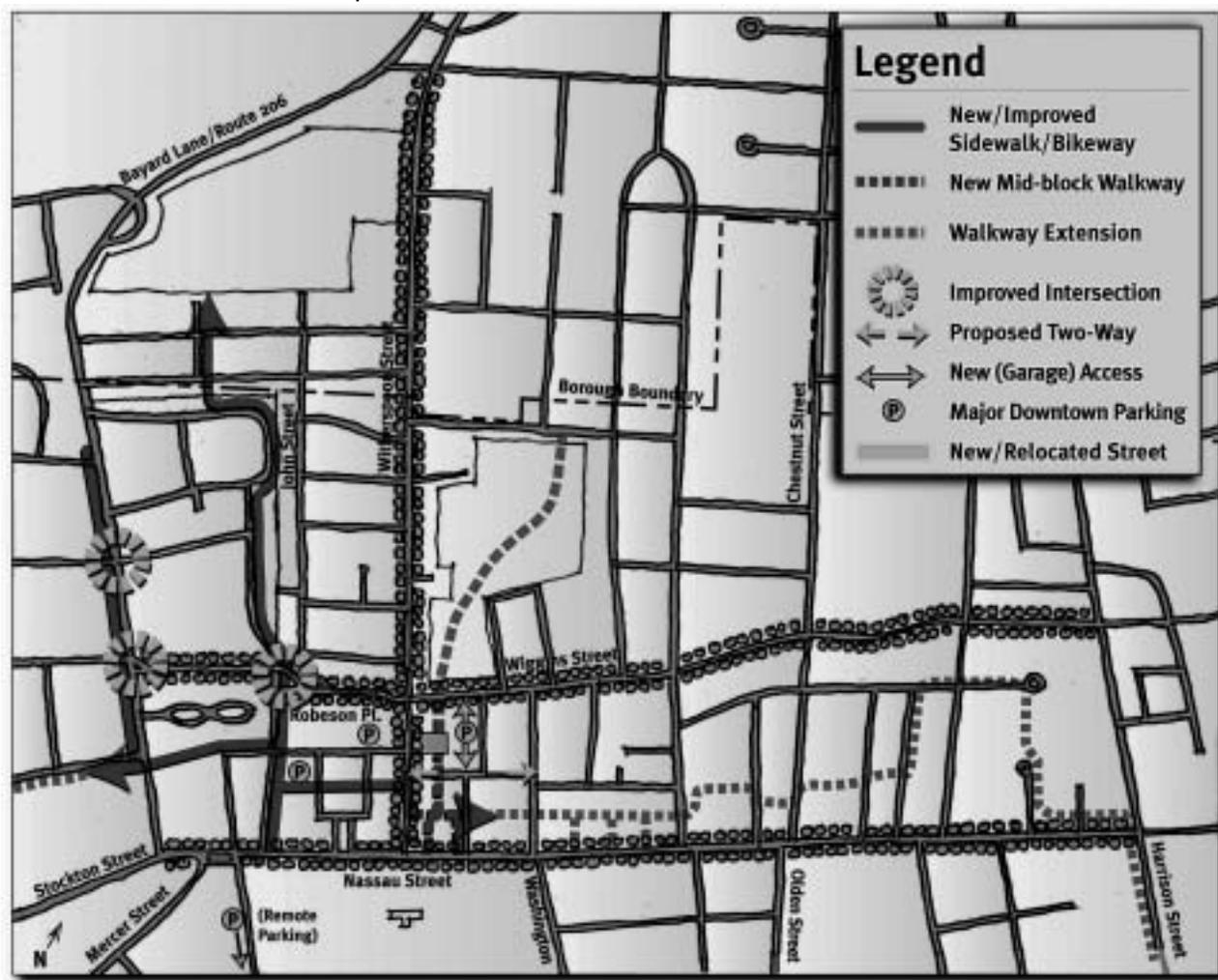
Historic and Neighborhood Preservation

There are historic buildings and structures in Princeton; there are also historic districts. The Plan adds to the idea of "preservation" the idea of preserving the way of life of neighborhoods, and the possibility of preserving the odd and interesting quality that comes from a mix of buildings in any one area, even if they are not historic structures.



Circulation

The plan for Circulation, which affects all five Zones, includes the purposeful maintenance and creation of major entrance roadways into the center of town, new pedestrian crosswalk intersections that will permit easy walking into downtown, and a linked set of sidewalks and mid-block walkways that connect all the neighborhoods and downtown. It is a unified plan that especially makes walking and biking integral to the life of the community.



Land Use

This diagram – the colors, the values – of the existing zoning districts reflects the fine-grained variety that now exists in the five Zones of this Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors. The uses and the densities generally reflect the community's intentions; only a few important suggestions are made for changes that are needed to support the recommendations in the Land Use Plan.



- traffic needs.
- Be sure that residential developments include affordable dwellings.
- If more parking is needed to support this principle, provide remote parking for employees.
- Don't make downtown "just an extension of the Mall of America."

4. Make affordability a part of every project.

- As several residents said, "provide places for my aged parents and my children to live."
- Assure that residences are provided for the lower-wage service workers who are employed here, for graduate students, and for University employees.
- Include affordable housing in downtown as well as the neighborhoods.
- Provide affordable rents for shops, so individual merchants in smaller businesses can also serve the community.
- Assure that affordable residences are integrated into the fabric of the community.
- Remember that affordability in Princeton has two meanings: the calculations in relationship to the existing economic climate, and the actual affordability for many people who work here.

5. Connect downtown and the neighborhoods by walking and biking.

- Princeton is a walking community; keep reducing the need to drive to downtown. Extend downtown walkways throughout the shopping area, and into the neighborhoods.
- Reconnect our town: the busy streets (Robeson Place, Route 206) prevent walking, and cut off the neighborhoods from each other and from downtown.
- Make an integrated movement plan that slows traffic, provides for adequate parking, encourages walking and biking, and links the neighborhoods and institutions to each other and to downtown.

6. Expand the idea of "preservation," to include sustaining the way of life of the neighborhoods, and retaining the character of groups of buildings, even though they may not be historic.

- Plan for diversity — of people and activities, of open spaces, of housing, and of shops — in all new and renovated developments, in downtown and in the neighborhoods.
- Preserve the key buildings and open spaces, in downtown and the neighborhoods. Support the ongoing efforts of the historic preservation interests in the community.
- Avoid uniformity of design.

7. Revenues to the Borough should be increased, as development occurs.

- New developments, and renovations, will help increase the Borough's tax base, thereby supporting governmental services and constraining the tax burden on residents. These results should, and can, take place within the existing development limits of the zoning regulations.
- Promote retail uses that will not only serve the Princeton neighbors, but will also add to the total tax revenues.
- Promote downtown-type residential developments (which generally have many fewer children than other residential types) that will increase tax revenues without adding substantial parking or traffic needs, and that will add a 24-hour vitality to the center of the community.

These seven Principles are intended to specifically reinforce the Goals stated in the 1996 Community Master Plan. For example, the 1996 Plan calls for:

"... maintaining the socio-economic diversity of the population, and the cultural diversity, that lends the Princeton Community its special character."

"Maintain a ... mix of uses"

"Preserve the existing character and mix of commercial, residential, and other land uses..."

"Guide future development with due regard to its impact on future taxes..."

"Continue to provide the community's fair share of affordable housing."

"Preserve the character of the established neighborhoods."

"Provide a pedestrian and bicycle path network...for circulation between neighborhoods, recreation, schools, and shopping."

"Encourage the development of parking facilities and... "shared parking."

"Promote use of historic properties..."

These, and others, indicate the importance of the coordination between this Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors, with the on-going work of the Community Planning Board as it continually updates



the Community Master Plan.

OBJECTIVES: LAND USE

Zone 1:

- Add a public square for civic gatherings, for use by all of the community; note that all outdoor open space in downtown is now private.
- Promote additional residential units in downtown — including new developments, infill units, and renovations; assure that some units are affordable.
- Promote a mix of retail uses in downtown that includes small "mom and pop" type stores that serve the needs of the neighbors — and not only the high-end shops that serve visitors from the region.
- Provide adequate parking, within the capacity limits of the available land, to serve the customers, employees, and residents of downtown.
- Accomplish all of these objectives within the existing height and density requirements of the zoning regulations, and within the goal of preventing outward expansion of downtown into the neighborhoods.

Zone 2:

- Encourage residential uses that face Paul Robeson Place. Make it a neighborhood, again.
- Assure that the new dwellings in this Zone are integrated into the fabric of Princeton, and not isolated like a suburban gated community.
- Assure that some residential units are affordable.

Zone 3:

- Encourage the uses in Zone 3 to be complementary, and to link together.
- If new residential is developed, assure that some units are affordable.
- If density is increased to meet other objectives, retain the sense of green and spaciousness in the adjoining open spaces.

• Note that this Plan identifies the idea of the common and shared infrastructure, but does not define the envelope: that is to be created by owners. As their plans evolve, therefore, this Plan should be revisited.

Zone 4:

- Promote vital retail that will serve the nearby neighborhoods.
- Promote home ownership and reduce overcrowding in rental buildings.

Zone 5:

- Preserve the "funky" mix of uses on east Nassau Street, including both retail and residential.
- Avoid downtown "creep" east on Nassau St.

OBJECTIVES: HOUSING

- Increase the supply of affordable housing in the Borough; remember that the employees of many businesses and the university cannot afford to live here, and therefore to effectively serve the community. Remember also that many seniors cannot afford to continue to live here.
- Locate the affordable housing in a variety of sites and situations in the Borough.
- Aspire to include about 20% of any residential development as affordable.

At a meeting of the neighbors of the downtown, Princeton Future Co-chair Robert Geddes presents the concepts for the possible development in Zone 1 on June 13, 2001, at Maclean House.

'Princeton Future's recipe for eliciting comments, then responding to them, has just been terrific! The tone has been inclusive and constructive. Princeton Future is making a big difference.'

Gail Ullman
Princeton Regional
Planning Board



The Planning & Design Task Force of Princeton Future met at Palmer House, Aug. 4, 2001. Clockwise from bottom left: Alan Chimacoff, Mark Demshak, Bill Wolfe, Gail Ullman, Tony Nelessen, Henry Arnold, Dan Rew, Katie Shelley, Robin Murray, Carlos Rodrigues, Louise Schiller, Jim Constantine, Jerry Ford, Juliet Richardson, Yina Moore, Michael Mostoller, and Robert Geddes.

OBJECTIVES: CIRCULATION

Zone 1

- The addition of parking to downtown should include movement patterns that will improve traffic flow, rather than impede it.
- More walking opportunities should be created: the density of the pedestrian environment in downtown is high enough to justify added walkways within the blocks that link the various shopping areas. Follow the precedent set by Chambers Walk.

Zone 2

- Slow the traffic: Paul Robeson Place looks and acts like a high speed highway, which is incompatible with the rest of the Borough.
- Make walking along the sidewalks better: safer, more pleasant, more comfortable.
- Create good walking links between the western portions of the Borough and downtown, and design the sidewalks to also serve as front doors for the new residences.

Zone 3

- Improve the access to the area, with additional intersections and crosswalks on Bayard Lane/Route 206 and Paul Robeson Place.
- Improve the access to the area, by making a linked internal circulation system.
- Improve walking and biking to downtown, from the western neighborhoods, the northern neighborhoods, and the Township.

Zone 4

- Improve the walking environment of the sidewalks.
- Provide adequate on-street parking for residents, churches, shops.

Zone 5

- Make pedestrian crossing across Nassau Street safer and easier.

OBJECTIVES: UTILITY SERVICE

- Improve the appearance and function of streets with overhead utility wires.
- Integrate the PSE&G transformer site into the rest of downtown.

OBJECTIVES: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Zone 1

- Provide a new public open space to support the activities and appearance of the new Library.

Zone 2

- Improve the setting of the existing church, which has the roadway of Paul Robeson Place very close to the sanctuary.

Zone 3

- The three institutions should coordinate their planning, regarding uses, parking, and open

spaces.

Zone 4

- Minimize the impacts that the several regional institutions can have on the neighborhoods, and on the historic Witherspoon St., as they plan their futures.

Zone 5

- Assure that the plans for the University properties are coordinated with the expectations of the adjoining neighborhoods.

OBJECTIVES: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Zone 1

- Increase the amount of open space in downtown; add outdoor plazas, sitting areas, and mid-block walkways — all of which are activated by shopping.

- Assure that the open spaces are designed for use by everyone in the community — all ages, all interests, and so on.

Zone 2

- Make the sidewalks of Paul Robeson Place safe, comfortable, and tree shaded.

Zone 3

- Preserve much of the existing green spaces; design them so that they support the integrated development called for in the Land Use Objectives.

Zone 4

- Preserve and maintain the quality of a tree-lined Witherspoon St.

Zone 5

- Preserve and maintain the quality of a tree-lined Nassau St.
- Improve the neighborhood parks.

OBJECTIVES: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Remember the difference, in preservation, between the quality and character of neighborhoods and the actual historic design of individual buildings and groups of buildings. As plans are made for growth or change, “preservation” of both types should be part of the process. “Community Preservation” is a phrase that was expressed in the creation of this Plan, and could be considered a supporting addition to the important preservation Goals of the 1996 Master Plan.

OBJECTIVES: CONSERVATION

Although there are only two large green areas within the focus of this Plan (Green Hill and the cemetery), the Goals of the 1996 Master Plan remain essential. For example: protect environmentally sensitive areas; preserve scenic corridors and historic landscapes; and preserve the tree-lined quality of Princeton’s roadways.

III. LAND USE ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The recommendations for Land Use are based on the five planning “Zones” identified in I. Strategic Overview. Note that each Zone includes a mix of uses — including residential, institutional, and commercial — so the recommendations generally focus more on the nature of the physical and social environments than any dramatic change in uses.

All of the Elements of this Plan are based directly on the Principles and Objectives described in Chapter II. Because planning for the uses of a community’s land is the most comprehensive of all the Elements, each one of the seven Principles is supported fully by the recommendations of this Land Use Element.

Although the five Zones are very different from each other, certain basic conclusions have been reached from the Principles and Objectives; all of these conclusions apply in various ways to all of the Zones :

- The line between the core of downtown and its adjoining neighbors must be clearly drawn, so that the higher density more commercial uses do not “creep” into the residential areas. This intention has already been expressed in parts of the zoning code, in the districts that are designed to be “transitions” between downtown and the residential streets.

- The existing zoning code also defines the appropriate design limitations on future development: buildings should be no taller than the current height limits, and development should not have any more area than the densities expressed in the floor

area ratio limits.

- Because it is the strong recommendation of this Plan that downtown should not grow any further up or out, any additional development — beyond that which could be permitted by code — should take place in other centers in the Borough or the Township, and should therefore serve as “satellites” of the existing downtown.

- Any new development or redevelopment in any Zone must reinforce the scale and character (both the historic character and the community character) of Princeton. Open space locations and uses, and building designs and uses, all must add to the variety and vitality of life in Princeton.

The Goals of the 1996 Plan are also summarized in II. Principles and Objectives, and are also therefore directly related to these Land Use recommendations. These 1996 Goals amplify the same concern for the physical and social environments that is expressed in this Plan, by stating five “guidelines for non-residential development,” which propose the following:

- Promote the preservation of existing buildings.
- The design of new buildings should foster appropriate qualities that respect the bulk, scale, character, materials, and colors of existing buildings.
- Maintain existing views and vistas (e.g., the relationship between downtown and the University, the views from Nassau St. to the Nassau Inn).
- Provide new open spaces and walkways, to create a pleasant pedestrian environment that links parking facilities with commercial and cultural activi-

ties.

- Design elements should be carefully addressed, especially in the detailing of the outdoor environments in the downtown.

- A park on Witherspoon Street, across from Hulfish Street, should be considered.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIVE ZONES

Zone 1:

- On the whole, preserve the buildings and open spaces that contribute to the fine-grained, pedestrian scale of the historic downtown. However, there may be a few places within the apparently built-up core that could be subject to change. If any change takes place, it should be done with great care, to assure that the human-scale quality of Princeton is preserved. (Examples of such changes could include an addition at the rear of an existing building, the replacement of a smaller building that does not contribute to the overall character with a larger and better designed one, a significant renovation of an existing building.)

- Provide new public open space within the heart of downtown; all existing open spaces are privately owned, so there is no place for civic gatherings, public performances, town events, or even just sitting and reading. Downtown needs a such a destination.

- There has been inadequate parking in this area of downtown for some time, a fact which is commonly experienced by both neighbors and visitors. The completion of the new Library will add to the existing demand. Therefore added parking should be provided, within the framework of the basic conclusions expressed above: no taller than the code permits, and supportive of the small scale quality of downtown.

- Additional residential uses should be encouraged, to add liveliness in more hours of the day and to add to the economy of the Borough and downtown. Any new such developments should take place within the limits of the permitted maximum building heights and densities, and should be served by adequate parking. As in all the Zones of this Plan, a portion of any additional residential in downtown should be affordable.

- The provision of additional parking, beyond that which could fit within Zone 1 by the use of parking structures, should be accomplished by the creation of remote parking lots for employees, thus releasing existing spaces within downtown for use by the shoppers and the residents here. Although this recommendation requires an extensive shuttle system to move people from their cars to their jobs, it is an effort well worth evaluating — an evaluation that has already begun, and has included both government agencies and the major institutions in the area.

- Three areas of downtown have been proposed for development within Zone 1; as they have been defined, they support the Principles of this Plan, and the basic recommendations made here:

1. The mixed-use development that includes a public square facing the intersection of Witherspoon and Hulfish Streets is supportive of this Plan in many ways. This project includes a mix of residential and retail uses and parking in a garage behind the development, which will add the vitality of new residents in downtown and some much needed parking. The open square will provide the civic destination that is recommended here, and will also act as a gateway to downtown, from the northern neighborhoods and historic Witherspoon St. The size and design recommended are fully in keeping with the scale and character of the rest of downtown. This portion of Witherspoon St. as it is now has no focus — no destination to draw people — and so will limit the ability of shops to thrive unless it is changed. The new open space and the new development are therefore essential for the health of this entrance to the heart of Princeton. With all of these characteristics, this development will therefore help in many ways to “draw the line” between the neighborhoods and downtown.

2. The general proposal for the development of the

Griggs property, at Hulfish Street, should also be supported. As the (family) owners said, “My grandfather, Burnett Griggs, owned the property from about 1925. We believe the site’s best use would be a mixed-use building with retail or a restaurant on the first floor, and residences on the upper floors.” (As in all new developments, the provision of supporting parking must also be considered before approval.) With these uses such a development could be harmonious and compatible with commercial buildings on Hulfish and Witherspoon Streets. One neighbor added: “Your grandfather’s food was excellent!” — and therefore set a standard for what should happen on this special piece of downtown.

3. The block between Tulane, Spring, Nassau, and Witherspoon Streets includes the opportunity to add new retail and residential uses on the site of the current Tulane St. parking lot, since those spaces are being replaced in the new garage. As this entire area of the parking and service facilities behind the stores of Nassau and Witherspoon Streets is being planned, the existing internal block walkway system that exists elsewhere in downtown should be extended here. This movement system is described in more detail in V. Circulation. In addition, all functional issues must be resolved, such as the maintaining of some short-term parking, and the organization of truck movement for deliveries and fire fighting. It is the strong recommendation of this Plan that a clear overview of the entire internal block be taken, to assure that movement of cars, people, and trucks is accommodated, that appropriate parking is provided, that the needs of the individual property and business owners are met, and that the fabric of the walkable downtown can extend into what has always been only a service area. Princeton is one of the few small communities where a second system of walking and shopping can thrive, beyond that of the normal streets and sidewalks. Full advantage should be taken of that opportunity.

Zoning recommendations, regarding the CB District in Zone 1:

In general, maintain all of the existing regulations; for example:

- Maintain the same set of permitted uses.
- Maintain the existing height limitation, which is 65’ (about five floors of offices, or six floors of apartments).
- Maintain the existing density regulations, which limit the total area of development that can be built on any site. (The area of any building cannot exceed 1.5 times the area of its site; e.g., a 20,000 sf site can contain a 30,000 sf building, which usually leaves outdoor areas for light, air, and service. In this case, a 30,000 sf building could be, as an example, a four or five story structure with 7,000 sf floors and 13,000 sf of open area.)

Two small changes could be considered:

- The permitted height for residential buildings is 65’, or 5 stories. Since 65’ is adequate for a normal 6 story residential building, and since the addition of residential to downtown is a strong recommendation of this Plan, the actual number of stories should be raised to 6, while the 65’ height limitation remains.

- The zoning regulations should add the specific possibility for the provision of required parking in remote locations, and not merely within the CB District area. As noted above, remote parking for employees would create spaces within downtown that could serve the downtown residents.

Zone 2:

Although there was considerable discussion about traffic, it was observed in the neighbors’ meeting that “The purpose of the town is not traffic and parking — the purpose of the town is to live together.” Therefore the recommendations for the future of this Zone focused more on the residential quality of life — in spite of the fact that Paul Robeson Place at the center of the Zone appears and acts more as a highway than a local

street. It was also important to the neighbors to remember that this street was once named Jackson Street, and included single family homes on both sides of the street. When Paul Robeson Place was constructed, as part of the plan for the future of Palmer Square, the entire Jackson Street neighborhood was removed. This dramatic change to the John Witherspoon neighborhood, the transformation of the street itself, the complete separation of the residential neighborhood from downtown, and the elimination of a pleasant pedestrian link to the west are the major driving forces in thinking about the future of this Zone.

As a result, these are the specific recommendations for Zone 2:

- Paul Robeson Place itself should be redesigned and reconfigured as a narrower roadway, so that it can be pleasant and safe to walk along, and can be a desirable place to live. The recommended details are described in V. Circulation.

- This reconfigured roadway must therefore permit both sides of the street to be part of the public realm, and it must therefore include walking links from the western neighborhoods and Zone 3 into downtown.

- If the “wound” of removing Jackson Street is to be healed, some residences must face the streets (both Paul Robeson Place and Chambers St.), to make the area seem as a residential neighborhood once again, and to re-link the John Witherspoon neighborhood with the heart of Princeton. It is essential that any residential development that takes place here — especially on the Palmer Square property — must not be designed as if it were a “gated” community, and must be integrated into the adjacent neighborhoods. Windows and doors must put “eyes on the street” so that the residents and the passing pedestrians feel secure and part of a caring community.

- Assure that any residential development that takes place in this area includes its share of affordable housing, as defined in IV. Housing in this Plan.

- Assure that any mix of dwellings includes provision of adequate parking.

Zoning recommendations for the CB and R-4 Districts in Zone 2:

No changes are recommended for these portions of the CB and R-4 Districts. The use, bulk, and parking regulations all support the recommendations made here.

Zone 3:

During this process of considering the future of Zone 3, the neighbors said:

“The (adjacent) J/W neighborhood is small scale, interactive, multi-use: it has independent shops, schools, playground, restaurants, churches.”

“We need housing for the elderly. We currently put them on ice flows and send them to Jamesburg.”

“I am hearing something very encouraging: pedestrian connectiveness. Over the years we have heard the opposite, about fears of strangers coming in, which closes off neighborhoods.”

“This should be a permeable neighborhood, like the other neighborhoods.”

“There is a natural, big, straight-forward solution that suggests itself: make this into a neighborhood that is connected to the other neighborhoods.”

These comments led directly to the recommendations regarding this large and open site:

- The three institutions — the YM/YWCA, the hospital facilities at Merwick, and the University at Stanworth — should create a single plan for the area, which provides for uses that are supportive of each other, and which creates a unified movement system and which shares open spaces. As one neighbor said, “Make it a place where people learn to walk, to exercise, to babysit, and to walk downtown to volunteer and tutor” — a place with a single idea that links it to the larger Princeton community, instead of the apparent isolation that exists now.

• The coordinated movement system is especially needed, since it is now extremely difficult to drive out onto Route 206, and it is virtually impossible to walk along or across that busy highway. The movement systems are therefore not only inconvenient, but also add to the separation of the facilities from each other and from their neighbors.

- In order to increase availability while using less of the land, shared parking should be considered.
- When designing and planning the future of the Zone, make this a place that is a neighborhood like the other neighborhoods: open permeable, connected to its neighbors.

Zoning recommendations regarding the R-1 and R-4 Districts, in Zone 3:

Zone 3 is divided into two districts which, as a principle, contradicts the idea of creating a unified plan for the entire area. Therefore, the primary recommendation is to establish a new zoning classification that will be compatible with a new master plan for the entire area. Such a new classification should permit the mix of uses recommended, the opportunities for shared parking, and a pattern of development and open space that will meet the objectives established in this Plan.

- R-1: Since this zoning district contains regulations for single family homes on individual lots, it does not relate in any way to the possible future of Zone 3.

- R-4: These regulations permit a variety of residential types, plus churches, schools, and libraries. It is a satisfactory category for the Stanworth property, but does not apply to the Merwick or YM/YWCA property since it does not permit those institutional and civic uses.

Zone 4:

Witherspoon St. passes through the John/Witherspoon neighborhood, includes the Hospital and the elementary school, and concludes in the Township at the new Township Building. The neighbors of John/Witherspoon were very clear about their aspirations for what has always been the core of their community life:

- Take steps to see that the overcrowded units in the area are improved, so that they are no longer overcrowded, that their appearance and density is compatible with the rest of Witherspoon St., and that they are generally consistent with the quality of the adjoining neighborhood. (As a neighbor said, "I am offended by the way they (renters and landlords) keep their properties.")

- Encourage added shopping on Witherspoon St., especially that which supports the needs of the neighborhood. All shopping should remain the RB district, and not extend further into the residential blocks; this zoning district permits the variety of uses that would support neighborhood life.

- As of the writing of this Plan, the Hospital is considering its future plans. Since this institution has major impacts in many ways, and on many parts of the community, the considerations that are now taking place must be supportive of this immediate neighborhood, as well as of the region. Traffic movement, pedestrian movement, size and density of buildings, the amount and location of parking, and so on, must all be very carefully balanced with the quality of life of the residents who live nearby. In addition, since the Hospital owns and operates Merwick, the total planning for medical facilities must be considered as this Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors is approved and implemented.

Zoning recommendations regarding the R-4, RB, and HMC districts in Zone 4:

(Note that no recommendations are made regarding the separate zoning districts that are in the Township portion of Zone 4, since no changes are required.)

- In general, both sets of regulations are well crafted to support the recommendations made here. The use, bulk, and parking regulations are compatible with this Plan. In addition, RB is specifically located to permit retail for the neighborhood within mixed-use buildings, which is exactly what the neighbors requested.

- The most contentious area of concern by the neighbors was the apparent overcrowding that has occurred in some rental properties on Witherspoon Street. According to Borough officials, all legal means have been employed at this time to correct that situation; the zoning regulations are clear about the nature of dwelling units, so the issue is the support of the law and enforcement rather than the regulations themselves.

Zone 5:

The neighbors were very proud of the diversity of their part of the community. Some of them observed:

"Make a (Land Use) planning map of many colors, like 'Broadway Boogie Woogie' by Mondrian."



"This should not be just an extension of Mall of America."
 "Building designs vary, sidewalks vary — but it works."
 "Houses are an important part of our 'High Street'."
 "We like the fact that we can walk to the shops and that we don't always need our cars."

These imaginative and supportive observations led to four very basic recommendations:

- Prevent downtown "creep" — change the CBD ("Central Business District") zoning on Nassau St. between Vandeventer Avenue and Maple Street to NB ("Neighborhood Business"), which has a mix of uses similar to the rest of the shopping streets, and which limits the building height to a compatible three stories.

- Preserve the "funky" character of Nassau St. Consider the preparation of guidelines for new buildings and for renovations that further promote the variety of style, character, and design inventiveness that already exists — and that do not impose regularity or repetition.

- Assure that the existing homes (in the R-3 and R-4 zoning district) on Nassau St. remain residential; do not permit extension of the shopping area beyond the existing limits.

- Add to the possible variety and mix of uses by permitting residential in the SB zoning district, which now primarily permits retail and offices.

Zoning recommendations for the CB, NB, RO-1, SB, R-3, and R-4 districts, of Zone 5:

Since the regulations of these many zoning districts quite exactly reflect the existing patterns of use and character, and also reflect the neighbors' wishes, only these few changes are recommended:

Because there was a strong feeling that this "High Street" portion of Nassau St. was not "downtown," and did not want to be part of downtown, the portion of the CB district in Zone 5 between Washington Rd. and Maple St. should be changed to NB ("Neighborhood Business"). The only major differences between these two sets of regulations are: (1) The maximum building height in NB is 35' (which is in keeping with the existing buildings), and the CB is 65' (or 30' taller than any building in Zone 5). (2): A 15' front yard is required in NB (see below regarding a change). And (3): The maximum area of a store in NB is 5,000 sf; there is no limitation in CB.

Given that recommendation, these changes to NB are proposed:

- Eliminate the 15' setback; this is a shopping area, where shops should be located along the sidewalk.

- Re-evaluate the maximum shop area of 5,000 sf: does this still support the types of retail that the neighbors' expect?

- Hotels are currently permitted: eliminate this use and consider replacing it with smaller bed-and-breakfasts (with smaller parking needs).

- Parking garages are permitted. Since Zone 5 immediately adjoins residential neighborhoods, the recommendation is that this use not be permitted.

In addition to these recommendations for the NB district, it is also recommended that residential be added as a permitted use in the SB district, on the upper floors only. This change will add to the mix of uses in a way that is consistent with the rest of the street.

Harrison Street Park, like the other public open spaces in the five Zones, is beloved by the neighbors, and should be carefully maintained.

'I'm a member of Princeton Future precisely because my home and workplace of the past 40 years, Princeton, is the kind of community that can engineer a dedicated citizens group such as this one. And in turn, Princeton – considered as both 'Our Town' and also the focus of an entire region – deserves the type of attention that will intelligently guide its development while preserving the many appealing characteristics that drew us all here.'

Michael Graves
 Michael Graves
 & Associates

IV. HOUSING ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Fairness in housing within the Princeton community appeared in the discussions concerning all of the five Zones. This was the case in the 1996 Plan, and continues to be so now. For example, the neighbors had these observations:

“We need housing for the elderly. We currently put them on ice flows and send them to Jamesburg.”

“We haven’t come to grips with the fact that the guy who works at the middle school has to live in Ewing.”

“We have not provided housing for the people who make the town work.”

“The university’s service personnel can’t afford to live in Princeton. We need affordable housing, and not \$200,000 affordable housing.”

And, the 1996 Plan set these standards for the community to follow:

- The Housing Element documents the Princeton Community’s long history and a commitment toward providing affordable housing.
- Provide Princeton’s regional fair share of affordable housing for low, moderate, and middle income households.
- Promote, preserve, and enhance Princeton’s unique community life, and housing stock.
- Provide for present and future housing needs, while retaining the small-town quality and diversity of life within the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Affordability was, indeed, a major issue, and was raised in all public meetings, regarding all Zones, and all recommendations for uses. Since this Element is an extension of the Housing Element of the 1996 Plan, only three recommendations are suggested here:

V. CIRCULATION ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The recommendations made here support the Land Use recommendations made in Chapter III. They also support the Goals for Circulation Planning of the 1996 Community Master Plan. Examples of the 1996 Goals are:

- Balance land use decisions with the capacity of the circulation system. The Downtown Plan suggests just that, since it states that the Downtown is nearing build out and recommends little if any extensive development
- Encourage further use of both public and private transit.
- Provide a pedestrian and bicycle path network. This Goal is expanded in this Plan to specifically include comfortable sidewalks as part of the pedestrian path network.
- Encourage the development of parking facilities in appropriate areas of local business districts. The Downtown Plan expands on this Goal by being more specific about the development of a new parking garage and the creation of remote lots for employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the specific recommendations regarding circulation are focused on the five Zones of the study process, five general policies also evolved, that apply to the entire area and, indeed, to the whole community:

- Princeton has been found to be one of the most walkable communities in the nation. A study revealed that almost 40% of the employees in the Downtown (and the University) walk to work. Therefore it is the firm resolution of its citizens that every effort be made (in the policy, planning, and design processes) to encourage even more walking, and to further reduce the reliance on the automobile for downtown trips. A decrease in automobile use can decrease the demand for downtown parking and help reduce traffic congestion.
- In further support of the intention to reduce automobile use, the use of public transit should be increased. NJ Transit has some bus service now; it could be increased to increase community use. “Jitney” type service, whether to serve remote employee parking lots or to serve the residential areas, should continue to be explored.
- As yet another part of the same intention, an increased use of bicycles between neighborhoods and downtown, between the various neighborhoods themselves, and from homes to schools, recreation areas, and other institutions will give more choices for access to the community.
- In designing and planning for circulation, the human scale of Princeton must be protected. Therefore all streets should reflect that scale by remaining narrow, tree-lined, and with comfortable sidewalks. This design policy will not only preserve the appearance of the community, but it will slow the traffic — which in itself is also a goal of preserving the human scale.

• Parking has become a challenging issue within the CB District — the historic Downtown of Princeton. It is the strong recommendation that, with the exception of the possibilities of an expanded Chambers St. garage and the construction of the new garage on Spring St., additional parking not be provided. If additional development (as noted throughout this Plan, that development should primarily be residential) occurs, the added parking must be created in remote locations. Such remote lots can provide parking for downtown employees, and must be served by some type of public jitney service. This parking policy gives the opportunity for Downtown to change and continue to improve without the destructive need to remove buildings to provide more parking. It will preserve the human scale quality, and the historic fabric.

Zone 1:

Spring Street should be evaluated for two-way traffic, in order to permit the choice of heading east to Tulane Street and Vandeventer Avenue, or west to Witherspoon Street.

The pattern of traffic on Spring Street should also be evaluated to determine if the sidewalks could be widened, and street trees added.

The new garage considered for Spring Street must include entrances and exits onto both Wiggins and Spring Streets, to distribute the car movement and thereby to reduce congestion (note that the two parking lots on either side of Spring Street exited only one way, to the east).

Resolve all delivery issues, especially in those areas where the new public open space and walkways are recommended (e.g., between Spring St. and Nassau St.).

Manage the public parking (especially that which will be provided in the new Spring St. garage) to include adequate short-term parking spaces for shoppers, as well as spaces for Library users, employees, and residents.

If any additional residential development is considered in the Zone 1/downtown area, and if additional parking is required by the zoning regulations, a policy of providing remote parking for downtown employees should be implemented to open up existing downtown parking for the new downtown residents. Note that a jitney service and remote parking lots will be needed to implement this policy.

Also, as one of the neighbors said, “The jitney is a great idea. It could serve all the neighborhoods.” This suggests that the creation of a publicly-sponsored jitney service for remote parking could also be used, if managed appropriately, to pick up riders in a neighborhood route.

Zone 2:

Relocate and narrow Paul Robeson Place so that the street can once again feel and function like a typical Princeton neighborhood street, and not like a highway. The new Paul Robeson Place should include two mov-

ing lanes (narrower than the existing roadway, or about 11’ wide each (note that the standards in the 1996 Plan call for 12’ wide lanes) and two parking lanes. Note that this plan would also provide the First Baptist Church with convenient on-street parking and a green side yard.

• Affordable housing of all types should be provided, including units which are calculated as “affordable” within the economy of Princeton, and those which are truly affordable to working people and students.

• Dwellings of both types of “affordability” should be provided in any new residential developments, including those being considered for Zones 1 and 2. In both Zones the target for the number of affordable units should be about 20% of the total in any development.

• As plans are developed for the future of Zone 3, and as added residential uses are considered, the same aspirations for affordability should apply.

• All residential developments should be planned so that the affordable units are integrated into the overall community, and not set aside and isolated. The citizens of Princeton expressed the intention to have a unified community, and not one of separated neighborhoods or projects.

Make both sides of Paul Robeson Place — the reclaimed public realm — comfortable for pedestrians, with wider sidewalks, and with street trees set in a grass verge along the curbs. Residents of the J/W neighborhood remembered well what had been done. As one neighbor said, “There is no significant sidewalk on either side of Robeson Place. Not only was it expropriation, it was bad planning.”

Zone 3:

Create a linked roadway system, within the site, that connects the uses and their parking areas.

Use this internal system to create new signalized intersections on Bayard Lane/Route 206 and Paul Robeson Place, to make left turns out of the properties possible, and to make walking across these busy streets safe for pedestrians.

Add a new sidewalk along Bayard Lane/Route 206, so that the neighbors can walk safely to the new intersections and crosswalks.

Extend Chambers Street into the property, via a new intersection with Paul Robeson Place; align the new extension with the original location of the street, which would be set back from the homes on John Street. Evaluate the needs and concerns of the neighbors, in considering possible pedestrian linkages between this new street and John Street.

Create pedestrian crosswalks at the new intersections; make pedestrian links between the western neighborhoods and downtown. As residents from adjacent neighborhoods said, “I have 3 children; I would love to walk them to school. Crossing 206 is extremely daunting; we don’t even have a sidewalk. We are so close to downtown; it is too bad we can’t take advantage of it.” Another resident said: “Route 206 divides our town into 1/3 - 2/3: we have to think about making Princeton integral again.” This idea of unifying the community is an extremely important point for all of Princeton, and arose throughout the process.

Consider closing the John Street intersection with Paul Robeson Place (where Chambers Street will now be located), to eliminate short-cut traffic within the John Witherspoon neighborhood.

Create a north-south bikeway and walkway that links downtown (at Paul Robeson Place), which parallels the extended Chambers Street, and which ultimately can be linked to Race St. and Community Park South.

Zone 4:

Preserve and protect the trees along Witherspoon St.; improve the conditions of the sidewalks, to make walking safe and comfortable. To maintain the wonderful tree canopy, add new trees that are of the same species

as the existing and that therefore are large, spreading, and deciduous.

Maintain the on-street parking, to serve both the existing (and new) retail uses, and many of the existing houses. (Also: see Zone 3, regarding the location of a N-S bikeway that parallels Witherspoon St.

Zone 5:

Create visible crosswalks at key intersections, to make safer opportunities for pedestrian crossings in the shopping area.

VI. UTILITY SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

Utilities are the structural underpinning of all other planning. In general, they should effectively support the community's ideas, but should not be dramatically visible. The few recommendations made here are based on that assumption, and on the Goals set for Utility Service in the 1996 Community Master Plan; for example, these two goals are directly related to this Downtown Plan:

- Facilitate the implementation of other elements of the Master Plan through proper utility service planning.
- Ensure that utility service planning does not have a negative impact upon the environment or quality of life within the Princeton Community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The areas that are the subject of this Plan require only two suggestions regarding utility services. In Zone 1, the PSE&G property on Wiggins Street has long been looked at as a possible location of a downtown-related development, when the cost and technology of removing the existing switching station makes it possible. In Zone 4, the entire appearance of historic Witherspoon Street will be improved by placing the overhead wires underground. The trees are suffering from the trimming for the wires, and the utility poles interrupt pedestrian movement.

VII. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

The five Zones of this Plan contain a remarkable range of community facilities, ranging from churches, to arts and recreation facilities, to the government buildings of both the Borough and the Township. The 1996 Plan recognized the importance of the institutions and government facilities on the quality of life of the community, and so set these Goals:

- Provide adequate municipal, educational and cultural facilities to meet the needs of Princeton residents.
- Balance the provision of community facilities against the goals and priorities of other elements of the Community Master Plan, and ensure that such facilities enhance the quality of life within the Princeton community.
- Create a sense of place distinctive to the Princeton community, by enhancing public areas with art, creating a safe and pleasant pedestrian environment, and linking commercial, educational, and cultural activities. (Note that this 1996 Goal exactly fits the Objectives and recommendations for each of the five Zones of this 2003 Plan.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Zone 1:

The new Library is well located at the center of the wider community, and near the center of downtown. It will add vitality to downtown, and will be convenient for the nearby employees, shoppers, and residents. The public square that is recommended as part of the mixed-use development on the block, and which will adjoin the Library, is an essential part of the overall Library design.

Zone 2:

The Baptist Church at the current intersection of John St. and Paul Robeson Place is now extremely close to the widened roadway. A re-built street — narrower, relocated — will create the opportunity for a landscaped buffer between the traffic and the sanctuary.

Zone 3:

The three institutions that own this large area — YM/YWCA, the Medical Center (at Merwick), and Princeton University (Stanworth) — are all respected by the community. As they consider their re-

pective futures, and consider a single coordinated plan for the entire site, certain actions could be evaluated. For example: housing for seniors would be well located here (as a quiet but convenient place), the Hospital could include as one of its policies to provide some of its services in other locations (just as the YM/YWCA does now), and the University could add more dwellings without diminishing the open and green quality.

Zone 4:

This corridor is the center of many institutional uses. For example: the churches along Witherspoon St. will always need their on-street parking; and the Hospital's plans must be evaluated in terms of impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. The Township offices and schools are already serving the community well. A major issue

VIII. OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

The Downtown area of Princeton has only a small area of open space, but the actual places are extremely valued by the community. In general, the addition of some new open space within Zones 1 and 3 were specifically mentioned in the neighborhood discussions, but also green quality of the tree-lined streets was felt to be an essential part of the open feeling of Princeton. The 1996 Community Master Plan necessarily had a wider view to take, since it covered the larger open areas beyond Downtown, but several of its Goals precisely support the fine-grained recommendations made in this Plan; for example:

- Preserve and protect open spaces around important historic and cultural sites.
- Actively promote the development of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities of varying sizes to meet neighborhood needs and the needs of the community at large.
- Develop a greenway system that connects existing and proposed open space areas as well as connecting adjoining municipal systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Zone 1:

Create a new public square on Witherspoon St., at the Library, to serve as both a gateway from the north and as a civic destination for activities of all kinds. The need for this space has been described in III. Land Use, but is worth re-stating: it will be the only truly public outdoor gathering place in the center of Princeton, and can be used for civic

IX. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

INTRODUCTION

As the Community Master Plan says, "Historic architecture is an essential element of Princeton's physical image today." This 2002 Downtown Plan is wholly supportive of that understanding, and of the Goals for Historic Preservation in the 1996 Plan, which include:

- Identify and document historic buildings, structure, sites, roads, and districts.
- Promote appropriate utilization of historic properties.
- Protect and enhance historic properties.
- Promote appreciation of historic properties.

Important as these are to the quality of life in Princeton, the neighbors felt strongly that there were additional views of preservation that should be recognized: the preservation of community life, especially in specific neighborhoods, and the preservation of the remarkable mix of building types — many of which are not historic — that gives

created by all these institutions, but especially regarding the Hospital, is that they serve the region and that therefore create great demands on the traffic capacity of the street. Access issues are therefore a fundamental part of planning for the institutions, and for the design of the street.

Zone 5:

This length of Nassau St. is the longest edge of meeting between the neighborhoods and the University. The discussions with both the neighbors and the University indicated that the relationship between them is a good one. The only issues raised related to the car: parking by students and faculty on some neighborhood streets, and the substantial focus of University traffic on Nassau St.

events, performances, outdoor dining, and just sitting in the shade or sun.

Create a system of new north-south and east-west public walkways that connect to the new square and extend the existing pattern of similar walkways, such as the Chambers St. walkway. Include retail and other businesses along these walkways.

Zone 2:

Create new sidewalks that are safe and comfortable, as part of a pedestrian system that links the western neighborhoods with the rest of town. Include grass edges and street trees to give the sense of a green walking corridor (and not an auto highway).

Zone 3:

Create a linked open space system that is accessible to the community, and that preserves the existing historic Merwick garden and the existing alley of Plane trees. The neighbors also asked: "Make open space for all; think of the commonality of the all folks who come."

Zone 4:

Preserve the existing street trees; plant new trees. Make the sidewalks a comfortable pedestrian link between the northern neighborhoods (including those in the Township, and the Hospital) and Downtown.

Zone 5:

Maintain and improve Quarry St. Park, Barbara Boggs Sigmund Park and Harrison St. Park.

Princeton its real livable character. These two types of "preservation" do not mean that buildings and open spaces cannot change, but that as they change the very special qualities of the communities in which they sit must be maintained. This difference, between "history" and "character," was an extremely important point that was raised in the Downtown planning process.

Examples that were often cited in the discussions included the fact that Bank Street and Jugtown are historic districts and should be protected. On the other hand, the varied quality of Nassau St. in Zone 5 was also valued, in spite of the fact that many buildings are not "historic." In the same way, the John/Witherspoon neighborhood has a long and storied history and the neighbors cherish both their past and their current quality of life; that quality is also worthy of preservation even if many of those individual buildings also do not qualify as "historic."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation can include a variety of buildings and places, including those that are historic and those that are merely a valued part of the community's fabric. In Area 5, the "funky" character of the buildings complements the variety of uses and, although not "historic," should be maintained. Simple voluntary guidelines can help with advice to owners of existing buildings as well as developers of new buildings; they must be crafted to reinforce the unique nature of what some called the "Village High Street" without making it seem uniform or controlled. Topics such as the variety of signs and awnings (in both existing and new buildings), setbacks and ground floor uses in new buildings, the openness of store fronts, and the rhythm of building elements in new facades should all be addressed — but not architectural "style," since variety is the goal.

X. CONSERVATION

INTRODUCTION

Conservation is generally focussed on the larger open green areas of the Princeton communities, so there is less to conserve in the Downtown Zones. However, the fundamental principle of preserving the environment is rooted deeply in Princeton values, so that what does exist in this portion of the Borough is as important any of the major spaces elsewhere. This Plan calls for the protection and maintenance of the open spaces of the cemeteries, the careful use of the open spaces in Zone 3, and the ongoing protection of the area's street trees. The 1996 Plan reflects these values, which apply to Downtown and its neighbors; for example:

- Preserve and enhance existing scenic corridors, historic landscapes,... and woodlands.
- Preserve and enhance the tree-lined quality of Princeton's roadways.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are only two large open green areas within the study area of this Plan: "Green Hill" of Zone 3, and the Cemetery in Zone 4. As development takes place in Zone 3, the guiding principles of conservation that are described in the Community Master Plan should be followed, such as the preservation of visual resources, scenic corridors, wetlands, and various habitats. Valued stands of trees should be preserved; other landscapes (both native and the formal garden) should be part of the planning. The Cemetery, as it considers means for expanding its business, should preserve its grand landscape — especially the trees.

XI. PLANNING RELATIONSHIPS

BOROUGH ZONING REGULATIONS

The recommendations of this Plan are intended to reinforce the basic intentions of the Zoning Regulations by making suggestions for changes that reflect the community's intentions. The details of those changes are described in detail in III. Land Use.

COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

As stated in the introductory sections of this Strategic Overview (Relationship to the 1996 Community Master Plan), the entire Plan for Downtown and its Neighbors is organized to supplement the eight Elements of the 1996 Plan. The recommendations reflect the goals of the 1996 Plan; it is the intention that they will supplement, rather than change, the recommendations of the earlier Plan.

Participants

Princeton Future could not have done its work without the extensive commitment of our extraordinary fellow citizens whose Princeton-based firms permitted the donation of their professional time and goodwill to the Planning & Design Task Force of Princeton Future:

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Princeton Future's most important contribution has been to listen to our neighbors. The Neighborhood Task Force is composed of the following citizens whose participation as hosts and volunteers has assured that a social vision for our community is developed at the same time as the physical vision:

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In addition to the two Task Forces of Princeton Future, many, many neighbors attended meetings and workshops. This list is a partial record of the many who took part, including the Task Force members:

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