

**CITY OF SALEM**

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**For**

**ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY  
REVITALIZATION**

**FEBRUARY 2, 1998**

**TRIAD ASSOCIATES**

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# **CITY OF SALEM**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ISSUES/RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The objective of the Strategic Plan is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the City of Salem's activity centers in relation to the community's overall economic climate and to make recommendations to the governing body regarding priorities and development initiatives.

The study will accomplish the following:

- 1) Define the City's activity centers.
- 2) Conduct a needs assessment and evaluate the characteristics and attributes of each activity center.
- 3) Provide issues, recommendations and specific economic development initiatives for each of these areas.

The following information, and the supporting maps, will guide the City in setting its redevelopment goals and help it prepare an economic development "action plan". The "action plan" will specify the projects and programs to be implemented to achieve these goals. This Strategic Plan is the first step in the revitalization process - it will enable the City to take the appropriate actions necessary to foster long-term, positive, economic growth.

## **II. DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AREA**

### **Issue:**

- Downtown Revitalization

### **Recommendation:**

Expand the designated downtown redevelopment district as described in the "1984 New Market Redevelopment Plan" to include all commercially-zoned property in the downtown area and the Market Street Corridor.

In the process of conducting this study, it was determined that the current designated redevelopment area limits the City's ability to comprehensively plan the downtown retail district. The redevelopment area should be expanded to include all commercially-zoned, contiguous downtown property along Broadway. In addition, it was noted that the Central Business District and the Market Street Corridor share a historic character which physically links these activity centers. This relationship is an asset to the Downtown Commercial District and should be utilized to strengthen and support redevelopment initiatives in the Central Business District and the Waterfront Park Commercial Area.

The proposed redevelopment area includes the property fronting along the Market Street Corridor that connects the Central Business District to the Waterfront Park Commercial Area. This delineation will allow these areas to be planned and redeveloped in a consistent, integrated manner. Once an overall plan is developed, specific projects can be phased over time, such as capitalization of a low-interest loan program, signage and facade grant program, property revitalization projects, etc.

It is recommended that non-contiguous, commercially-zoned properties that are located in residential areas continue in their function as neighborhood commercial uses.

The development of a plan for the "revised" downtown redevelopment district will enable the City to better position itself to benefit from State and Federal public financing programs. Funding decisions are generally more favorable when it can be shown that the project requiring funding is consistent with the redevelopment or district land use plan.

### **III. ACTIVITY CENTERS**

#### **A. Central Business District Retail Center Development**

##### **Issue:**

- Promote historic character of the downtown.

##### **Recommendation:**

The CBD includes significant areas that are within the local and federal Historic District. The historic character of the downtown is an asset which should be maintained and enhanced through facade/streetscape improvements and specialized retail development.

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##### **Issue:**

- Expand Business Development in the Central Business District.

##### **Recommendations:**

Utilizing Fenwick Plaza as the commercial anchor to support future commercial development in the central business district, the City can promote growth through the following initiatives:

- 1) Market the City as a prime location for professional office space. Target local and regional developer interest.

Develop a commercial/office center in the downtown to draw professional businesses. Select a vacant commercial property for redevelopment/ retrofit as a facility to house professional offices/retail space. The facility can offer shared business services, i.e., reception, secretarial and conference space. Locate businesses to fill at least 50% (pre-lease) of the space.

Promote and sustain the City's designation as the county seat. Salem should capitalize on this distinction and market itself as a professional office district. Professional businesses, physicians and medical facilities, such as an HMO office, may be a target market for the downtown business area.

Not only will professional offices bring people and businesses downtown, a strong professional office clientele will support other commercial establishments, such as restaurants, printing shops, office supplies, etc. For example, professional businesses will utilize downtown restaurants to entertain clients. A popular restaurant can quickly start a momentum that will bring a destination market - as word spreads from the professional community (and their clients), residents from the surrounding area will also begin to patronize the restaurant.

- 2) Attract commercial service establishments to the downtown.

Expand current "lunch time" market to include businesses that service morning patrons, i.e., bagel/coffee shop, and the evening trade, i.e., entertainment/eating establishments.

- 3) Promote a linkage with the Market Street historic corridor and the Charles Pederson Park by attracting specialty retail businesses that contribute to the CBD's historic character.

Maximize the retail potential that the City's historical environment lends and seek out specialty shops that will attract people to the City, such as, antique, craft, and unique gift shops. Other suggested businesses would be artists, decorators, and caterers.

- 4) Utilize the County College Annex to widen the early evening trade potential of the downtown. The Annex student population will be commuter-based, comprised largely of working professionals and older adults. Parking for the students is proposed behind the facility. In an effort to capitalize on this new market, satellite parking should be planned across the street to draw the students to Fenwick Plaza and other commercial establishments. Commuter students, particularly working adults, patronize restaurants/retail establishments that are in close proximity to the school facility and parking.

- 5) Conduct market and economic feasibility study(s) to determine the reuse potential of large retail properties that have a significant impact on the business district, such as, the former J. C. Penny and Murphy Buildings.

Determine the reuse potential of vacant commercial properties located in the CBD.

**Issue:**

- Expand Downtown Security Program

Security issues are an important component of any business marketing program. In order to attract business to the downtown, the City must be perceived as a secure, safe place for patrons and business clientele. The City should continue its current security efforts and expand on these to ensure that a safe environment for commercial patrons and residents exists.

**Recommendation:**

Analyze the current security environment in the downtown and determine if an actual or a perceived security problem exists. In addition, determine whether the expanded commercial activity will foster security issues that do not presently exist. Enlist input from businesses and property owners, along with the Salem Police Department to make recommendations regarding policies and procedures to be implemented.

The following activities presently are being implemented in the downtown district as part of the City's security campaign. These activities should continue and be expanded per the recommendations of the Salem Police Department.

- \* Additional foot patrol in the evening hours.
  - \* Ad campaign to change resident perception of downtown safety.
  - \* Resident crime-watch patrols.
  - \* Young adult activity program.
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**Issue:**

- Assess downtown parking to determine access and demand concerns.

**Recommendations:**

**Parking:** Provide adequate, easily-accessible, downtown parking for businesses and their patrons.

- 1) Conduct a parking inventory, analyze the current parking situation and develop a strategy to improve vehicle access to the downtown.

- 2) Consider pedestrian amenities to off-street parking, such as, mid-block access to Broadway, increased lighting, bicycle racks, etc.
- 3) Institute a Parking Signage Program.

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#### **ACTIVITIES:**

Develop a Business District Redevelopment Plan for the downtown. The City has the option of coordinating and managing all or part of the redevelopment effort or entering into a joint-venture partnership with a private developer to coordinate and manage the project. This public/private joint-venture would be predicated on the City's providing specific resources/services to both attract and sustain the relationship with the development entity throughout the redevelopment process.

To redevelop and market the downtown to promote growth, the following activities are suggested.

- 1) Conduct an overall Market/Feasibility Study and initiate a Marketing Program.

A Market Study should be undertaken which includes the following components:

- a) Building Inventory/Retail Survey (Use Analysis)
- b) Retail Highest and Best Use Analysis
- c) Comprehensive Market Expansion Plan Transition Strategy (how will the transition be made from the current "lunch" trade to include "morning" and "dinner" trade).
- d) Circulation - Recommendations on the adequacy of existing on/off-street parking to meet future needs.
- e) Design Considerations - streetscape, facade, signage, retail window treatments, etc.
- f) Marketing and Promotional Plan - Areas to explore should include advertising, media promotions, and planned events.
- g) Operational Strategy - A program to promote CBD retail stores as a single cohesive unit. The image of a downtown shopping district as a "horizontal department store" must be established and maintained through standards for retail operation, i.e., store hours, advertising, facade treatments, maintenance, etc.



- 2) **Develop a Marketing Brochure - Prepare a marketing package that can be provided to entice prospective businesses interested in locating in Salem.**
- 3) **Enlist the services of a retail marketing firm/professional to implement program.**
- 4) **Coordinate downtown Facade and Signage Improvement Program initiatives to support the marketing campaign.**
- 5) **Form a CBD Business Association.**
- 6) **Designate a Special Improvement District.**
- 7) **Develop a low-interest revolving Loan Program to encourage and promote private investment in the CBD.**
- 8) **Apply for Small Cities Grant Funds to demolish obsolete and deteriorated structures in CBD to provide for additional commercial parking. Plan the parking area for easy access, aesthetic appeal and safety.**
- 9) **Seek other available publicly-funded financing tools to improve the CBD.**
- 10) **Promote Tourism Activities. NJ Coastal Heritage Trail - In order to further promote tourism activity in the CBD and the Market Street Corridor, the City should meet with the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism and the National Park Service to request that the City's historic sites be listed on the State's maps. This would increase the viability of these features and draw visitors to support downtown restaurants and service providers.**

**B. Salem Plaza Commercial Area  
(East Broadway - Yorke Street to Salem-Quinton Boundary)**

**Issue:**

- In recent years, the East Broadway commercial district, which lies outside Salem's Central Business district, along the City's main artery (Broadway), has had the highest concentration of commercial growth in the City. The Salem Plaza Shopping Center, McDonald's food chain, Rite Aid, KFC/Taco Bell and the Farmers and Merchants National Bank have firmly established this district as a commercial center. This activity has had a somewhat detrimental effect on the City's Central Business District.

**Recommendation:**

Further development of East Broadway will continue at a pace which will be set innately by existing commercial market trends. It would be advisable to allow the area to develop at its own pace. Land use regulations instituted through Salem's newly-revised Master Plan and implemented by the local Planning/Zoning Boards should be sufficient to direct future commercial development in a manner which is consistent with the City's development goals and objectives. It would be more productive for the City to focus its resources on the revitalization of its downtown, establishing it once more as a thriving nucleus of commerce for the community.

## **C. THE MARKET STREET CORRIDOR**

### **Issue:**

- Strengthen the historic character of the Market Street corridor.

### **Recommendation:**

Much of the Market Street Corridor falls within the local and Federal Historic Districts. A few non-conforming uses exist that detract from the overall continuity of the area. These uses need to be addressed in a manner which is appropriate to the historical significance of the area.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

- 1) Design street improvements along Market Street that continue the historic nature and add to the vitality of the historic area. Continue to actively pursue historic designations and funds to maintain and revitalize existing structures.
- 2) Formulate redevelopment plan for non-conforming uses, such as the vacant Auto Parts Store. The City could attempt to help market such buildings for reuse in a manner which would support the Historic District, such as, an antiques/crafts mini-mall.
- 3) Improvements could be made to more closely integrate Pederson Park with the Market Street Historic District and should relate to plans for the Waterfront Park/Commercial Area described in Section D, which follows.

**D. WATERFRONT PARK/COMMERCIAL AREA**

**Issue:**

- Maximize the commercial and recreational potential of the City's prime waterfront properties.

**Recommendation**

Create linkages from the CBD through the Market Street corridor to the open space areas adjacent to Market Street to promote and support commercial development and the City's historic environment.

**ACTIVITIES:**

- 1) Develop a contiguous waterfront pedestrian/bicycle pathway to start from Charles Pederson Park and continue along the "Old Feed Barn" parcel - and possibly the City's option parcel adjacent to this property and connect one pathway through to Fifth Street. (Possibility of ISTEA/Green Acres funding for bicycle path)
- 2) Develop the City's option parcel as waterfront commercial/open space and light industrial use. The property is currently zoned general manufacturing. A plan could be developed to integrate this parcel with the activities proposed on the adjacent "Old Feed Barn" site, such as the pedestrian walkway. Access to the property from Fifth Street would allow for possible subdivision of the site to be utilized for both commercial/open space, specifically water-oriented specialty retail and industrial use.
- 3) Develop physical improvement plan for waterfront/commercial area and Charles Pederson Park (located at the end of Market Street corridor).

**Marina**

This area should be considered as a possible site for development of a public marina.

## **E. INDUSTRIAL/MANUFACTURING AREA**

### **Issue:**

- Industrial growth is a large factor in Salem's revitalization. Employment and expanded tax rates are the foundation of any plan to expand the City's economic base and provide for a balanced economy.

The City has easily-accessible highway, rail and shipping (port) transportation modes to offer industry. As the transportation of goods is a primary consideration for companies seeking to relocate, the City should capitalize on its excellent transportation system by marketing itself to the industrial community as an attractive location for business growth.

Along with transportation, businesses seek to locate where there is an available, able work force, low utility costs, and suitable industrial space (land) to accommodate production needs.

### **Recommendation:**

Promote City's local resources, viz., access, labor force, stable tax base, and identify incentives available, such as, Foreign Trade Zone status, tax abatement, consideration for payment in lieu of taxes (Pilot) provisions, UDAG/revolving Loan financing, and access to other Regional, State, and Federal funding.

Expand and support the City's industrial/manufacturing base, vacant industrial facilities, such as the Heinz Property and Erdner Building, should be marketed to potential users, along with above-referenced resources/incentives.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

The following activities are suggested to implement the above recommendation:

- 1) Assess industrial reuse potential of underutilized and vacant properties.
- 2) Assess environmental clean-up activities required for use/reuse.
- 3) Analyze current infrastructure improvements to assess ability to sustain industrial development/redevelopment.
- 4) Gather pertinent marketing information, such as labor pool, utility cost information, and tax advantages available to businesses.

- 5) Assemble a directory of available State/local financing programs that aid business expansion.
- 6) Develop a marketing brochure which includes site location, labor pool, transportation, utility, and infrastructure information (etc.), and incentives to utilize as a marketing tool
- 7) Initiate a marketing campaign. Advertise in business and trade publications. Select a business slogan - The State of New Jersey is "Open for Business", why not capitalize on the State's theme.
- 8) Apply for Federal USED A funding to finance road improvements, re: Grieves Parkway, to provide an alternate truck route from Port to Route 49 East of the CBD.

## **F. PORT AREA**

### **Issue:**

- The South Jersey Port Corporation is proposing improvements to construction of a Pier (dock) facility on property adjacent to Salem's sewage treatment plant.

### **Recommendation:**

- 1) Obtain additional information concerning the above-noted proposed port activities before the City proceeds with any initiatives in this area. The actions to be taken by the City to support and/or capitalize on the new facility will be determined by the scope of the project.
- 2) Continue to market the port as a Foreign Trade Zone, i.e., benefits that the Zone provides businesses. The Foreign Trade Zone is currently held by the South Jersey Port Corporation. If the Corporation were to relinquish ownership, the Foreign Trade Zone ownership would transfer to the City of Salem.
- 3) The capped landfill area adjacent to the port is recommended for future re-use as a container lay-down area. Determine time table for completion of the required site work and formulate strategy, including potential developer/operator for use as a lay-down area.

The boundary of the port should be extended to include all or part of the capped landfill area and it is recommended that an appropriate set-back area (buffer) be established along Second Oak Ditch as dictated by State and Federal Wetlands and Water Quality regulations.

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## **Marina Area**

### **Issue:**

- The marina situated between Mid-Atlantic's two terminals is a recreation marina which has limited docking facilities.

This is a privately-owned facility. Suggestions to make improvements to the marina would have to be acceptable to the owner, who would have to bear, at minimum, a part of the cost.

**Recommendation:**

Aesthetic improvements to the marina would certainly impact its marketability but it would have to be demonstrated that these improvements would foster business expansion. There does not seem to be sufficient land for expansion of the operation to accommodate more boats, i.e., additional docking, or to expand other services, such as, a fuel depot or food service (restaurant). Therefore, it is questionable as to whether any action to encourage additional marina development at this location should be recommended.

The Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Coast Guard, plans to reconfigure and replace the Penns Neck Bridge starting in the year 2000. The City may want to consider the area north and east of the Penns Neck Bridge as a possible future public marina site. Implementation of this recommendation should be re-evaluated and held until the bridge improvement project is underway. Potential funding for a public marina/waterfront development project could include Green Acres and ISTEA.

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#### **IV. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS**

##### **Issue:**

- Explore ways for the City to widen the scope of housing resources available to its residents and improve its current housing initiatives.

The City has several neighborhood revitalization programs underway. There is a conscientious effort being made to stabilize neighborhoods in distress by consistently utilizing housing programs funded by Federal and State resources. These programs are targeted to different residential target areas in the City where there is a need for housing rehabilitation and infrastructure improvements. The City has focused its efforts on providing owner-occupied housing to its residents by working with nonprofit and private housing organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Over the last fifteen years, the City has participated in the Balanced Housing, Small Cities and the Neighborhood Preservation Programs. The City's strategy has been to maximize the potential of these programs by targeting specific neighborhood areas for housing revitalization funds in an effort to stabilize these neighborhoods and improve the quality of life of the residents.

##### **Recommendation:**

The City should continue to support owner-occupied housing initiatives. Providing homeownership opportunities to residents will positively impact residential neighborhoods by strengthening and stabilizing these communities. In addition, the City's present housing strategy to prioritize and target neighborhoods for housing rehabilitation should be complemented with a scatter-site, in-fill housing program.

A comprehensive housing rehabilitation plan should be implemented that targets and phases residential rehabilitation as public funds become available. Infrastructure and public rights-of-way improvements must be scheduled to coincide with rehabilitation and new construction and have a relationship to commercial and recreational projects contained in the Strategy to promote and encourage the success of the revitalization effort.

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**Issue:**

- **Neighborhood Security**

Security problems in residential communities is a deterrent to neighborhood revitalization. Crime prevention is an integral part of any successful housing rehabilitation program.

**Recommendation:**

The City should initiate a Neighborhood Crime Watch Program in neighborhoods where security and vandalism are issues. Through the Crime Watch Program, police and residents have a forum to work together to explore ways to improve the quality of life in communities where crime is a concern.

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## **V. RECREATION AREAS**

### **Issue/Recommendation:**

- The City of Salem has a state-of-the-art community recreational facility which was recently constructed with private funds. This facility is in addition to significant acreage of City park land. Although the City should continue its efforts to support and maintain its open/recreational space for resident use, it is recommended that the emphasis be placed on combining recreational and commercial activities with the focus of pursuing the stabilization and growth of the City's economic base as the primary goal.

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## VI. CONCLUSION

The strategies contained in this document, and on the supporting maps, provide the City with a foundation to formulate a comprehensive economic development plan. The Strategic plan's recommendations are meant to be utilized as a road map to establish an agenda - a set of directions to follow to realize the City's revitalization goals.

The study concerns itself with analyzing the City's activity centers and prioritizing the issues that have the greatest impact on the area's economic base. The comprehensive approach applied in the strategic planning process provides a clear picture of the interrelationships that exist between Salem's activity centers. These inter-relationships are the framework for the recommended economic development strategies found in the Strategic Plan.

It is suggested that the City focus its primary resources on its Central Business District and industrial/manufacturing areas, as these activity centers have the greatest potential for economic growth. An outline of specific activities has been included to aid the City in preparing an "action plan" to implement economic development initiatives that will stabilize these centers and build a strong base for future business expansion. Further, the study recommends that the City promote its historic character and develop the relationship that exists between the Central Business District, the Market Street Corridor and Waterfront Park areas. This strategy views each of these centers as an integral part of the Central Business District redevelopment effort, and has established this by redefining the Downtown Redevelopment Area to include these activity centers.

One of the City's most important assets is its historic environment and inventory of period commercial and residential structures. The Central Business District and Market Street Corridor provide a glimpse of small town America during the early part of the century. This is a distinct and unique feature of the City. Salem is one of only several cities within the State which has maintained its historical integrity. Communities with similar characteristics have successfully utilized this as an economic development tool. The Strategic Plan encourages the City to follow in suit and consider its uniqueness as a strength to be capitalize upon in its assessment of development priorities and strategies.

A Strategic Plan is the City's business plan, and as such, the City should reevaluate the recommendations set forth in the plan annually to assess its accomplishments and determine the appropriateness of initiatives in light of these accomplishments.