

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC REPORT

TRENTON250
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Report prepared by

Group Melvin Design in partnership with
ACT Engineers
Cooper's Ferry Partnership
Public Works Partners
Urban Partners
Urban Engineers

CONTENTS

PLAN OVERVIEW	1
TOPIC REPORTS.....	1
TERMINOLOGY.....	1
PRIORITY INVESTMENT NEIGHBORHOODS	1
LONG-TERM CATALYTIC PROJECT AREAS	2
DISTRICT PLANS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND.....	5
PRE-K THROUGH 12 EDUCATION.....	5
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	6
LIFELONG LEARNING	7
RELEVANT GOALS.....	9
INITIATIVES.....	11
PRE-K THROUGH 12	11
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	12
LIFELONG LEARNING	12
EDUCATION AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE	12
A. IMPROVE QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRE-K THROUGH 12 STUDENTS INITIATIVE	13
1 <i>School Reform Initiative.....</i>	13
2 <i>Reduce School Absences Initiative</i>	14
3 <i>Diversify and increase the Trenton schools' revenue sources</i>	15
B. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.....	16
1 <i>Connect Pre-K through 12 education to employment opportunities</i>	16
2 <i>Job and Career Pathways initiative</i>	17
C. LIFELONG LEARNING	19
1 <i>Encourage opportunities for lifelong learning for residents of all ages</i>	19
2 <i>Provide universal access to the Internet.</i>	20

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PLAN OVERVIEW

Trenton250 is Trenton’s long range Comprehensive Master Plan that will guide the City from now to the 250th Anniversary of its incorporation in 2042.

TOPIC REPORTS

The core recommendations for the Master Plan are organized in “Topic Reports”, commonly called Elements of the Master Plan. These reports take a particular perspective on trying to achieve the Vision and enact the Guiding Principles. They contain a background section that summaries the issues and opportunities relevant to that topic. The reports then enumerate a series of goals, initiatives, and actions that the City should implement to achieve the Vision.

TERMINOLOGY

The following terminology is helpful for understanding the Master Plan:

- Action: An individual policy, project, program, partnership, study, or advocacy position that the City and the community must execute to support an initiative to achieve a goal (e.g. Green Infrastructure Program, Assunpink Greenway Daylighting Project, or an Anti-Litter Campaign)
- Initiative: A collection of Actions (see above) to achieve a desired goal (e.g. Reduce Water Pollution and Enhance the Natural Environment).

PRIORITY INVESTMENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Trenton’s community-driven plan to create, “A Premier Economic and Cultural Center Built on Arts, Industry, and Education” is ambitious. Implementation will require

sustained long-term commitment. Moreover, the vision must be reconciled with the reality that the City and its partners have limited resources: all initiatives cannot be executed in all locations immediately.

To address this, the City has identified six neighborhoods throughout the City where neighborhood efforts should be concentrated to have the greatest impact. These areas, also known as “Priority Investment Neighborhoods”, are likely to see the fastest revitalization while catalyzing improvements in surrounding areas. Although this framework is laid out in greater detail in the Housing Report (see **Develop Housing Toolkit & Implement Prioritized Investment Framework Initiative**), the intent is for the city to prioritize its neighborhood investment - whether housing, economic development, circulation, environment, or education – in these areas. (See Priority Investment Framework Map for more details which neighborhoods have been identified for priority investment)

LONG-TERM CATALYTIC PROJECT AREAS

In addition to these strategic neighborhood investments, the City must continue to work diligently on long-term catalytic projects such as creating a Trenton Transit Center Transit-Oriented Development, Reclaiming and Redeveloping the Waterfront, and encouraging more active use of the Sun Center. These efforts are not likely to see year-to-year improvements, and the payoff for investments in these projects may not be realized for a number of years. Nonetheless, this is the benefit of long-range planning: it allows the City to see the long-term benefits of consistent investment in projects, even if they are unlikely to yield short-term results.

DISTRICT PLANS

Those interested in understanding how the recommendations made in the Topic-Focused Reports should be implemented “on the ground” should consult the District Plans. The Plans do not provide any additional initiatives or actions but instead provide insight on where those recommendations might best be implemented.

INTRODUCTION

To effectively foster social opportunity and a vibrant economy, Trentonians must take an integrated approach to providing job readiness and improved educational attainment for residents of all ages. In doing so, the City of Trenton along with the community – County, school district, and nonprofits providing job training services, etc. – must balance two critical needs. The first is an immediate need to address short-term issues and train residents for jobs that are available now. At the same time, any educational strategy must take into consideration what might be demanded in a 21st Century economy and give guidance for how Trenton can position its residents to succeed in a rapidly shifting environment.

This Report lays an adaptive framework that will allow the above-mentioned community institutions that are addressing education and workforce training, to have the tools they need to meet the short- and long-term needs. Education and workforce development stakeholders, in partnership with the City of Trenton, must make improvements in three areas to effectively meet its goals:

- **Pre-K through 12 Education:** expanding the ability of public, private and charter schools to teach students workforce, social, and critical thinking skills including literacy and technology in preparation for post-secondary education and employment
- **Workforce Development:** enhancing the City's economic stability and prosperity by training people for in-demand occupations that provide clear and coherent career paths and potential for growth while providing residents with the ability to respond to changes in the regional and national economy
- **Personal Enrichment:** improving the opportunities available for the ongoing pursuit of knowledge that enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development

The following background section provides context for understanding this framework. Moreover, this report identifies a series of community-driven goals that will help the

City track its progress. The subsequent five strategies are designed to work together to ensure the Trenton community can create high-quality educational, workforce training, and lifelong learning opportunities for all its residents.

BACKGROUND

The following section is based on the Trenton250 Issues and Opportunities Report, which compiled information from residents, previous plans, stakeholder interviews, and existing conditions analysis conducted by the City and its consultant team. A list of stakeholders interviewed is available in Appendix A of the Issues and Opportunities Report. The following previous plans and studies were reviewed:

- Trenton Community Based School Master Plan, 2001
- Mercer County Community College Strategic Plan, 2012 - 2013
- Trenton Public Schools Long Range Facilities Plan, 2005
- TPS Academic Plan, 2015 - 2018

PRE-K THROUGH 12 EDUCATION

Trenton's increased prosperity and vibrancy depend in large part on the education and training of its residents. Education (for both youth¹ and adults²) is a powerful force for promoting economic opportunity and growth. Unfortunately, poor performance in Trenton's schools and limited opportunities for adults to develop occupational skills or participate in lifelong learning activities threaten the viability of Trenton's future workforce and economy.

Trenton's public and charter schools lag behind statewide performance statistics, and graduation rates remain considerably lower than that of comparable communities.³ Faced with a \$19 million budget gap, Trenton Public Schools has recently closed one of its 13 elementary schools and continues to struggle to fund critical capital improvements and academic enrichment programs for its students. This challenge is, in part, due to a dependence on limited State funding.

1. The Hamilton Project, "A Dozen Economic Facts about K-12 Education" (2012) from: http://www.hamiltonproject.org/assets/legacy/files/downloads_and_links/THP_12EdFacts_2.pdf
2. Online Journal of Workforce Education and Development, "Influence of Workforce Education and Development on the Growth of Today's Economy" (2009) from: <http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1034&context=ojwed>
3. According to New Jersey's 2013-2014 School Performance reports, when compared to peer schools, every school in Trenton, including elementary and middle schools, lags or significantly lags behind statewide statistics in at least two of three indicators: Academic Achievement, College and Career Readiness, and Student Growth. When compared to peer schools, (as defined by schools with similar demographic characteristics, such as the percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch, limited English proficiency or special education programs), 71.4 percent are lagging or significantly lagging in academic achievement, 90.5 percent are lagging or significantly lagging in college and career readiness (76.2 percent of TPS schools are in the bottom 19.9th percentile for this metric), and 47.4 percent are lagging or significantly lagging in student growth performance. According to Trenton Public Schools 2015-2018 Academic Plan, just 52.9 percent of high school students graduate, compared to a 60.7 percent graduation rate in New Brunswick and a 67.7 percent graduation rate in Newark. As of 2014, 88.6 percent of students statewide graduate high school.

4. Reardon, S.F., Robinson, J.P., & Weathers, E.S. (Forthcoming). *Patterns and Trends in Racial/Ethnic and Socioeconomic Academic Achievement Gaps*. In H. A. Ladd & E. B. Fiske (Eds.), *Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy* (Second ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum.

At the same time, the City of Trenton faces a larger obstacle to educating its residents than many of its wealthier neighbors. The concentration of poverty in Trenton's public schools makes providing high-quality education to all of its students especially difficult. For example, researchers have found that the single-most powerful predictor of racial gaps in educational achievement is the extent to which students attend schools surrounded by other low-income students.⁴ As such, the City must also work with the understanding that solutions must explore new ways to abate the negative impact of concentrated poverty on students.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Trenton's adult learners also face challenges in preparing for and accessing jobs. Often, adult learners did not receive a Pre-K through 12 education that equips them with the foundational workforce skills necessary to excel in the workplace. Lack of access to relevant training programs, as well as basic learning tools (e.g., internet access), also significantly limit opportunities for adult learners and job seekers in Trenton to pursue quality jobs. Further, there is no current relevant pipeline to local and regional employers. A very limited linkage exists between Trenton's education institutions and local and regional businesses, hindering the creation of training initiatives that could teach the skills needed by employers.

For Trenton to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive, globalized and technology-driven economy, workforce stakeholders and the City of Trenton along with Mercer County must invest significantly in educating and training its current and future workforce. To be effective, these investments must align squarely with the needs of local and regional businesses and industries. A proposed Workforce Task Force should analyze data and work closely with relevant employers to understand their hiring and training needs and to identify skills gaps that can be addressed through targeted demand-driven workforce training investments.

As identified in the Economic Development Report, the following industries experienced the largest growth in employment in the combined Mercer/Bucks area from 2002 to 2014 (growth indicated in parentheses):

- Management of Companies and Enterprises (139%)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (50%)
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (38%)
- Accommodation and Food Services (33%)
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (21%)

Given their high employment growth rates, these are the industries which Trenton is best positioned to exploit by capturing a portion of this growth and employment for residents – and therefore, workforce training investments should be targeted towards growth industries. Moreover, as the City works to advance economic development

in the downtown, neighborhood commercial centers, and in its industrial areas, workforce development strategies must be coordinated with economic development efforts.

The recommendations outlined in this Report create the foundation from which Trenton can build this dynamic, demand-driven workforce system. However, for these efforts to be successful, the City in partnership with the County must first establish a coordinated workforce system with relevant community partners working together, and then target its investments to growing industries.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Trenton is home to many organizations and entrepreneurial businesses that offer a range of programming that can advance personal enrichment for Trentonians. These programs provide residents with multiple opportunities for advancement in academics, health, physical activity, social services, youth development, extracurricular learning, social opportunities, and community development. Advancing and leveraging community facilities and schools as hubs of personal enrichment throughout Trenton's communities will allow easy access to lifelong learning for all ages. Nonetheless, budget cuts have resulted in a reduction of programming at community facilities, as well as the closure of a number of Trenton's libraries. By partnering with community organizations and businesses, the City can overcome the gap in funding for services. Moreover, many residents do not have consistent and reliable access to the internet as a source of information in their homes. As a result, residents may not have access to the means for personal enrichment necessary for the creation of a strong economic and cultural hub.

CASE STUDY: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN NEW JERSEY

The following is an excerpt from Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's Investing in People & Places: Philadelphia's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and provides a background for understanding the approach to workforce development in the State of New Jersey.

The state's workforce development efforts are coordinated through the Jobs4NJ program, administered by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Jobs4NJ offers employment services for job seekers (including career counseling, adult education, workforce training, and specialized services for veterans, disabled individuals, youth, older workers, and ex-offenders); and for employers (including job training and hiring incentive programs). Information on New Jersey's workforce initiatives is available at www.jobs4jersey.com.

Recognizing that it is critical to have a fluid statewide workforce system that can respond quickly to the needs of employers and job seekers, the Department has also created Talent Networks, which focus on the specific needs of key industries in the state. The goal of the networks is to connect employers, job seekers, the state's One Stop Career Centers, and educational institutions, in order to help current job seekers develop relevant skills that lead to job opportunities, help employers find qualified employees, and ensure that the state's residents have access to training and educational opportunities that lead to the jobs of the future.

The mission of each Talent Network is to support the efforts of the workforce development system and educational institutions to prepare workers for opportunities in key industry sectors, serve as the primary workforce contact for the industry sector, and encourage networking between job seekers, employers, and education and training providers. Talent Networks have been established for advanced manufacturing; financial services;

health care; life sciences; retail, hospitality, and tourism; technology and entrepreneurship; and transportation, logistics, and distribution. Following the devastation of Superstorm Sandy in October 2012, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development also established a special Talent Network to focus on New Jersey's economic recovery.

Another New Jersey workforce initiative is the New Jersey Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development, which was founded in 2004 by the state's community colleges to provide coordinated one-stop statewide education and training services to businesses and industries. Its founding was based on the "New Jersey Community Colleges Compact", an Executive Order signed in 2003 that created a new statewide partnership between the State of New Jersey and its 19 community colleges. The Compact designated New Jersey's community colleges as the preferred statewide provider of training and workforce development.

Through the Consortium, New Jersey businesses and organizations have one-point access to all of the vast resources of the community colleges, including over 1,700 programs taught by faculty with business and industry experience. With 64 campuses statewide, there is a community college facility within 20 to 25 minutes of where every resident lives or works in the state. Companies can access, develop, and receive workforce education and training for their current and emerging employees. The Consortium can also assist New Jersey businesses and organizations at no cost with the development and submission of NJ customized training grant applications. In addition, the Consortium has entered into an agreement with the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), the State's premier bachelor and graduate technical university, to provide advanced training for Consortium clients.

RELEVANT GOALS

1. **Pre-K through 12:** Trenton will have more quality educational opportunities and improved education attainment for students in grades pre-K - 12, improving the performance of Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools
2. **Workforce Development:** Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those previously involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways
3. **Lifelong Learning:** Trenton will provide residents of all ages with opportunities for lifelong learning and personal enrichment

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INITIATIVES

To effectively achieve these goals, Trentonians must take an integrated approach to providing educational opportunities.

PRE-K THROUGH 12

To meet its Pre-K through 12 goals, the City needs to improve quality educational opportunities and attainment for residents. This can be accomplished by:

- reforming the pre-K through 12 education system,
- reducing absenteeism,
- improving literacy and technological skills,
- diversifying the public school's revenue sources, and
- connecting the public education system to career and post-secondary educational opportunities.

Through distinct goals, these strategies are closely related. Reducing the City's dependence on the State for educational funding by expanding its tax base will give the City more flexibility to implement education reform. At the same time, the City of Trenton must understand that improving Pre-K through 12 education will require close coordination with multiple entities (most importantly, the school board) to overcome the barriers associated with highly concentrated poverty. By better connecting its public education system to post-secondary education and workforce opportunities, the City will demonstrate to students the value of its offerings. Trenton graduates will be motivated and better prepared to succeed in college and beyond.

5. According to "The Impact of Broadband on Education," a report commissioned by the US Chamber of Commerce, broadband "is positioned to serve as an essential vehicle for delivering content and tools that can be used to spur student engagement, enhance learning outcomes, facilitate collaboration and innovation among educators, and enable cost savings in the administration of education."

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

However, education reform at the Pre-K through 12 levels alone is insufficient to achieve resident's community-driven vision. There are current generations of Trentonians who are not properly trained for a modern workforce. Moreover, the economy is constantly changing, and there will always be a need to retrain residents to meet new economic demands. For that reason, the City of Trenton must work with the County to diligently improve its workforce development system and to coordinate with the variety of workforce development providers in the region. This effort must be targeted at reaching people and increasing access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways for Trenton's adult population, including those who have been previously involved in the criminal justice system.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Encouraging learning opportunities for residents of all ages will allow residents to drive their own education and will support many of the community-driven guiding principles. More robust opportunities for personal enrichment will not only allow Trentonians to equip themselves to find new jobs or entrepreneurial opportunities, but will also encourage more arts and cultural activities, and make Trenton's downtown and neighborhoods more attractive to residents.

To support these learning opportunities, the City of Trenton and its community partners must work diligently to provide universal access to the Internet. High-speed internet access is no longer a luxury, it is a basic utility. Access to the internet will support younger residents' education⁵, allow working age residents to find quality work and be well-informed, and increase access to online support for lifelong learners.

EDUCATION AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE

Improving education in Trenton will be one of the most effective ways to support the goals and objectives identified in this report. Despite national reports on the reduction in family size and the fact that millennials are having fewer children than previous generations, building a strong Pre-K through 12 education system is one of the most effective ways to make Trenton a choice destination for residents and to attract high-quality employers. Moreover, a more educated citizenry will equip Trenton residents to make sharpened decisions and formulate solutions for community issues.

A. IMPROVE QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRE-K THROUGH 12 STUDENTS INITIATIVE

1 | SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVE

Improving quality educational opportunities for pre-K through 12 students starts by

- recognizing low-cost opportunities for learning advancement,
- funding programs proven to bolster academic achievement and higher graduation rates, and
- understanding the influence that our larger socio-economic environment has on educational outcomes.

By leveraging and enhancing the strengths of the public, private, and charter school systems, as well as existing community resources, Trenton can create a network of educational options for local students and support students' ability to take advantage of those options⁶.

Create an Education Task Force

The City of Trenton, in partnership with the Trenton School Board and community education stakeholders, should fund an Education Task Force that will fund and conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the public school system. This report should identify a path forward for the City and School District that will allow it to educate its youth so that they have the foundational workforce skills needed to be successful in the labor market. The task force should take an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community/civic engagement. This approach poses the opportunity to improve student learning while also creating stronger families and building healthier communities. Such efforts will reinforce the reality that schools are the centers of many of Trenton's communities and can be centers of support for both students and their families.

Moreover, the City should hire a City liaison to the Board of Education and State agencies. This liaison would assist in brokering partnerships between the three entities and identify opportunities for collaboration that would benefit Trenton Public Schools.

Core Goals

Core goals of this initiative should be to: improve parent/guardian engagement, leverage community support to encourage educational attainment and reduce the achievement gap, and create educational programs that match students' skills with local and regional employers' needs. Providing more quality educational opportunities for pre-K-12 students will allow Trenton to improve attendance records, graduation rates, academic achievement, and college and career readiness in Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools. This

6. An example of these education options is Children Defense Fund Freedom School model, which is a nationally recognized evidenced based program that has been operating by Shiloh CDC in the City of Trenton for the last 8 years. This program provides summer academic and cultural enrichment activities that helps children fall in love with reading, increases their self-esteem, and generates more positive attitudes toward learning. The model has been proven to stem summer reading loss. Eighty one percent of participants in the program either maintained or improved their reading level during the summer of 2015. All of the youth who completed the Freedom School program have either graduated from high school or are underway to graduation. Of those graduating, so far, all are enrolled in a post-secondary program.

- 7. Trenton will have more quality educational opportunities for students in grades pre-K - 12, improving performance of Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools.
- 8. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels
- 9. Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents

programming - combined with the partnerships between pre-K through 12 schools, colleges, and employers that are promoted by many of the Workforce Development initiatives - will prepare students to succeed in both post-secondary education and employment.

Short- and Medium-Term Efforts

While the City is actively involved in the lengthy process of evaluating and enacting system-wide education reforms, the City should continue to leverage community programs and initiatives to improve education in the short- and medium-term. This includes:

- Leveraging the Capital City My Brother's Keeper program, which is already being implemented by the City;
- expanding its community schools program;
- investigating the creation of a University Assisted Public School; and
- attracting teachers to live and work in Trenton through housing incentive programs, among other efforts

In the short- and medium-term, the City should also work with the School Board to investigate how they can leverage existing school infrastructure to better support students and families. These actions should be seen as steps that lay the foundation for long-term coordinated reform work.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Pre-K through 12⁷**
- ▶ **Overall Housing⁸**
- ▶ **Overall Economic Development⁹**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Education Task Force / Comprehensive Education Reform Report**
- ▶ **Education Liaison**
- ▶ **Community Schools Program**
- ▶ **Housing for Teachers Program**
- ▶ **My Brother's Keeper Initiative**
- ▶ **Trenton250's Community Facilities Report**
- ▶ **University Assisted Public School**

2 | REDUCE SCHOOL ABSENCES INITIATIVE

Student absences are a major factor that limits student and school success. Studies have found a strong correlation between academic achievement scores and school attendance. Such work supports common sense: students who are not at school cannot receive instruction. Excessive absenteeism is a precursor of school dropout and is related to juvenile delinquency. Moreover, because average daily attendance rates

are a common determiner of school funding, absences mean that schools have fewer resources to do the job.

School attendance is affected by a number of factors including the student's ability to safely walk to school, to feel safe from violence at school, and interruptions in school attendance caused by disruptions at home, among others. The City of Trenton should partner with the School District and its community education stakeholders to leverage and expand efforts to ensure that Trenton's residents are attending school.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Pre-K through 12¹⁰**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **My Brother's Keeper (MBK)**
- ▶ **Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS)**
- ▶ **Safe Locations Program**
- ▶ **Truant Recovery Program**

3 | DIVERSIFY AND INCREASE THE TRENTON SCHOOLS' REVENUE SOURCES

Trenton Public Schools' immense budget gap and dependence on the State for funds significantly limits the quality of education that it can provide. In addition, the presence of charter schools directs funding away from the public school system. To make necessary capital improvements and provide critical services to its student population, Trenton Public Schools must reduce its reliance on the State and diversify its revenue stream. The most straightforward way to diversify the school system's revenue is to increase the local residential tax base, which directly supports the schools. Aspects of Trenton's Master Plan that aim to attract new prosperous residents and enable existing residents to develop sustainable career paths support this goal. For more information on initiatives that will expand the City's tax base, review the Housing and Economic Development Reports.

In addition, the City must improve its interagency relationships so it can better pursue innovative funding opportunities. It must also maximize the revenue potential of publicly-owned properties within Trenton, especially schools. However, this effort should be coordinated with the school board, which owns many of these assets. This approach will simultaneously help fill the budget gap and meet community needs.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Pre-K through 12¹¹**
- ▶ **Workforce Development¹²**

10. Trenton will have more quality educational opportunities for students in grades pre-K - 12, improving performance of Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools.

11. Trenton will have more quality educational opportunities for students in grades pre-K - 12, improving performance of Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools.

12. Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Education Liaison**
- ▶ **Capital Improvements Funding Study**
- ▶ **Trenton250's Community Facilities Report**

B. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

1 | CONNECT PRE-K THROUGH 12 EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The School District is the largest provider of Pre-K through 12 education in the City, making it an important part of ensuring Trenton has a competitive workforce. The “School Reform Initiative” is aimed at better educating residents and expanding the ability of schools to teach students workforce, social, and critical thinking skills. In parallel, the City will leverage and expand the existing community resources that support student’s ability to successfully graduate and then engage in post-secondary academic and career opportunities. The goal should be to successfully create a bridge between pre-k through 12 education and gainful employment or post-secondary education.

The City should work in partnership with the School Board and its education stakeholders to create a strong connection between pre-K through 12 education and career and post-secondary schooling opportunities. This can be accomplished by establishing evidence-based mentorship programs (for example, City Year) and leadership/civic development programs. Moreover, the City should create a fund dedicated to supporting career exposure and learning opportunities that will broaden the perspectives and knowledge of students. This fund should support the efforts of Capital City My Brother’s Keeper employability efforts.

At the same time, the City should continue the work with Trenton Central High School Small Learning Communities to establish internships and work opportunities with local businesses, state government, and non-profits during the school year and in the summer, and connect students to workforce providers offering career readiness and industry-based career exploration, training, and placement opportunities. The Mayor’s Summer Employment initiative for youth, in partnership with the Capital City My Brother’s Keeper initiative, is working to ensure that all job training service providers in the City of Trenton are aligned and/or using best practices in training and are training for occupations/industries that are high-paying and available in the regional economy. The City should continue this effort and document the results. This effort should expand to ensure that workforce services offered through the Mercer County Workforce Investment Board and local workforce providers are aligned with the industries identified as part of Trenton250’s Economic Development Report.

The City of Trenton should also support the development of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming and advisory committees in each Trenton Central High School Small Learning Community. This programming should leverage partnerships between local and regional businesses and Trenton schools to inform curriculum, prepare students for careers in specific industries, and create career exposure and learning opportunities during the school year and summertime for students. Each CTE should be staffed with an Employer Relations Coordinator who will help students to access after-school and summer internships.

Finally, the School Board should investigate a partnership with Mercer County Community College to offer a 4+1 curriculum for occupational certifications and/or associates degrees. This program would allow students to complete 4 years of secondary school and then receive an occupational certificate or associate's degree after completing only one additional year of post-secondary education.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Pre-K through 12¹³**
- ▶ **Workforce Development¹⁴**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **4+1 Degree Program**
- ▶ **Career Exposure Fund**
- ▶ **Career & Technical Education programming and advisory committees**
- ▶ **Mayor's Summer Employment Initiative**
- ▶ **Mentorship Program**
- ▶ **Trenton Central High School Small Learning Communities Program**
- ▶ **Workforce Alignment Policy**

13. Trenton will have more quality educational opportunities for students in grades pre-K - 12, improving performance of Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools.

14. Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways

2 | JOB AND CAREER PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

To promote economic growth in Trenton, the city must increase access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways for Trenton's adult population, including those who have been involved in the criminal justice system. To do this, the City should enhance coordination among stakeholders within Trenton's workforce system – the Mercer County Workforce Investment Board and One-Stop Career Center, nonprofit workforce development providers, training providers and educators such as Mercer Community College, and employers. By bringing together public, private and non-profit stakeholders to understand the current and anticipated hiring and training needs of local and regional employers, Trenton can maximize employment opportunities for all Trenton residents.

City Representation and Partnerships

To accomplish this, the City must ensure a City representative is an active member of the Mercer County Workforce Investment Board. The City and its workforce development partners should also create a task force to provide data and conduct further studies on the City's workforce demands and strengths. The task force should advocate for necessary adult education and workforce training strategies. Moreover, this group could initiate an online and print awareness campaign that would promote workforce services available within Trenton so that those seeking jobs and training can identify the free or low-cost options available to them.

Pipeline

The City of Trenton and other workforce development stakeholders should establish a pipeline for residents to job opportunities within city development projects. This pipeline can be accomplished by enforcing local hiring requirements and by increasing residents' awareness of existing jobs. This integration should increase the number and breadth of access points Trenton residents have to employment.

Training

Like Trenton's youth, adult job seekers must also have access to affordable higher education and training relevant to local and regional industries, including industrial jobs. Adult job seekers must also be given the opportunity to remediate their foundational workforce skills to ensure that higher education and technical or advanced workforce training is effective. To meet this need, the City of Trenton should expand connections to Mercer Community College, both by supporting expanded programming at the Trenton location and identifying opportunities to increase access for Trenton residents to the primary campus. The City of Trenton should explore leveraging its proximity to public transit to create a shared space near the Transit Center area that could house classroom space, which would be used by relevant satellite programs with regional higher educational institutions, in addition to being open for rent to other community groups. Providing this combination of placement and training opportunities will position adult learners and job seekers in Trenton to pursue quality jobs.

Persons Involved in the Criminal Justice System

Individuals who are reentering the Trenton workforce after time within the criminal justice system will benefit from many of the same workforce programs that are utilized by adults who have not had this experience. Trenton's workforce system should provide a dedicated program for adults who have criminal convictions and are seeking work, and also explore best practices for enabling such adults to return to the workplace and reduce recidivism. The City should consider working with organizations like the Center for Employment Opportunities to provide services in Trenton or leverage their best practices, such as making highly supervised transitional employment opportunities available to ex-offenders and advocate to reduce barriers for employment.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Pre-K through 12¹⁵**
- ▶ **Workforce Development¹⁶**

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Court-Involved Workforce Program**
- ▶ **First Source Hiring Program & Staffing**
- ▶ **Regional Workforce-Education Partnership**
- ▶ **TechHire Community**
- ▶ **WDB Participation Policy**
- ▶ **Workforce Alignment Policy**
- ▶ **Workforce Marketing Program**
- ▶ **Workforce Program to Reduce Recidivism**
- ▶ **Workforce Task Force**

15. Trenton will have more quality educational opportunities for students in grades pre-K - 12, improving performance of Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools.

16. Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways

C. LIFELONG LEARNING

1 | ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING FOR RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES

Trenton can build an even more vibrant community by leveraging the City's rich history and cultural diversity to foster opportunities for personal enrichment among its residents. Formal enrichment opportunities such as adult learning seminars, lectures, and arts and cultural programming can mix with more informal activities like utilizing improved internet connectivity to access videos, articles, and tools available from around the world.

The City should work with local residents and stakeholders to understand and then establish activities in each Ward that would promote cultural awareness and interaction among residents in different neighborhoods. Activities may include farmer's markets, cultural awareness days/weeks, or arts festivals. This effort can be supported by improved public libraries and the City should develop a long-term plan for the shuttered public libraries. Moreover, expanding and leveraging a Community Schools program to offer community-run programming for adults such as arts, cooking classes, dance/yoga classes, and language courses could help increase lifelong learning opportunities throughout the City. The creation of the Community Facilities Report will help the City identify which city-owned assets are able to best support these efforts.

Finally, the City should investigate the establishment of a shared "makerspace" near the Transit Center area that would include collaborative and knowledge sharing workspace for startups, entrepreneurs, corporations, and community makers, as well as classroom and lecture space for satellite programs offered by regional colleges and universities.

17. Trenton will provide residents of all ages with opportunities for lifelong learning and personal enrichment

18. Trenton will have more quality educational opportunities for students in grades pre-K - 12, improving performance of Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools.

19. Trenton will provide a variety of quality for-sale and rental options for households of all types and residents at all income levels

20. Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents

This would leverage many of the workforce development initiatives identified in this Report, as well as initiatives to support transit-oriented development that are identified in the Economic Development, Housing, and Circulation Reports.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- ▶ **Lifelong Learning**¹⁷
- ▶ **Pre-K through 12**¹⁸
- ▶ **Overall Housing**¹⁹
- ▶ **Overall Economic Development**²⁰

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative:

- ▶ **Cultural Awareness Program**
- ▶ **Library Plan**
- ▶ **Community Schools Program**
- ▶ **Trenton Transit Center Shared-Space Project**
- ▶ **Adult Literacy and Education Program**
- ▶ **Trenton250's Community Facilities Report**

2 | PROVIDE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO THE INTERNET.

In some of Trenton's low-income neighborhoods, as few as 20 percent of the homes have reliable Internet access. With limited access, but expanding with mobile smartphone usage, Trenton's youth and adults may be unable to access information for personal enrichment, education, and skill building. A lack of basic Internet access, or basic internet skills, prevents young people and adult job seekers alike from accessing training and job opportunities. Further, residents without access to the Internet also lack access to information and tools available globally.

Without computer literacy skills – and regular access to the Internet – young adults are unlikely to be familiar enough with computers to compete for IT jobs. According to organizations such as Code.org, a national advocate for computer science to be added to school curricula, there is a mismatch between the high number of computer science-related jobs available and the comparatively fewer schools that teach computer science at an early age. Improving Internet literacy and providing access to low-cost and easy-to-use hardware can bridge this digital divide in Trenton's low-income communities and improve the City's competitive advantage in an increasingly technology-driven economy.

The City should explore creating free public access points to the Internet for Trenton's residents, beginning at publicly accessible locations such as libraries, then potentially expanding and leveraging a structure similar to LinkNYC. This effort can build upon the work of the Trenton Digital Initiative (TDI), which distributes free computers and low-cost, high-speed Internet to economically challenged Trenton families so that children

can do their homework and adults can participate in the Internet economy. Finally, the City should work to establish strategic partnerships for computer and Internet literacy with regional colleges, universities, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

This initiative will help the City meet the following goals:

- Pre-K through 12²¹
- Workforce Development²²
- Lifelong Learning²³
- Overall Economic Development²⁴

The City should implement the following actions to execute this initiative

- ▶ **Free Access Points**
- ▶ **Trenton Digital Initiative**
- ▶ **Internet Literacy Program**
- ▶ **Trenton250's Technology Report**

21. Trenton will have more quality educational opportunities for students in grades pre-K - 12, improving performance of Trenton's full range of educational institutions, including public, private and charter schools.

22. Trenton's diverse adult residents – including those involved in the correctional system - will have access to a wider range of quality jobs and high-demand career pathways

23. Trenton will provide residents of all ages with opportunities for lifelong learning and personal enrichment

24. Trenton will have a strong, diverse, and sustainable economy with a broad range of employment opportunities for residents

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TRENTON 
DIVISION *of* PLANNING

Department of Housing &
Economic Development
Division of Planning

319 East State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
609.989.3518

www.trenton250.org