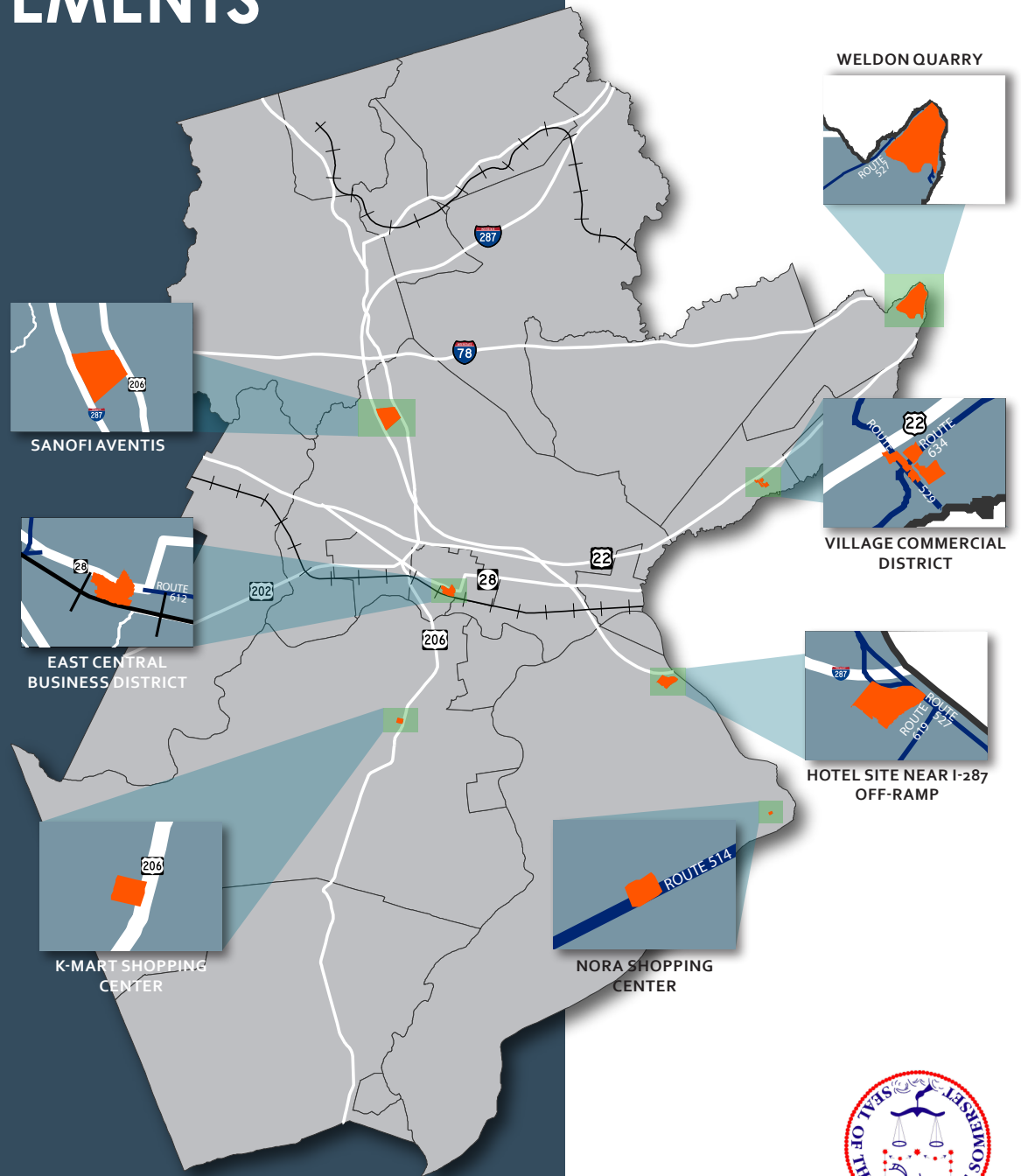


SUPPORTING PRIORITY
INVESTMENT IN SOMERSET
COUNTY THROUGH
**ACCESS AND MOBILITY
IMPROVEMENTS**



Executive Summary
JUNE 2013



Disclaimer Statement

This report has been prepared as part of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority's Subregional Studies Program with financing by the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation. This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Transportation in the interest of information exchange. The United States Government assumes no liability for its contents or its use thereof.

INTRODUCTION

Consistent with its motto, “creating quality communities together,” the Somerset County Planning Board has been at the forefront of fostering smart growth, shaping the County’s future through a comprehensive planning program as Somerset seeks to leverage its considerable assets and make strategic investments in redevelopment and targeted growth.

The overall study approach is designed to gather the necessary support to move projects forward, and serve as a template for other locations across Somerset County and New Jersey seeking to attract private investment opportunities. The study included collaboration and coordination activities, formulation of goals and objectives, market-based assessment of existing conditions and redevelopment potential, and development of land use and multimodal improvements for the pilot redevelopment sites.

I. COLLABORATION, OUTREACH AND COORDINATION

This *Access and Mobility Improvements* study follows a community-based planning process: a comprehensive program of outreach and coordination initiatives to help guide the effort and build consensus on achievable goals and recommendations. The Parsons Brinkerhoff (PB) project team met with and sought input from the County’s municipal partners, residents, business community, real estate professionals, and partner agencies. Engagement of this broad range of stakeholders guided the compilation and screening of candidate locations, vetting of redevelopment scenarios, and advancement of recommendations. This process ensures that the outcomes properly reflect the priorities, needs, and concerns of stakeholders, advocates, and decision makers.

II. STUDY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal of the *Access and Mobility Improvements* study is to identify land use and transportation improvements to support redevelopment and targeted growth. The study is grounded in a methodology to identify, screen, and evaluate candidate locations, and propose a series of pilot sites to serve as templates for redevelopment of underutilized, underperforming, and vacant sites.

Study goals identified through the outreach, coordination, and collaboration activities include:

- Undertake a community-based planning process of outreach and coordination
- Understand the local and regional context for redevelopment
- Achieve consistency with the State Strategic Plan methodologies
- Prioritize local and regional value capture, return-on-investment, and job creation
- Build consensus on achievable goals
- Leverage existing and proposed infrastructure investments
- Capitalize on access to regional institutions, health care, universities, and innovation districts
- Identify marketable opportunities for redevelopment and targeted growth
- Develop suitable land use recommendations and multimodal transportation improvements

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in three phases:

Phase One: Identify initial candidate locations for redevelopment and targeted growth, giving priority to locations with existing infrastructure and supportive planning efforts and designations.

Phase Two: Conduct initial screening and existing conditions assessment of candidate locations including evaluation of transportation access and mobility conditions, environmental screening, and land use potential.

Phase Three: Select seven prototype pilot sites, evaluate direct and indirect economic impacts, and develop land use scenarios and supportive multimodal transportation improvement concepts.

TABLE 1 | PILOT STUDY SITES

| Site Name | Municipality | Concept |
|--------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Sanofi Aventis Site | Bridgewater Twp | Upgrade Mixed Office to Mixed Use Town Campus |
| Hotel Site near I-287 Off Ramp | Franklin Twp | Consolidate Isolated Parcels; Increase Value of Leasable Space |
| K-Mart Shopping Center | Hillsborough Twp | Redevelop Vacant Highway Commercial |
| Weldon Quarry | Watchung Boro | Redevelop Quarry Site as Mixed Use Center |
| East Central Business District | Somerville Boro | Redevelop as Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Center |
| Village Commercial District | Green Brook Twp | Upgrade Corridor to Village Greenway |
| Nora Shopping Center | Franklin Twp | Upgrade Suburban Arterial to Main Street |

IV. DETAILED SITE EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SANOFI AVENTIS – Bridgewater Township

Currently vacant and formerly home to a single tenant research and development office campus, the large size of the site (111 acres) and multiple building layout is appealing for mixed-use redevelopment featuring multiple office/R&D tenants, high quality residential, retail, and a hotel.

The site has direct access to U.S. Route 202/206 and is near Interstates 78 and 287, although it is several miles from the I-287 interchange and other retail and commercial centers. Redevelopment scale is limited by constrained capacity of the adjacent U.S. 202/206 corridor. A variety of multimodal improvements are recommended to support redevelopment.

HOTEL SITE NEAR I-287 OFF-RAMP – Franklin Township

The 52 acre site is located adjacent to the I-287 interchange on Easton Avenue. Existing uses include office space, light industrial and low density warehousing. The Garden State Convention Center is

adjacent. Its size and proximity to Rutgers University and the region's major hospitals and corporations in New Brunswick make it attractive for redevelopment as a Scientific-Research Hub focused on office space and accessory retail. Because of various environmental and traffic constraints, the goal is to decrease overall density but increase the dollar value per square to encourage redevelopment.

Although adjacent to an I-287 interchange, vehicular access is circuitous and recurring congestion is an issue on Easton Avenue. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle access to the site are also very limited. Improvement recommendations focus on enhancing vehicle circulation and multimodal connections.

KMART SHOPPING CENTER – Hillsborough Township

The nearly 10 acre site contains a partially vacant shopping plaza on a section of U.S. Route 206 characterized by other strip shopping plazas, fast food, big box retail, and professional offices. The site is physically separated from existing retail and Town Center development in Hillsborough south of the site. A mixed-use redevelopment strategy centered on health, wellness, and medical uses is proposed.

The site benefits from signalized access to U.S. 206, but lacks connections to a multimodal network. Improvement recommendations include pedestrian connections to the recently approved adjacent Green Village mixed-use residential development.

WELDON QUARRY –

Watchung Township

Building upon the existing Office/Conference Center overlay district, the preferred land use scenario recommends allowing a mix of complementary uses in addition to the development already allowed by the current zoning regulations.

The 206 acre site is a single parcel that houses an active quarry operation. Surrounding uses include office buildings, the Watchung Reservation, and residences. An existing overlay zone encourages mixed-use development and the site features proximity to I-78 and U.S. Route 22. The site is appealing for a mixed-use redevelopment strategy centered on office uses, as well as assisted living; civic, cultural, and entertainment uses to fill a regional void; and retail and restaurant space.

The topographic constraints of the quarry present access and stormwater constraints; the site is largely auto-dependent. Potential transportation concepts include completing the missing moves at the I-78 at Diamond Hill Road interchange, investigating capacity improvements for New Providence Road, and developing a walkable block plan within the redevelopment site.

EAST CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT –

Somerville Borough

The 35 acre, multi-parcel site includes a mix of residential and commercial uses at the eastern end of Somerville's business district. A redevelopment project at the western end of the business district is in progress. The site benefits from excellent transit access via rail and bus; a dense, mixed-use business district that encourages pedestrian mobility; and access to NJ Route 28. The proposed redevelopment strategy focuses on a mix of residential, office, and retail uses, and utilizes overlay zoning to foster parcel consolidation and transfer of development rights within the floodplain.

Constraints include the large number of parcels, existing occupancy, and floodplain of the Peter's Brook Greenway at the east end of the site. Proposed transportation improvements include implementing a road diet featuring Complete Streets concepts along Veterans Memorial Parkway and Park Avenue, a variety of pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility enhancements, and several targeted intersection improvements to support and accommodate the scale of proposed redevelopment activity.

VILLAGE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT –

Green Brook Township

The 17 acre, multi-parcel site is centered at the crossroads of two county routes – North Washington Avenue and Greenbrook Road. The site comprises many small lots and lacks a cohesive center. Existing uses are largely commercial and residential, and the surrounding area includes municipal offices and services, schools, and residential neighborhoods. The site has access to U.S. Route 22. The proposed redevelopment strategy is focused on developing a mixed-use, walkable neighborhood retail district with small professional offices and upper floor residential.

Transportation recommendations include a road diet on North Washington Avenue south of Greenbrook Road and streetscape and pedestrian improvements throughout the site area to improve pedestrian safety, walkability, and connections to surrounding schools and neighborhoods. Recommendations also investigate capacity improvements for U.S. Route 22 and install pedestrian connections to existing transit stops along U.S. Route 22.

NORA SHOPPING CENTER –

Franklin Township

The 3 acre site is a single-parcel containing a small commercial plaza along Hamilton Street. It is part of a neighborhood commercial district composed of mixed commercial and residential uses, creating a small urban environment conducive to walking and biking and enhanced by recent streetscape improvements.

The proposed redevelopment strategy expands the size of the existing building with additional retail space, and enhances the frontage along Hamilton

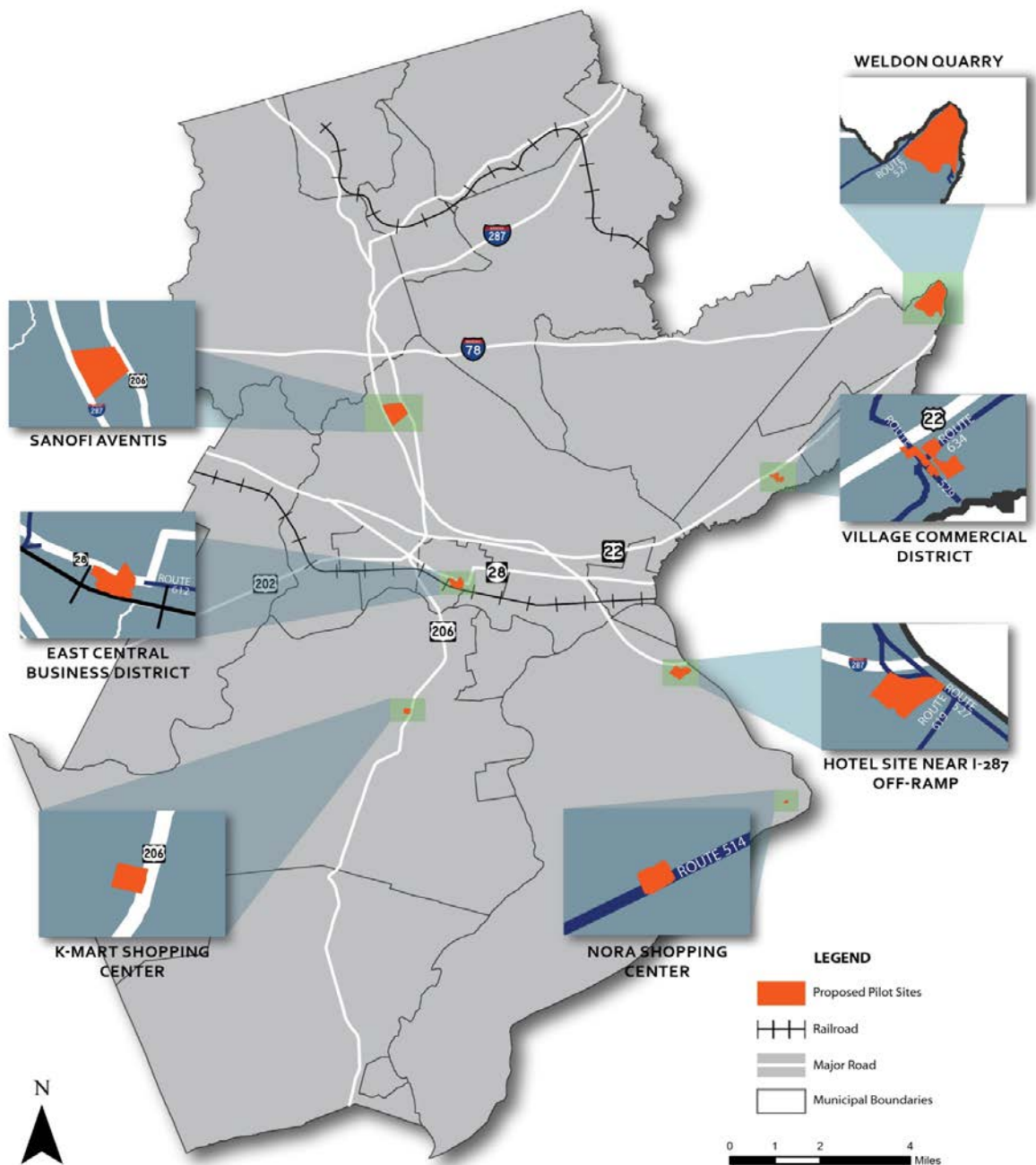
Street with a wider pedestrian realm, featuring a corner kiosk.

Proposed transportation improvements include additional bicycle, pedestrian, and streetscape improvements along Hamilton Street; access control at the site; and investigation of improved transit service along Hamilton Street and transit integration with the proposed kiosk.

V. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN MATRIX

The implementation matrix details the recommended site improvements for the seven preferred sites, including whether the improvement is recommended in the no build or build scenario, the potential time frame, and the responsible organization(s). The plan includes a variety of access and mobility concepts including traffic, transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

FIGURE 1 | PILOT STUDY SITES



Study Advisory Committee Members

Peter S. Palmer, Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Robert Bzik, Somerset County Planning Division

Walter Lane, Somerset County Planning Division

Kenneth Wedeen, Somerset County Planning Division

Tara Kenyon, Somerset County Planning Division

Joseph A. Fishinger, Jr., Somerset County Engineering Division

Elizabeth Thompson, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

Barry Ableman, NJ Office of Planning Advocacy

Joseph Burdulia, NJ Department of Transportation

Vivian Baker, NJ Transit

Donna Allison, RideWise

Mike Kerwin, Somerset County Business Partnership

Mark Healey, Franklin Township

Colin Driver, Somerville Borough

Gene Strupinsky, Hillsborough Township

2013

Board of Chosen Freeholders

Peter S. Palmer, Freeholder Director
Patrick Scaglione, Freeholder Deputy Director
Robert Zaborowski, Freeholder
Patricia Walsh, Freeholder
Mark Caliguire, Freeholder

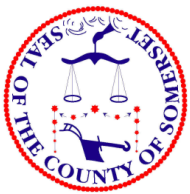
Planning Board Members

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr., Chairman
Kenneth Brenn, Vice Chairman
Margaret Mary Jones
Lisa Marshall
Robert Marasco
Michael Loftus
Peter S. Palmer, Freeholder Director
Robert Zaborowski, Freeholder Liaison
Matthew D. Loper, County Engineer/Board Secretary
Ronald Krilla, 2nd Alternate
Patrick Scaglione, Alternate to Freeholder
David J. Lorimer, Alternate to County Engineer
John M. Lore, Esq., Deputy County Counsel for Planning

Planning Division Staff

Robert P. Bzik, AICP/PP, Director of Planning
Anthony V. McCracken, Sr., AICP/PP, Assistant Director of Planning
Thomas R. D'Amico, AICP/PP, Supervising Planner
Laurette Kratina, AICP/PP, Supervising Planner
Walter Lane, AICP/PP, Supervising Transportation Planner
Kenneth Wedeen, AICP/PP, Principal Planner
James Ruggieri, AICP/PP, Principal Community Planner
Galina Chernikova, Senior Planner
Tara Kenyon, Senior Planner
Nora Fekete, Planner
Andras Holzmann, Planner
Tatiana Kika, Principal Draftsperson
Andrew Phillips, Draftsperson
Patricia McGarry, Manager, Cultural & Heritage
Sally de Barcza, Programs Coordinator
Diana Vigilante, Manager, Office of Solid Waste Management
Melissa Harvey, Recycling Coordinator
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager
Patrice Thomas, Administrative Assistant
Catherine Bunting, Administrative Assistant

Somerset County Planning Board
20 Grove Street, P.O. Box 3000
Somerville, NJ 08876-1262
(908) 231-7021 Fax (908) 707-1749
E-mail: planningbd@co.somerset.nj.us



PARSONS BRINCKERHOFF

A. Strauss-Wieder, Inc.
analyses for informed decision-making™

PHILLIPS PREISS GRYGIEL LLC
Planning & Real Estate Consultants

TechniQuest Corporation
Engineering Consultation & Construction Inspection