NEW JERSEY HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

Context #11

Metropolitan New Jersey, 1910-1945

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CONTEXT #11: Metropolitan New Jersey, 1910-1945.

World War I caused significant changes in New Jersey. Munitions works, oil refineries, textile factories, and many other industries flourished. Planned communities such as Allwood, in Passaic, were built to house the increased number of workers. Many war related products were made in Kearny, Camden, Newark, Plainfield, Linden, and dozens of other New Jersey cities. Boom towns and company sprang up from nothing.

The war erupted in Europe just as New Jersey's two major cities, Elizabeth and Newark, planned for their 250th anniversary celebrations. New Jersians barely noticed the initial outbreak of war. President Woodrow Wilson (formerly New Jersey's Governor) urged all Americans to be "impartial in thought as well as action." Despite the pronouncement of neutrality, New Jersey's businesses favored the Allies. Passaic County's textile plants wove woolens for Allied uniforms; Singer Sewing Machine in Elizabeth produced parts for French arms; while copper plants in Perth Amboy and oil refineries in Bayonne and Bayway strongly supported the Allies. The manufacture of explosives in New Jersey pushed American's neutrality to the brink. Long established explosives manufacturers at Kenville, Haskell, Pompton Lakes, and Parlin all increased production. DuPont opened a huge gun powder plant in Salem to augment existing plants. New factories at Lynhurst and Morgan made shrapnel and shells. Picatinny Arsenal, a United States Army installation in Morris County, increased production and testing of ballistic weapons. It was clear to most everyone that these facilities supported the Allied efforts.

Once the United States declared war against the Axis powers in 1917, New Jersey quickly became a center for military preparation and embarkation. Training camps were hastily built in Fort Dix among the forests of Burlington County; Wissahickon near Cape May County; Merritt at Cresskill; and Vail at Little Silver. In total, New Jersey had 16 military bases by the end of the war. Fort Dix was the major northeastern training facility for the war; this base contained over sixteen hundred buildings housing seventy thousand troops, as well as horses and machinery. Camp Merritt was a vital processing center, while Hoboken served as the embarkation point for nearly half of the American soldiers bound for the war. Hoboken also received the bulk of America's war dead.

New Jersey generated a substantial manufacturing effort during the war. Seventy-five percent of the nation's shell-loading capacity was located in New Jersey. The Hercules and DuPont companies increased to production levels not even imagined in 1914. A huge shell-loading plant built by Bethlehem Steel in Atlantic City employed 6,500 workers, most of whom were housed in government built town of Belcoville. In 1919, New Jersey led the nation in ship building value, thanks to major facilities in Newark, Kearney, Elizabethport and Camden.

The end of the war initially brought unbridled enthusiasm. The aftermath of the war, however, resulted in a reduction of industrial output and a rise in unemployment. Fortunately the post-war recession had ended by 1925, at which point New Jersey stood 6th nationally in the value of its diverse manufactured products.

The 1920's also witnessed changes in transportation, particularly in the increasing popularity of the automobile. By the 1920's, the automobile had become a vital part of the American lifestyle. It not only was a common mode of travel, but it also generated countless social and material changes. The auto freed people from their dependence on the railroad and the need to live close to their jobs. With the availability of popularly-priced cars in the mid 1920's, people were able to leave the cities, traveling or living anywhere there was a road. Once remote areas became suitable locations for home building, and, frequently, urban amenities, such as shops, were not far behind. In addition, the opening of bridges and highways, including the Delaware River Bridge in 1926, followed by the Holland Tunnel in 1927, and later, the Lincoln Tunnel and the George Washington Bridge, facilitated the movement of goods and increasing numbers of people in and out of the state.

With the collapse of Wall Street in October 1929, New Jersey and the rest of the nation were thrust into the Great Depression. The stock market crash caused a chain reaction that saw banks fail (140 in New Jersey alone), industries close, and factory workers lose their jobs. Reliant on manufactured products, New Jersey suffered severely during the Depression.

By the mid-1930's the United States Government began pouring billions of dollars into the economy to stimulate recovery. President Franklin D. Roosevelt established many government agencies to help the jobless and the poor. More than 100,000 New Jersey men and women became Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers. WPA projects in New Jersey included:

- demolition of the old Newark Post Office;
- turning 31 acres of swamp in Haddon Heights into a park;
- reconstructing the Bradley Beach boardwalk;
- building a new boardwalk in Cape May City;
- planning and constructing an old age home in Cumberland County;
- converting the D & R Canal in Trenton into a base for highway U.S. Route 1;
- building Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City;
- restoring the Grover Cleveland Birthplace in Caldwell; and
- constructing and repairing post offices, schools and bridges.

Similarly, the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) utilized thousands of unemployed young men between the ages of 17 and 23. They repaired, rebuilt, and created new campsites, picnic areas and hiking trails, substantially impacting New Jersey's public parks.

Despite the efforts of the federal government, it was the second World War that pulled the U.S. out of the Depression. However, between 1910 and the early 1940's, substantial changes occurred in housing, transportation, agriculture, immigration, and recreation in New Jersey.

Housing

As America took to the roads during the 1920's, the landscaped suburb, a concept that had its beginnings in Llewellyn Park in the 1850's, became a reality throughout the nation. As block after block of houses were built in outlying areas, creating the beginnings of suburban sprawl, architects became increasingly concerned about the character of communities. They focused on communities as entities rather than as collections of independent structures.

The House Beautiful Annual Building Issue of 1929, reflected the widespread American interest in the planned suburb. Oakcroft, a group of houses built around a single open space in Ridgewood, was cited for its use of the common area as a part of the original plan. Radburn, designed and developed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, soon followed.

Radburn, nationally recognized as a model of 20th century planned communities, was designed to protect its residents from being dominated by the demands of the automobile. Although the design permitted easy access by car, it did not allow the automobile to intrude or to control living patterns. This carefully landscaped village, begun in 1928, was planned with pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths that passed beneath the roadways, allowing residents to avoid contact with auto traffic. The creation of the superblock, with cluster housing at its periphery, permitted trees and greenways unbroken by roadways. The houses, which included single-family as well as multiple dwellings, had attractive facades at both front and rear; the designers considered the common parkland behind the houses as aesthetically important as the entryways.

Radburn was planned to be self-sufficient. It was designed to accommodate a large enough population to support its own schools, commercial areas, and industry, while remaining small enough to retain a sense of community. Unfortunately, due to the Depression, construction stopped before Radburn was even half-finished. Enough of the proposed community was built,

however, for it to become a modest version of its original concept.

Before the Depression limited housing construction in New Jersey, there were several years of great expansion. The combined effects of postwar prosperity, increased use of the car, and the accompanying growth of highways resulted in the expansion of existing commuter suburbs and the development of the state's open spaces. Despite the popular desire for up- to-date interiors--modern amenities like indoor plumbing and electricity were becoming a reality for an increasing number of people--most of the public continued to prefer architectural styles whose origins were in the past.

The stock market crash in 1929 ended this construction boom. Instead of conveying a sense of grandeur, the new housing erected during the Depression was quite different, usually simpler and less pretentious. At one extreme, communities of crude shacks sprang up in the Jersey Meadows, not far from Newark. Often made of tin and other scrap materials, these flimsy shacks were the only shelter for many victims of the great financial disaster.

Fortunately, all construction of the Depression was not as disastrous as the "Hoovervilles". A spate of federally funded projects were designed to provide employment and housing. One of most notable government efforts to improve local living standards during the Depression was the creation of the community of Jersey Homesteads, now known as Roosevelt. During the 1930's, this small village, located just outside Hightstown, was developed by the federal government as a social experiment, as an attempt to establish a cooperative, self-supporting community that would remove its residents from many of the hardships of urban life. Original plans included self-contained industrial facilities and open land for each dwelling, permitting residents to grow their own produce. Louis Kahn, who later became a major figure in American architecture, assisted Alfred Kastner in designing the entire village of small Bauhaus-style residences, a factory, farms, and, later, a school. At the time, the boxlike cinderblock-and-concrete houses were quite radical in concept. There was little adornment to break the stark lines, but the houses were economical and practical.

Despite Roosevelt's residential success the original plan for an economically self-sufficient community never came to fruition. Production problems prevented the factory from becoming a profitable manufacturing operation, and the building was soon used for other purposes. Many of the city people who came to live in Roosevelt were not inclined to be part-time farmers, and the concept of agricultural self-sufficiency soon disintegrated. Instead of a haven from urban industry, Roosevelt became a refuge for artists and other creative people who appreciated the village's unusual character.

Very little other construction occurred in New Jersey during the Depression. In 1934 a small impetus was given to the construction industry by the creation of the Federal Housing Administrative (FHA), a federal agency established to stimulate new construction. Despite the infusion of FHA money, New Jersey remained essentially depressed until the approach of World War II.

Transportation

Transportation played a vital role in the history of New Jersey. Early forms of transportation in the state were developed primarily to move products from their source to the market place. A stronger emphasis on effectively moving people from one place to another differentiated 20th century transportation planning from earlier periods.

Railroads served as the major mode of transport across the State during the last quarter of the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th centuries. At the end of World War I, railroads were the principal carrier of both freight and passengers. New Jersey led the nation in rail density, with the heaviest concentration of railroads along the metropolitan corridor between New York and Philadelphia. Railroads continued as the primary carriers of freight through the mid-to-late 1940's, when the artificial stimulus of World War II was removed. Passenger traffic, however, declined abruptly in the 1920's due to the phenomenal growth of automobile and bus travel. The automobile industry hastened the decline of the railroads, and not even innovations like electrification, specialized cars and automation could prevent this decline.

By the 1920's railroads were competing with the automobile industry. With immigration at its peak, New Jersey's population grew dramatically during the first quarter of the 20th century. As the cities grew, development pushed into the surroundings. Railroads, electric railways, and trolleys provided access to these outlying areas; however, these modes of transportation were confined to trackage. Although rails covered much of the state by the early 20th century, the automobile and motor truck allowed access to previously isolated farmland. Reaching into these undeveloped areas, the automobile exposed farm areas to the pressures of urban and suburban development. The automobile permitted people to move out of the city, causing a suburban population boom. Along with urban deterioration, this suburban boom caused industry as well as individuals to move away from the cities.

In addition, the automobile began reshaping the commercial centers of New Jersey. As people and factories left the urban cities, so did businesses. Shopping by car generated a shift

from the large commercial downtowns such as Jersey City, Newark, Elizabeth, Trenton, New Brunswick, Bridgeton, and Phillipsburg to smaller towns with easier automobile access and more convenient parking. This transformation eventually manifested itself in the development of supermarkets and shopping centers, further affecting the economic and physical deterioration of most of New Jersey's major cities.

The earliest roads were built to serve horses, carts, wagons, and carriages. These roads were poorly maintained, a situation which was exacerbated with the introduction of the automobile. As early as 1910, automobile advocates and industry officials saw this problem and urged the building and maintenance of roads. The passage of the Federal Aid Road Act in 1916 provided money to states that had formal highway departments. In response to this legislation, the State created the New Jersey Highway Department in 1917.

Under the Department of Highways' leadership, New Jersey moved rapidly to build a network of state roads. New Jersey roadbuilding innovations of the 1920's included the nation's first traffic circle, the three lane highway, and the dual/divided highway. Examples of major highway projects designed to accommodate urban growth and increased traffic include:

- Pulaski Skyway (1932). Allowed the free flow of high density auto traffic from New York to Newark.
- Holland Tunnel (opened 1927). Provided a direct vehicular link from Jersey City to Manhattan.
- Benjamin Franklin Bridge (1926). Connected Camden and South Jersey with Philadelphia.
- George Washington Bridge (1931). Connected northern New York City with Northern New Jersey.
- Lincoln Tunnel (1937). Linked mid-town Manhattan with Weehawkin (northern Hudson County).

As evident from the examples, early efforts concentrated on alleviating the traffic congestion along the corridor from New York to Philadelphia. The Depression and World War II slowed this development of highways in New Jersey, but the war's end brought phenomenal increases in auto sales and use. The transportation system designed to meet the States needs only a scant twenty years before proved inadequate for post- war New Jersey.

One form of transportation unique to the 20th century was aviation. The initial two decades of aviation following the Wright Brothers first powered flight in 1903 were primarily experimental. Following World War I, however, air travel played an important role in New Jersey's history. Hadley Field in Brunswick served as the east coast's first airmail terminal for

the United States Postal Service. When Newark Airport opened in 1928, the post office transferred their operations to Newark. The Newark Airport was touted as the world's busiest airport until 1939 when New York's La Guardia Airport opened. Initially, commercial aviation focused on airmail, but passengers and air freight service became a strong component of air transport by the 1930's. The enormous military demands dramatically stimulated air transport in World War II.

Agriculture

New Jersey farmers from 1910 to 1945 faced numerous challenges while the role of agriculture in the state's economy diminished considerably. There were only 25,000 farms in 1940 compared to nearly over 33,000 farms in 1910; even though the average size of a farm increased. Despite the decrease in the number of farms, dramatic improvements in farming technology and techniques actually resulted in increased total yields in many areas. Sophisticated new machinery, although an expansive initial investment saved on labor costs and also allowed more land to be farmed.

Experimentation and research was conducted and disseminated through the New Jersey College of Agriculture, the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Stations, and County Agricultural Extension programs. The Smith Hughes Act of 1917 provided federal aid to high schools for training in agriculture and led to the establishment of Future Farmers of America. Along with 4-H clubs, Future Farmers of America further assured that the most current scientific agricultural techniques found practical applications on farms.

Although farmers recognized the advantages of organization, New Jersey Granges never witnessed the popularity they did in other states. Granges briefly surfaced as buying and selling agents. Set up primarily as a social organization, Granges found it difficult to perform as a business over extended periods. Farming cooperatives, however, had better success. The Farmers Cooperative Association of New Jersey, one of 27 major New Jersey cooperatives of the period, aided many farmers in the purchase of seed, fertilizer, insecticides, and general supplies.

Despite the drop in the number of farms between 1910-1945, farmsteads were still common in New Jersey. All regions of the state had operating farms; many had been in the same families for generations. Active farms in central New Jersey along the densely populated urban corridor, however, were less common than farms located in Northwestern New Jersey and Southern New Jersey.

Although the number of dairy cows in New Jersey dropped between 1920-1940, improved feeding and breeding procedures

markedly increased milk production. The northwestern counties of Hunterdon, Sussex, and Warren, along with Burlington County in the south, produced most of New Jersey dairy products at this time. Relatively obscure earlier, the raising of poultry, particularly in Monmouth, Hunterdon, and Ocean Counties, developed into one of New Jerseys major agricultural industries in the 1920's.

A precipitous drop in New Jersey grain production during the 20th century was primarily a practical economic reaction of farmers to huge grain supplies available from the mid-west. Jersey farmers instead chose to grow crops which could be marketed exclusively in the New Jersey-New York-Pennsylvania metropolitan region. Consequently, fresh fruits and vegetables became the major New Jersey crop during the 1920's. Improved canning techniques and the development of frozen foods further influenced the growth of truck farms in the 1930's and 1940's.

Immigration

Restrictive national legislation in the 1920's marked the end of the epoch of free immigration into the United States. The Immigration Act of 1924 established a quota of 150,000 immigrants per year. National origin quotas were designed to favor northern and western Europeans and highly restrict southern and eastern European migration. The sharp decline in immigration was the prime factor in a reduction of foreign-born residents in New Jersey by 1940, the first since statistics on foreign-born populations were recorded, beginning in 1850. As a consequence of these restrictions, the impact of immigrants in New Jersey was much less than previously.

Entertainment

Entertainment and recreation facilities are documented throughout most of New Jersey's history. During the period of 1910-1945, however, the seashore resort economy dominated the shore line. Resort and recreational facilities dotted virtually the entire coast, from Raritan Bay to the tip of Cape May, as entrepreneurs and tourists alike took advantage of an increase in leisure time and an excellent mass transit system from Pennsylvania and New York.

The development of the seashore resort economy provided a distinctive group of recreational resources during this period. Publicly accessible resources included boardwalks, casinos, carousels, dance halls, theaters, beach pavilions, municipal pools, and parks. Private (restricted access) activities and facilities included fishing, boating, tennis and golf clubs.

Atlantic City was clearly New Jersey's most renowned seashore resort through this period, but many other coastal towns provided recreation opportunities, sometimes with specialized activities and events. These communities included Asbury Park, Cape May, Long Branch, Long Beach Island, Seaside Park, and Stone Harbor.

While the recreational and entertainment facilities of the coastal areas attracted much attention from 1910-1945, many other areas of the state also had resources associated with leisure-time. These resources included music halls, movie theaters, and auditoriums ranging from a room above a store to large facilities such as the Loew's and Stanley Theaters in Jersey City. These facilities were primarily located in New Jersey's larger communities but were often found even in towns as small and isolated as Belvidere and Califon.

The more rural areas of the state often featured sportsman clubs for hunting and fishing. Canoeing clubs supplemented the generally earlier and more pretentious yachting clubs.

Private recreational clubs retained their prestigious and often restricted nature, but many towns built public facilities for swimming, tennis, and other recreational activities.

Baseball, football, and basketball facilities were found throughout the state, often in open fields. The more metropolitan area, often had more formal facilities such as Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City, Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson, and Dillon Gymnasium and Palmer Stadium in Princeton.

In recognition of a growing need for open recreational areas, public park systems grew substantially during 1910- 1945. Many of the county and state parks established were formally designed by recognized landscape architects such as the Olmsted Brothers. (Many of these parks were heavily improved during the depression by the Civilian Conservation Corps). To supplement public spaces, private amusement parks provided dances, rides, exhibitions, festivals, daredevil performances, animal acts and souvenirs for a fee.

Industry

During 1910-1945, New Jersey solidified its standing as one of the nations's most diversified and productive industrial states. Although the Great Depression wreaked havoc on most manufacturers, World War I and World War II provided enormous stimulus for established and new industries. Older manufacturers such as iron and steel, textiles, clothing, leather, paint, jewelry, ceramics, and machinery continued to figure prominently in New Jersey's economy, while newer industries such as

electrical products, petroleum products and pharmaceuticals helped to establish New Jersey's reputation as a modern industrial state. Several New Jersey products figuring in the national economy from 1910-1945 had not even been invented at the turn of the century. These included automobiles, airplanes, radios, phonographs, and plastics.

During 1910-1945 New Jersey's factories developed along the urban metropolitan corridor near labor and rail transportation. Towards the end of World War II, as populations migrated away from the cities and the trucking industry matured, numerous companies relocated to the suburbs.

Urbanization

During 1910-1945 New Jersey urban centers reached their apex and subsequently began their downward spiral. By 1920, the state's largest cities - Newark, Jersey City, Camden, Trenton and Elizabeth had reached their population peaks. Business developed as the urban areas became centers for banking, investment, culture, commerce, and industry. Jersey City rebuilt its downtown Journal Square and Newark embarked on its "City Beautiful Movement". The many major urban accomplishments during the period included street rebuilding, sewer & water systems, urban parks, and a sophisticated mass transit system.

By 1940 the effects of the depression, limits on immigration, and a mass exodus to the suburbs resulted in a noticeable decline in New Jersey's urban population. This trend became even more noticeable in the decades following World War II.

NJHT 1991 APPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH CONTEXT #11 AND CATEGORIZED BY PROPERTY TYPE.

1) **Educational:**

Educational properties from this period represent less than 5% of all Context 11 properties listed in the Registers. This property category may include schoolhouses, dormitories, libraries, university and college facilities, etc. There is one 1991 NJHT application associated with this category.

#91021 Rose Memorial Library, Madison Borough, Morris County.

2) **Recreational/Cultural:**

Recreational properties may include such examples as amusement parks, campgrounds, county fairgrounds, dancehalls, museums, art galleries, sport facilities, etc. They are a common property type in New Jersey for this historic period and represent approximately 13% of all Context #11 property types listed in the Registers. There are five 1991 NJHT applications associated with this category.

#91018 Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, Essex County.

#91059 The Boardwalk, Sparta Township, Sussex County.

#91087 Carlton Theater, Red Bank Borough, Monmouth County.

#91003 Rahway Theater, Rahway City, Union County.

#91093 Loew's Jersey Theater, Jersey City, Hudson County.

3) **Religious:**

Religious properties associated with this context are under-represented in the Registers, making up less than 3% of all Context #11 properties listed. Religious properties are very common in New Jersey for this time period and may include such examples as churches, church-related housing, and cemeteries. There are two 1991 NJHT applications associated with Context #11.

#91049 Central Presbyterian Church, Montclair, Essex County.

#91083 Har Sinai Temple, Trenton, Mercer County.

4) **Institutional/Government:**

Properties associated with this category include post offices, research facilities, meeting halls, courthouses, etc., and represent approximately 9% of all Context #11 properties listed in the Registers. There are five 1991 NJHT applications associated with this category.

#91086 Old Courthouse, Somerville Borough, Somerset County.

#91001 Bergen County Courthouse Complex, Hackensack City, Bergen County.

#91029 Hudson County Courthouse, Jersey City, Hudson County.

#91053 Plainfield City Hall, Plainfield City, Union County.

#91071 New Jersey State House Annex, Trenton, Mercer County.

5) **Landscape Architecture:**

Context #11 properties significant for Landscape Architecture are under-represented in the Registers. They represent less than 2% of all listed properties from this period and may include examples such as parks, private estates, formal gardens, etc. There is one 1991 NJHT application associated with this category.

#91013 Bamboo Brook (Merchiston Farm), Chester Township, Morris.

6) **Transportation:**

Transportation related properties from this time period are common in New Jersey and represent approximately 18% of all Context #11 properties registered. Examples include aviation related structures such as hangers and airport facilities, ships and ferries, railroad stations, trolley facilities, etc. There are three 1991 NJHT applications associated with this category.

#91005 Public Service Trolley Barn, Paterson City, Passaic Co.

#91004 Erie-Lackawanna Railroad Terminal, Hoboken, Hudson Co.

#91090 Phillips Schooner, Maurice River Twp., Cumberland Co.