



Essex Street Gateway Transit Hub Hackensack, NJ



American Planning Association
New Jersey Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

TOGETHER
**NORTH
JERSEY.**



Preface | About the study

In the fall of 2020, The American Planning Association New Jersey Chapter's (APA-NJ) Community Planning Assistance Program (CPAP) engaged a team of volunteer planners to develop a transit hub strategic plan for the Essex Street Train Station on NJ TRANSIT's Pascack Valley Line for the City of Hackensack.

Through outreach to Hackensack's diverse population, research into effective Transit Hub strategies and consideration of ways to better connect with county government offices, Main Street Redevelopment and an expanding Hackensack University Medical Center, this report presents a strategic vision to renew and embrace the Essex Street Station within the City of Hackensack.



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New Jersey Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen



Essex Street Gateway Transit Hub Project Partners



APA – NJ Community Planning
Assistance Program



Together North Jersey Efficient Task
Force



City of Hackensack



Volunteer Planners



Essex Street Gateway Transit Hub Team

VOLUNTEERS



Zainab Al
Mansour



Eric Sturm



Walter Lane



Woo Kim



Tom Behrens



Kevin
Williams



Maryam
Yaghoubi



Laura Semeraro



Devon
McGuinness



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Spach
Trahan

PROGRAM STAFF



Tom Schulze



Jeffrey Vernick

Presentation Outline

Project Goals

Project Objectives

What is a Transit Hub?

Why Essex Street Station?

Hackensack Community and Transportation History

Hackensack and Essex Street Station Today

Station Study Area and Existing Conditions

Community Outreach

Issues and Challenges

Recommendations



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JERSEY.**



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Making Great Communities Happen

Propose sustainable, community-supportive and market-driven land use renewal / development strategies for station site and immediately adjacent parcels

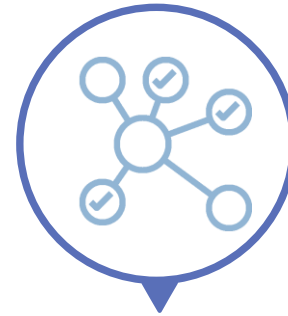


Project Goals

Make Essex Street Station a walkable destination with active public spaces and amenities that support both travelers and the surrounding community



Increase Essex Street Station's limited commuter role to better serve regional employment and destination travel



Improve access, circulation and safety for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular travel



Better connect Hackensack's government, retail, residential and educational areas with Essex Street Station

Project Objectives

Identify Attractive and Sustainable Site Design Solutions

- Market-based land use planning and zoning
- Community quality of life / cultural / economic well-being needs
- Connected design between public spaces and community

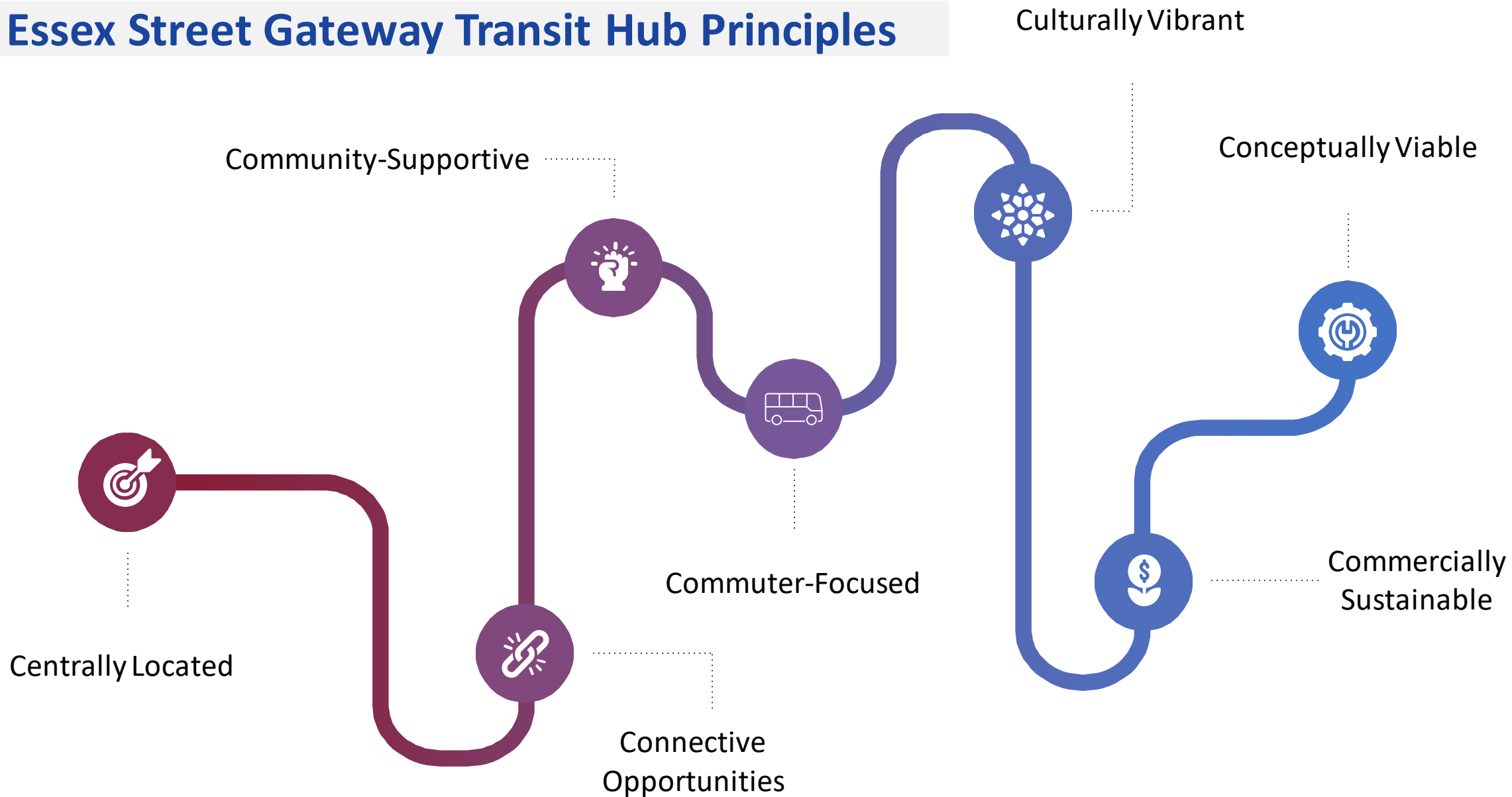
Improve Connections with Hackensack's Core Development Areas

- Establish safe, signed and well-lit travel lanes, paths and routes
- Balance vehicular circulation and access with community-oriented pedestrian and bicycle site access design
- Explore non-traditional transportation mode opportunities (e.g., scooters, bike-share)

Increase Essex Street Transit Ridership Market Opportunities

- Limit growth of rail parking capacity levels
- Improve station amenities
- Increase focus on first/last mile access
- Promote regional rail access to support growth in Hackensack employment (HUMC, government), residential and commercial redevelopment (Main Street)

Essex Street Gateway Transit Hub Principles



Essex Street Gateway Transit Hub Strategic Assessment Study

Evaluate station and surrounding areas for

- Ridership markets, functionality and customer amenities
- Site access (vehicular and non-vehicular)
- Relevance to ongoing Hackensack redevelopment initiatives
- Current / potential future travel needs

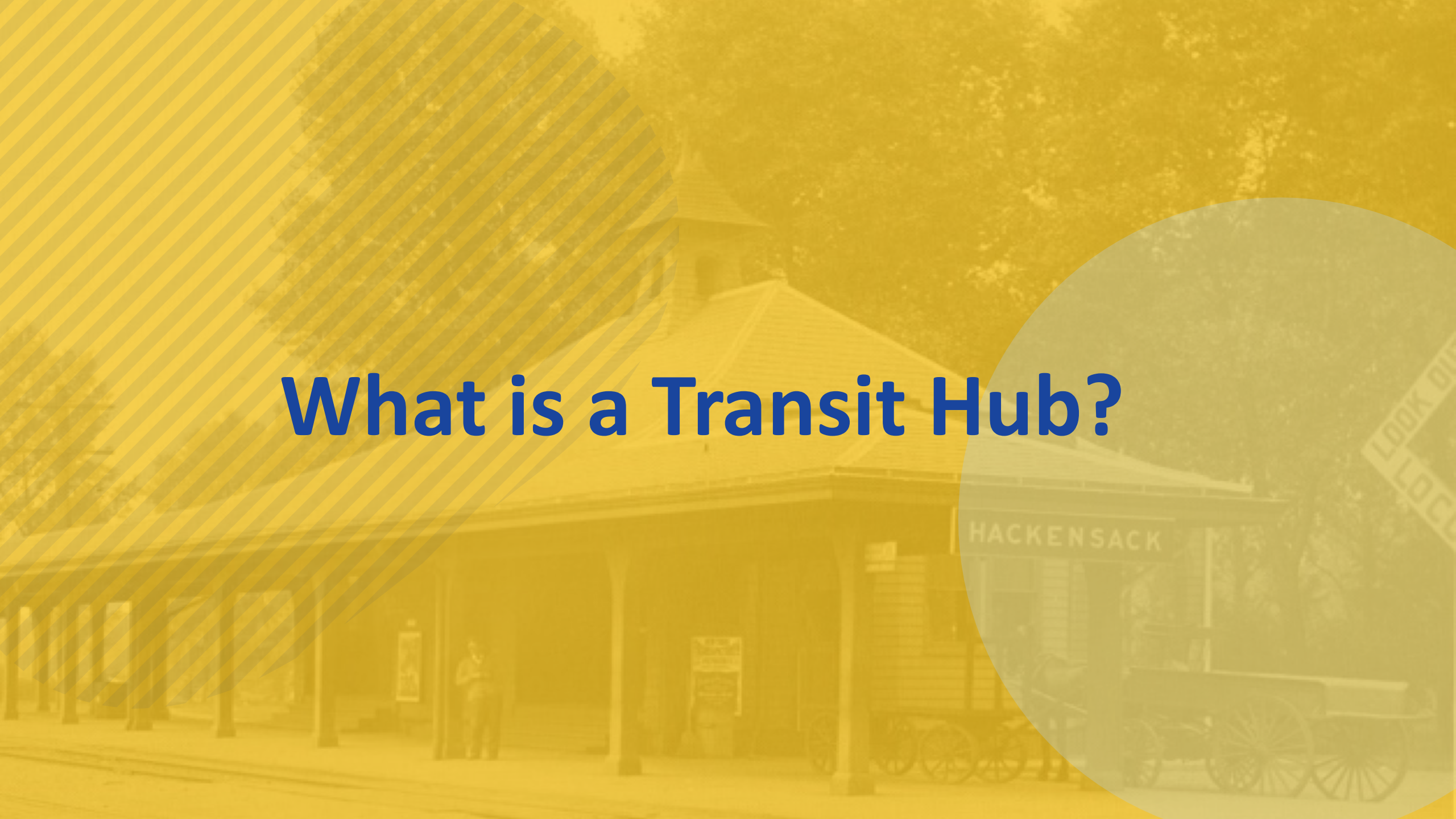
Speak with community stakeholders

- Ensure equity / equitable involvement in the planning process
- Identify study area strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Conduct a place-making analysis

- Safe and connected designs between public spaces, streets and sidewalks and the surrounding community
- Improved station accessibility via walk, bicycles, scooters and ride-hailing
- Leveraging Hackensack's employment, government services and flourishing redevelopment areas
- Exploring compatible land use opportunities

What is a Transit Hub?



What is a Transit Hub?



Area surrounding a transit station (bus, train, light rail, ferry) that contains diverse land uses, a variety of activities and multi-modal transportation connections that are fully integrated with that station.



Walkable, vibrant, culturally interesting places with lively, active public spaces and a rich mix of amenities.



Wide variety of seamlessly connected options for getting from place to place.



Designed to meet the needs of local residents as well as station users.

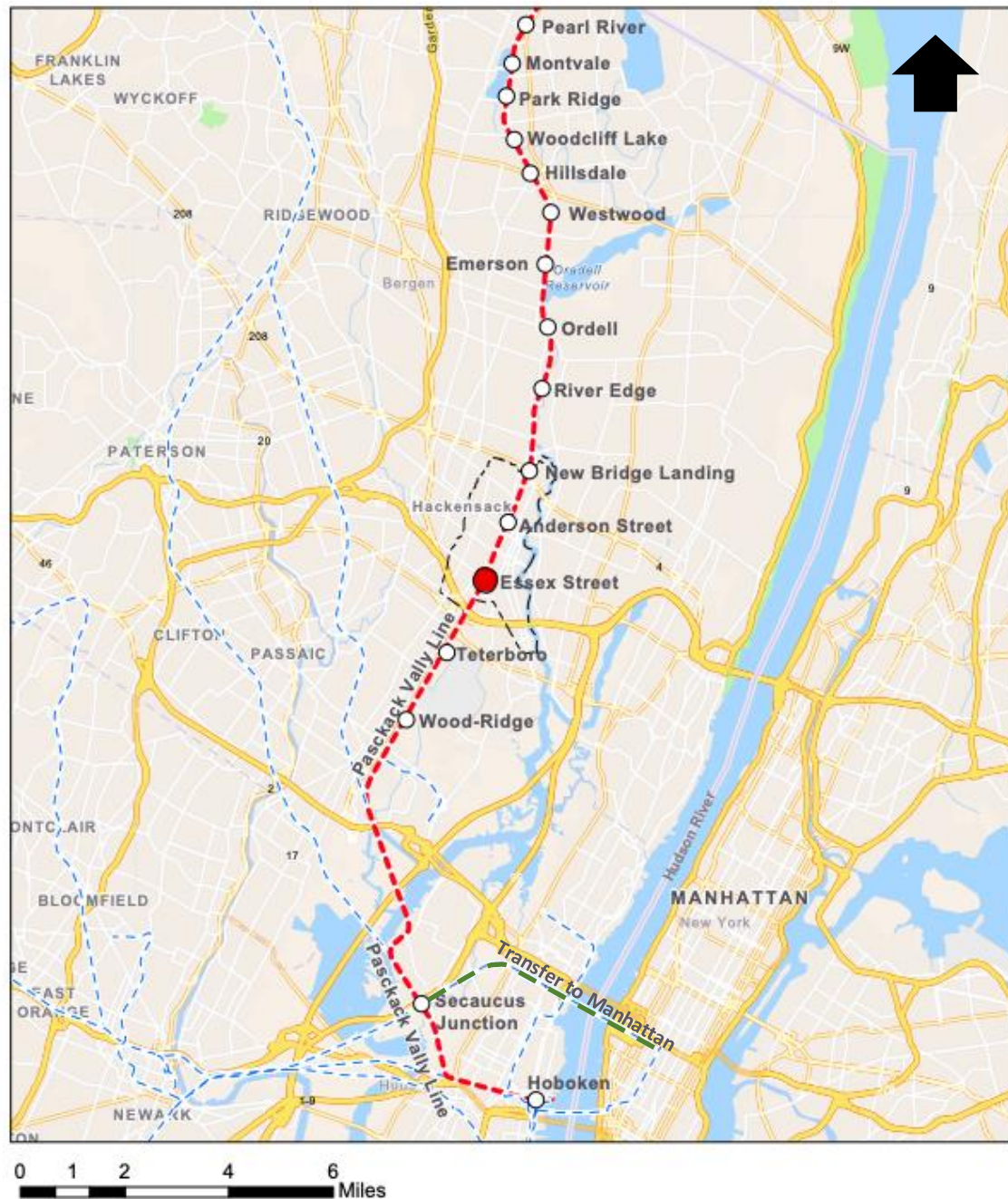
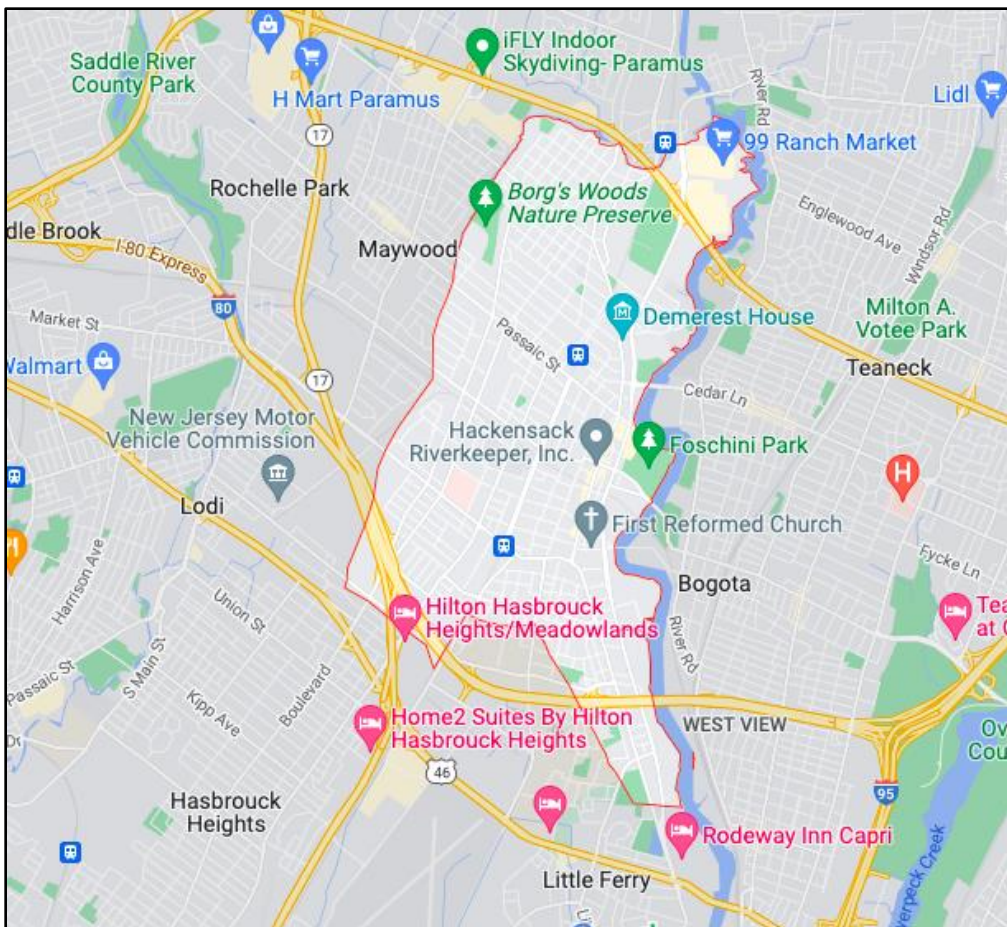


Located in urban, suburban or even rural communities.

Why Essex Street Station?



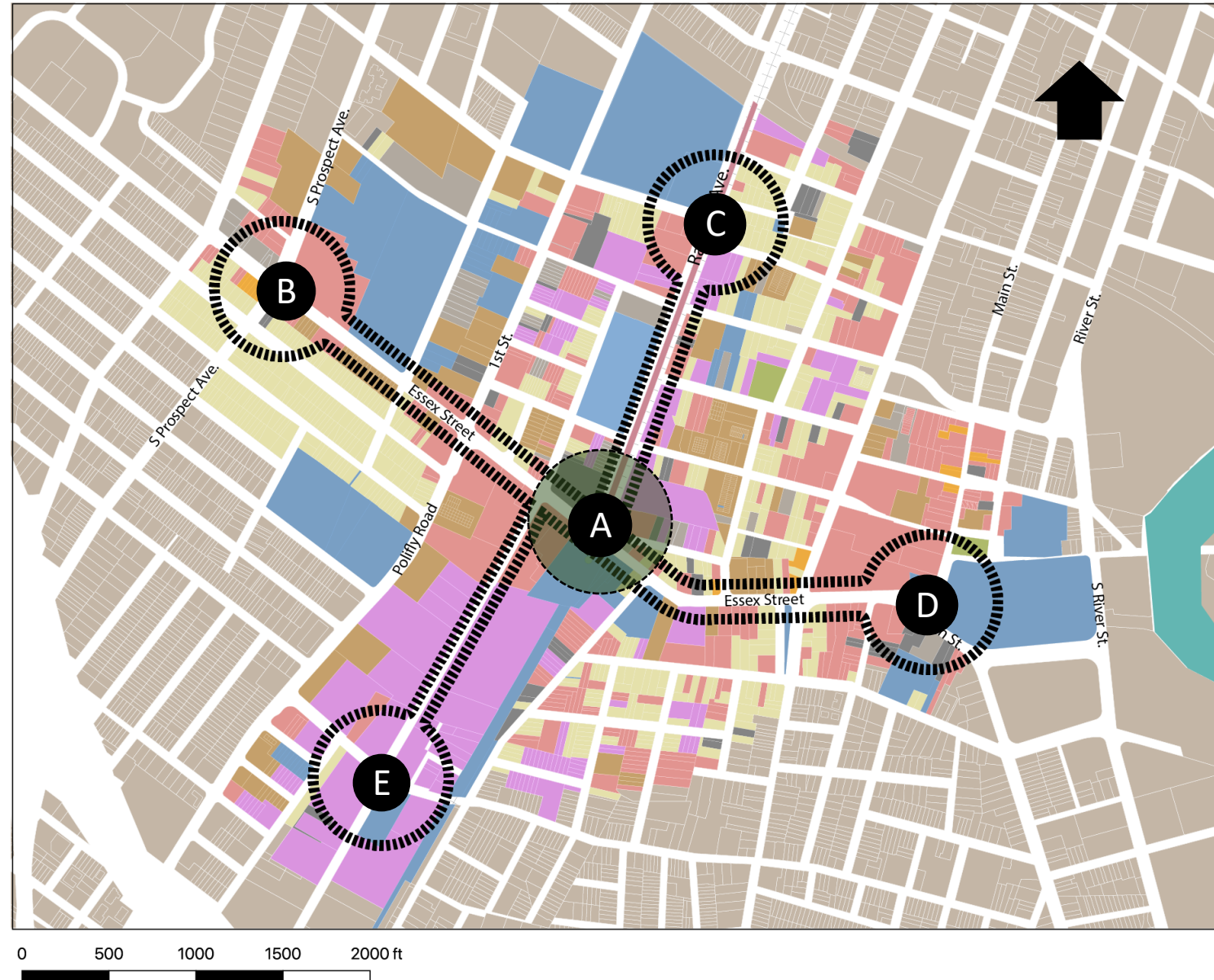
City of Hackensack, NJ



Opportunities

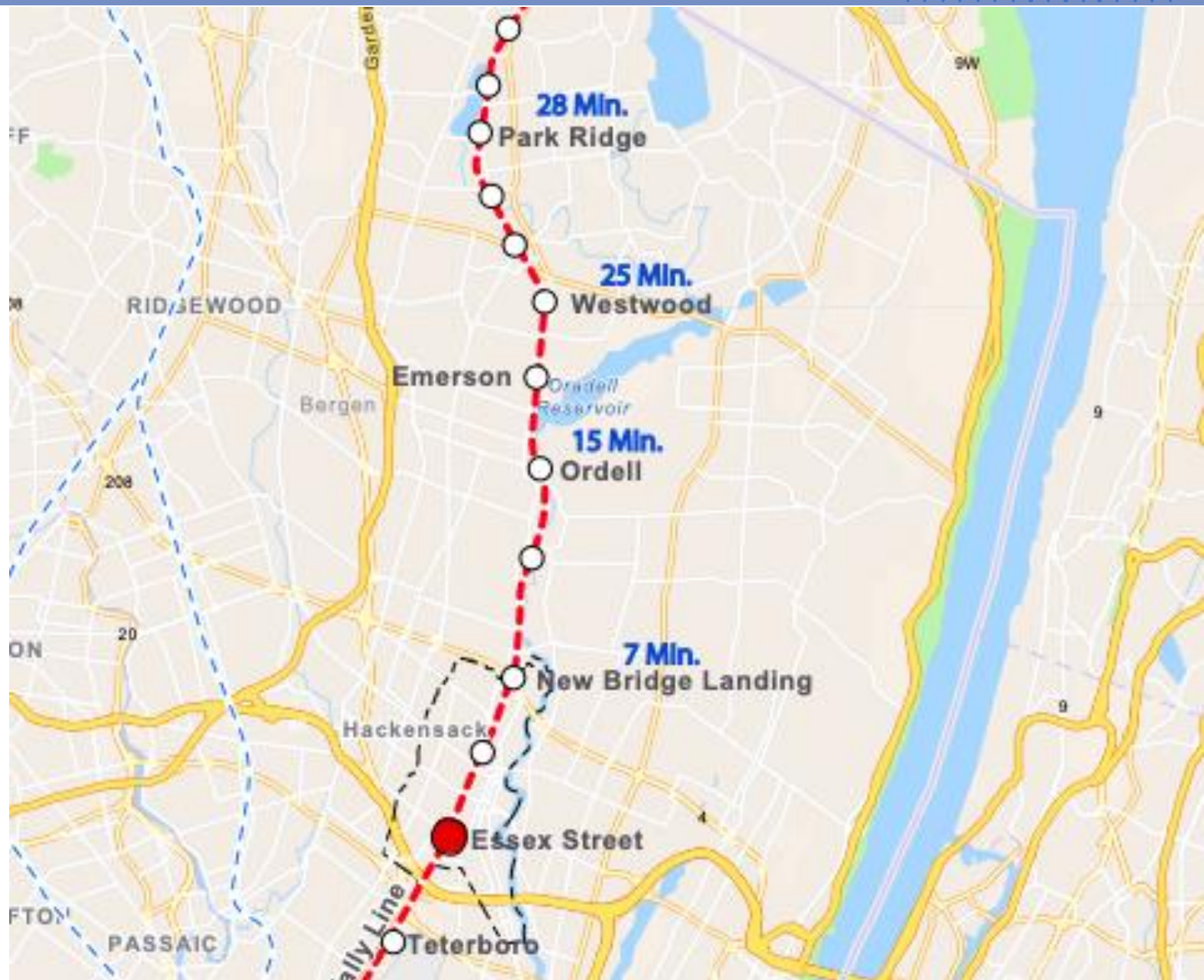
Many Desirable Destinations Within Walking Distance

- A. Essex Street Station
- B. Hackensack University Medical Center/ Prospect Avenue & Summit Avenue residential areas
- C. High School and Central Avenue Neighborhood
- D. Government / Main Street Redevelopment
- E. Polifly Road and Commercial Areas



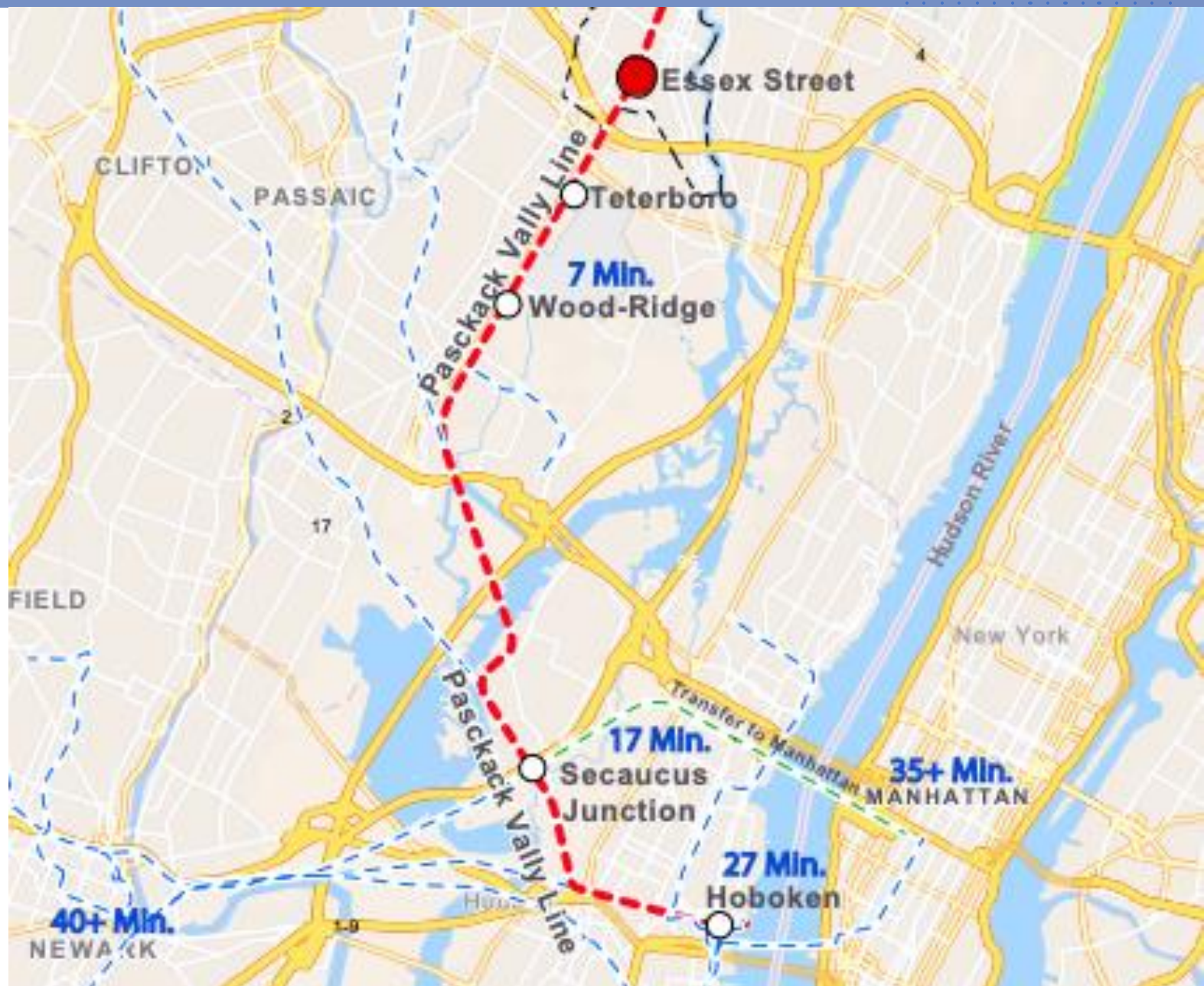
Opportunities

Approximate Best
Pascack Valley
Line Travel Times
Between Essex
Street Station and
North



Opportunities

Approximate Best
Pascack Valley
Line Travel Times
Between Essex
Street Station and
South



Challenges

Unattractive and Foreboding

- Surrounding parking, vacant, commercial and industrial lots appear desolate and deserted
- Asphalt park and ride lot, concrete platform and small plexiglass shelter in fair condition
- Area sidewalks lack lighting and security at night

Disconnected from Surrounding Community

- Surrounding high use and speed roadways impede safe bicycle and pedestrian access
- No indications of important civic, medical and residential destinations just a short walk away

Poorly Suited as Gateway for All-Hours Regional Travel

- Lack of a destination identity
- Poor illumination available beyond platform limits
- Almost no inclement weather protection



Hackensack Essex Street
Station Today:
**A shadow of
its former
purpose and
community pride.**

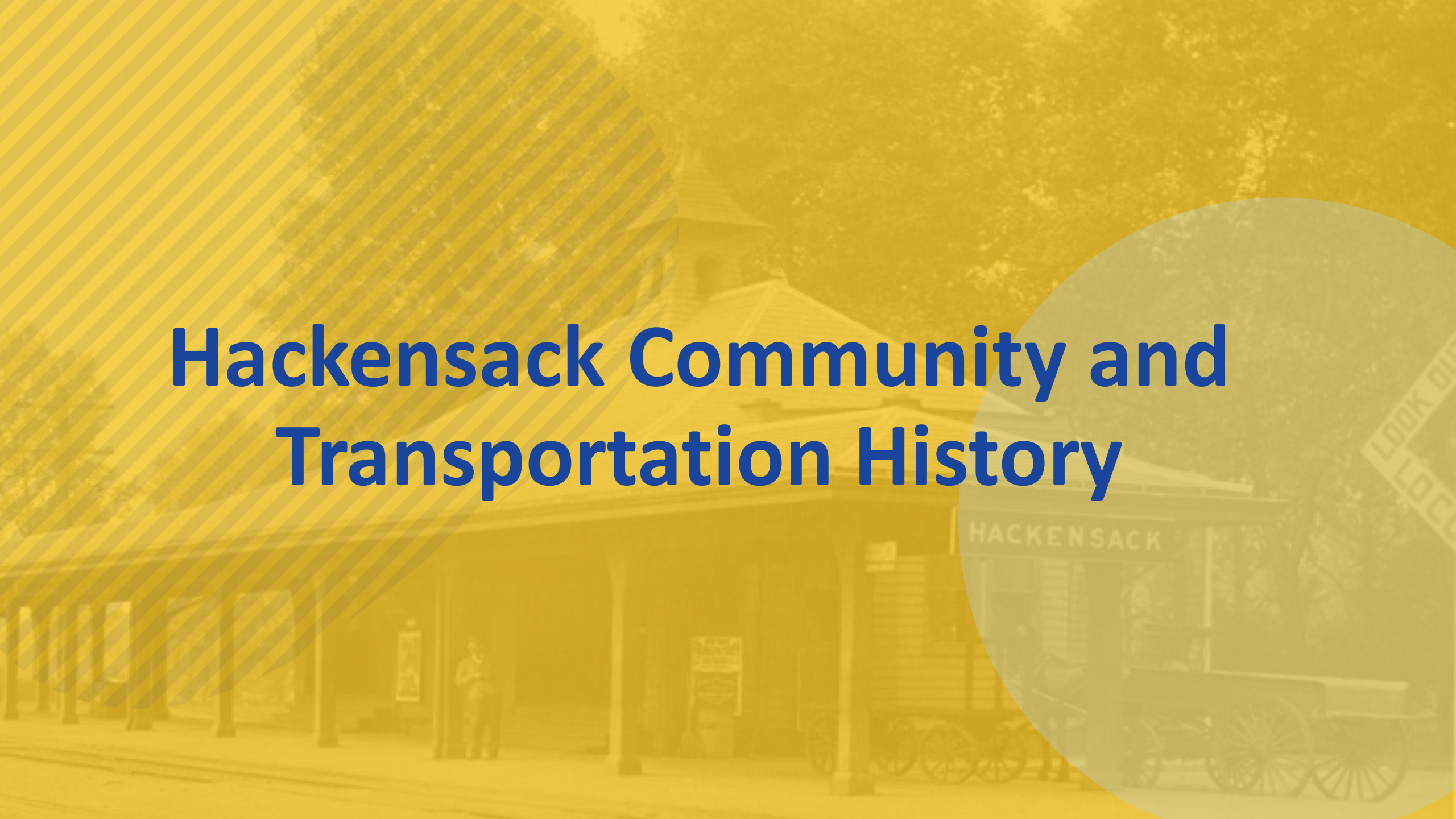
**Essex Street
Station - 2022**



**Essex Street
Station - 1910**



Hackensack Community and Transportation History



Hackensack Community History



Hackensack Community History

Population and Land Use

- Originally Settled by Lenni Lenape Community on banks of Hackensack River
- Dutch Settlement began in 1693 named Bergen
- British Colony until end of Revolutionary War 1783

1870 to 1930

- Bergen County's county seat
- Highest population in Bergen County
- Downtown emerges as an important business district
- Residential population grows from 4,200 to 24,500

1930 to 2000

- Decline of Main Street and some residential areas
- Redevelopment in some areas to office and multi-family residential
- Residential population grows from 24,500 to 42,600

2000 – Today

- Significant redevelopment in Downtown Hackensack along Main Street, State Street, and River Street
- Residential population grows from 42,600 to 46,000

Hackensack Transportation History

Essex Street Station buildings

● First station building

Constructed 1860

Converted to a freight house 1892.

Used Until 1960s.



● Second Station Building

Constructed 1892 (Photo from 1910).

Destroyed by vandalism fire – 1970.

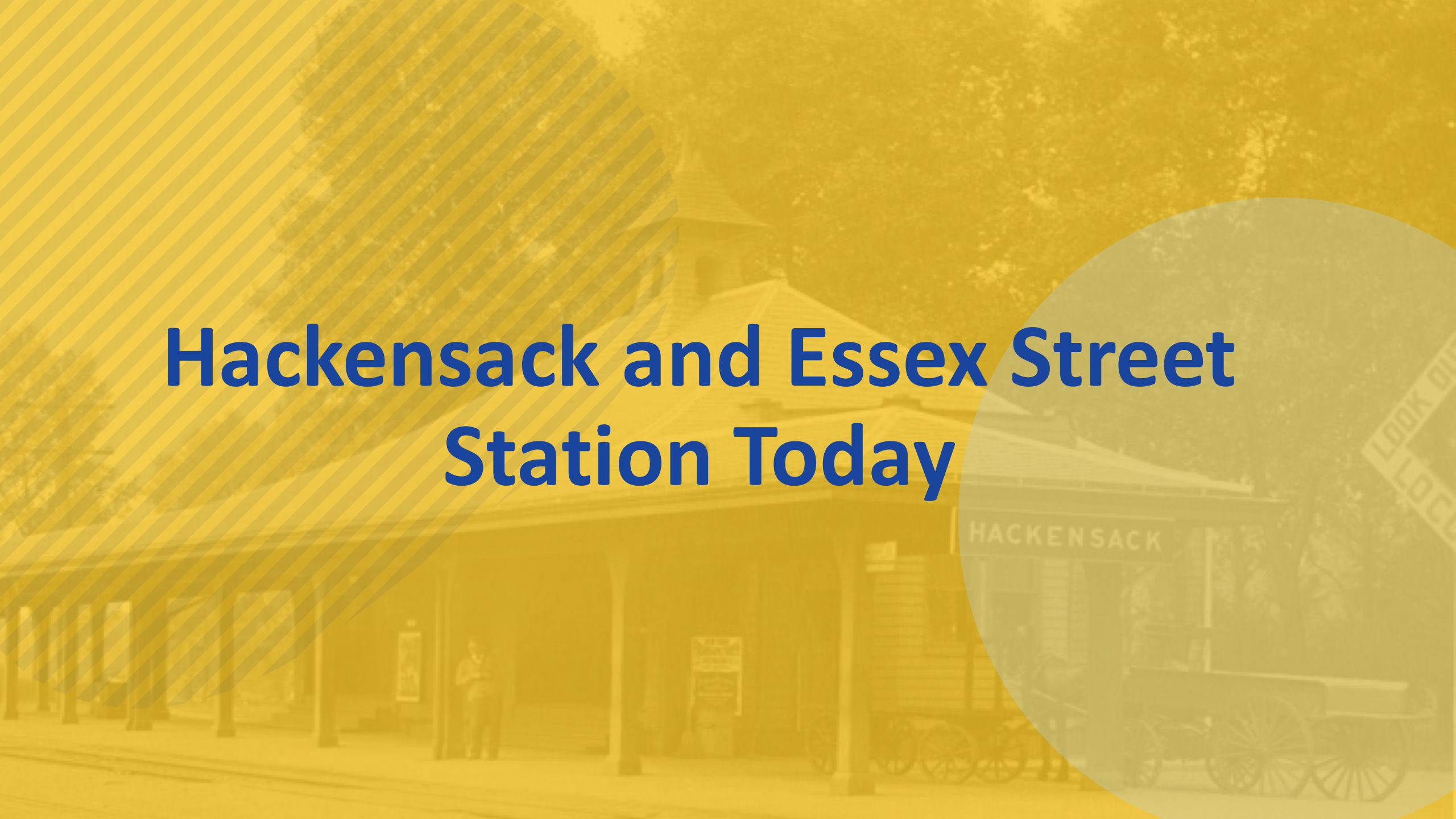


● Current Station

Prefab Plexiglass Shelter



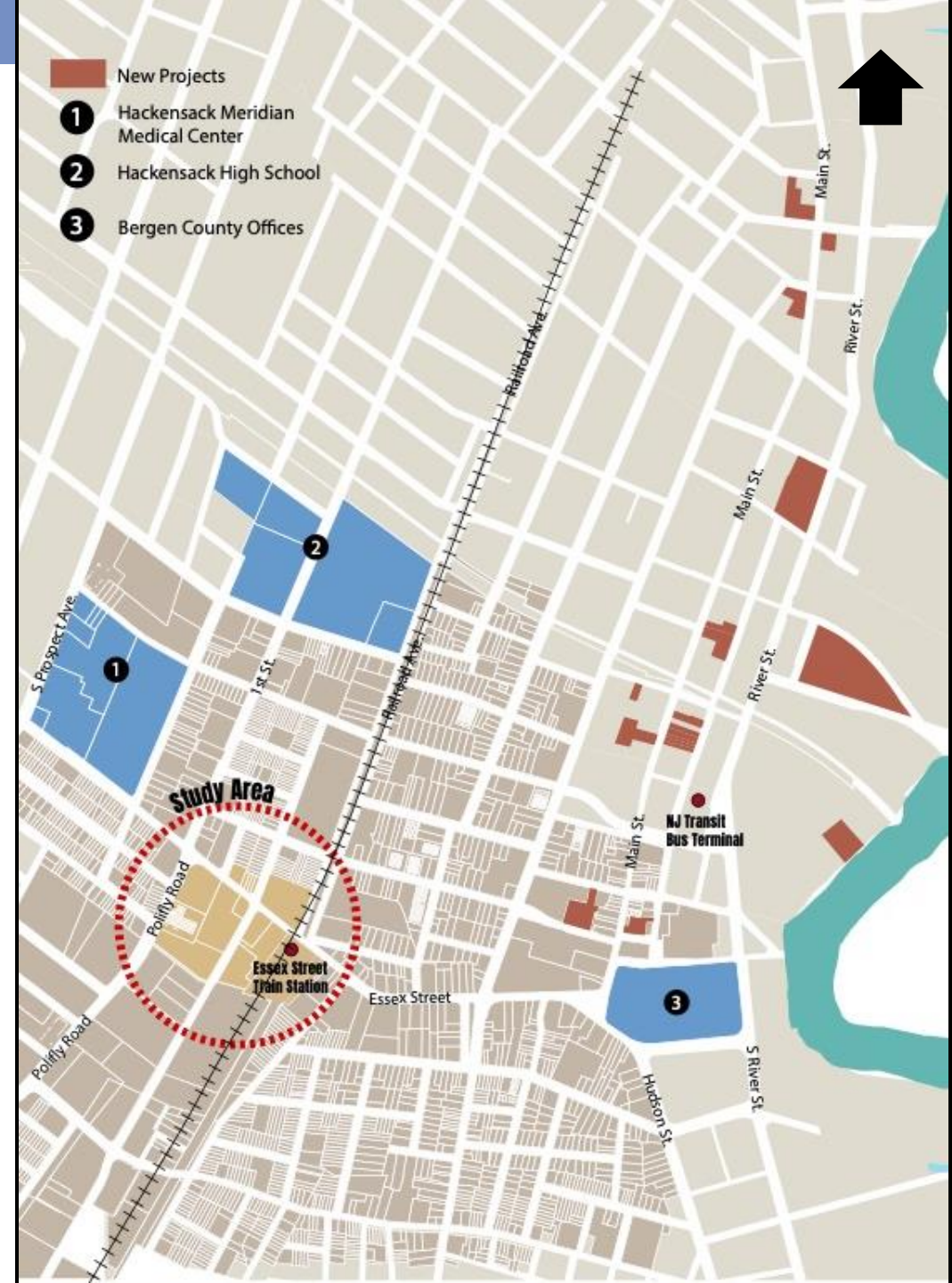
Hackensack and Essex Street Station Today



Hackensack a New Beginning - 2000 to Today

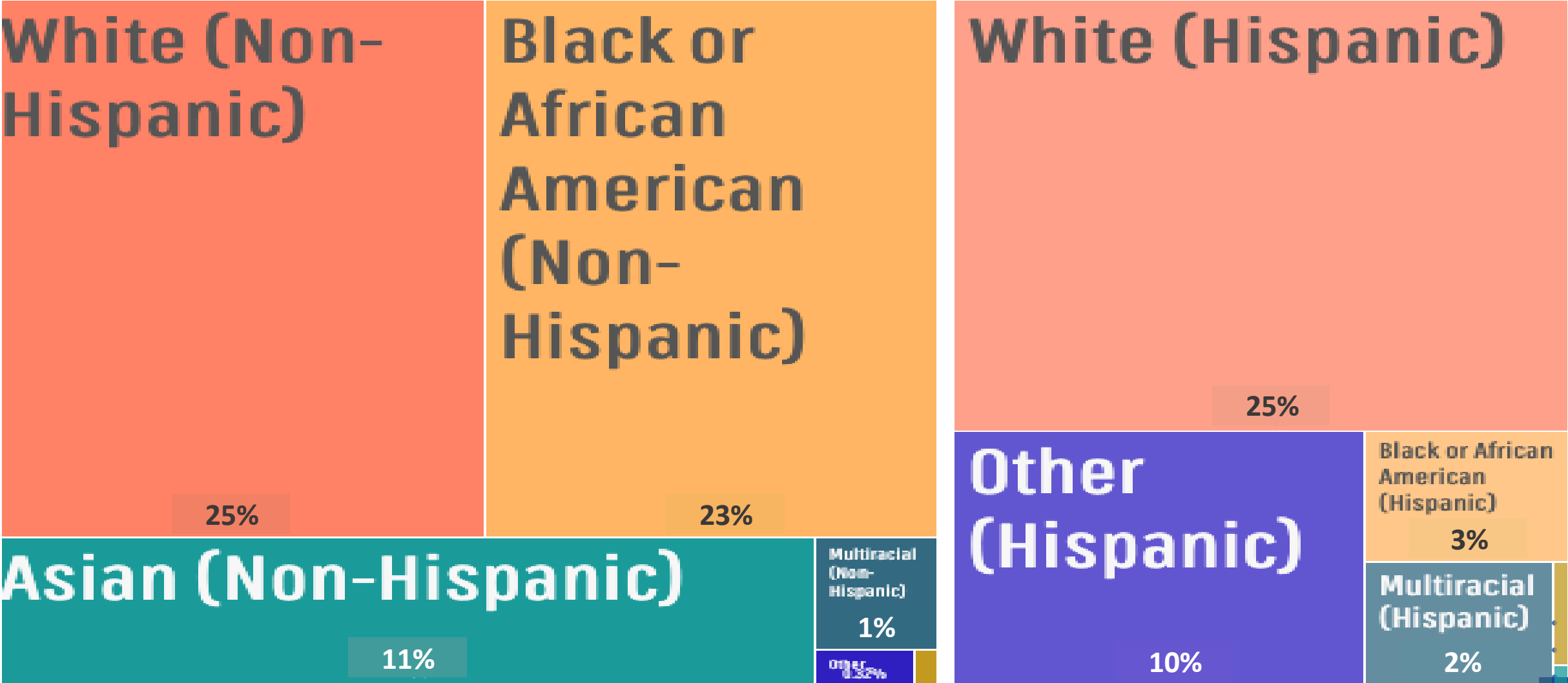
Revitalization Through Redevelopment

- Emergence and Expansion of Hackensack University Medical Center (HUMC)
- Hackensack River Redevelopment
- Bergen County Government Center Development
- Main Street Redevelopment



Hackensack Residents Today

Population by ethnicity



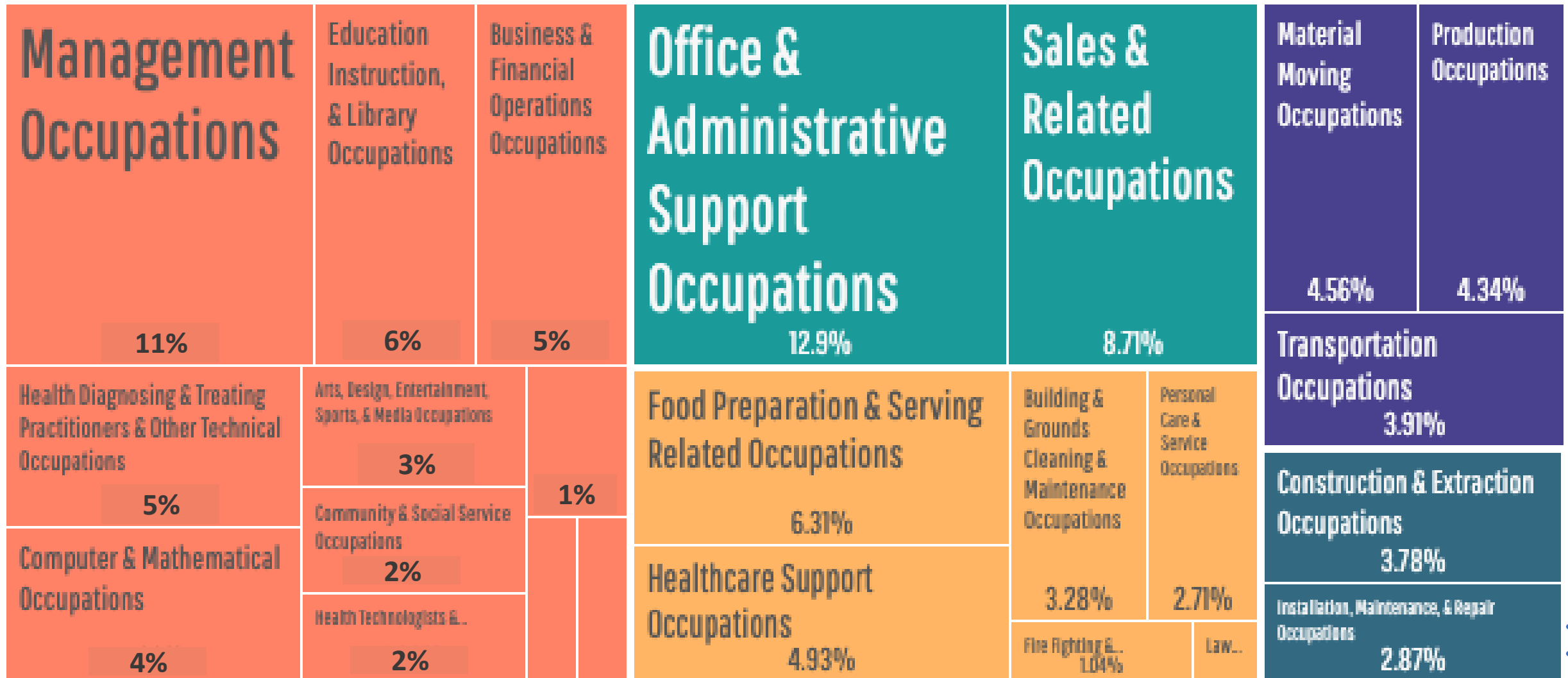
Hackensack Residents Today

Employment by Sector



Hackensack Residents Employment Today

Occupations by Sector



Essex Street Station Today



LOT 1

- 181 Standard & 7 accessible Spaces
- Resident: \$4/Day or \$150/Quarter
- Non-Resident: \$4/Day or \$150/Quarter

LOT 2

- 33 Standard Spaces
- Resident: \$120/Quarter
- Non-Resident: \$120/Quarter
- Evenings: Free
- Nights: Parking Allowed
- Weekends: Free

FACILITIES

- At Grade Platform
- Ticket Vending Machine
- Bike Racks / Lockers
- Shelter
- Platform Lighting

Daily Ridership (2018):

- Weekday Average: 341
- Weekend Average: 50

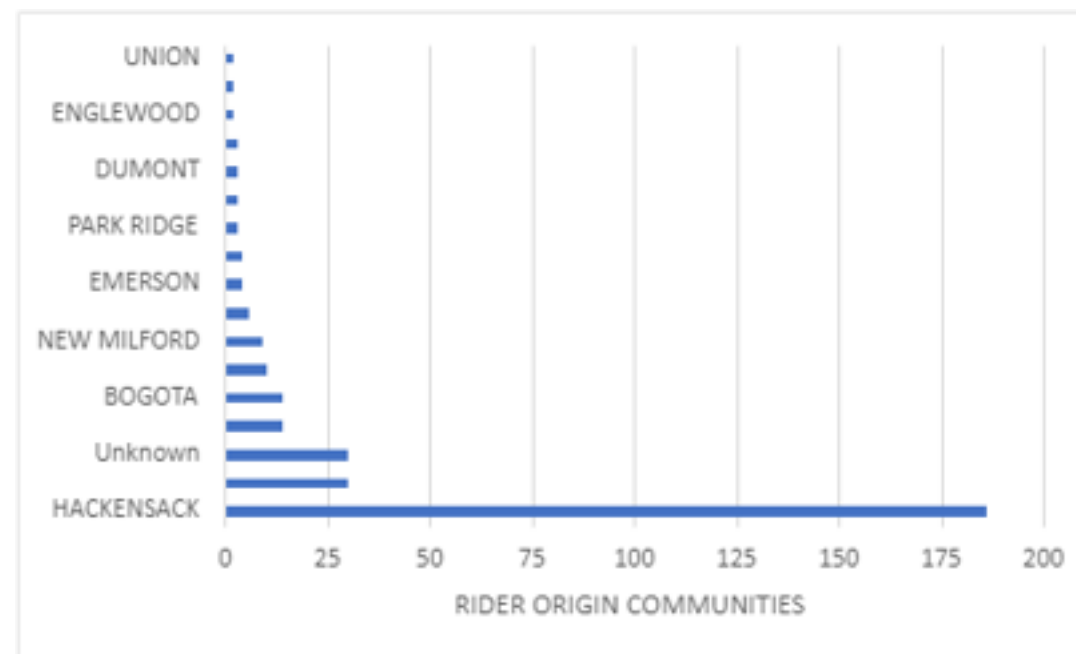
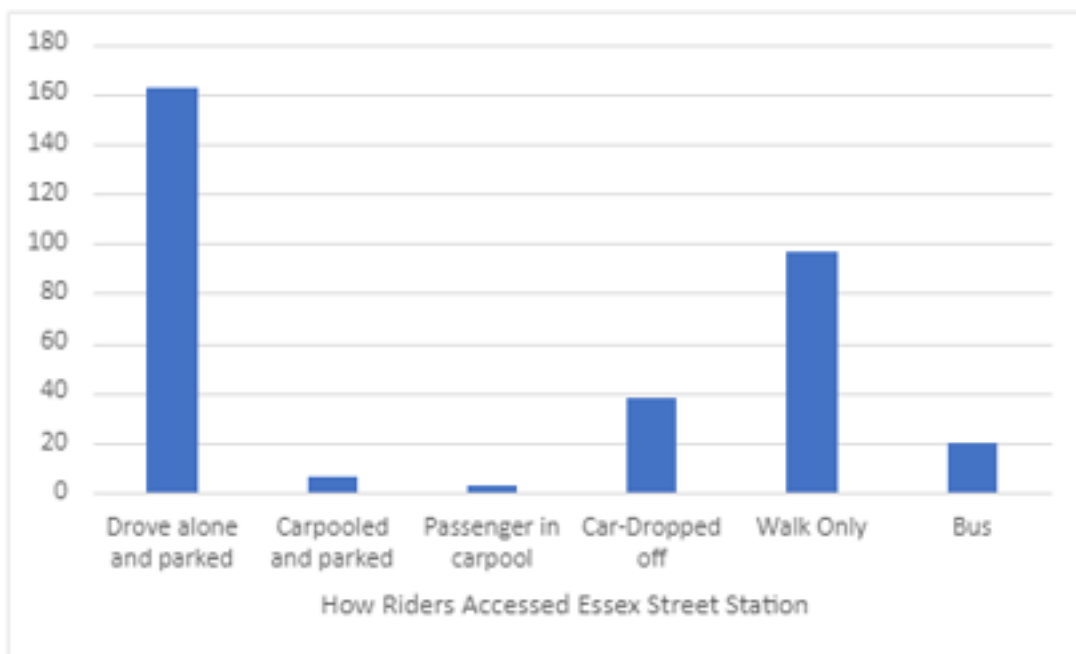
Parking: Total 221 Spaces

Weekday Average Travel Times:

- Secaucus Junction: 17 minutes
- Hoboken: 27-32 Minutes
- Penn Station, New York: 35 minutes
- Spring Valley: 43 - 49 Minutes

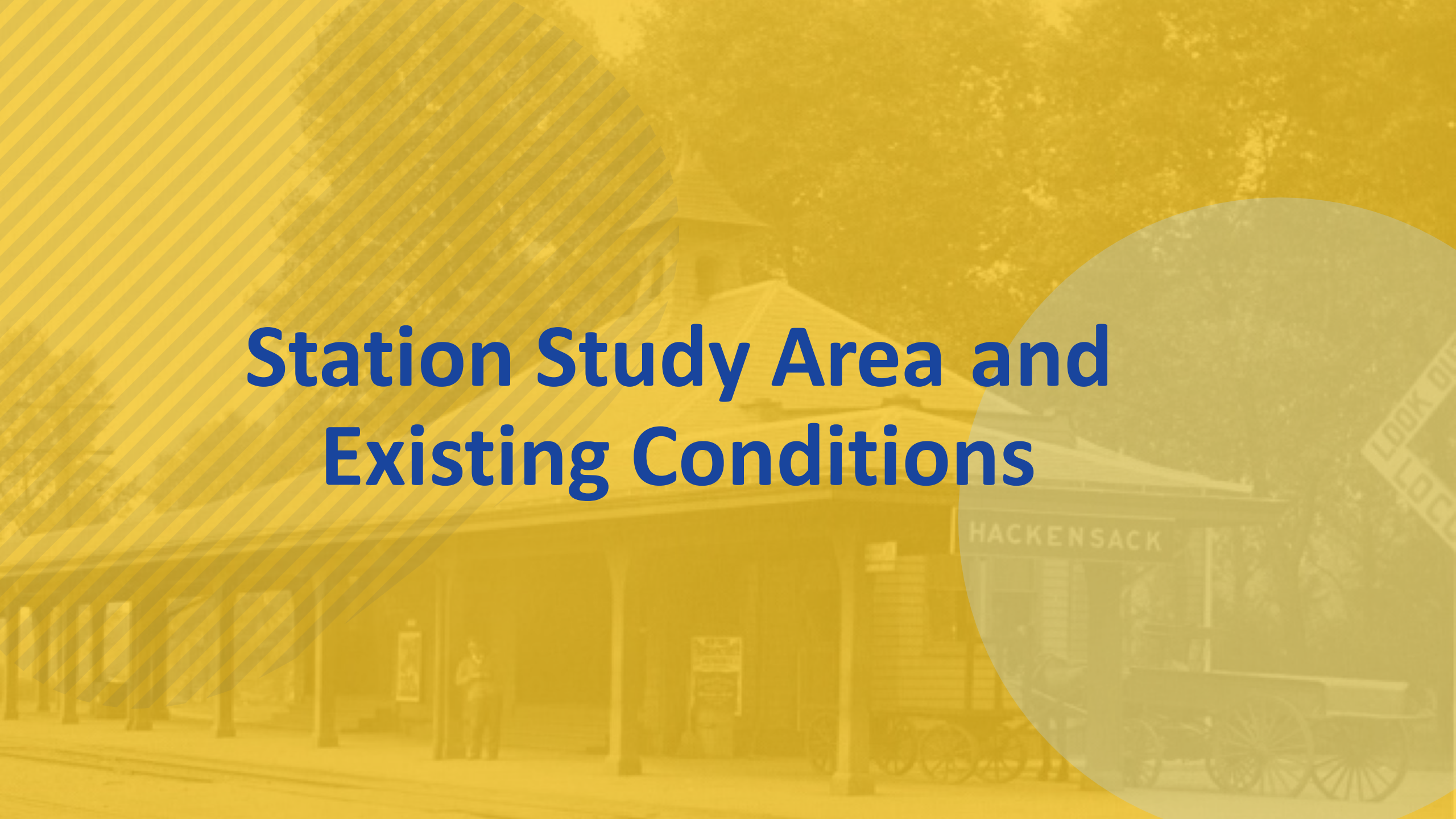
Passengers Origins and Method of Access

The data show the importance of parking and improved walking access

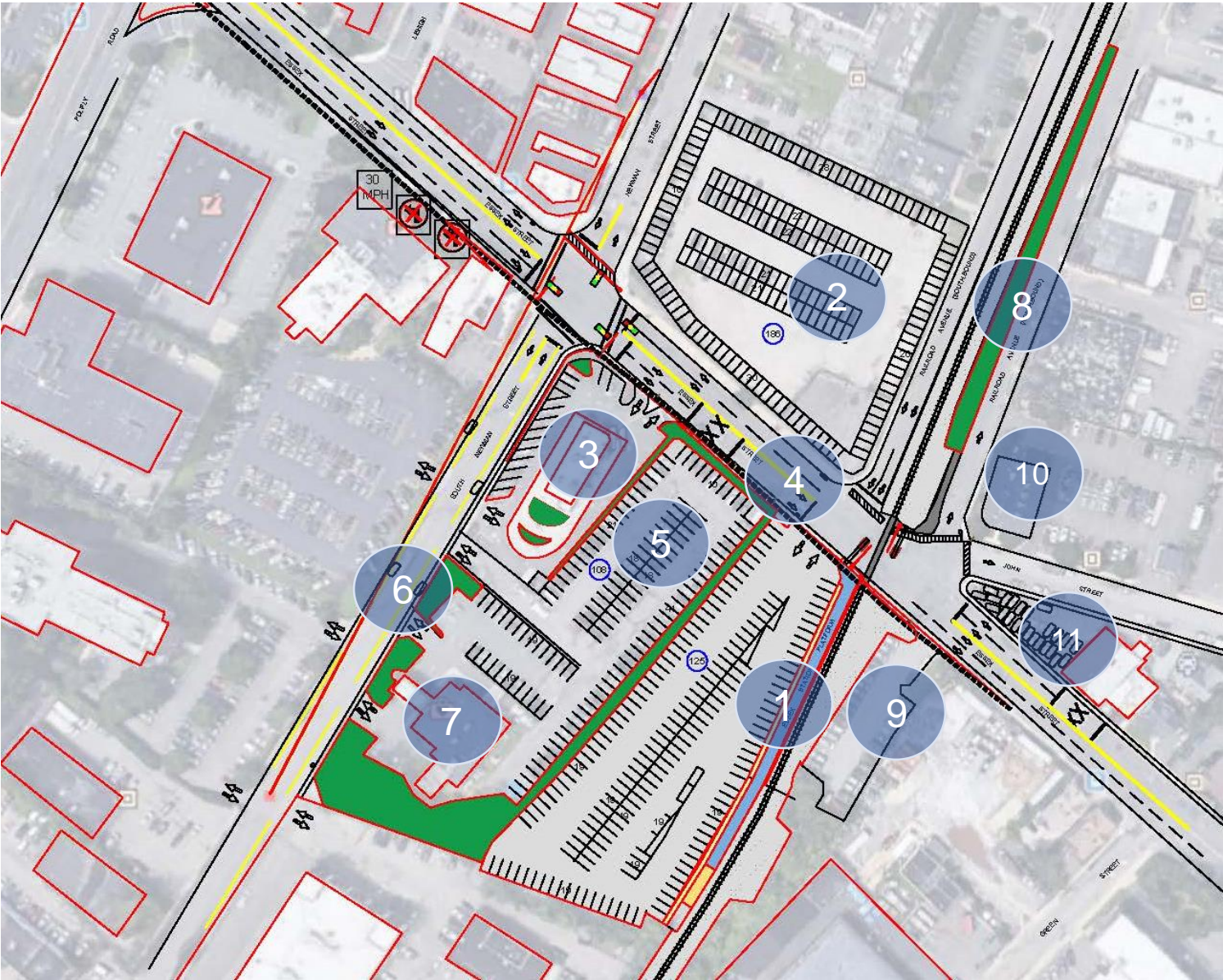


Source: NJ TRANSIT 2013 PVL Line Ridership Survey

Station Study Area and Existing Conditions

A historical black and white photograph of a train station, likely from the early 20th century. The station building is a long, single-story structure with a gabled roof and a small cupola on top. It has a covered platform with several pillars. A sign on the right side of the building reads "HACKENSACK". In front of the station, there are several vintage cars and a horse-drawn carriage. A person is standing on the platform. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter. A large, semi-transparent yellow circle is positioned on the right side of the image, partially obscuring the station building and the vehicles. The title "Station Study Area and Existing Conditions" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Essex Street Gateway Study Area



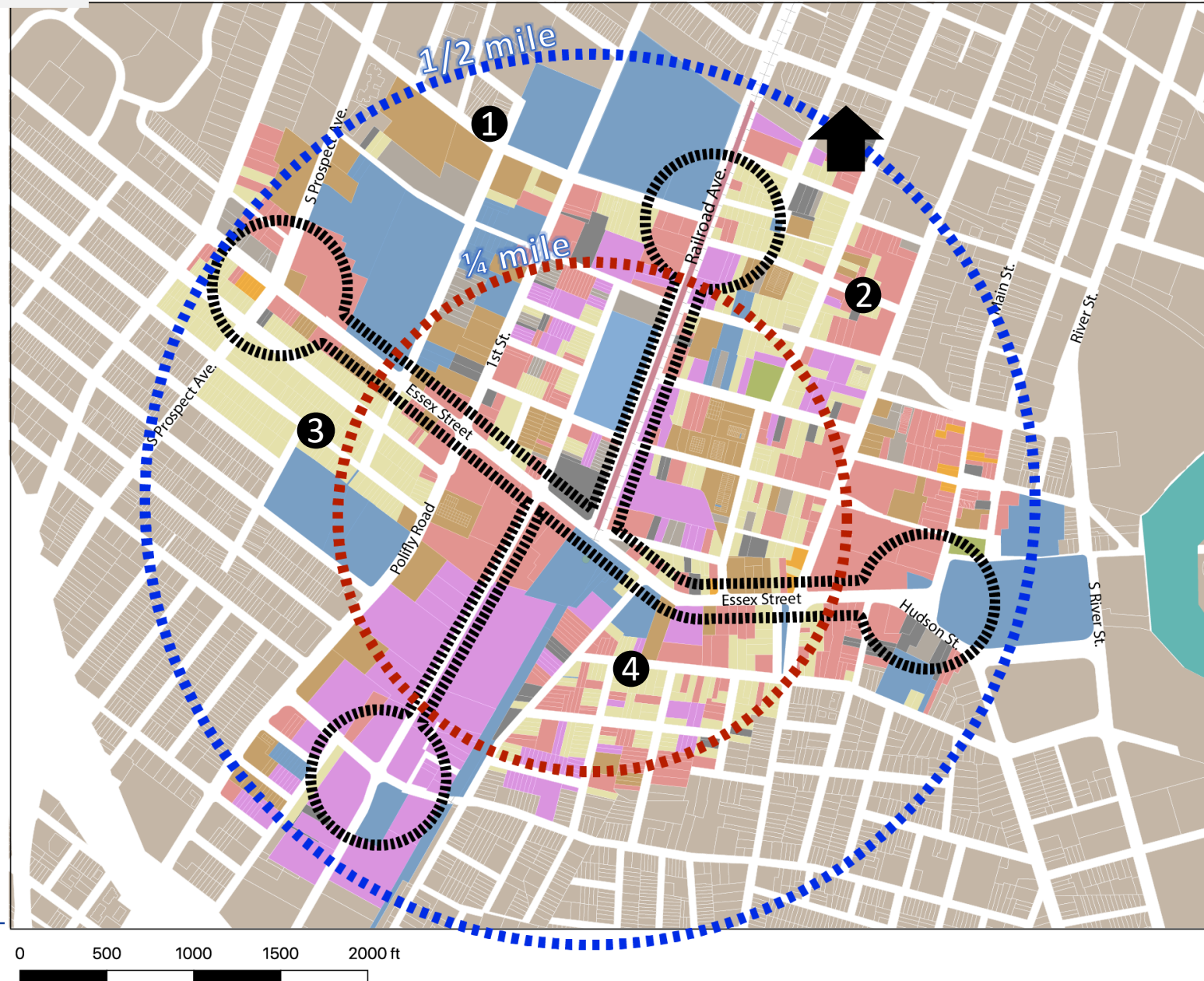
- 1 ESSEX STREET STATION PLATFORM & PARKING
- 2 SANZARI – VEHICLE STORAGE
- 3 McDONALD'S
- 4 ESSEX STREET (2 WAY TRAFFIC)
- 5 HUMC PARKING
- 6 SOUTH NEWMAN STREET
- 7 NEWMAN IMAGING
- 8 RAILROAD AVENUE – EAST AND WEST
- 9 NJ TRANSIT EAST LOT – ADDITIONAL PARKING
- 10 CONNECT ONE BANK
- 11 COURT HOUSE AUTO BODY SHOP



Neighborhoods and Destinations

The Essex Street Station area is divided into 4 sub-areas:

1. **Northwest** – HUMC and satellite offices, multi-family and large apartment buildings
2. **Northeast** – single and multi-family homes, light industrial, Main Street retail and residential, office buildings, County Government
3. **Southwest** – single family homes and small apartment buildings
4. **Southeast** – single and multi-family homes, mixed industrial, commercial and offices

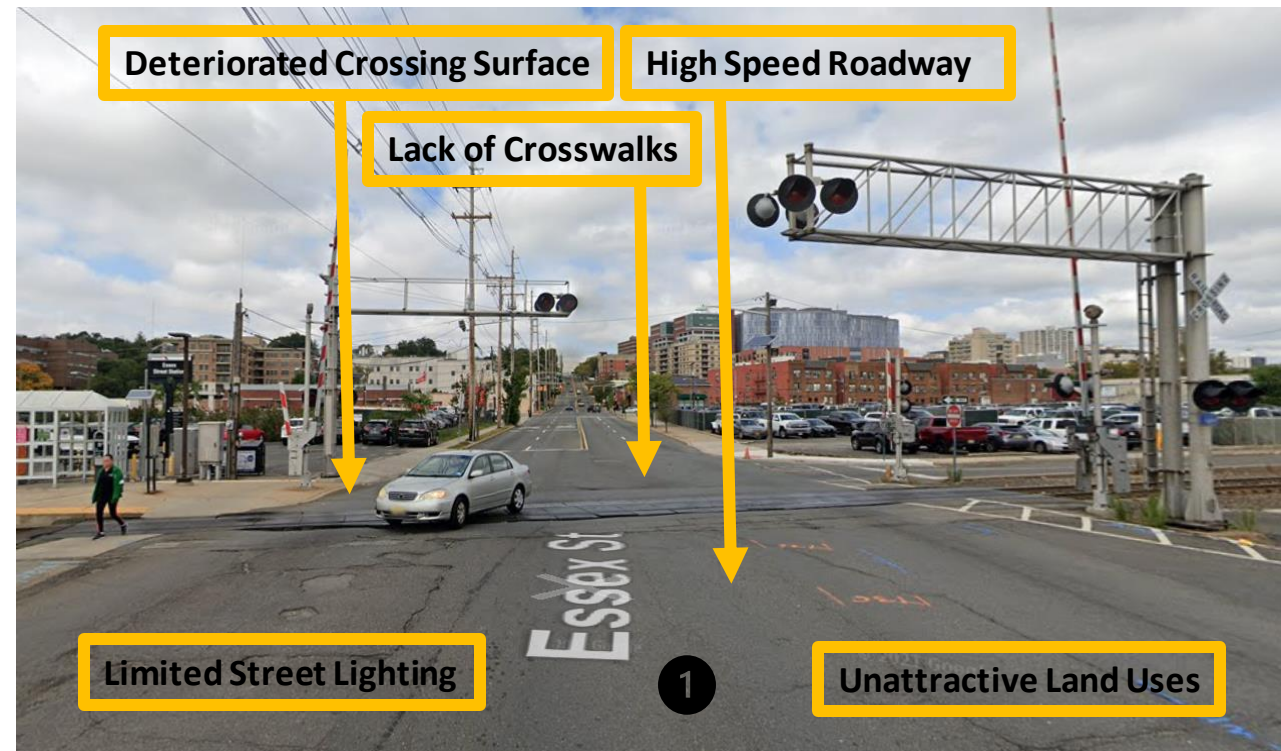
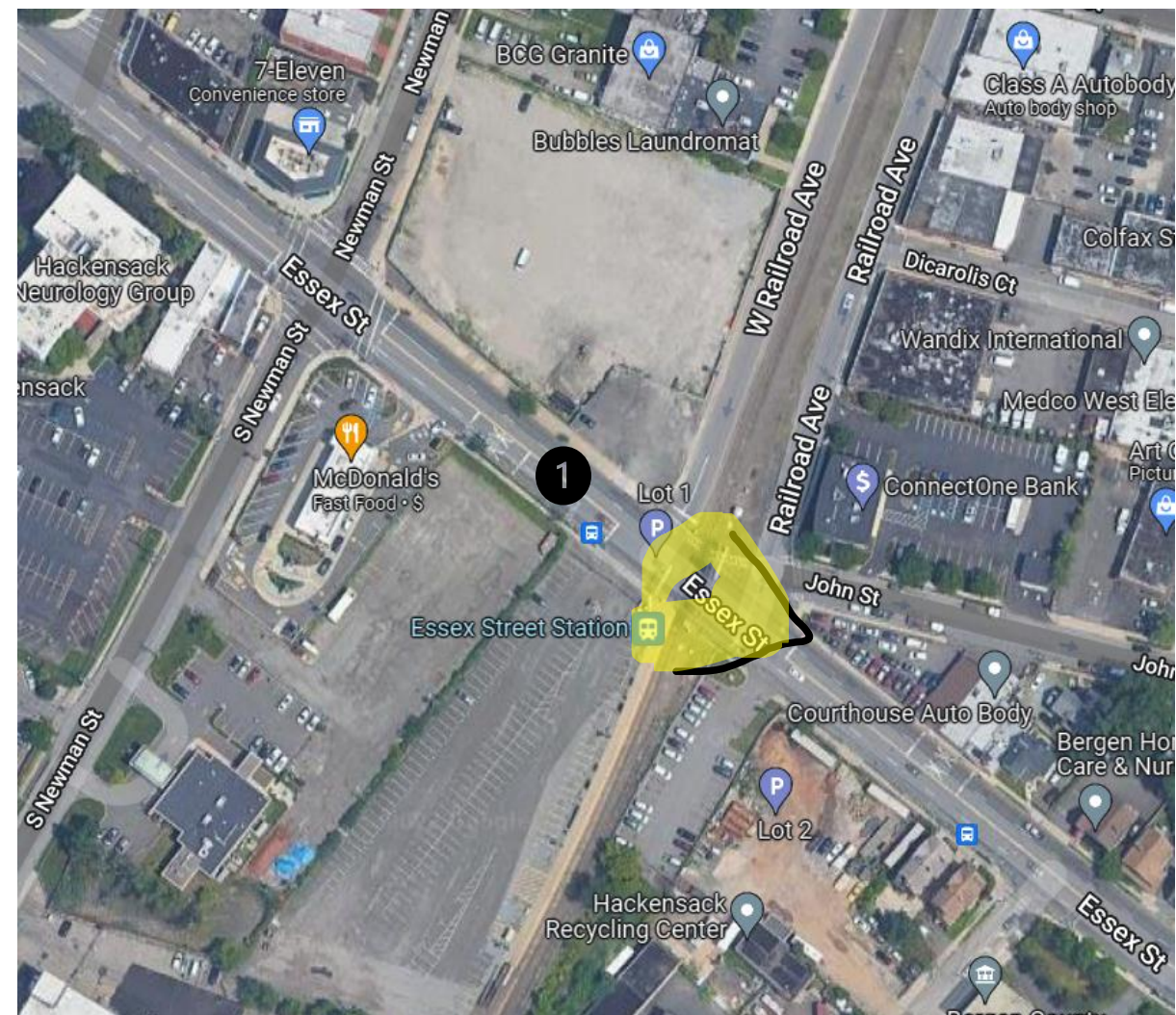


Essex Street Station Roadways Average Daily Traffic Volumes

Source: Esri, December 9, 2020

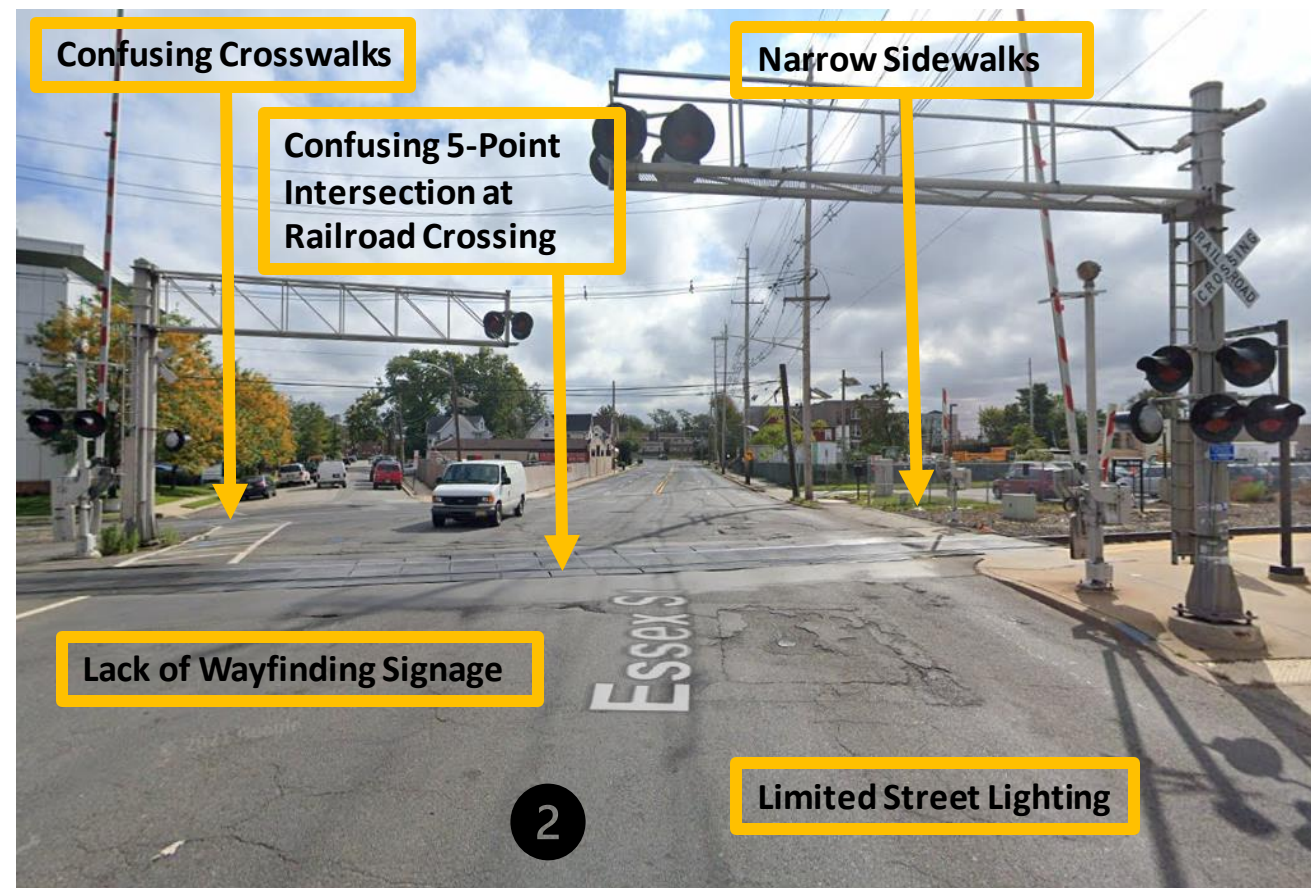
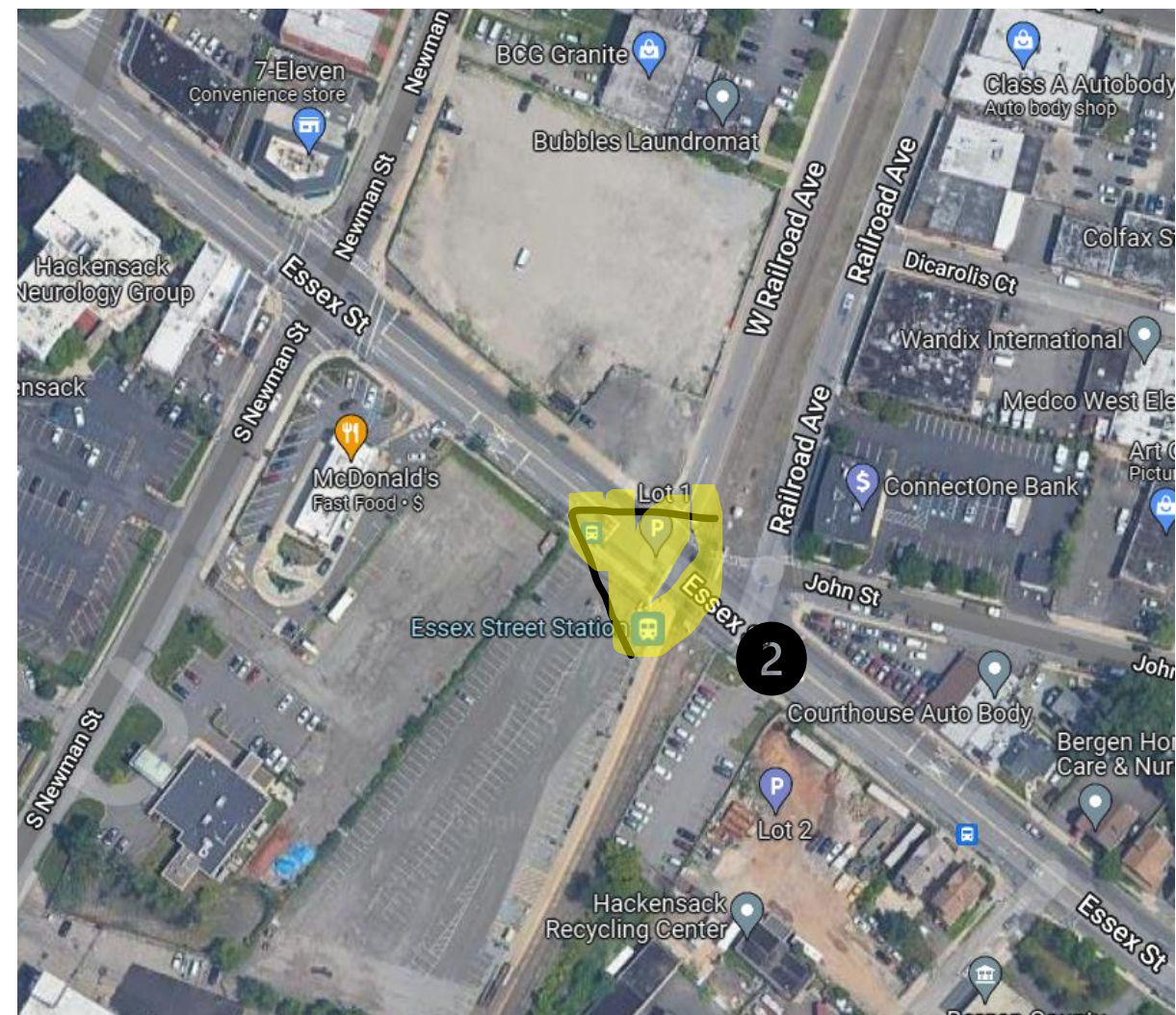
Roadway	Location	Owner	Volume	Concerns / Issues / Opportunities
Essex Street	• West of Station	County	36450	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily traveled high speed roadway • Limited pedestrian crossings • Poor pedestrian-scale lighting. • Facilitates access to/from NJ Route 17, Prospect and Summit Avenues
	• East of Station		17662	
Newman Street		Municipal		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Essex Street Station from west side
Polifly Road	• North of Essex St	County	21205	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates access to / from I-80 • Key north-south corridor
	• South of Essex Street		24438	
East / West Railroad Ave.	• North of Station	Municipal	871	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging 5-point intersection with Essex Street at railroad crossing • All turn movements permitted creates safety concern • No marked pedestrian crosswalks • Poor pedestrian-scale lighting • Excess cartway relative to vehicle demand.
	• South of Station		640	
Atlantic Street	• East of Polifly Road	Municipal	2737	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First crossing of PV rail line north of Essex Street • Poor pedestrian scale lighting

Existing Conditions: Essex Street Looking Westbound



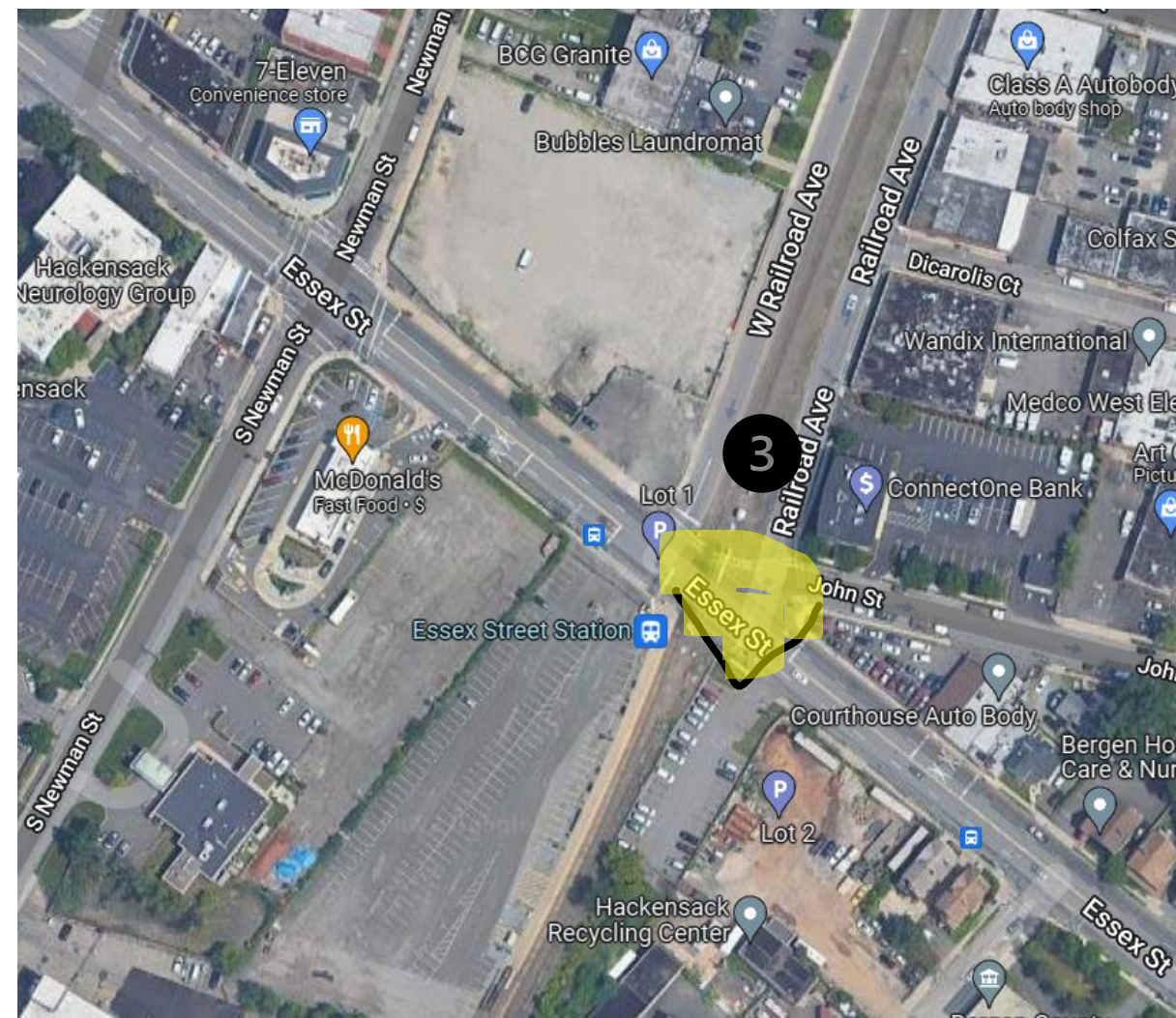
The site is bounded by heavily traveled County Route 56 (Essex Street) on the north side, a busy multi-lane roadway with limited pedestrian crossings, narrow sidewalks and poor illumination.

Existing Conditions: Essex Street Looking Eastbound



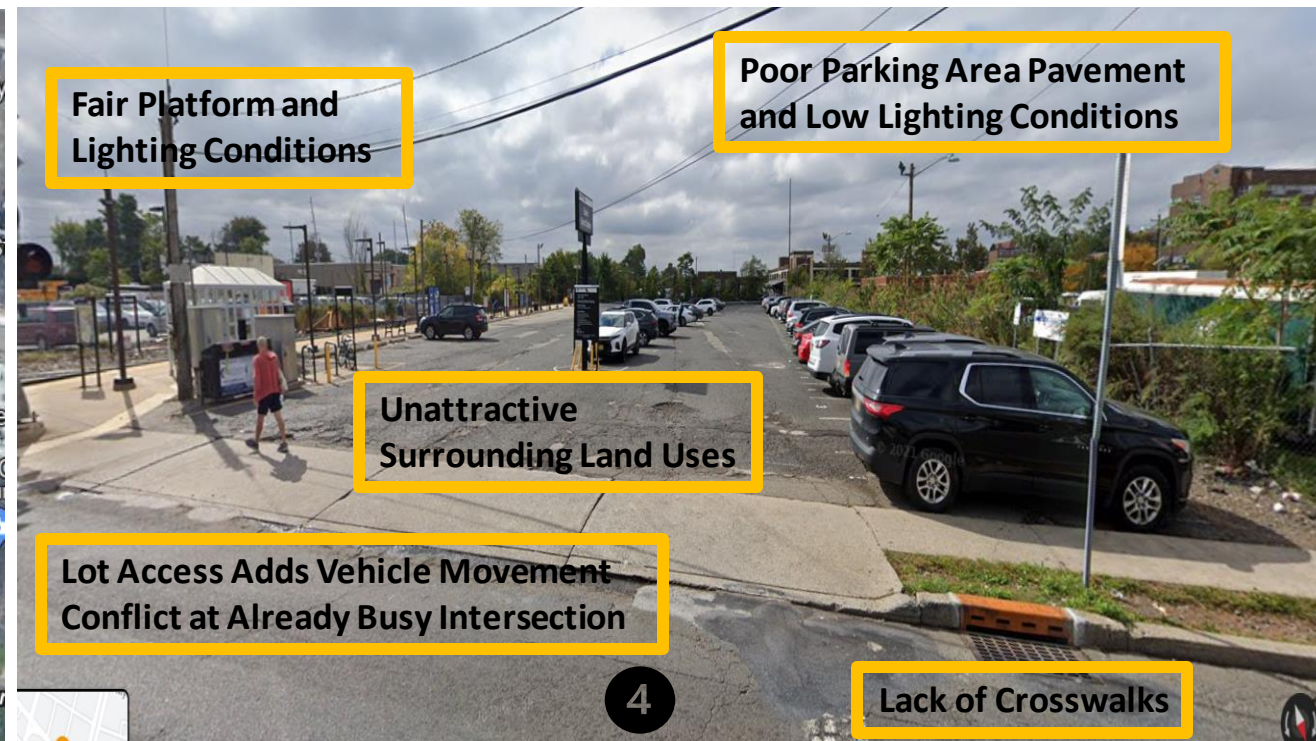
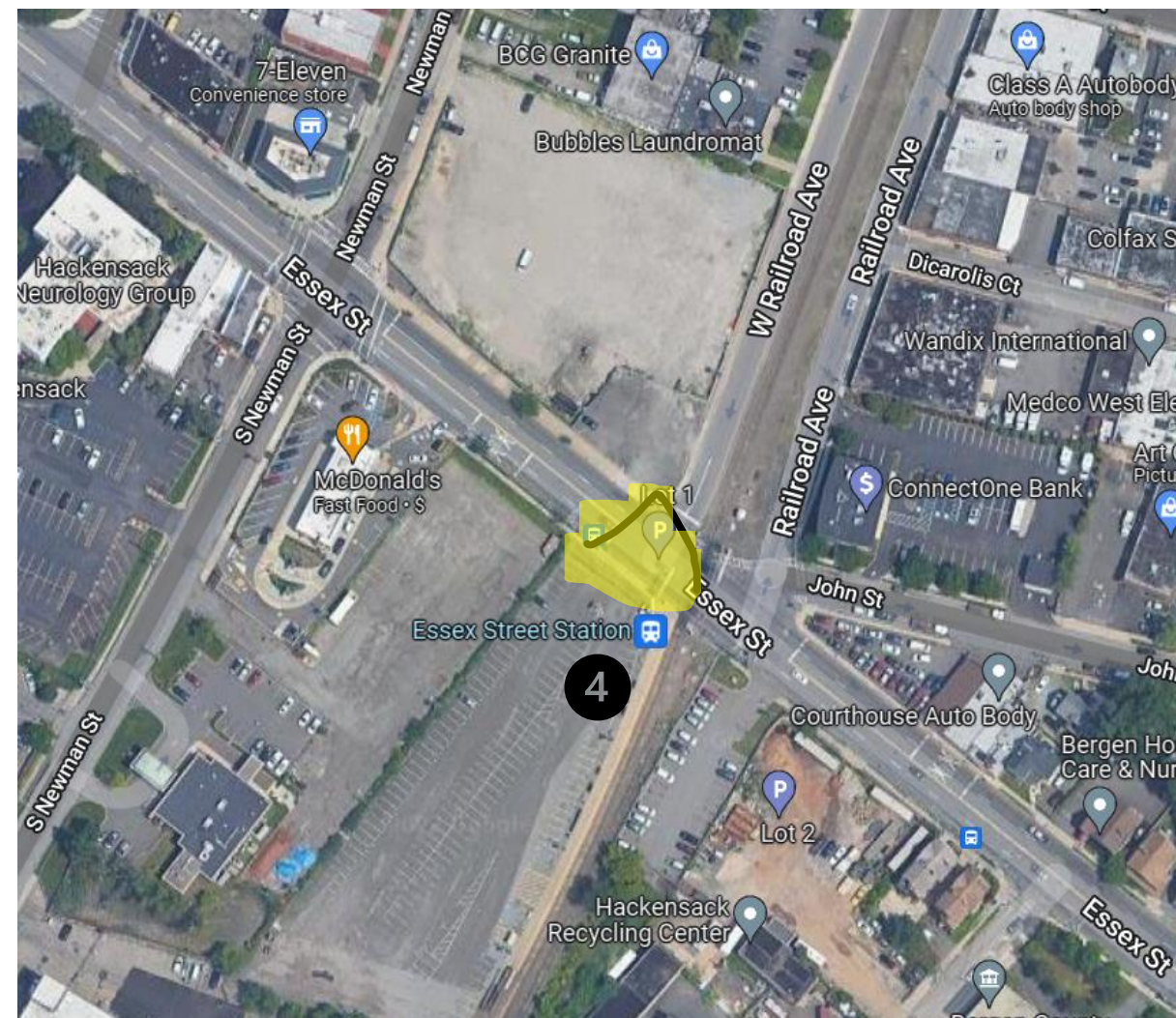
Although Essex Street to the east leads to Hackensack's key downtown destinations including Main Street Redevelopment, the County Government Complex, the Revitalizing Riverfront, Bus Terminal and Performing Arts Center just a short walk away, the current station area offers no awareness of these opportunities.

Existing Conditions: East and West Railroad Avenues



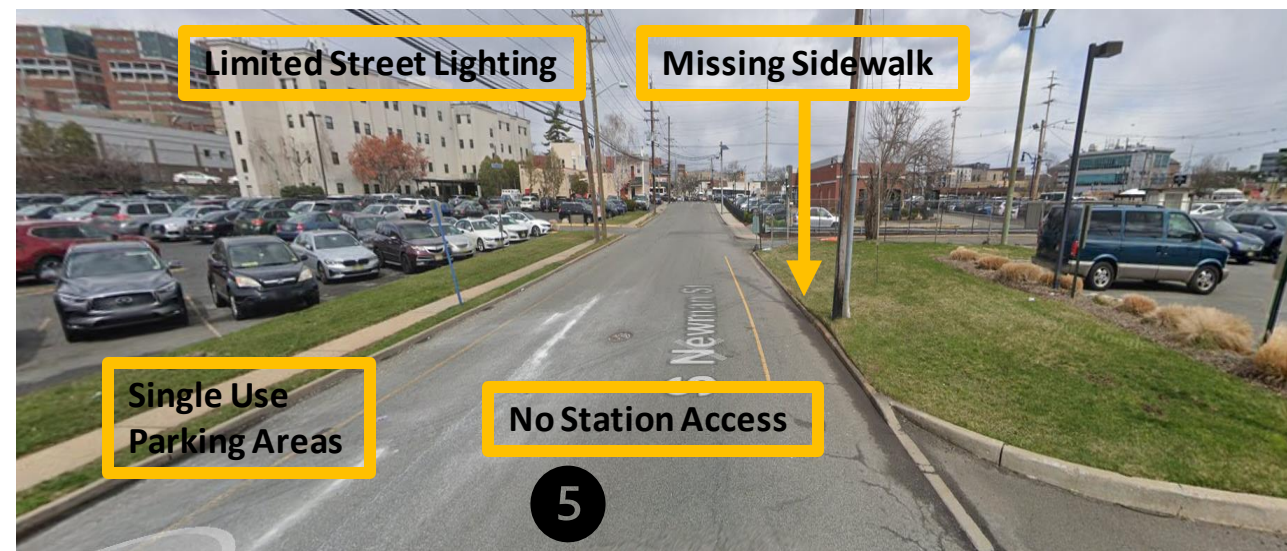
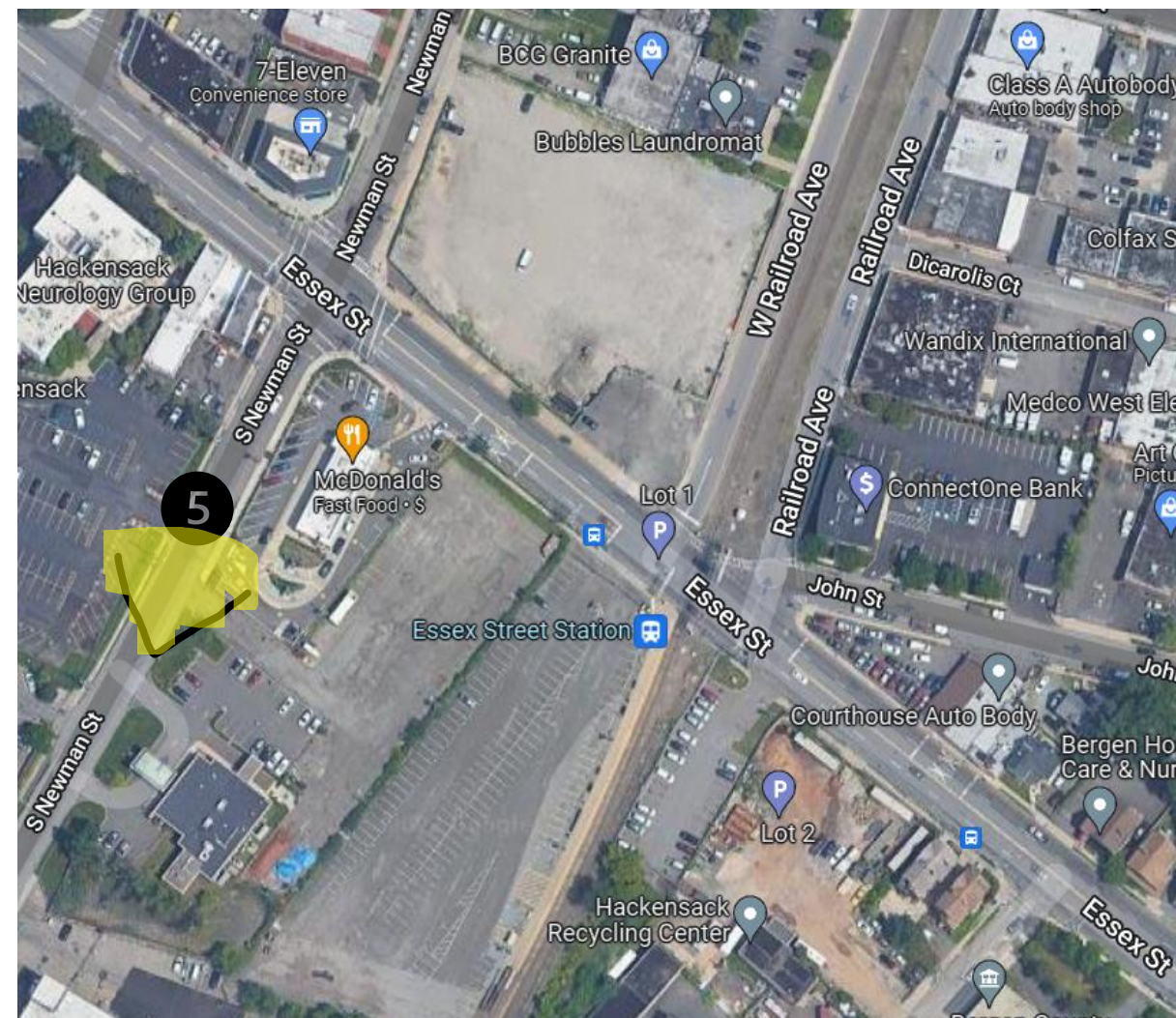
Parallel one-way East and West Railroad Avenues intersect busy Essex Street at the railroad crossing. Vehicle volumes on these streets are relatively low, yet unrestricted turn movements at Essex Street intersection create significant difficulty for pedestrian crossings and contribute to vehicular crash occurrences.

Existing Conditions: Essex Street Station



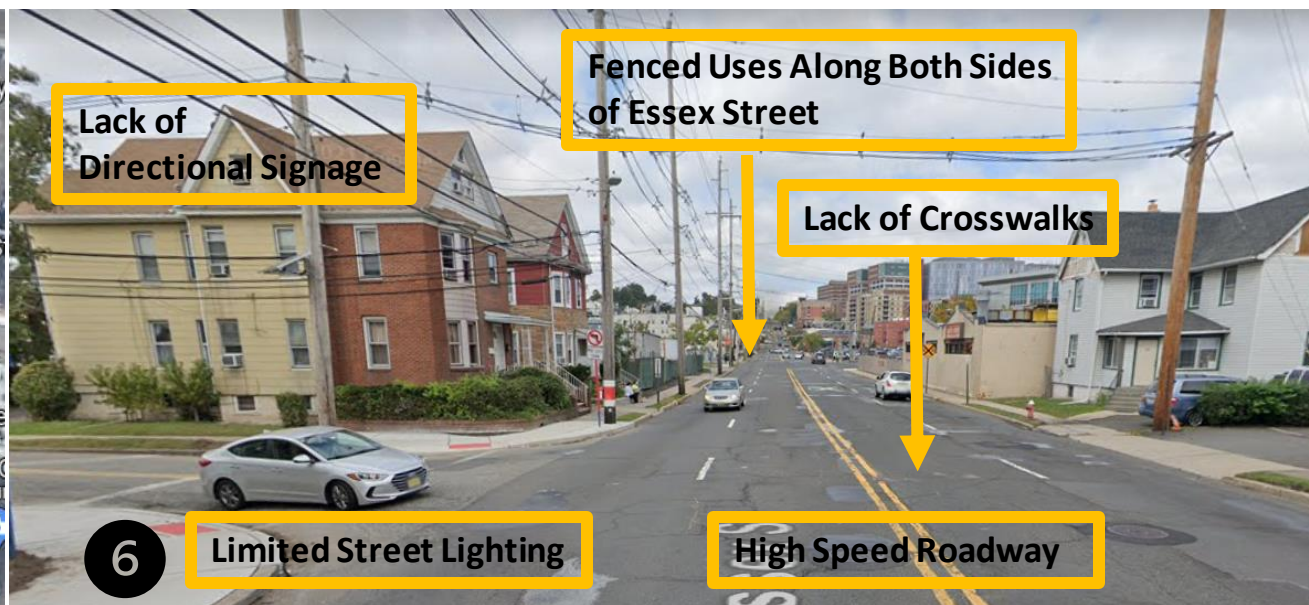
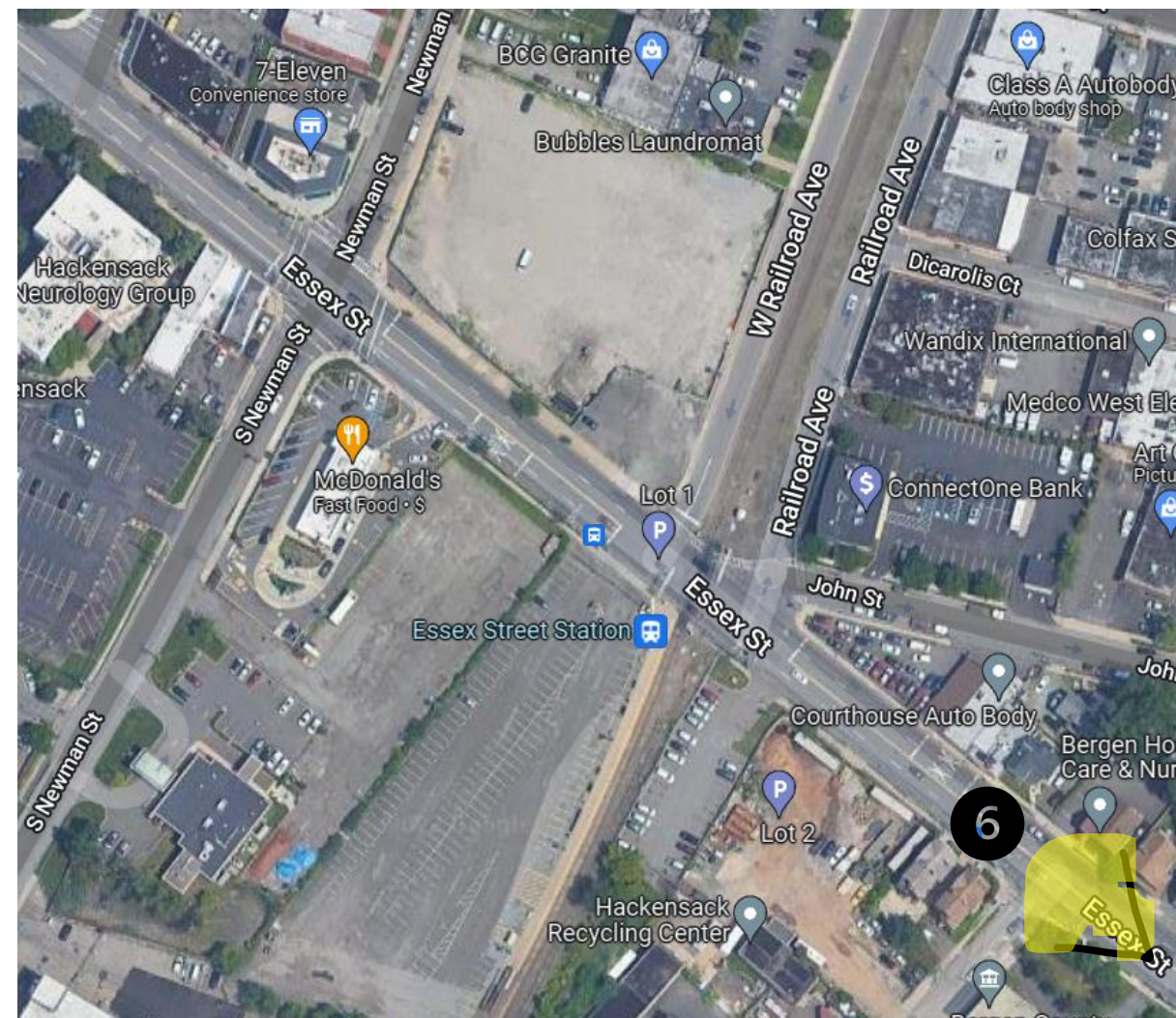
The current Essex Street Station set primarily amongst mixed light industrial and service land uses. Primary station access is by personal automobile. Main entrance on Essex Street at the busy grade crossing and intersection with East and West Railroad Avenues creates turning movement conflicts and safety challenges. Platform and shelter conditions are fair, while parking lot asphalt, lighting and pedestrian crosswalk and sidewalk conditions are poor.

Existing Conditions: South Newman Street



South Newman Street intersects Essex Street at a signalized intersection just west and parallel to the Essex Street Station parking area. Fenced, single use parking areas adjacent to the station lot preclude vehicular or walk access from South Newman Street and areas southwest of the station. Limited street lighting, missing sidewalk sections and a lack of human presence further discourage non-vehicular access and use, especially at night.

Existing Conditions: Essex Street at Green Street Intersection



Essex Street intersects Green Street just east of the Essex Street Station area. Green Street provides access to mixed residential and light industrial areas south and east of the station, while Essex Street leads directly to Hackensack's CBD. Lack of crosswalks, limited street lighting, narrow and deteriorating sidewalk sections and lengthy fenced lots and uses facing Essex Street create a lack of human presence discouraging non-vehicular access and use, especially at night.

Community Outreach



Community Outreach

Interview



YMCA
Glenn Macafee



Northern NJ
Community Foundation
Danielle Di Laurentis



Hackensack
Islamic Center
Hassa Elbaz



Hackensack Boys
and Girls Club
Joe Licata



Varick Memorial Church
Dr. Melanie Miller



Bergen County Planning
Tom Casey

Hackensack Condo Board – Board Meeting
Reviewed Previous Outreach Summary
NJIT/NJTPA study in March 2013

Community Impression of the Station

The Station Today



Desolate



Infrequent service



Unwelcoming day and night



Is not visible



Needs an update



Not a nice area



Surrounded by inappropriate uses, body shop, vacant lots, wasted space, abandoned properties



Inadequate lighting

The Station Area Needs



Cultural spaces/plaza



Bike storage / share



Safe pedestrian crossings to surrounding blocks



Wayfinding to other areas like Main Street, HUMC, the County



Small community-related retail



Better connections to medical and county government centers

A historical black and white photograph of the Hackensack Essex Street Station, a two-story wooden building with a gabled roof and a small cupola. The station has a covered platform with several support pillars. A person is standing on the platform, and a horse-drawn car is visible in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter. On the left side, there are diagonal yellow and grey stripes. On the right side, there is a large, semi-transparent yellow circle. The text "Hackensack Essex Street Station" and "Issues and Challenges" is written in blue over the image.

Hackensack Essex Street Station Issues and Challenges

Issues and Challenges



Purpose and Identity

Station lacks a sense of purpose for the surrounding community



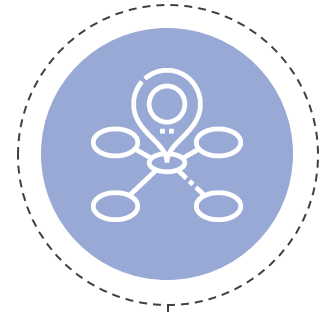
Traffic

Traffic volumes and inadequate street designs create safety concerns for pedestrians and vehicles



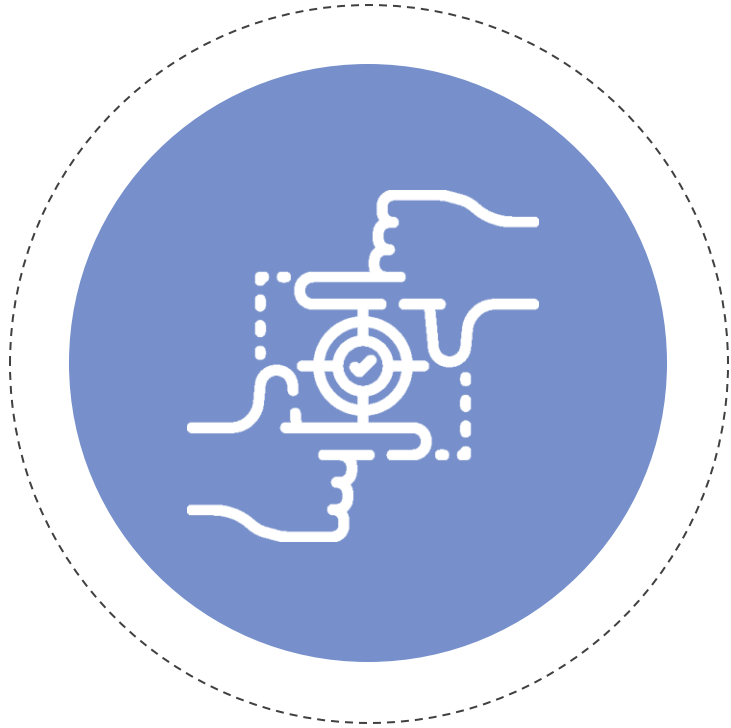
Safety and Security

Station area is perceived to be unsafe due to limited amenities, unattractive land uses, and poor lighting



Access & Mobility

Inadequate options to get from the station to surrounding areas – no wayfinding, unsafe pedestrian facilities, inadequate intermodal options



Station Lacks a Sense of Purpose and Identity

- Poor conditions and appearance leads to lack of awareness and sense of place
- Lack of cohesive land use that does not support the station
- Essex Street doesn't get the attention other areas are getting
- Little collaboration between employers, business and residents about the station needs.



Traffic and Street Designs Create Challenging Pedestrian Conditions

- Traffic along Essex Street and Polifly Road makes access to the station difficult.
- Priority for vehicles over pedestrians and bikes.
- Essex Street is a county road and the county sets priorities there, such as the county's plan to widen Essex Street to 5 lanes.
- Deteriorating, narrow and poorly situated sidewalks and missing crosswalks make pedestrian access to the station difficult and dangerous.
- Traffic safety issues caused by intersection of East and West Railroad avenues with Essex Street at railroad crossing and the driveway to the station.
- Traffic on Essex Street is blocked by train when it's in the station.



Limited Amenities and Unattractive Land Uses Create Safety and Security Concerns

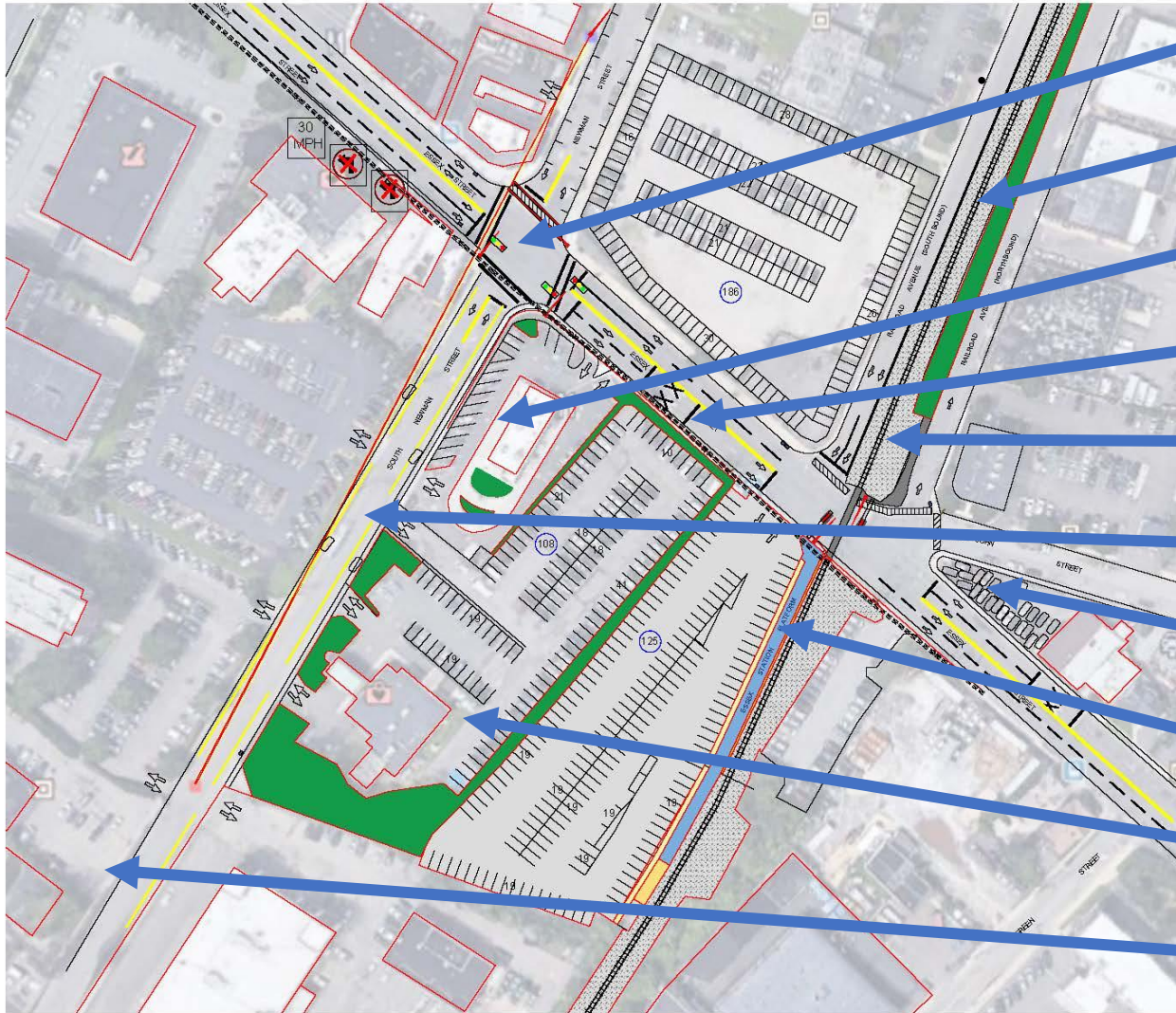
- The station platform and inadequate shelter provide limited protection for passengers waiting for the train.
- Deteriorated parking lot, fencing and sidewalk contributes to station access issues.
- Lighting in the station area is inadequate.
- Broad mix of industrial, residential and commercial uses and vacant lots around the station create confusing area.
- No clearly defined travel paths from the station to surrounding neighborhoods.



Options for Getting to Surrounding Areas are Inadequate

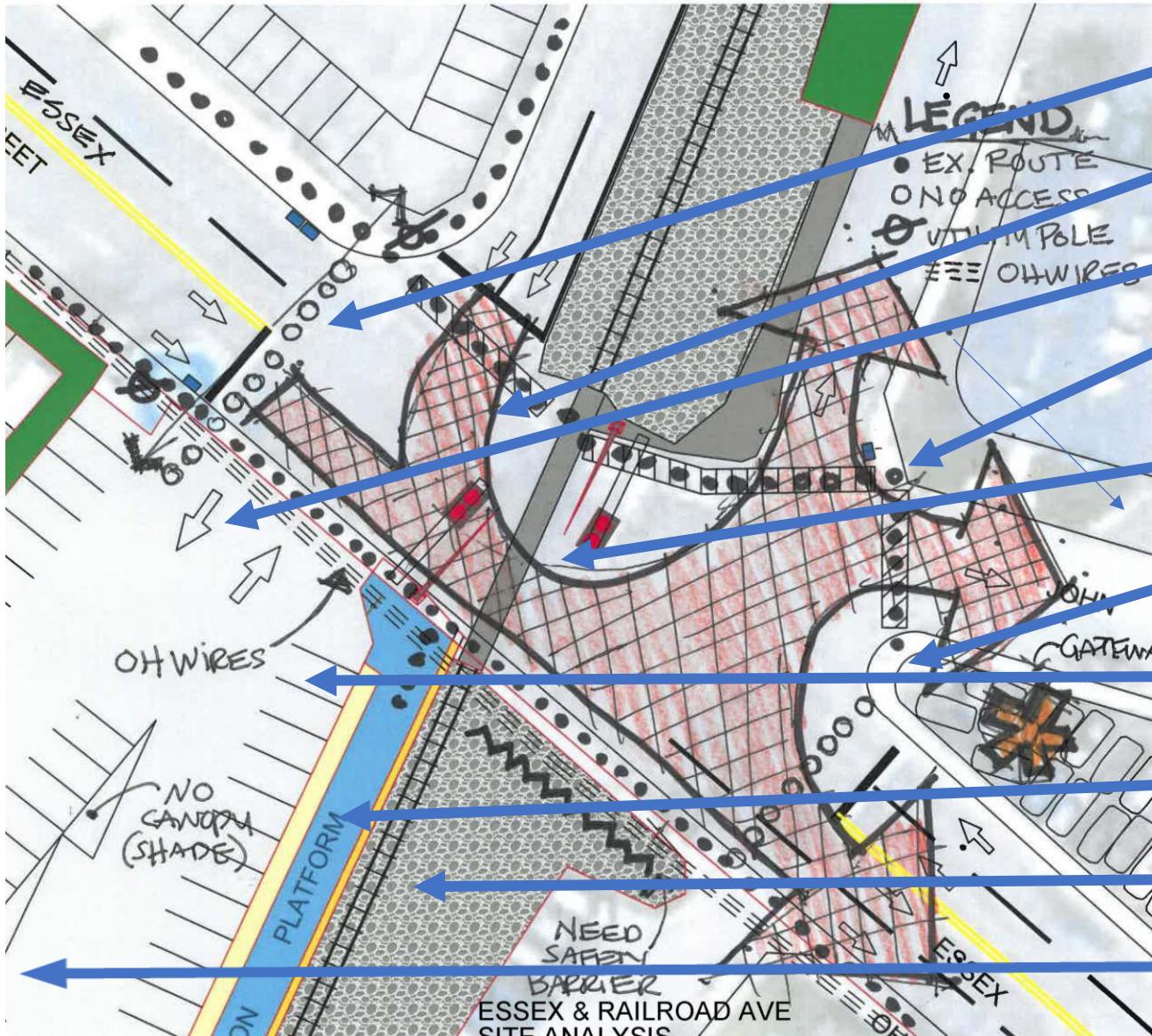
- Very limited secure facilities for bicycle storage.
- Nearby residential neighborhoods, especially to the west and south, lack easy, direct and safe walk access to the station.
- Lack of informational signage identifying surrounding city destinations and travel paths to access them.
- Little understanding of the market for intermodal services at the station such as bus connections, shuttles, bikes, scooters and ride-hailing.

Core Area Site Analysis: Constraints and Opportunities



- 1 Left turn movements from Essex Street to N/S Newman Streets create congestion
- 2 Low vehicular demand on E/W Railroad Avenues
- 3 McDonalds Restaurant location
- 4 Limited right-of-way for wider sidewalks, wayfinding and streetscape enhancements
- 5 Sufficient right-of-way to add micro-mobility mode lanes using E/W Railroad Avenues
- 6 Disconnected parking lots, excessive vehicular access points and poor pedestrian connections
- 7 Gateway opportunity at John Street Triangle
- 8 Limited weather protection and amenities at NJ Transit Essex Street Station Platform
- 9 Patchwork of parcels - Redevelopment opportunity
- 10 Potential extension of redevelopment plan to the south and west with assemblage of open parking lots/parcels

Essex Street Station Access Area – Constraints and Opportunities



- 1 Lack of pedestrian crosswalks across Essex Street
- 2 Five Point Intersection with no turning movement restrictions at railroad crossing create safety issues
- 3 Only vehicular access to Essex Street Station adds sixth point with unrestricted turning movements
- 4 Challenging pedestrian environment requires crossing guard protection
- 5 Pedestrian facilities not ADA compliant
- 6 Gateway opportunity at John Street Triangle parcel
- 7 No wayfinding signage to surrounding destinations
- 8 Limited weather protection and waiting facilities on Essex Street Station platform.
- 9 Railroad right-of-way has space for second track – opportunity for future short-turn train service
- 10 Essex Street Station parking lot fenced off from any access to South Newman Street

Recommendations



Connectivity to Surrounding Areas

- Improve the pedestrian environment on Railroad Avenue to create better connections from the station to the areas north, including large residential neighborhoods, the high school, the Boys and Girls Club, and the 60-unit Dizenzo Court senior citizens building.

Improve pedestrian environment on Essex Street - consider wider sidewalks, improved crosswalks, street furniture such as benches and plantings, and pedestrian scale lighting along the Essex Street Corridor

Create direct access to the Station from residential neighborhoods to the southeast and southwest of the station.



A: Essex Street Station



C: Hackensack High School



B: HUMC



D: Bergen County Government

Roadway Improvements

- Work with Bergen County to calm traffic on Essex Street, especially near the station.
- Relocate the station's vehicle entrance from Essex Street to Newman Street.
- Work with NJ TRANSIT to identify strategies for stopping the trains without blocking traffic on Essex Street



Bicycle / Pedestrian Improvements

- Prioritize bicycle and pedestrian safety, mobility and access along Essex Street. Strategies include:
 - changes in surface textures.
 - more prominent crosswalks.
 - narrower lanes.
 - improved pedestrian signals.
 - a pedestrian zone giving priority to pedestrians at the station.



CROSSWALK



BICYCLE LANE



RAISED CROSSWALKS



SIDEWALKS



CROSSWALK SIGNALS



TRAFFIC CALMING

Streetscape Improvements

- Provide amenities that encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel, such as:
 - More prominent crosswalks.
 - Narrower lanes.
 - Improved pedestrian signals, and
 - Pedestrian zone at the station giving greater priority to pedestrians.



Intermodal Improvements

- Create bus pullout lanes on Essex Street with a shelter to accommodate intermodal transfers.
- Encourage area jitney services and shuttles to stop at Essex Street station pullout.
- Implement a bicycle and/or scooter share program connecting the city's major destinations and neighborhoods with the Essex Street station.



Wayfinding Improvements

- Expand the existing wayfinding system to show routes from the station to the HUMC, county offices, the high school, and Main Street.
- Consider using public art installations as part of the wayfinding system.





Station Improvements

- Improve station platform customer access, comfort and protection by including a station canopy, benches, lighting, and ADA access.
- Create a plan incorporating a waiting area connected to new retail and services.
- Place parking facilities serving existing vehicle capacity to the site perimeter to maximize walkable places and create a plaza.
- Connect peripheral passenger drop-off, ride-hailing (i.e., Uber, Lyft), and secure and weather protected bicycle share / storage locations to encourage intermodal access.

Station Area Improvements – Strategic Plan Summary

Improve the station's physical condition and customer amenities.

Introduce neighborhood scale cultural, civic, recreational and retail uses at and around the Essex Street Station area.

Utilize urban design and crime prevention through environmental design principles to enhance the area's sense of place and ensure safety for the area's residents and the users of the Station.

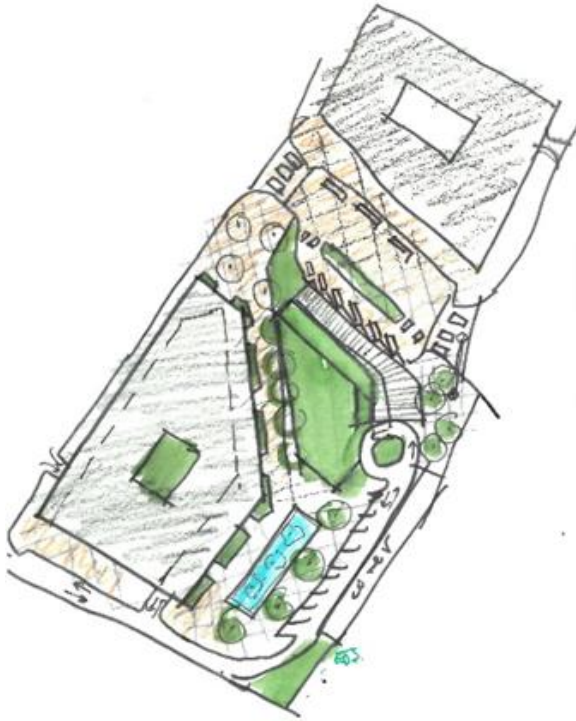
Implement green infrastructure to address stormwater issues and create environmentally attractive and sustainable settings that support station area redevelopment.

Implement attractive public art installations that enhance visitor experiences and encourage walk and bike access by residents and station users.

Hold community events/programs such as concerts and farmers markets to create foot traffic and bolster activity around the station.

Review NJ TRANSIT's recently updated Transit Friendly Planning Handbook for additional transit-friendly strategies.

HACKENSACK TRANSIT HUB PILOT TEAM INITIAL CONCEPTS



1A-
KISS AND RIDE
ALTERNATE 'A'

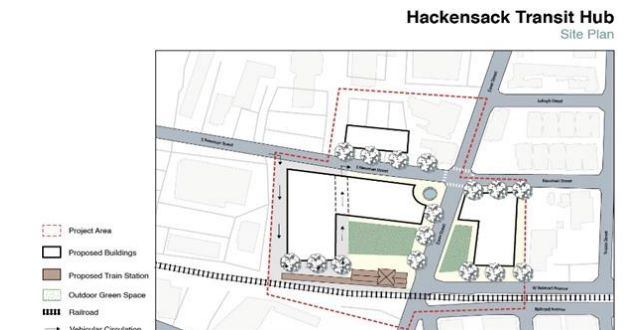
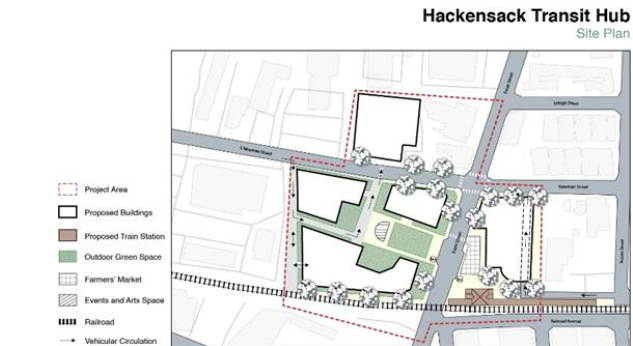
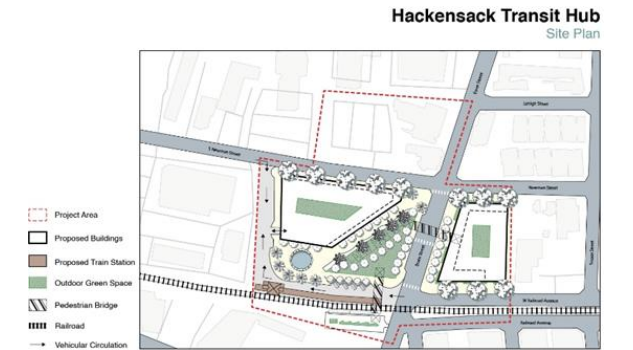


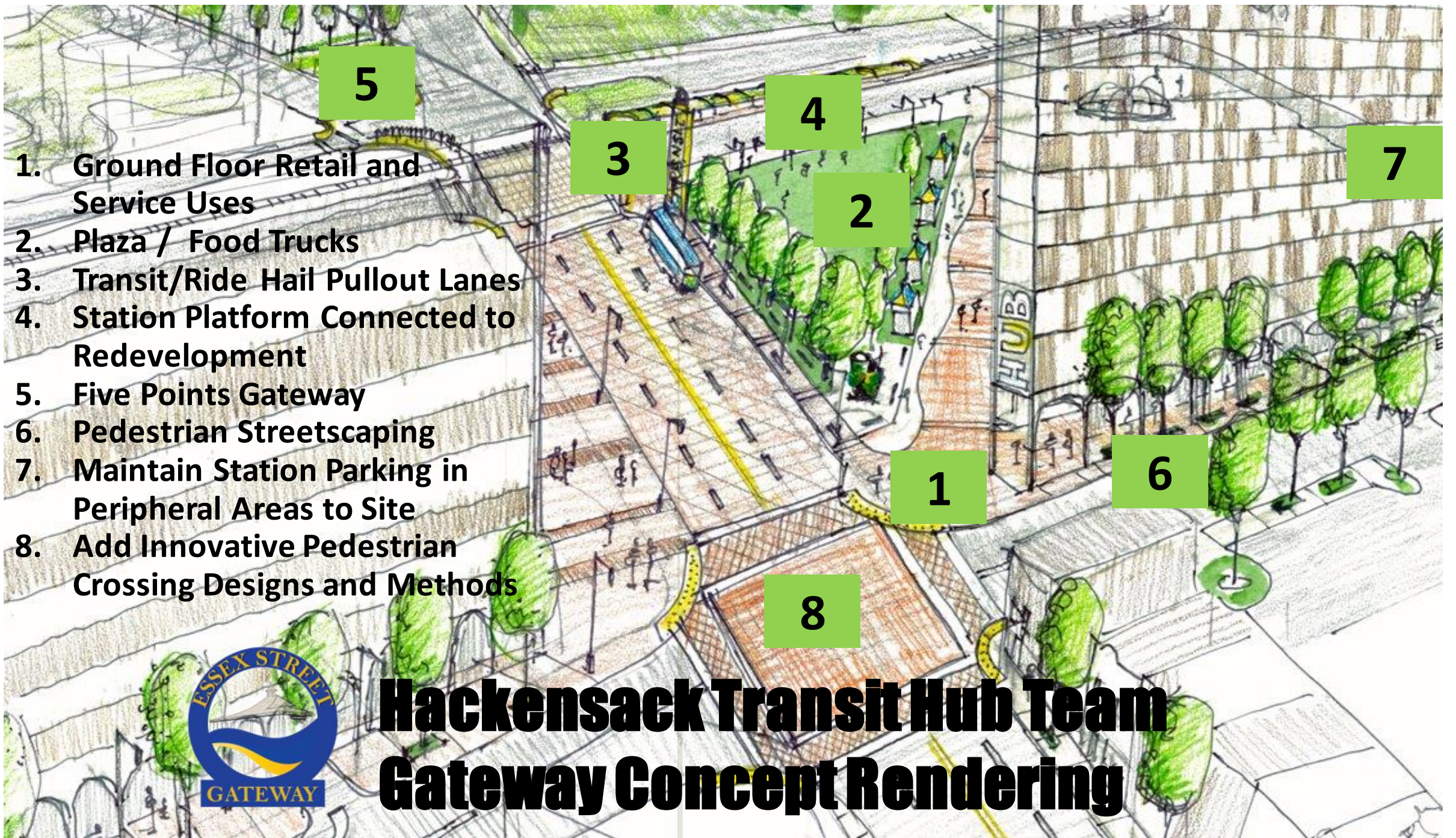
1-B
KISS AND RIDE
ALTERNATE 'B'

Click to add text



1-C- TRANSIT
CENTER
STREET PLAZA





1. Ground Floor Retail and Service Uses
2. Plaza / Food Trucks
3. Transit/Ride Hail Pullout Lanes
4. Station Platform Connected to Redevelopment
5. Five Points Gateway
6. Pedestrian Streetscaping
7. Maintain Station Parking in Peripheral Areas to Site
8. Add Innovative Pedestrian Crossing Designs and Methods



Hackensack Transit Hub Team Gateway Concept Rendering

Essex Street Gateway Concept Visualization





Next Steps



Create an Essex Street Station working group encompassing community and civic leaders, city agencies, HUMC, county government, board of education, business/chamber of commerce and transit commuters to refine vision for the station area and develop an implementation strategy.



Capitalize on the growing healthcare/life sciences node to support growth in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) related businesses.



Refine current planning and zoning policies to advance a consensus-based vision for the Essex Street Station area.

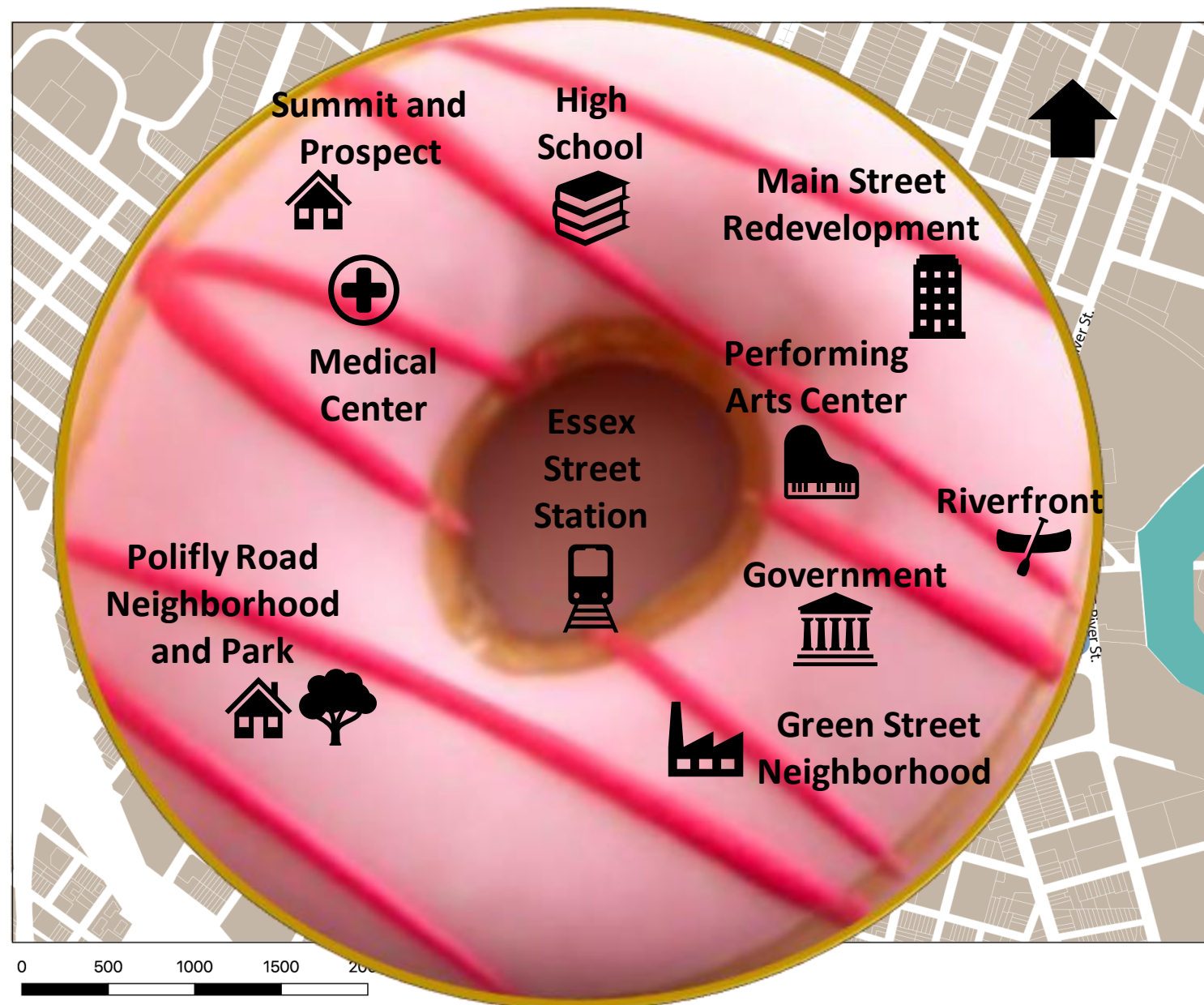


Leverage the Essex Street Station's location and quick train access to/from major regional labor markets and activity centers in Northern New Jersey and New York City to attract investment and support redevelopment opportunities.

Why Fix Essex Street

The Problem: Something's Missing Here

- Although Hackensack has many inviting places and attractive spaces...
...Essex Street Station is **not** among them.
- Lacks a clear sense of place and has only limited purpose
- Perceived to be unwelcoming and unsafe
- Not connected to the rest of the city at a human mobility scale
- Essex Street is presently a doughnut hole in the city's ring of desirable places.



How to Fix Essex Street



The Solution: Create a Desirable Transit Center

- Develop a specific transit hub strategic vision by engaging public, elected, civic, agency and business stakeholders in the Hackensack community
- Review municipal land use policies, ordinances and agency budgets to align with and support realization of the strategic vision
- Engage county, regional and state agencies to align project planning and provide guidance and support
- Solicit developers to craft a financially viable development plan for Essex Street that incorporates the strategic vision elements sought by Hackensack community.

