Roundtable Objective

Identify strategies to create a network of vibrant, livable downtowns of different sizes and densities throughout the region.

Key Questions

- How do we define a “successful downtown”?
- Why are some downtowns successful while others languish?
- How do we reinforce places that may not grow?

Overview

Most regional planning efforts are based on a familiar model: that to prevent sprawl and its associated ills, development should be concentrated in the places that are already urbanized. By doing so, we prevent the consumption of open space resources, make efficient use of existing infrastructure investments – especially transit – and support established communities.

Typically, we talk about directing growth to the region’s downtowns because these are the places that we most associate with these attributes – existing infrastructure, transit access and established communities. In reality, we know the urbanized landscape where we might target growth is much more complex - and as described below, is becoming more so.

- There is a huge diversity in the size, character and context of what we are lumping into this large category of “downtowns”.
- The role that downtowns will play in the vitality of the region is changing because both the nature of work is changing and the region has settled into a pattern of distributed growth that is unlikely to be reversed.
- The very definition of “downtown” is itself in flux, as other kinds of mixed-use development patterns such as corridors may sometimes function as the de facto downtowns for the communities that surround them.
Places to Reinforce and Places to Reinvent

With an eye towards the need to calibrate our policies and our growth scenarios to different kinds of places, RPA has started to characterize the region in terms of different types of places – a complex catalog that includes everything from “highway cities” to “rural industrial” to “small waterfront cities.” One way to think about these places is in terms of places to reinforce or places to reinvent; that is, places that either do or do not have the potential to meet the 4th Plan goals for prosperity, opportunity and sustainability.

It is tempting to associate places to reinvent or to reinforce with particular development typologies: we naturally assume that the places to reinvent are the commercial strips, the dead-and-dying malls and the underutilized industrial lands, and that the places to reinforce are existing single family neighborhoods and downtowns. This has some validity. But the real question is, what criteria should we use to classify these places:

Equity Criteria
- access to good schools and jobs for low-income people and racial minorities
- contribution for low-tax base community
- potential employment impacts

Long term economic viability
- vacancy rates
- age of structures
- suitability/adaptability to changing market trends and space/facility requirements
- vacant and underutilized land

Strategic location criteria
- proximity to community centers
- proximity to places that are economically viable
- opportunities to complete natural systems

Environmental criteria
- degree of environment challenges
- environmental justice goals
- vulnerability to storms, flooding and changing climate

Access and infrastructure criteria
- proximity to transit
- proximity to highways
- sewer and other infrastructure capacity

Through our discussions with the Communities Working Group for RPA’s Fourth Regional Plan and others, we have started to expand and refine the kinds of things we should be thinking about when we assess these places.

- **Health impacts of settlement patterns:** We know that walkable, bikable places enable the kind of daily exercise associated with “active living.” Access to nearby open spaces and recreational facilities is part of a complete place.

- **Downtowns as cultural centers:** We need to acknowledge and support the role that downtowns play as centers not just for new housing and commercial development, but for cultural activities.

- **Need for change that benefits existing residents and businesses:** We need to preserve the essential character of the communities in these places and reinforce places without displacement of at-risk or vulnerable populations.

- **Need for strategies for places that may not grow:** Perhaps most challenging, our strategies for the region’s downtowns should not be predicated on growth. As supported by the research in this briefing paper, it is unlikely that enough growth can be directed to all of the region’s downtowns to rely on the increased revenues that result from new development.
Beyond the Polycentric Region

The Region’s growth

Growth patterns in the region are complex and suggest that the region has settled into a pattern that is beyond polycentric.

On the one hand, the “Region’s Core”, encompassing Manhattan, western Queens and Brooklyn, the South Bronx, Essex and Hudson Counties – captured about one and half times the region’s share of employment, growing by 8% from 2002 to 2011. The region’s largest downtowns – places such as Stamford, Bridgeport, Newark and Jersey City – captured about half of the region’s job growth over the last decade. But most of the other downtowns in the region lost jobs. The Region’s Core captured about 10% of the regional population and the Region’s Centers and Downtowns, another 20%. A similar percentage of population growth went to industrial, commercial and employment areas in the region, including what we’ll introduce in this paper as ‘Corridor Downtowns’. Meanwhile, the region continued to see the majority of the population growth over the last ten years go towards rural and suburban communities.

This dispersed pattern is reflected in changing commutation patterns which reveal the degree to which the primacy of the Manhattan CBD is challenged. Some of the fastest growth in commutation was within New York City’s boroughs and within the counties outside of New York City. The 14 counties of northern New Jersey are now themselves a destination for 30% of regional worker flows—a total that surpasses Manhattan’s. In part, Manhattan’s own success may be part of the cause as congestion to and within the CBD increased.

Our quantitative analysis, described in more detail below, has yielded the following four coarse types of settlement patterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typologies</th>
<th>Land Area</th>
<th>% of Region’s Land</th>
<th>Pop 2010</th>
<th>% Pop Change</th>
<th>Jobs 2011</th>
<th>% Jobs Change</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Region</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>7,303</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>1,352,847</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>307,493</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dispersed Residential</td>
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<td>13%</td>
<td>2,126,374</td>
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<td>571,124</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>736</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2,988,862</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>1,159</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>544,861</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>634,262</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>87%</td>
<td>7,012,944</td>
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<td>1,807,532</td>
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<td>Commercial Centers &amp; Corridors</td>
<td>Commercial/Employment Areas</td>
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<td>13.0%</td>
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<td>Corridors</td>
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<td>Moderately dense residential areas</td>
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<td>336</td>
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<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>3,366,186</td>
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<td>Region’s Core</td>
<td>Large Cities / High Density</td>
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<td>0.4%</td>
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<td>1.1%</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>0.1%</td>
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<td>2.5%</td>
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<td>Hyper Dense Business</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtotal</td>
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<td>0.5%</td>
<td>4,015,071</td>
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<td>2,674,490</td>
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<td>Total Region</td>
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<td>12,496</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>21,872,714</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
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</table>
The Suburban Region

Places throughout the region that have a very low percentage of impervious surfaces, are mostly dispersed low-density residential areas and have very few street intersections. These areas are surrounded by the region’s rural landscape.

Corridors and Commercial Centers

Places that were identified as mainly employment-oriented places, with a dominance of single use areas, such as shopping malls, industrial parks, etc. These areas have a high percentage of impervious surfaces, which represents the vast paved areas most of these places accommodate.

Region’s Centers and Downs
tons

Places that ranked high in their mix of uses, had high density of both employment and residential uses, but were also balanced in terms of jobs and housing. These places are highly developed, and depending on the scale, are areas that represent mainly infill and redevelopment opportunities. Their high intersection density shows that they are usually compact with a tightly knit street network.

The Region’s Core

Represents the hyper dense areas of Manhattan, western Brooklyn and Queens, southern Bronx and areas of Hudson and Essex county. These places represent a hyper dense environment of compact and connected urban fabric, with either the highest density of employment or residential, or a combination of both. Similar to downtowns, the Region’s Core scores high in mix uses.
The Changing Landscape for the Region’s Downtowns

A review of RPA’s three previous plans reveals the changing role that downtowns play in the regional settlement pattern.

**The First Regional Plan** (1927) was predicated on a “solar” model of regional growth, in which all roads and all rails led to the Manhattan Central Business District. Small subsets of the region’s larger cities were depicted as smaller versions of the Manhattan CBD, but Manhattan remained the undisputed and singular center for the entire region.

**The Second Regional Plan** (1960s) acknowledged the emergence of what was called “Spread City.” While the plan still supported concentrations of development in the regions’ downtowns and the primacy of the Manhattan CBD, this strategy implicitly acknowledged the reality of sprawl.

**The Third Regional Plan** (1996) marked an attempt to return to the model of aggressively focusing growth in a select subset of cities surrounded by compact neighborhoods and separated by protected landscapes that created a comprehensive and contiguous “regional greensward.”

The subset of cities which were prioritized for future employment growth were called “Regional Downtowns” and to qualify they needed to meet certain threshold criteria for (among other things) density, transit access, and compact urban form. The Third Plan boldly suggested that half of the region’s future employment growth – around 1 million jobs in 20 years – should be directed to the Region’s Core and these 11 Regional Downtowns. As our analysis demonstrates, from 2002-2011, most of the job growth happened in the Region’s Core, with only a small amount of growth in the densest cores of the Large Downtowns and a subset of the original 11 Regional Downtowns – Poughkeepsie and Trenton. This added up to around 240,000 jobs in a decade that included a deep recession.

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**The First Regional Plan**

**The Second Regional Plan**

**The Third Regional Plan**
The Regional Downtowns Today

Today, almost twenty years after the Third Regional Plan, the situation has changed. While 4 of the 11 "Regional Downtowns" identified in the Third Plan grew at least somewhat, overall they remained stable. In fact, the population in these downtowns grew by 1.2%, and lost 1.5% of employment from 2002-2011. Nevertheless, when you isolate their denser downtown cores, these grew in terms of jobs by 6% across the region. On the other hand, corridors around the region grew their population by 8% and saw no employment growth.

The 11 “Regional Downtowns” identified in the Third Plan have all fared quite differently:

- The Regional Downtowns with high access to jobs, such as White Plains and Stamford, gained population. These places also have high job and residential densities. In some of the Regional Downtowns, such as White Plains and New Brunswick, growth in population seemed to follow high job density.

- Two of the Regional Downtowns with the highest median household income, Hicksville and Mineola, also remained stable in terms of population, housing units and jobs. These two downtowns also have the highest percentage of owner-occupied households as well as low vacancy rates.

- Jamaica, the Regional Downtown with the most access to jobs by public transit, saw growth in terms of population, housing and jobs.

- Outside of the core, Trenton and Poughkeepsie were the only two Regional Downtowns that had job growth, even though they had the lowest median household income (MHI)

- Newark saw an increase of housing stock in the downtown core area but overall, did not gain population.

The image of a region organized primarily around a relatively small set of downtowns along a radial network of commuter lines leading to the core is giving way to a much more complex pattern, a constellation of centers of different kinds and scales. These growth trends suggest the need for a full range of strategies calibrated to downtowns of every size and accounting for huge variations in growth rates. The Fourth Regional Plan will need to address a broad range of these place types beyond just the largest of cities.
Re-defining and Assessing the Region’s Downtowns

As with the previous three plans, RPA is trying to describe alternative growth patterns and evaluate their consequences as well as develop place-specific policies and recommendations. This is a complex enterprise that requires many different kinds of analyses as well as a robust discussion within RPA, our working groups, and a broad set of stakeholders.

To facilitate that discussion, as well as to ground our policies and recommendations in the landscape of the region, we are trying to describe the region in terms of types of places that are defined both in qualitative and quantitative terms. For the quantitative analysis, we have divided the region up into half-mile-square increments and used a series of indicators – percentage of urban development, intersection density – residential density, employment density and degree of mixed-use, to define these different types of places. As described above, this analysis yields four broadly conceived settlement patterns: the Suburban region, Commercial Centers and Corridors, the Region’s Centers and Downtowns, and the Region’s Core.

What do we mean by “downtown”?

For the purposes of defining and assessing the region’s downtowns, we have further differentiated these settlement patterns by the degree to which they are more residential than commercial, are mainly business or are places that have a high concentration of mix of uses, for example. The result is the typology of downtowns presented below: the Region’s Centers, Large, Mid-Size and Small Downtowns, and what we are calling “Corridor Downtowns” – patterns of linear urbanization organized around major roadways.

The complexity of the regional landscape suggests that there are many places that may not fit our conventional definition of “downtown” which is as much of an idea as it is a physical type of place – if not more so. Depending on local experience, people will extend the idea of downtown to places that do not necessarily fit our conventional image such as a regional shopping center like the Bridgewater Commons Mall, which was intentionally named to conjure up exactly those associations. In fact, it includes civic spaces and community-oriented events. Similarly, commercial corridors which are so easily dismissed as “strips” may function as the local main street for the surrounding communities and may host not only retail, but civic buildings and other services, like along Route 28 in Middlesex Borough (NJ) or Route 110 in Williston Park (NY). These places offer a lot of capacity for redevelopment and political resistance to intensification will be low. New uses can be added to make these places more complete by including housing and promoting more pedestrian- and transit-friendly streets. More intensification will also enable more transit/mobility options. For the purpose of

The role of downtowns in the Fourth Regional Plan

While still a work in progress, major objectives are emerging from the research and outreach associated with the Fourth Regional Plan. One way to think about the region’s downtowns is to understand the role that they can play in accomplishing each of those six objectives:

Provide the infrastructure and development capacity for sustainable and equitable economic growth.

Downtowns are places with:
- the capacity to accommodate growth that would otherwise sprawl
- legacy infrastructure systems to exploit
- the density to support a variety of public transportation options

Expand access to opportunity and a high quality of life for all races, ethnicities and income levels.

Downtowns are places with:
- diverse populations and integrated neighborhoods
- job opportunities for a range of skills
- a range of supportive services and cultural resources
- supportive social networks

Provide affordable residential and commercial options across a full range of incomes.

Downtowns are places with:
- diversity of housing types and levels of affordability
- non-car mobility options
- tolerance for density

Establish more resilient built and natural systems and reduce and capture carbon emissions.

Downtowns are places with:
- lower per capita carbon emissions
- density to support alternative district-wide energy systems
- configurations that enable green infrastructure strategies for intersections with natural systems

Improve the effectiveness of regional institutions and regulatory systems.

Downtowns are places with:
- governance systems that coordinate development on a regional scale
- more civic infrastructure: stakeholder groups, issues-based stakeholder groups, citizen planners
- more resources for studies, planning, grant writing and administration
Downtown Characteristics and Patterns of Growth

Growth in these centers and downtowns was uneven and not necessarily related to size. For example, Regional Centers such as Stamford and Hoboken with populations between 63,000 and 15,000 and Small Downtowns such as Riverhead and Mount Kisco with populations between 2,000 and 5,000 gained population – between 7 and 9% and 21 and 10%, respectively. Large Downtowns such as Passaic and Hackensack with populations between 68,000 and 42,000 and Mid-sized Downtowns such as New Milford and Freehold with populations between 8,700 and 7,500 remained mostly stable. Over 20% of Small Downtowns, places like Paramus and Southampton with populations of 4,000 and 1,000 saw population decline. When compared with the number of residential units, or the growth on housing construction, the Region’s Centers saw a larger increase in production, growing their housing stock by almost 10%. On the other hand, Small Downtowns saw only a 4% increase in their housing stock. Finally, corridors throughout the region mainly saw increase in both categories, with a 9% increase in population and 12% in their housing stock.

Note: These numbers do not correspond to the municipal total numbers, they represent the portion of a municipality that has been categorized as the Region’s Centers & Downtowns.
Regional Centers

Regional Centers are places that have a highly dense and compact core with a balanced combination of jobs and housing units. Regional Centers are densely built out, although there might be places, such as Newark, where infill and reuse can occur in previously developed land. These dense cores are surrounded by smaller, but similarly compact areas which have a similar balance of jobs and housing, but at a more moderate density. These areas are surrounded by a dense residential area, with a small share of jobs. These places are either part of the Region’s Core – like Newark, Hoboken and Jersey City- or act as regional hubs – like Bridgeport, Stamford and New Haven. These places are the legacy anchors of the New York metropolitan settlement pattern.

- Residential density between 4,500 and 18,000 housing units per square mile
- Employment density between 9,000 and 24,000 jobs per square mile
- Compact and intense development

Growth & stability in the region’s urban hubs

In general, the Regional Centers (among them some of the Third Plan “Regional Downtowns” like Stamford, New Haven, Bridgeport and Newark) saw growth and stability in all three categories – population, housing and jobs.

High occupancy rates and high percentage of renters

All of these places have high occupancy rates (between 89 and 95%) as well as high percentage of renters – between 71 and 78%.

High proximity to – or a part of – the Region’s Core

Most of them rank high in access to jobs by public transit in 60 minutes, creating access to over 2 million jobs, except for Bridgeport with an average of 55,000 jobs.

High poverty rates & struggling communities

But most of the Regional Centers also have a high percentage of households below the poverty line, with New Haven and Newark on the top, with 26% and 30%, respectively. Except for Hoboken, with a median household income of $119,637, most of the Region’s Centers have median household incomes closer to – or below- $60,000.

Sample Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Land Area</th>
<th>Pop 2010</th>
<th>Housing Units 2010</th>
<th>Jobs 2011</th>
<th>% Pop Change</th>
<th>% Housing Units Change</th>
<th>% Jobs Change</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Access to Jobs</th>
<th>Residential Density</th>
<th>Job Density</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Pop 18 Under</th>
<th>% Pop 65 Over</th>
<th>% Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>% Renters</th>
<th>% Households Below Poverty</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Hoboken</td>
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<td>15,251</td>
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<td>12%</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stamford, CT

Newark, NJ
Large Downtowns

Large Downtowns are places that have a high density core, similar to the Regional Centers, with a combination of employment and residential uses. These Large Downtowns, are surrounded by a few nodes of dense employment and residential areas and moderately dense residential areas surrounding these cores. These places are mostly built out, but some have some developable land available. These places play an important role in the region’s economy:

- Residential density between 2,700 and 12,000 housing units per square mile
- Employment density between 2,000 and 15,000 jobs per square mile
- Compact and intense development

Population growth but not necessarily job growth
The 36 Large Downtowns (among them some of the 3rd Plan “Regional Downtowns” like New Brunswick, White Plains, Hempstead, Mineola and Trenton) saw growth and stability in population and housing units, but a mixture of growth and decline in terms of jobs.

High occupancy rates and high percentage of renters
Most of these places have high occupancy rates – between 86-96% as well as high percentage of renters. A few places have lower share of renters such as Mineola (25%), Hempstead (21%), Eastchester (32%) and Long Beach (42%).

Average proximity to the region
Most of these places have access to about 500,000 jobs by public transit in 60 minutes- with a few places in Northern NJ – Fort Lee, Weehawken, Harrison, North Bergen and Fairview with access to over one million jobs.

Well-to-do places
On average, these places have a lower percentage of households below the poverty line (13%) although there are exceptions such as Asbury Park, Paterson, Trenton, Irvington and Passaic with poverty rates closer to 30%. The median household income for Large Downtowns is $72,861, higher than that for Regional Centers. Nevertheless, around 15 out of the 36 large downtowns have a very low MHI, among them North Bergen, New Brunswick, East Orange, Trenton and Paterson.

Diverse and young places
Places such as Paterson, Perth Amboy, Trenton and East Orange have higher percentage of people under 18 than the other Large Downtowns, as well as higher percentage of non-white residents.

Sample Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Land Area</th>
<th>Pop 2010</th>
<th>Housing Units 2010</th>
<th>Jobs 2011</th>
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<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Access to Jobs</th>
<th>Residential Density</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Pop 18 Under</th>
<th>% Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>% Renters</th>
<th>% Households Below Poverty</th>
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<td>Paterson</td>
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<td>244,995</td>
<td>5,564</td>
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<td>8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<td>Trenton</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>78,226</td>
<td>30,741</td>
<td>38,194</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>39,868</td>
<td>115,209</td>
<td>4,677</td>
<td>5,811</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>40,610</td>
<td>11,340</td>
<td>26,496</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46,556</td>
<td>135,228</td>
<td>4,157</td>
<td>9,714</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Rochelle</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>47,191</td>
<td>18,221</td>
<td>19,844</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>65,844</td>
<td>398,328</td>
<td>5,232</td>
<td>5,698</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastchester</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>17,744</td>
<td>8,564</td>
<td>8,564</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
<td>107,857</td>
<td>517,462</td>
<td>4,915</td>
<td>4,915</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomfield</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>30,400</td>
<td>12,514</td>
<td>9,097</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>-0%</td>
<td>61,102</td>
<td>996,357</td>
<td>4,551</td>
<td>3,308</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

White Plains, NY

New Brunswick, NJ
Mid-size Downtowns

Mid-size Downtowns are places that have a moderately dense core, are smaller in size than Large Downtowns, and have a combination of jobs and housing. The Mid-size Downtown core is surrounded by moderately dense residential areas. These places have more developable land available than Large Downtowns.

- Residential density between 1,000 and 6,000 housing units per square mile
- Employment density between 200 and 15,000 jobs per square mile
- Compact and moderate development

Stable residential areas but struggling on employment

Out of the 115 Mid-size Downtowns, 14% of them saw decline in population and 10% saw growth, while the majority remained stable. Only 3% saw decline in housing units and almost 20% saw an increase, which is higher than the number of downtowns that saw population growth. In terms of employment, 34% saw growth while 43% saw decline.

High occupancy rates, mainly owners

Most of the Mid-size Downtowns have high occupancy rates, except for places along the coast – Toms River (65%), Manasquan (67%), Point Pleasant Beach (56%), Belmar (64%) and Bradley Beach (68%). Most of these downtowns have a lower percentage of renters than both Large Downtowns and Regional Centers – with 40% being the overall average. Places in Long Island, such as Smithtown and Oyster Bay have some of the lowest percentages of renters – 16% and 14%, respectively, whereas, places in the Hudson Valley, such as Newburgh and Poughkeepsie have some of the highest percentages – 76% and 75%, respectively.

Not so well connected to the Region's Core

Almost half of the Mid-size Downtowns have access to less than 50,000 jobs in the region by public transit in 60 minutes.

Above average incomes

Mid-size Downtowns have a lower percentage of households below poverty as well as a higher median household income than both Large Downtowns and Regional Centers. The median MHI for these places is $74,991, with a few places on the higher quartile – Smithtown, Oyster Bay, Greenwich and Mamaroneck, all above $100,000.
Small Downtowns

Small Downtowns are places that have a small and dense core, a defined mixed use area with a balance of jobs and housing units. This core is surrounded by lower-density residential areas. Some of these small downtowns are surrounded by more suburban or rural residential areas. These Small Downtowns have an average of 50% impervious surface, which provides development opportunities as well as a higher percentage of open space.

- Residential density between 500 and 4,400 housing units per square mile
- Employment density between 200 and 22,000 jobs per square mile
- Compact and moderate development in a smaller scale than other downtowns

Stable residential areas but struggling on employment
Out of the 89 Small Downtowns in the region, 20 saw decline in population, 9 in housing units and 39 in employment.

Renter’s town
On average, the Small Downtowns have similar percentage of occupancy and share of renters as the Large Downtowns - 94% and 51%, respectively. Nevertheless, there are a few places, such as Milltown, Marlboro, and Pine Beach, with occupancy rates of 97% or higher and rent share of 10% or lower.

Diverse and well-to-do downtowns
Almost half of the Small Downtowns – 36- have 40% or higher percentage of non-white residents. The median household income for Small Downtowns ($78,118) is higher than the Large Downtowns and Mid-size Downtowns, but there are a few places such as Riverhead, Newton, and New Paltz, which have a MHI below $50,000, and on the opposite spectrum, Chatham, Ridgewood, Woodbury, Princeton and Ramsey, with MHI above $100,000.

Sample Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Land Area</th>
<th>Pop 2010</th>
<th>Housing Units 2010</th>
<th>Jobs 2011</th>
<th>% Pop Change</th>
<th>% Housing Units Change</th>
<th>% Jobs Change</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Access to Jobs</th>
<th>Residential Density</th>
<th>Job Density</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Pop 18 Under</th>
<th>% Pop 65 Over</th>
<th>% Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>% Renters</th>
<th>% Households Below Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paramus</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>4,068</td>
<td>1,453</td>
<td>10,726</td>
<td>-9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>$95,192</td>
<td>243,257</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>7,151</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>7,622</td>
<td>2,831</td>
<td>4,283</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>$94,528</td>
<td>101,144</td>
<td>2,265</td>
<td>3,427</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Beach</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>-8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>$85,311</td>
<td>17,862</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahwah</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>1,552</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>$84,701</td>
<td>58,002</td>
<td>2,380</td>
<td>1,783</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Ferry</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>8,092</td>
<td>3,318</td>
<td>2,811</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>$71,932</td>
<td>1,977,641</td>
<td>3,319</td>
<td>2,812</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Kisco</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>5,163</td>
<td>1,895</td>
<td>3,731</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-0%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>$60,886</td>
<td>59,440</td>
<td>2,555</td>
<td>5,030</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Corridor Downtowns

Corridors are places that have a low percentage of impervious surface as well as low intersection density and are usually along highway corridors. These places have a mix of uses similar to Small Downtowns, with lower densities in terms of housing units and employment. These places are usually in close proximity to low-density suburban or rural residential areas.

- Residential density between 300 and 9,000 housing units per square mile
- Employment density between 300 and 7,000 jobs per sqmi
- Low and linear development

Growing their residential areas

Overall the Corridor Downtowns in the region saw growth in terms of population and housing units. Although there was a higher increase in population and residential units than employment, the jobs/housing balance for these places were on average 2:1, making them mainly employment centers. Out of all the different types of downtowns, these linear downtowns saw the highest population growth rate (9%) as well as high housing production (12%). Compared to other downtown types, the corridors have a high MHI, on average $94,800.

Sample Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Land Area</th>
<th>Pop 2010</th>
<th>Housing Units 2000</th>
<th>Jobs 2011</th>
<th>% Pop Change</th>
<th>% Housing Units Change</th>
<th>% Jobs Change</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Access to Jobs</th>
<th>Residential Density</th>
<th>Job Density</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Pop 65+ Under</th>
<th>% Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>% Renters</th>
<th>% Households Below Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Hwy 112</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>10,080</td>
<td>3,792</td>
<td>7,250</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>$84,136</td>
<td>2,378</td>
<td>1,710</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Hwy 27a</td>
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<td>1,058</td>
<td>1,460</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>$84,531</td>
<td>2,385</td>
<td>1,460</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Us Hwy 46</td>
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<td>35,437</td>
<td>14,084</td>
<td>54,681</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>$90,827</td>
<td>1,796</td>
<td>2,772</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Hwy 17</td>
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<td>1,057</td>
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<td>I 84</td>
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<td>8,602</td>
<td>3,060</td>
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<td>3%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<td>996</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Hwy 110</td>
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<td>3,323</td>
<td>1,344</td>
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<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$89,661</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>6,470</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wantagh State Pkwy</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1,436</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>-13%</td>
<td>-12%</td>
<td>-44%</td>
<td>$111,677</td>
<td>2,872</td>
<td>1,071</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

We’re Still Sprawling
As suggested above, although many downtowns gained population, 50% of the region’s population growth over the past decade went to some of the most rural and dispersed areas. The Region’s Centers and Downtowns received only about 20% of the region’s growth with another 20% going to Corridors and Commercial Centers. Jobs however, became increasingly concentrated in the Region’s Core and in the cores of Large Downtown such as Hoboken, Yonkers, Trenton and Jersey City.

Connected but Struggling
In general, the Regional Centers and Large Downtowns have excellent transit connections to their surroundings and Manhattan CBD. But many of these places also have the highest poverty rates. Similarly, there is no clear relationship between transit access and prosperity. Almost half of the Large and Mid-Sized Downtowns that have transit access also saw declines in population and/or jobs such as Paterson, New Brunswick, Weehawken and the City of Orange.

Size Doesn’t Matter, but Income Does
The degree to which places gained or lost population and employment is not well correlated with size. Large and Small Downtowns both grew and shrunk. But the places with higher incomes were the places that grew such as Hoboken, White Plains, Clifton, New Rochelle, and Edgewater.

A Region of Corridors
The places that we have called “Corridor Downtowns” actually saw the highest growth in population and housing production but with little to no growth in employment. And these places are not always well-served by transit such as places along State Highway 878, 97, 70 and 21, and US Highway 9 and 44.

Three big questions for downtowns and the Fourth Regional Plan

1. How do we define a “successful downtown”?

There are a variety of physical characteristics that we associate with our conventional notions of what a successful downtown should look like:

- A place that is mixed use with a variety of employment and cultural offerings.
- A place that is “compact” and “dense”.
- A place with a fine-grained pattern of pedestrian-friendly streets and blocks.
- A place with a diversity of housing types and residents.

As suggested earlier, in our complex regional landscape we may have to have a more expansive conception of what we call “downtown” that includes places like shopping centers, commercial corridors and crossroads that may not meet these land use and design criteria but may never the less serve as important centers for their communities.

This suggests that our definition of a successful downtown should focus more on outcomes related to economic vitality, social equity and sustainability and the strategies that may enable those outcomes.

Questions:

- What criteria related to equity, sustainability and prosperity should we use to define success?
- What strategies should we use for important community centers that do not necessarily meet our definition of a conventional downtown?

2. Why are some downtowns successful while others languish?

As our research shows, it is not always about size, but often it is about growth. Income and wealth polarization in the region is reflected in the uneven prosperity of the region’s downtowns. Some places, like White Plains and Stamford, have prospered. White Plains, with
a MHI of $82,467 and access to over 290,000 jobs, for example, saw an increase on population and housing units, where half of the housing units are renter-occupied. Similarly, Stamford, with a MHI of $65,671 and access to over 120,000 jobs, saw the same growth trends.

Similarly, it is not about being connected or having access to transit. There are other downtowns like Newburgh, Poughkeepsie and Bridgeport that continue to struggle, in spite of being relatively well connected to the rest of the region. In this case, Newburgh, Paterson and Poughkeepsie have MHI of $35,849, $39,542, $40,161, and $41,016 respectively - all on the lower quintiles of their categories. Of these places, only Paterson saw a decline in employment, whereas all the other places were mainly stable with Poughkeepsie and Newburgh seeing a slight increase. These places which were formerly vibrant employment centers in their own right, seem to be unable to turn the corner in spite of having the “bones” of a healthy center and in some cases, such as Bridgeport and Newark, in spite of being well connected.

Questions:
- What strategies and investments do we need to make for places that may not grow to be successful?
- Are we prepared to transition away from places that do not meet our criteria for reinforcement and if so how do we do this?

How do we reinforce places that may not grow?

Many downtown revitalization strategies are predicated on growth: new infill development or increased tax revenues for public expenditures on infrastructure and open space. But the reality is that many places will not grow; some may even loose population and employment. As our preliminary analysis demonstrates, many downtowns — of various sizes and characteristics — lost employment in the last decade. Similarly, more than half of the region’s downtowns remained stable or had population loss. Some places, like Asbury Park and the City of Orange, have seen both population and employment loss over the past ten years. In fact there is an emerging body of practice around “shrinking cities”. While this concept tends to apply only to large cities, there may be some “Legacy City” strategies that can be adapted to a wider range of places. These include: finding new ways to use vacant land, including urban agriculture or open space, in lieu of the redevelopment; identifying and building on local competitive advantage including physical, cultural, institutional and/or leadership assets; and looking beyond jurisdictional boundaries to increase and improve both human and capital resources and to consider new forms of governance by reorganizing city and county functions.