

NEW PROJECTS

1. MASONIC TEMPLE AND CLARKE CATON HINTZ OFFICES

Architect: Clarke Caton Hintz, Trenton
 Total Cost: \$2 million (temple), \$4 million (offices)
 Completion: 2010

2. ASSUNPINK CREEK PARK FACILITY

Architect: RLM Architect, Trenton
 Total Cost: \$2 million
 Completion: 2013

3. NEW JERSEY STATE POLICE MUSEUM & LEARNING CENTER

Architect: Historic Building Architects, Trenton
 Total Cost: \$250,000
 Completion: 2011

MARKET STATS

2.98

EXPANSION INDEX VALUE, TRENTON

The Expansion Index from Reed Construction Data is a 12- to 18-month look ahead at the construction marketplace. A value of 1.0 or higher signifies growth.

SOURCE: REED CONSTRUCTION DATA

84,913

POPULATION, 2010

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

-1.28%

JOB GROWTH, 2010-2011

SOURCE: SPERLING'S BEST PLACES

7.4%

COUNTYWIDE UNEMPLOYMENT, NOVEMBER 2011

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

5 MILLION S.F.

OFFICE INVENTORY

SOURCE: SEGAL LABATE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

4%

OFFICE-SPACE VACANCY RATE, JANUARY 2012

SOURCE: SEGAL LABATE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

\$58,800

ESTIMATED MEDIAN HOME VALUE, JANUARY 2012

SOURCE: ZILLOW

→ LOCAL MARKET

Trenton, N.J.



TEXT BY MARGOT CARMICHAEL LESTER
 AND CLAIRE PARKER

TRENTON HAS A RICH HISTORY that dates back to the days of the colonies. In 1776, George Washington earned his first significant victory here, crossing the Delaware (and inspiring the now-iconic Emmanuel Leutze painting) to defeat enemy troops. Temporarily our nation's capital in 1784 and 1799, Trenton became the Garden State's government seat in 1790. It grew to prominence through ceramics mills and rubber and wire manufacturing—inspiring the motto, “Trenton Makes, The World Takes,” as seen on the Lower Trenton Bridge.

Since the 1970s, though, Trenton has experienced more take than make. National economic woes beset local manufacturers, shuttering plants and adding to the unemployment rolls. A city-center mall project in the 1970s failed to attract big businesses and drove visitors and employers to the suburbs. The Sun National Bank Center, opened in 1999, hasn't delivered on its promise to spur additional development nearby. City and county government are the largest employers, and both are downsizing due to budget cuts.

Fewer people downtown creates a less-attractive environment for developers. And a lower government head count means slower operations for those who do build. “The city has many challenges due to understaffing of their permits and inspections departments,” says Robin Murray, FAIA, principal of RLM Architect and a native of nearby Princeton. “Permitting is difficult and has been for years.”

There are nevertheless opportunities, thanks in large part to the “beautiful and varied architectural heritage and extensive stock of historic buildings,” says John Hatch, AIA, principal with Clarke Caton Hintz.

In 2010, the firm included its own offices in a renovation of the landmark Masonic Temple. The \$6 million project benefited from Urban Enterprise Zone grants, state economic-development funding, a federal historic tax credit, and private financing. The LEED Silver rehab won the 2011 AIA New Jersey Merit Award for Interior Architecture and other awards.

Another Trenton rehab came in the form of the New Jersey State Police Museum & Learning Center by local firm Historic Building Architects (HBA). The \$250,000 project restored a 1934 log cabin built by the Civilian Works Administration into a museum whose highlights include the ladder used in the Lindbergh kidnapping.

Building on Trenton's industrial past, RLM designed the Assunpink Creek Park Facility, to be completed in 2013. A redeveloped brownfield within a 100-year flood plain, it will become a gateway to a riverside trail and a venue for a farmers market and city events—and a demonstration of Trenton's potential.

“I am always hopeful for Trenton,” says HBA principal Annabelle Radcliffe-Trenner, AIA. “We need some strong leadership in this city that can be creative. This is a sad but beautiful city still asleep but with wonderful potential.” □