



# Retail Study in Camden's University District

ULI Philadelphia  
Technical Assistance Program

January 18-19, 2011

Report by:

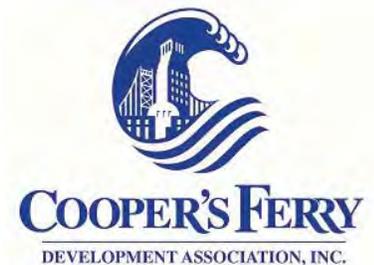


**Urban Land  
Institute**

**Philadelphia**  
Serving Eastern and Central  
Pennsylvania, Southern New  
Jersey, and Delaware

On behalf of:

**GREATER  
Camden**  
*Partnership*



April 28, 2011

David Foster  
President & CEO  
Greater Camden Partnership  
One Market Street  
Victor Building, Suite 1-C  
Camden, NJ 0810

Dear David:

Enclosed is the report for the ULI Technical Assistance Program (TAP) focusing on Camden, New Jersey. Our colleagues and I thank you and your staff for working with us on the Camden TAP on January 18th and 19th, 2011. Your specific request asked the panel to evaluate the potential for retail development in the University District of Camden. The 11-block study area includes parts of the campuses of Camden's three colleges: Rutgers University - Camden, Rowan University, and Camden County College. The goal of the TAP was to determine the ideal location and composition of a concentration of retail to bring needed energy, pedestrian traffic and amenities to the District, as well as feasible techniques for financing the development.

Our evaluation began with a guided site tour including the surrounding neighborhood and locations that might be impacted by retail development. We then conducted more than two dozen interviews with community stakeholders including government officials, students, institution presidents, the local community development corporation, city agencies and property owners. The next day, the panel deliberated at length and presented a summary of findings and recommendations to community members and stakeholders, focusing on **retail district composition, location and financing**. This report represents the objective professional opinion of our distinguished panel. Please review the report and let us know any comments you may have. We offer to maintain an open dialogue with you, including a willingness to speak with elected officials who may question the conclusions reached by the panel.

We are grateful to your staff, especially Merigan Mulhern, who very ably assisted in the preparation of the TAP, arranged stakeholder interviews, provided technical reports and maps, and coordinated with ULI Philadelphia District Council staff. Thank you for interest in the ULI TAP program and your continued interest in this opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Richard Huffman'.

Richard Huffman, FAIA  
Co-Chair, TAP Council, ULI Philadelphia  
Camden TAP Team Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Anthony S. Rimikis'.

Anthony S. Rimikis, CCIM  
Camden TAP Co-Chair

**Urban Land Institute Philadelphia**  
**A Technical Assistance Panel Report**  
**Retail Study in Camden’s University District**

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### 1. Executive Summary

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On January 18-19, 2011, the Philadelphia District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) held a Technical Assistance Program (TAP) in Camden, NJ. The purpose of the TAP was to identify opportunities to develop a University District retail center in the heart of Camden – not only to support the needs of employees, visitors and students of the various institutions throughout Camden, but also to create a more attractive, pedestrian-friendly and vibrant downtown atmosphere.

The TAP panel consisted of experts in urban planning and design, real estate development, community relations, and transit. Panelists began by taking a bus tour of the City of Camden and the study area to gain a better understanding of the opportunities available within the City, as well as the challenges faced by the community and its stakeholders. Panelists then conducted interviews of 37 stakeholders, including representatives from key institutions such as Rutgers University - Camden, Cooper University Hospital, and Camden County College. The panel also interviewed local business owners, neighborhood organizations and local developers.

Upon hearing from community residents and stakeholders, the panel collaborated to identify the key challenges facing the creation of a Retail District in Camden. Some of these challenges include:

- State of the present economy.
- The need for an updated Downtown Redevelopment Plan.
- Minimal interfacing between institutions and surrounding neighborhoods.

- Perception of Camden as unsafe.
- Scattered nodes of activity.
- Lack of pedestrian-friendly street routes.

The panel identified a number of recommendations that it felt would serve as guiding points as the City moves forward in the development of its downtown into a more successful retail destination. Primary recommendations related to:

- Retail district composition.
- Retail center location opportunities.
- Creative financing opportunities to support retail.

The panel also identified a number of secondary action items. Implementation of these items would complement the primary recommendations. These include recommendations to:

- Incorporate retail destinations targeted at college students, employees and local residents.
- Create active, vibrant destinations.
- Utilize mass transit opportunities.
- Offer "Live Where You Work" incentives.
- Improve existing architecture.
- Capitalize on large numbers of waterfront visitors.
- Encourage the development of additional academic space around the institutions to support retail.
- Encourage institution-backed gap financing for retail tenants.

This report provides greater detail on the thoughts behind each of these challenges and recommendations. The panel believes that this assignment and the resulting discussions offer a valuable opportunity to implement strategies to revitalize Camden and establish this historic city as an inviting and economically vibrant destination. Page 4

## 2. Introduction/Background

### About ULI

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 as a nonprofit educational and research institute and is supported by nearly 30,000 members representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. ULI's mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment and to create and sustain thriving communities.

In 1947, ULI began providing advice to nonprofits and government agencies that needed help in planning and development. Its Advisory Services Panels bring together objective planners, developers, lenders, architects, and related professionals to evaluate a community's needs and make recommendations on implementation. The TAP is a smaller-scale, localized version of this important community outreach service. None of the professionals involved receive monetary compensation for this work, and each one signs an agreement to avoid any conflict of interest.

### About the Greater Camden Partnership

The Greater Camden Partnership (GCP) is a nonprofit organization that brings together the leading public, private and non-profit organizations from the region to develop and implement creative revitalization strategies for the City of Camden. GCP was founded in 2001 to serve as a catalyst for the coordination of community leaders from Camden and from around the region based on a shared sense of social responsibility to the people of Camden and

a recognition that the City needs to draw upon external resources to effect a social and economic turnaround.

For this particular TAP, ULI Philadelphia was charged by the Greater Camden Partnership with evaluating potential retail development in the University District of Camden, New Jersey, the heart of downtown. The 11-block study area includes parts of the campuses of Camden's three colleges: Rutgers University - Camden, Rowan University, and Camden County College. The purpose of the TAP was to determine the ideal location and composition of a concentration of retail to bring needed energy, pedestrian traffic and amenities to the District, as well as feasible techniques for financing the development.



Image courtesy of Google Earth



Map courtesy of Kitchen & Associates

### **3. Program Schedule and Objectives**

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The Camden TAP sessions on January 18-19, 2011 were led by ULI Philadelphia Advisory Board members Richard Huffman, FAIA, and Anthony Rimikis, CCIM. The President and CEO of the Greater Camden Partnership, David Foster, played a significant role in planning and preparing for the TAP.

On the first day, the ULI TAP panelists conducted interviews of community stakeholders including government officials, board members of educational and healthcare institutions, property owners and students. The participants represented the following organizations:

- Adventure Aquarium
- Camden County College
- Camden County Improvement Authority
- Camden Redevelopment Agency
- Cooper Foundation
- Cooper Grant Neighborhood Association
- Cooper University Hospital
- Cross Properties
- Dranoff Properties
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- LEAP Academy
- New Jersey Economic Development Authority
- PNC Bank
- Property Owners
- Rowan University
- RPM Development
- Rutgers University
- Susquehanna Bank

On the second day of the TAP, panelists discussed the interview results, and analyzed the qualitative and quantitative information available. Based on their professional expertise, the panelists primarily focused their ideas and discussion on identifying the most appropriate and effective makeup of retail options; the most logical location for the proposed Retail District; and potential financing opportunities to fund this initiative. Further, as stated earlier, the panel also identified a number of secondary action items. Each of these recommendations and action items will be discussed in more detail later on in this report.

At the end of the two-day session, the panel presented the summary of findings and recommendations to community members and stakeholders at a well-attended meeting.



Photo courtesy of Megan Leinart

## 4. Interview Results

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The TAP panel gathered the following information and perspectives based on the interview results:

- Camden is safer than the general public perceives.
- Cooper University Hospital and the nearby universities are demand drivers.
- Retail is needed in the area (grocery stores, restaurants, etc.).
- Pedestrian wayfinding signage could be improved.
- Support from the local government is needed to carry out changes.
- Camden has the financing in place to improve streetscapes and should continue to further these plans.
- Financial incentives are being offered to Rutgers University-Camden, Rowan University, Cooper University Hospital, Camden County College, and Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital faculty/staff to purchase property in Camden.
- The new Rutgers graduate dormitory (12 stories, 350-bed, 7,000 SF of retail on the ground floor) could significantly impact Cooper Street and stimulate surrounding development.
- Cooper University Hospital and Rowan University's new medical school (to be completed in 2012) will generate additional demand.
- Demand generators in the City are disconnected, thereby discouraging pedestrian activity.
- There are a substantial number of surface level parking lots.

- There is little activity in the City after 5pm.
- Most people who work in Camden drive in and leave immediately after work.
- There is not enough demand to support existing retail.

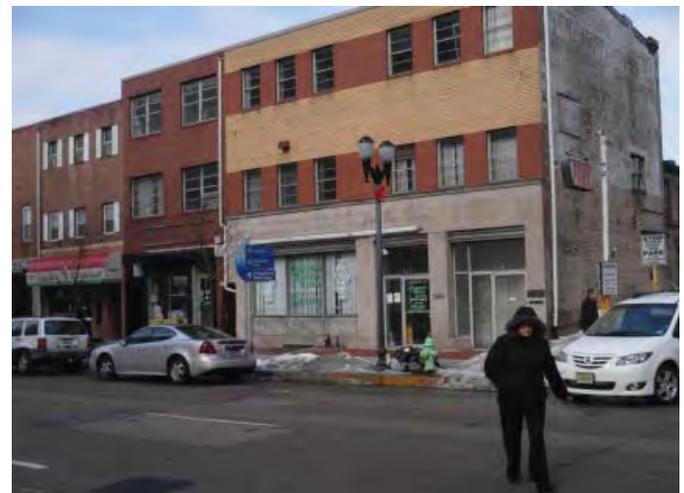


Photo courtesy of Anthony S. Rimikis, CCIM

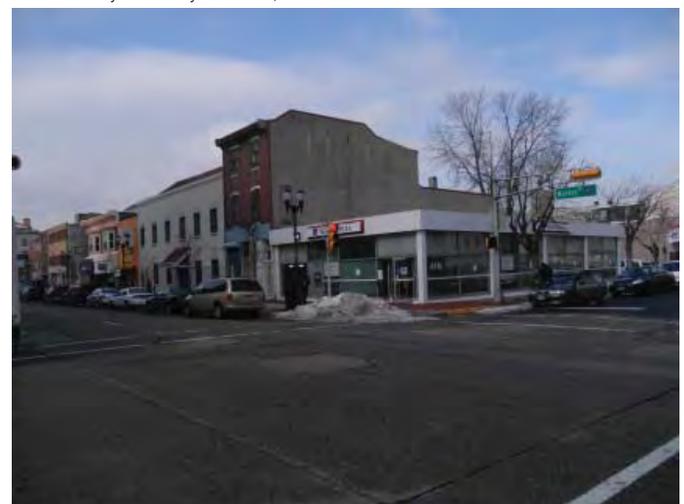


Photo courtesy of Anthony S. Rimikis, CCIM

## 5. Key Challenges

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The panel identified the following key issues facing Camden as the City moves forward in the development of a downtown Retail District:

### **Present Economic State**

The state of the economy over the past three to four years has served as an impediment to development throughout the United States. Stakeholders across all sectors nationwide have had to postpone and often cancel many projects due to lack of capital and a poor economic outlook. Healthcare and educational institutions have weathered this economic storm with more success than most, while retail, residential and downtown municipal projects have, for the most part, halted with little sign of improving.

Camden is extremely fortunate to have two major institutions – Cooper University Hospital and Rutgers University - Camden – call it home. Both institutions have been expanding their campuses and increasing their specialties, which has helped to draw more students, staff and visitors to Camden, thereby generating more economic activity in the City. The City is also home to campuses for Rowan University and Camden County College which contribute valuable student/faculty/staff populations. However, in spite of the contributions of these institutions, there is still a lack of “permanent” residents who both live and work in the downtown area of the City to consistently support retail, restaurant and entertainment destinations.

Cooper and Rutgers have both made valuable investments in the City of Camden through their development efforts, which play an important role in the revitalization and redevelopment of Camden. However, the present economy continues to hinder market rate residential or retail development in the near future, further delaying opportunities to recreate the downtown area as an attractive residential and retail destination.

### **Need for Institutional Plans to Integrate the Downtown Redevelopment Plan**

As mentioned, Camden boasts a number of important assets, including the institutions of Cooper University Hospital, Rutgers - Camden, Rowan University and Camden County College. We understand that in 2004 the city developed a Downtown Redevelopment Plan, which serves as a guiding plan for development throughout Camden. The panel observed that there may be an opportunity at this time to incorporate the strategies outlined in the Downtown Redevelopment Plan into the development plans for the various institutions. Integrating the goals of the City with those of the institutions will allow for more synergy moving forward, and allow all to work together to implement strategies that are best for the downtown, and the community as a whole.



**The Advantages and Disadvantages of Camden as an Accessible “Drive-in” City**

Camden’s proximity to many established retail, entertainment and dining destinations in surrounding New Jersey municipalities and Philadelphia, is both an opportunity and a challenge to its ability to develop a successful Retail District. Millions of people from Philadelphia and throughout New Jersey visit Camden’s waterfront attractions each year. However, most who visit these venues drive directly to a concert or baseball game, or to the Aquarium or Battleship, and leave the City immediately following. Very few people patronize downtown Camden retail or restaurant establishments. Most people see little incentive to explore the City, and many of the established traffic patterns direct visitors straight to the waterfront and back out, avoiding any interaction with other sections of the downtown area.

Similarly, those who do live and/or work in Camden – Rutgers, Rowan and Camden County College students and staff, Cooper University Hospital staff, and the many Camden office employees – have a multitude of options for restaurant, grocery and retail destinations just outside of Camden in surrounding

municipalities and in Philadelphia. Many Camden employees and downtown residents shop outside of Camden, in spite of the fact that the downtown establishments could potentially meet many of their needs.

However, Camden’s proximity to these population centers is also a significant opportunity. Should Camden develop an attractive retail destination, not only will Camden residents and workers be more likely to patronize these outlets, but residents from the surrounding areas will also be drawn there. Further, the millions of waterfront visitors each year would be more likely to visit the downtown area as well.

**Perception of Camden as Unsafe**

The City of Camden undoubtedly faces challenges related to overcoming years of negative perceptions related to crime and public safety concerns. News and other media regularly portray Camden as a blighted and unsafe place. While Camden has, and will continue to implement steps to improve its safety, the presence of so many major institutions, and their contribution of a constant flow of people in and around the City, helps increase safety.

One of the most effective strategies for increasing safety in any area is creating street-level activity. Generating a constant flow of pedestrian activity along the street will help to increase the level of safety, and as a result create a more positive perception of the City as a whole. The development of a Retail District to serve Camden residents,

college/university students and hospital and office employees, as well as to attract the many crowds of visitors to the waterfront destinations, will help to create more street level activity, while resulting in improvements in the real and perceived safety of the downtown and surrounding areas.

### **Scattered Activity Nodes with Little Pedestrian Connectivity**

While Camden features numerous destinations which attract millions of visitors each year, many offices with a large population of employees, and institutions drawing large numbers of faculty, staff and students, there is a noticeable disconnect between these nodes of activity. Camden lacks any semblance of pedestrian-friendly connections linking people visiting or working at the waterfront to the downtown area. Similarly, there is also considerable separation between the Cooper University Hospital campus and the rest of the downtown, causing many of its employees to stay confined to the hospital neighborhood.

These disconnects hinder the potential opportunity to generate activity on the streets in Camden. Further, they provide little incentive for the large numbers of people who do regularly visit Camden to patronize the downtown area. As a result, Camden must find a way to create more attractive and pedestrian-friendly corridors which will serve as a link throughout the downtown area, to the major activity generators on the educational and hospital campuses, as well as the waterfront attractions.



Photo courtesy of Anthony S. Rimikis, CCIM



Photo courtesy of Anthony S. Rimikis, CCIM

## 6. Recommendations

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The ULI Technical Assistance Program focused on three primary themes throughout the course of this exercise: **composition, location and financing**. The panel discussed each of these topics in great detail, understanding that their successful combination will result in a greater likelihood of creating a vibrant and successful Retail District within downtown Camden.

### PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Retail District Composition

The panel discussed what it believes to be the most appropriate makeup of retail destinations to serve this area of Camden. The common theme running through these discussions was that **the district must incorporate retail destinations which meet the needs of college students, but also employees and residents of the surrounding neighborhoods as well**. While it is important that the retail specifically be of interest to the many students residing in and visiting the area each day, there is not a great enough number of students to adequately support a Retail District. Therefore, the retail must be all-inclusive.

Much of this discussion centered on food. **From fast food restaurants and convenience stores to sit-down bars and restaurants, the panel all agreed that it is critical to provide the student population, as well as the community, with a selection of a few restaurants to serve the**

**various needs of the community**, but not so great in number that the small community could not support.

**The neighborhood would also significantly benefit from the integration of a convenience store, as well as a grocery store**. Many panel members referenced other universities such as the University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University and Rutgers-New Brunswick. The neighborhoods around these institutions have succeeded in incorporating restaurant destinations which have positively contributed to the fabric of their communities, generating foot traffic and street-level activity, while helping to revitalize the area as a whole.

In addition, panelists also recommended a number of service-oriented retail opportunities which it felt would significantly benefit those living in and visiting Camden. Some of these suggestions include:

- Copy/printing centers
- Technology stores (phones, computers, etc.)
- Dry cleaners
- Pharmacy
- Fitness center

**The panel agreed that the most preferable option for the integration of these retail destinations would be to generate interest in local entrepreneurs to open these businesses**.

Not only will this help to create a greater sense of community pride for these individuals, but it may help to inspire others in the community to create businesses of their own as well.

**Retail Center Location Opportunities**

The panel discussed a variety of opportunities for the most appropriate location for this retail development. **Among the main corridors running through Camden, Market Street seemed to be the most logical opportunity for a Retail District. However, the panel also recognized the opportunities available on the north/south running streets, particularly 3rd Street and 6th Street.** Each of these streets boasts a unique and inviting pedestrian scale, and already features a few existing pockets of successful retail.

The panel identified 3rd Street, as it serves as an opportunity to complement the existing and proposed development in that area, particularly the existing Victor Building, as well as the future

Radio Lofts. Further, the panel also recognized opportunities on 6th Street, as this street is anchored by the university bookstore. The bookstore is an opportunity to serve as a catalyst for additional retail, as well as to help link the campus with the surrounding community.

**In addition, the panel also discussed the long term opportunity to create a significant retail corridor running throughout Camden, starting in the Cooper Hospital area and moving north, and at the Cooper Street area near Rutgers and Camden County College and developing south.**

In this scenario, the two corridors would connect at the Walter Rand Transportation Center, creating an opportunity to significantly upgrade the center into to multi-modal transit-oriented development with additional retail, housing and transportation opportunities. Although this live/work/learn option is a long-term opportunity, any progress toward the development of these two areas of Camden is a significant step toward an exciting future here.

**Creative Financing Opportunities to Support Retail**

The panel understood that the recent economic climate has, and will continue to create significant barriers to any potential retail investment in downtown Camden. However, the panel discussed in great detail the creative financing opportunities available to support any future development, as well as the significant investment opportunities this creates for the City’s anchor institutions.



Image Courtesy of Google Earth



Image Courtesy of Google Earth

**First, the institutions can support the retail development around their campuses by working with developers to locate academic services space such as classrooms, student housing, or office space above ground floor retail.** This option will not only help to generate activity along the street to support the retail, but the location of the university space within these buildings will be attractive to developers. The institution could then provide space on the first floor of the building at low or below market value to retailers.

**Another opportunity for the City's institutions to support continued retail development is to assist with actual financing for the retail tenants near their campuses.** Although institutions may be understandably reluctant to provide full financing, they may consider gap financing to provide the balance of the payments for a loan that a business may not be fully able to afford.

**Finally, a unique option for Camden's institutions to support this retail endeavor is to commit to procure goods and/or services from these retailers.** This is only logical for those retailers who would supply goods or services that the university needs. However, the institution may pledge to purchase a minimum amount of a store's products annually. As a result, this creates a greater likelihood of success for the store, while reducing the risk of the unknown for the lender.

This panel understood that each of these items is critical to the success of any future Retail District in downtown Camden. It is the hope of this panel,

as well as the various stakeholders involved, that these issues be considered by the entire Camden community, from business owners and employees, to the decision-makers at its various institutions, as well as its residents. **While some of these recommendations may take a number of years to implement, any progress toward the effective combination of these composition, location and financing recommendations for the Retail District is critical.** Each of these components is significant to the establishment of downtown Camden as an attractive and exciting destination to serve not only its residents, but the millions of potential visitors from the surrounding areas as well.

### SECONDARY ACTION ITEMS

#### Strategic Master Planning

It would be a valuable initiative for all Camden institutions, specifically Cooper University Hospital and Rutgers-Camden, to coordinate their respective campus master plans to not only plan for the future growth of their own campuses, but also to identify opportunities to work together to contribute to the future development of the City as a whole. Similarly, the City and the Greater Camden Partnership should assist in developing these plans, taking into consideration these valuable resources, to plan for the future needs of this redeveloping city. **Each of Camden's major stakeholders must work together to implement planning and development strategies** which complement each other, while creating a unified master plan for future growth and development.

**The panel recommends that Rutgers-Camden implement planning strategies to progress development southward. Similarly, Cooper University Hospital should expand its development northward.** Through this strategy, each institution will further enhance and improve the central areas of downtown Camden. However, most importantly, as they begin to move together the result will be improvements in infrastructure, increases in walkability and pedestrian connectivity, the attraction of more retail establishments, and an increase in activity throughout the city.

The master plans must also include a significant **focus on integrating additional housing opportunities.** Camden has a lack of permanent residents who would be integral in supporting future development and retail growth. The City needs adequate and quality housing options to generate more activity, as well as create vital connections between its major institutions and entertainment destinations.

**Transit-Oriented and Traffic Routes are Critical**

Camden offers residents, visitors and employees significant access to public transit. PATCO and NJ Transit buses, and the RiverLINE train all provide service to Camden and offer convenient options for access to and from Camden and the surrounding area.

Mass transit will continue to be an essential component to the future development of Camden. People today consider the availability of transit one of the most important factors in their likelihood to live or work in an area. Traffic congestion, increasing fuel

costs and an enhanced focus on sustainability will continue to encourage people to seek alternatives to driving. The fact that Camden is so accessible to mass transit will continue to support its future development. However, Camden must continue to enhance its transit options, specifically bus and trolley routes, throughout the City to major destinations and residential areas. Further, it is important that the City maintain the quality and safety of these transit assets in order to enhance and improve perceptions of security and reliability.



Map Courtesy of Kitchen & Associates

Many of the established traffic patterns guide visitors directly to the waterfront attractions. These patterns were likely established to provide visitors with a fast and convenient route to their waterfront destination. However, these routes hinder opportunities to promote the downtown area and its existing retail and restaurant establishments. Should Camden proceed with the development of a Retail District, it is important to consider opportunities to drive traffic through the downtown so that people are more likely

to patronize its businesses. Five years ago, Cooper's Ferry Development Association developed the City's new vehicular wayfinding system organized by color-coded districts and corresponding destinations within the specific districts. Continued implementation of this system could encourage visitors to prolong their stays in Camden by visiting additional destinations.

### **Create Active and Vibrant Downtown Destinations**

Many of Camden's primary activity generators are institutions or destinations which are self-contained, disconnected from each other, and generate little pedestrian or economic activity outside of their boundaries or district. The waterfront ballpark, aquarium and concert venue all have significant on-site parking, as well as dining options, which provide convenient opportunities for visitors yet discourage any interaction with downtown Camden. Similarly, the large campuses of both Rutgers Camden and Cooper University Hospital have developed their own inward communities which also encourage little interaction with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Moving forward, **we recommend that these institutions focus on establishing further development outside the boundaries of their campuses to encourage more interaction** with the surrounding community. Developing more student housing, office space, and entertainment destinations in downtown Camden will help to create a more active, vibrant, walkable environment that will better support existing and new downtown retail establishments.

For example, the panel recommended the possible relocation of some college/university facilities to more central locations downtown. Moving the bookstore, food services building, fitness center, or even additional student housing to the core of downtown will help to drive students, faculty and staff off campus and help to reduce the disconnect between the institution and the surrounding community.

### **"Live Where You Work" Incentives**

The panel recommends that the City of Camden, as well as its major institutions, develop "Live Where You Work" incentive programs to encourage those who work in the City to live there as well. As mentioned throughout this report, while the establishment of a University Retail District in Camden will be a positive step toward generating activity and improving the downtown area, it will take an influx of permanent residents to ultimately support any new development and ensure its success.

An example of this type of program is the State of New Jersey's "Live Where You Work" program (NJ LWYW). The program is sponsored by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, and provides low-interest mortgage loans to homebuyers purchasing homes in towns where they are employed. The goal of LWYW is to build stronger communities by promoting homeownership and encouraging people to live closer to their jobs. The City of Camden, working with major institutions and employers, should promote this incentive program. However, if that is not possible, it may be able to develop its own program specific to its unique needs.

Similarly, Camden's higher education and medical institutions – in particular Rutgers-Camden and Cooper University Hospital – may also implement a Live Where You Work incentive program for their own employees. Another example of these programs is the Johns Hopkins "Live Near Your Work" (LNYW) grant program in Baltimore. This partnership between Johns Hopkins, its employees, and the City of Baltimore helps employees buy homes in specific neighborhoods near its campuses. The program gives employees an opportunity to build home equity, while enabling them to contribute to the growth and development of their surrounding communities. The program benefits both the institution, and the City as a whole, as it helps to recruit and retain employees and residents.

Both of these programs are good examples of what local governments and institutions are doing to attract residents to their municipalities. They are both programs which the City, its institutions, local developers and the Greater Camden Partnership could partner to increase home ownership in downtown Camden.

### **Capitalize On and Market to Critical Masses of Visitors**

Camden has a number of important entertainment assets which draw a significant population of visitors to its waterfront attractions and institutions every year. However, the vast majority of these visitors leave the downtown area immediately after the events as there are few amenities and attractions of interest to extend the visit and patronize any current retail establishments.

Camden must identify opportunities to create linkages, amenities and points of interest between these destinations and nearby locations in the downtown community to capitalize and leverage the economic benefit of the visitors to the waterfront. For instance, **integrating permanent or temporary active uses along the City streets near the waterfront**, which may be incorporated with the waterfront attractions, will help attract people farther into the City and make them more aware of what the downtown area has to offer. A few examples of community generators the City can implement or continue to promote more heavily in this area include:

- Street fairs.
- Farmers markets.
- Park music festivals.
- Food and restaurant promotion festivals.
- Carnivals.

### **Improve Architectural Building Façades**

One of the first steps to improving the perception of any community is to update and enhance the architectural façades of its buildings. The quality and character that buildings project have a considerable impact on the overall perception of any neighborhood or district. It is important that the buildings throughout Camden's downtown area project the redeveloping nature of the area, and the desired character of the surrounding community.

The panel recommends that **Camden implement façade design guidelines and grant program** for its downtown buildings. The purpose of the guidelines and program would be to establish

architectural continuity for both existing and future buildings, as well as create an inviting atmosphere for residents and visitors. This initiative would provide Camden building owners with guidance, as well as potential funding related to the design and restoration of existing buildings and storefronts to improve their appearance, enhance the City's identity and promote a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Some of these guidelines would apply to:

- Storefront signage.
- Façade material elements.
- Windows and awnings.
- Visibility of mechanical and electrical items.
- Façade color and design.
- Building illumination type and brightness.
- Building maintenance.

We understand that many building owners within downtown Camden may not have the financial resources to update their buildings to any proposed design standards. Therefore, the City should determine specific neighborhood boundaries that would require these elements and implement the façade grant program to assist building tenants with the funds necessary to meet these guidelines.

### **Develop a Market Study and Merchandising Plan**

While the establishment of a University Retail District is an exciting opportunity, it is important that Camden first truly understand the needs and desires of its current and potential residents. Camden should conduct a comprehensive analysis to identify retail demand and future tenants in its downtown district. In addition, developing a merchandising plan will

provide valuable information regarding the suitability of uses for commercial developments.

The development of a merchandising plan in Camden will help to articulate the most appropriate retail vision to serve the current and future needs of the downtown area as it continues to grow and expand. In addition, this plan will serve as a strategic guide for the future marketing of downtown Camden to potential local and national tenants.

### **Provide Additional Retail to Accommodate Waterfront Development**

The block bounded by Cooper and Market Streets between 2nd and 3rd Streets is a valuable opportunity to locate a Retail District in the future. The block is currently bounded by the proposed Radio Lofts Condominium project (to be developed by Dranoff Properties), Rutgers University and L-3 Communications Corporation.

The nearby location of both Rutgers University and L-3 Communications provides a unique opportunity to create a Retail District in this section of Camden, as there is already an established population of office workers, as well as university staff and students, to patronize future retail. Further, the addition of the proposed residential development at the Radio Lofts building will bring a significant number of residents to support the surrounding retail. The addition of supportive necessity retail nearby including grocery, convenience and other shopping destinations would also serve as an attractive incentive and could further encourage people to move into the neighborhood.

The development of a Retail District in this section of Camden would enhance the neighborhood and provide valuable infrastructure to support the existing and planned developments. In addition, the existing businesses on Market Street will serve as a catalyst for the future development of retail in the area. Finally, the close access to the waterfront destinations will help to transform this area into a more attractive, pedestrian-friendly and active destination.

### **Redevelopment of the Parkade Building Site**

It is our understanding that the City intends to demolish the existing Parkade building located at the corner of Market Street and 5th Street. This building has long been abandoned is an eyesore in a heavily trafficked area across from City Hall.

We understand that the current plan for this site is to redevelop the property as a park. While this plan could provide the area with a more attractive appearance and opportunities for community gathering and events, it is vital that the area be managed and operated in an appropriate manner so as not to develop into a habitat for inappropriate or unsafe activity.

We also recommend, to the extent possible that once demolished, a portion of the lot should be developed for retail or residential uses which will help activate the park. Further, the location of a public park on the site may be an appropriate site for some of the aforementioned community gathering activities including a farmers' market, festival, and more.

### **Centralize Parking**

Camden has a number of parking lots scattered throughout the City. The parking lots are not the highest and best use of these properties, particularly given their convenient proximity to the potential Retail District, transit, and the City's major institutions. In conjunction with mixed-use development on these surface lots, **the panel recommends consolidating parking into one or more centrally located parking facilities** so as to more appropriately utilize these lots for further development and green space. This will improve the economic viability of development by reducing the overall amount of structured parking to be built.

New development of structured parking in the downtown core should be integrated with mixed-use at the grade level to enhance the area's vibrancy. A mixed-use parking facility can play a vital role in encouraging more street-level activity, but also in encouraging surrounding development. Incorporating street level retail, office or restaurant space within the structure is an effective use of potentially limited space. This can increase activity in the surrounding neighborhood, as well as inspire architectural appeal and pedestrian scale along the street.

We recommend that Camden **identify opportunities to integrate a mixed-use parking facility** in the downtown. This type of development will prove valuable in freeing up existing parking lot space, while encouraging the development of a much needed mixed-use center in the heart of the community.

### Leverage Camden Heritage and Pride

Camden has a unique history which it should promote to attract visitors to the area and generate much-needed activity. Some of these historic sites include:

- Walt Whitman House and Museum.
- The Victor Building (the historic Nipper Building).
- Campbell Soup Co. corporate headquarters.
- Battleship New Jersey.

We recommend that Camden more effectively market these important landmarks. Camden residents and community stakeholders should identify opportunities to highlight the significant historic contributions made in this City over the past century. This will inspire a greater sense of pride within the community, and help attract more visitors from the surrounding region.

### Encourage Appropriate Uses on Primary Streets

The study area focused on Cooper and Market Streets as the primary area for a potential retail center. However, many of the existing buildings located on Cooper Street are not conducive to retail conversion. Many of these buildings are historic and feature frontage which does not portray the look and feel of typical retail store space. In addition, the front doors of many of these buildings are above the street level, requiring patrons to walk up stairs to enter the building. These issues do not effectively accommodate retail patrons, and are unlikely to attract tenants.

The study team identified **Market Street as a more advantageous solution for the integration of retail and Cooper Street as a better opportunity for the expansion of future office and residential space to complement proposed retail areas on Market Street.**

In addition, we recommend that the City **promote and enhance the variety of existing retail establishments on the north/south running streets** which connect Market and Cooper from 2nd Street to 6th Street. These establishments will serve as a foundation for future retail as they already provides goods and services to the current student, employee and residential populations in the City.



Photo courtesy of Anthony S. Rimikis, CCIM

### 7. Conclusion

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As stated throughout this report, the panel believes that the Camden has significant potential to re-establish itself as an attractive destination for visitors and residents alike. The panel understands that Camden faces a number of challenges moving forward due to years of economic stress and negative perceptions. However, as the home of a number of important institutions, as well as its notable waterfront destinations, Camden can continue to promote these as it sets out to redevelop and revitalize its downtown core.

The panel highlighted a number of opportunities that Camden should explore, including a **more intentional integration of the higher education and and healthcare institutions into the community, as well as the utilization of Market Street as a retail center and Cooper Street as an office and residential core.**

The challenges and recommendations outlined in this report will serve as a guide by which the community and its stakeholders can follow moving forward as it seeks to transform Camden into a more active and vibrant shopping and residential destination.



Photo courtesy of <http://www.camden.rutgers.edu>



Photo courtesy of <http://farm3.static.flickr.com>

## 8. Community Stakeholders Interviewed

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- **Jeff Anastasi** – Co-owner, Market Street Pizzeria
- **Vivian Baker** – Assistant Director, Transit Friendly Land Use & Development, NJ Transit
- **Lou Bezich** – Vice President for Administrative Services, Camden County College
- **David Blumenfeld** – President, Cross Properties
- **Sue Brennan** – Senior Project Director, Broadway Main Street, Greater Camden Partnership
- **Shawn Burke** – Cooper Grant Neighborhood Association
- **Joe Cavaliere** – Co-owner, Market Street Pizzeria
- **David Chojnacki** – Director of Business Services, Camden County College
- **Ellen Crain** – Senior Vice President, Community Development Officer, Susquehanna Bank
- **Carl Dranoff** – President, Dranoff Properties
- **Andrew Elliott** – Director, Camden Special Services District, Greater Camden Partnership
- **Donald Farish** – President, Rowan University
- **David Foster** – President & CEO, Greater Camden Partnership
- **Frank Fulbrook** – Cooper Grant Neighborhood Association
- **Dena Gadaleta** – Rowan University Student
- **Greg Gamble** – Director of Economic Development, Rutgers University-Camden
- **Jacob Gordon** – General Counsel, Cooper's Ferry Development Association
- **Darnell Hagarty** – Rowan University Student
- **Ray Hutton** - Senior Director, Legislative Relations, NJ Transit
- **Sandra Ross Johnson** – Executive Director, Camden Redevelopment Agency (CRA)
- **Melissa Kanaly** – Marketing Director, Adventure Aquarium
- **Kevin Kavanaugh** – Vice President of Development, RPM Development
- **Sandra Kelly** – Director of Economic and Business Development, Camden County Improvement Authority (CCIA)
- **Kevin Keppel** – Adventure Aquarium
- **Susan Bass Levin** – President and Chief Executive Officer of the Cooper Foundation, Cooper University Hospital
- Alan Maiman – Deputy General Manager, Bus Service Planning, NJ Transit
- **John Matheussen** – CEO, Delaware River Port Authority
- **Donavan McCargo** – Director of Student Services Rowan University at Camden

- **Tyrone McCombs** – Assistant Provost, Rowan University at Camden
- **Wendell Pritchett** – Chancellor, Rutgers University-Camden
- **Dan Sandiford** – Bus Service Planner, NJ Transit
- **Gloria Bonilla Santiago** – Founder, LEAP Academy Charter School
- **Bill Thompson** – Vice President, Institutional Advancement Executive Dean, Camden City Campus, Camden County College.
- **Pete Toso** – Owner, Little Slice of NY Pizza
- **Laura Wallick** – Regional Director for Business Development in Southern NJ , New Jersey Economic Development Authority.
- **Beth Waltrip** – Principal Bus Service Planner, NJ Transit
- **Michael Worth** – Field Office Director, Camden Field Office, US Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- **Raymond Yannuzzi** – President, Camden County College.
- **Bryon Yoder** – President, Cooper Grant Neighborhood Association.

## 9. Panelist Biographies

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### **Richard Huffman, FAIA – Architect and Planner, Wallace Roberts & Todd (Team Chair)**

Mr. Huffman is an architect and planner who recently retired from Wallace Roberts & Todd, where he directed projects throughout the United States and abroad. He was partner in charge of the award-winning Richmond Riverfront redevelopment, the urban design for Liberty Place in Philadelphia, the mixed-use development of Samson Common at the University of Pennsylvania and the 5th Street mixed-use development at Georgia Tech. He is a Co-Chair of ULI Philadelphia's TAP Council, its Advisory Board and Management Committee, and serves on ULI's national Inner City Council. He has taught at various universities and now teaches a workshop in the graduate school of design at the University of Pennsylvania, where he received his master's degrees in Architecture and City Planning.

### **Anthony S. Rimikis, CCIM – Senior Vice President for Urban Development, Brandywine Realty Trust (Team Co-Chair)**

Mr. Rimikis is Senior Vice President for Urban Development at Brandywine Realty Trust. He is responsible for the company's downtown Philadelphia development and construction activities and has more than 30 years' experience in the field of real estate. Mr. Rimikis serves on the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors of the University City District of Philadelphia; the Advisory Board of ULI Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Real Estate Council; and also serves on the Board of Directors of the Delaware Valley Smart Growth Alliance. Mr.

Rimikis holds undergraduate degrees from Temple University and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and an MBA from LaSalle University.

### **Peter Angelides, AICP – Vice President and Director, Econsult Corporation**

Dr. Angelides, Vice President and Director of Econsult Corporation, is an economist and city planner who provides economic and financial analysis for public policy, real estate, economic development and valuation matters. Dr. Angelides also teaches at the Fels Center of Government and the City Planning program at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Angelides received his BA in Urban Studies and MCP degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in economics from the University of Minnesota.

### **Gregory B. Filipek – Cofounder and Director, Sora Holdings LLC**

As Cofounder and Director of Sora Holdings LLC, Mr. Filipek has more than 30 years of development and construction experience in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New York. He has developed over 6,000,000 SF of commercial retail space, including department stores, big box retailers, regional and strip centers, theaters and movie complexes. In addition, he has developed over 2,000,000 SF of commercial office space. He earned a bachelors degree in Construction Technology/Management from Rowan University and was previously Senior Vice President at Trammel Crow Company.

**Jaime Flaherty – Associate, U3 Ventures**

Ms. Flaherty joined U3 Ventures in 2010 as an Associate. With a background in real estate economics, Ms. Flaherty works on both the development and advisory capacities, providing expertise in market, financial, and fiscal analysis. She has more than five years of experience working as an economic real estate consultant for all major land use categories, including residential, retail, hotel, office, and industrial, as well as in the area of attractions/entertainment facilities. Ms. Flaherty has served as a project manager for a wide variety of assignments and her skills include detailed market research, complex financial modeling, and tailored quantitative analysis. Ms. Flaherty has undergraduate degrees in business and psychology from the University of Pittsburgh. She received a master's degree in City Planning, as well as a Certificate in Real Estate Development from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Craig Grossman – Managing Director, Goldman Properties**

Mr. Grossman, Managing Director of Goldman Properties, is responsible for the management, marketing, leasing, development and financing of all aspects of the Philadelphia portfolio – encompassing 30 properties comprised of just over 400,000 SF of commercial, residential and mixed-use space. Mr. Grossman graduated from Brandeis University with a bachelor of arts in Philosophy in 1990 and received his MBA from Baruch College in 1998.

**Anuj Gupta – Executive Director, Mt. Airy, USA**

Mr. Gupta is currently Executive Director of Mt. Airy, USA. Prior to this position, he served for three years (2008-2010) in Mayor Michael A. Nutter's administration in a number of roles including Chief of Staff, Department of Licenses & Inspections; Deputy Commissioner, Department of Licenses & Inspections; and Deputy to the Managing Director. Prior to joining Mayor Nutter's administration, Mr. Gupta was an attorney at Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP, where he practiced in the firm's real estate/affordable housing group from 2004-2008. Mr. Gupta is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Law School (JD, 2003), the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government (MGA, 2003) and Carnegie Mellon University (BS, 1996).

**Megan Leinart, LEED AP BD+C – Proposal Manager/Parking Specialist, Timothy Haahs & Associates**

Ms. Leinart, LEED AP, serves as Proposal Manager and Parking Specialist for Timothy Haahs & Associates, Inc. (TimHaahs). She has assisted in the preparation of supply/demand studies, reports and compilation of data for municipal, healthcare and private clientele. Ms. Leinart also serves as the Proposal Manager for the firm, where she is responsible for research and managing all proposals. Ms. Leinart is a LEED AP and helps to lead TimHaahs' sustainability efforts. Ms. Leinart is co-chair of ULI Philadelphia's 2011 Urban Marketplace Committee and also serves on the ULI Philadelphia Young Leader Council.

**Margaret M. McCauley – Founder and Principal, Downtown Works**

With her colleagues at Downtown Works, the retail consulting firm she founded, Ms. McCauley creates and implements sustainable retail strategies that turn decaying urban zones into vibrant, vital downtowns. Among other appointments, Ms. McCauley serves on the Board of the International Downtown Association and of the Woodrow Wilson House presidential museum. She is Chair of the American Institute of Architect's Retail and Entertainment Knowledge Community Advisory Group and a member of the International Council of Shopping Centers. As a member of ULI, she was part of a team of experts tapped to develop "Ten Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail."

**Chris Mrozinski – Vice President, PREIT**

Mr. Mrozinski is a Vice President at the Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust, where his primary responsibility is to manage the company's development activities. He has been responsible for over 3.5 million SF of development activities, the leasing of over 500,000 SF of retail and office space, and \$350 million of investment. In 2009 he completed one of the first LEED Certified historic buildings in Philadelphia and closed a significant sale of historic tax credits. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Delaware, and a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He currently serves on the Advisory Boards of ULI Philadelphia and on the board of directors of the Delaware Valley Smart Growth Alliance.

**Eileen B. Quigley, Esq. – Associate, Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP**

Eileen B. Quigley is an associate in the Real Estate Department of Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, LLP, and a member of the Construction, Eminent Domain, Real Estate Development, and Zoning Land Use Groups. Before joining the firm, Ms. Quigley served for seven years in the City of Philadelphia Law Department as an Assistant City Solicitor and then Deputy City Solicitor. In that capacity, she provided legal counsel and representation in litigation and appeals for the Departments of Public Health and Licenses & Inspections and the Historical Commission. She was co-counsel in creating and implementing the first Lead Paint Court in Philadelphia and co-counsel in creating and implementing a pilot program called CLIP (Community Life Improvement Program), addressing quality-of-life issues in Philadelphia.

**David M. Ricci – Partner, The Flynn Company**

David M. Ricci joined The Flynn Company in November 1988 and is its senior representative in the New Jersey region. His responsibilities include oversight of acquisition and development opportunities; leasing and sales within major business parks; and the representation of tenants and build-to-suit clients. Active in the local real estate community, Mr. Ricci serves as Incoming Chair of ULI Philadelphia and on ULI's national Small Scale Development Council. Mr. Ricci is a 1988 graduate of Ursinus College with a bachelor's degree in Economics, holds an Associate Broker's license in the State of New Jersey and a Sales license in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**Joseph F. Ritchie – Principal, Lomax Real Estate Partners**

Mr. Ritchie is a principal of Lomax Real Estate Partners, the real estate arm of The Lomax Companies. His responsibilities include sourcing and executing urban development projects across product type in Philadelphia and New Jersey. Mr. Ritchie has an MBA from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and a bachelor's degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He serves on the Commercial Real Estate Committee of The Reinvestment Fund and has been an active member of several boards including the Old City District, French International School of Philadelphia and Prepare International, Inc.

**Jerry Roller, AIA – Managing Member, JKR Partners, LLC, Architects and Designers**

Mr. Roller is the founder of the firm. Starting out as a sole practitioner as JK Roller Architect, he has guided the growth of the firm through the creation of JK Roller Architects LLC and finally to JKR Partners LLC, a new firm name chosen to reflect the contributions of the many partners who have joined him since the firm was founded. Mr. Roller is active in the American Institute of Architects, serving as President of AIA-PA and holding the posts of Regional Director and Vice President on the National AIA Board.

**Paul Steinke – General Manager, Reading Terminal Market Corporation**

Mr. Steinke has served as General Manager of the Reading Terminal Market since 2001. Prior to taking his current position, Mr. Steinke served nearly four years as founding Executive Director of the University City District, a business improvement district that

played a key role in the revitalization of West Philadelphia. Before that, he spent seven years as Director of Finance and Administration for the Center City District, Philadelphia's downtown business improvement district. Mr. Steinke is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University, and studied business administration at Drexel University. He serves on the board of directors of the Center City Proprietors Association, National Association of Produce Market Managers, Preservation Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau.

**Puja Suneja, – Senior Manager, Transaction Real Estate, Ernst & Young**

Ms. Suneja has over eight years of industry experience, primarily in real estate property and portfolio valuation, commercial real estate due diligence, bank and loan due diligence, public private partnership advisory, and complex valuation modeling. During her time with Ernst & Young, Ms. Suneja's clients have included commercial real estate owners and users, national developers, government entities, national and regional banks, mortgage banks and private equity firms. Ms. Suneja completed her bachelor of science in economics at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Ms. Suneja is Co-Chair of ULI Philadelphia's Young Leaders Council.

**Tracy Tzen, LEED Green Associate – Senior Marketing Coordinator, KlingStubbins**

As a Senior Marketing Coordinator at KlingStubbins, a full-service architectural, engineering, interior design, and planning firm of over 400 personnel, Ms. Tzen collaborates with firm leadership to execute local, national and international business development initiatives, including proposals, presentations, and additional marketing collateral. Ms. Tzen works directly for the Corporate/Commercial, Mission Critical, and Education sectors, and also leads departmental training sessions, provides guidance to new employees, and plays a critical role in the department's QA/QC process. Ms. Tzen graduated from Emory University in Atlanta with a business degree and concentrations in marketing and accounting.

**James M. Zullo, CAPP, LEED AP, AICP – Vice President, Timothy Haahs & Associates**

Jim Zullo serves as Vice President of TimHaahs' New Brunswick, NJ office. Prior to joining TimHaahs, Jim served as Senior Director of Real Estate and Economic Development for NJ TRANSIT, the third largest transit agency in the United States. Mr. Zullo has also served as Vice President of the New Brunswick Development Corporation and Executive Director of the New Brunswick Parking Authority (NBPA). Mr. Zullo is actively involved with the International Parking Institute, serving on the executive committee. He also is a member of the American Planning Association, New Jersey Parking Institute, New York State Parking Association, New Brunswick Special Improvement District, and the Urban Land Institute.



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