

TOGETHER  
**NORTH  
JERSEY.**



# THE PLAN.

**2015**



Connecting People, Places, and Potential ●



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 New Jersey Future  
 Building One New Jersey  
 PlanSmart NJ

Regional Plan Association  
 The Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey/  
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 \*Denotes Executive Committee Member  
 We would also like to thank the following individuals who served as chairs of our Standing committees and served on the TNJ Steering and Executive committees:  
 Michael McGuiness, New Jersey Chapter of NAIOP (Chair of Economic Competitiveness)  
 Kevin Moore, CityFood Resources L3C (Chair of Livability and Environment)  
 Karen Pinzolo, ArtPride NJ Foundation (Chair of Society and Community)

### STANDING COMMITTEES

We would like to thank the more than 200 members of our standing committees that contributed their time, insights and ideas throughout the planning process.

### PROJECT TEAM AND PARTNERS

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# Background ●



**WE ARE ALL FAMILIAR** with the challenges of living, working and doing business in North Jersey—for a start, scarce jobs, costly housing and commutes that jangle the toughest nerves. In North Jersey, people frequently travel between towns—or even between counties—to get to work, to school, to entertainment and home again. Our lives and our communities are deeply interwoven.

That means that improving quality of life in North Jersey can't be done one town at a time. Just as members of a family might work together to create a plan to buy a house, pay for college or budget for retirement, communities throughout the region must work together to achieve their long-term goals: creating places where people want to live and where businesses want to be.

But how do we get diverse communities to work together? That's where regional planning comes in.

Regional planning is a process that brings together planning experts, public officials, civic leaders, businesses and citizens to articulate goals,



**I**nitial funding for Together North Jersey came from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In 2009, HUD joined with the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency to create an Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities. In this context, HUD created the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program in an effort to support metropolitan and multi-jurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure plans and to empower jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of economic growth and revitalization, access to opportunity, public health, and environmental impact simultaneously.

In August 2011, in response to HUD's FY2011 Sustainable Communities Grant Program Solicitation, the Edward J. Bloustein School for Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University (Rutgers-Bloustein) submitted a collaborate grant application on the behalf of a coalition of government agencies, non-profit organizations, and others to create Together North Jersey.

In November 2011, HUD notified Together North Jersey that its application had been selected for an award in the amount of \$5 million and the partners, as part of the application process, entered into a formal "consortium agreement" in January of 2012. The HUD grant was then matched with an additional \$5 million in leveraged funds from project partners.

identify challenges and devise solutions that meet the needs of all stakeholders in an area, including residents, businesses and local governments.

Together North Jersey (TNJ) was created in 2011 to help develop a regional plan for North Jersey. Funded by a nearly \$10 million federal grant and leveraged funds from members, TNJ brought together a coalition of nearly 100 diverse partners—counties, municipalities, educational institutions, nonprofits, businesses and other groups—to develop the first comprehensive plan for sustainable development for the 13 northern New Jersey counties: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren.

# Listening and learning ●



**FROM 2012 THROUGH EARLY 2015**, TNJ staff traveled around North Jersey and spoke with thousands of residents, business owners and local leaders about the quality of life issues most important to them. Insights gleaned from these interactions were critical to shaping the plan. TNJ undertook three phases of public outreach: discovery, visioning and action planning.

In the Discovery Phase, TNJ staff conducted a series of public workshops for residents that asked “Where are we now?” and “Where are we headed?” Participants talked about current conditions where they live, and discussed what these conditions might mean for the future of their communities. Through group discussion and interactive polling exercises, participants and TNJ staff established shared values and developed an understanding of local needs and regional planning goals.

The Visioning Phase asked a new question: “Where do we want to be?” Building on what was learned in the discovery workshops, in this phase TNJ staff conducted outreach through “pop-up” kiosks in area



malls, community colleges and museums. Participants considered how much and where the region had grown over the past 30 years, and talked about where they thought future growth should occur.

The Action Planning Phase built on the first two phases of outreach, asking, “How do we get there?” With the goals for the region now clear, participants considered potential strategies for reaching those outcomes and recommended steps to achieve the region’s vision for the future. During this phase, in the summer of 2014, Together North Jersey partnered with The Star-Ledger to engage with North and South Jersey residents through interactive posts on NJ.com. The series of op-eds, articles, live chats, polls and other engagement activities that resulted from this partnership were an opportunity for New Jersey residents to learn about the development challenges facing our region and to be involved in shaping the Together North Jersey plan.

TNJ undertook  
 three phases of  
 public outreach:  
 discovery,  
 visioning and  
 action planning.

# About the plan●



In this plan,  
North Jersey is  
envisioned as  
a world-class  
region.

**THE TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY** plan is detailed, field-tested guidance for the kinds of public policy North Jersey needs to improve lives and opportunities for residents and businesses. It is not a compliance document or another set of regulations or layer of red tape.

This plan is also not just for elected officials or academics (though it is for them too!). It's for business owners, workers, teachers, developers, stay-at-home parents, students, urban planners, small farmers, commuters, artists, entrepreneurs, homeowners, renters, advocates...just to name a few. We all have a role to play in making our communities better.

Because here's the bottom line: The decisions we make as individuals, as families and communities are all connected. Choices about where to live or work shapes where a person shops, goes for fun, sends his or her children to school—and whether he or she drives, bikes, walks or uses public transit to do these things. Taken altogether, our individual choices shape our shared environment. The first step in planning for a sustainable future is recognizing and appreciating these connections and their impacts.

North Jersey may be part of the New York Metropolitan area, but it's also a distinctive region in its own right, with a strong workforce, vibrant local culture, abundant natural, historic and manufactured local resources and a dense transit system at the heart of one of the world's most vital markets. In this plan, North Jersey is envisioned as a world-class region that attracts talent from around the world and is known as a great place to live, work, raise children, do business and retire.

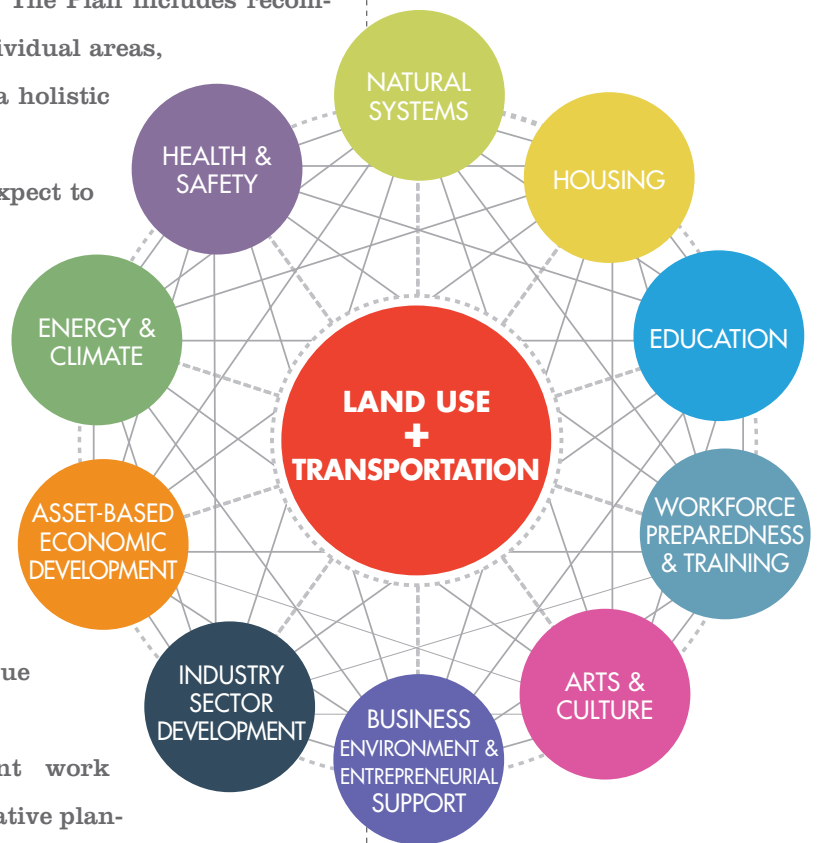




The pinwheel below shows the wide range of topics that TNJ partners and communities explored in developing The Plan, with land use and transportation at its heart. But critically, the figure also shows the many ways in which these topics are linked. While The Plan includes recommendations and strategies for improving individual areas, it emphasizes the “big picture,” articulating a holistic approach to planning for our region’s future.

Here’s a brief overview of what you can expect to find in each chapter of **The Plan**:

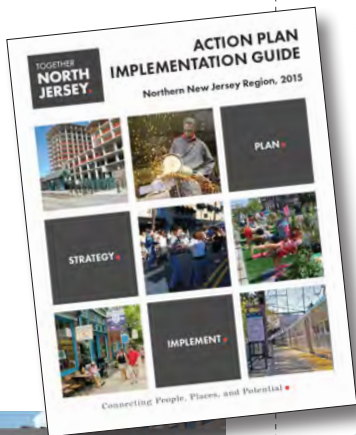
- **Where we are today.** Describes existing conditions and trends in North Jersey, and highlights some of the challenges and opportunities facing the region today.
- **Where we want to go.** Lays out a vision for the region’s future, based on five core goals and four key themes.
- **How we get there.** Identifies 15 focus areas and 73 strategies the region can pursue to achieve its desired vision.
- **Leading the way.** Highlights important work accomplished as part of TNJ’s 40 local initiative planning projects.
- **Making it all happen.** Discusses the difficult choices our region faces to find financial resources for implementation, and suggests a framework for moving forward.



# About the plan ●



**THE PLAN ALSO INCORPORATES** by reference: The Plan's Implementation Action Agenda which includes detailed actions, timelines and responsible parties for each strategy presented in the plan; the North Jersey Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; the Together North Jersey Fair Housing and Equity Assessment Final Report; the Local Demonstration Project Final Reports and the final work products of the Local Government Capacity Grant and NGO Micro-grant programs. All of these documents can be found at [www.togethernorthjersey.com](http://www.togethernorthjersey.com). For more detail on how these plans can be used by decision-makers in our region, see *Making It All Happen* (page 106).



- **The Together North Jersey Implementation Action Agenda:** The Together North Jersey Implementation Action Agenda includes detailed actions, timelines and responsible parties for each of the strategies presented in the 15 Focus Areas of The Plan. These documents are meant to provide detailed guidance to policy- and decision-makers who are looking to implement the recommendations provided by Together North Jersey. The Implementation Action Agenda is available online at [www.togethernorthjersey.com/actionplan](http://www.togethernorthjersey.com/actionplan).

- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** Together North Jersey and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) worked together to prepare a Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the North Jersey region. Funded by the U.S. Economic Development Agency, the North Jersey CEDS is designed to foster public-private partnerships to lay the



groundwork for an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen our regional economy, develop and implement a regional plan of action, and identify investment priorities and funding sources. [www.together-northjersey.com/ceds](http://www.together-northjersey.com/ceds)

- **Fair Housing and Equity Assessment:** As part of the process to develop The Plan, Together North Jersey also prepared a Regional Fair Housing and Equity Assessment (FHEA). The FHEA provides an analysis of segregation, racial and ethnic concentrations of poverty, access to places of high “opportunity,” distribution of recent infrastructure investments and explores other regulatory and private market barriers to fair housing choice. The report recommends strategies and actions to address regional disparities in access to opportunity and barriers to fair housing, all of which have been integrated into the Together North Jersey Plan. [www.togethernorthjersey.com/fhea](http://www.togethernorthjersey.com/fhea)



- **Local Demonstration Project, Local Government Capacity Grant, and NGO Micro-grant Final Reports:** Also available on the Together North Jersey website are all of the final products and reports for the three re-granting programs of Together North Jersey: the Local Demonstration Project Program, the Local Government Capacity Grant Program and The NGO Micro-grant program. These re-granting programs sponsored the work of local communities, counties and partnerships around the region to undertake a specific planning initiative in line with the goals of Together North Jersey. [www.togethernorthjersey.com](http://www.togethernorthjersey.com)

# Where we a



# re today ●



**THE 13 COUNTIES** of the Together North Jersey planning region are located at the heart of the Boston-to-Washington northeast corridor—among the world’s most vital markets for trade, politics, media, research and entertainment. This location, and particularly our proximity to New York City, provides many strategic advantages. But location isn’t our region’s only strength. North Jersey is also home to robust transportation networks, a range of successful businesses and industries, a highly educated workforce and a varied landscape of great places to live, work, play and do business, all

## **In this Section: Strengths and Assets ● | Issues and Challenges ●**

of which contribute to a high quality of life for many residents. Many parts of our region, especially its newer suburbs and historic town centers, have thrived in recent decades.

● Yet our once highly competitive region is also struggling. Overall prosperity appears to be in decline. We've experienced significant job losses and an uneven recovery from the Great Recession. For those who are employed, average commute times are among the longest in the nation. The cost of living in North Jersey is higher than in many other regions in the country, and increasing government debt burden threatens even higher taxes and/or potential cuts to essential public services.

● Business growth in North Jersey is hampered by aging infrastructure, high costs of doing business and red tape stemming from fragmented government decision-making.

Workers in critical but low- or middle-income occupations often struggle to find housing options they can afford. Underperforming urban centers make it hard to attract a talented workforce and the companies that would employ them—despite the fact that today's young professionals show a marked preference for urban living. Collectively, these serious challenges threaten our future prosperity and quality of life. ● In this section, we take a detailed look at some of the features of our region that contribute to its overall competitiveness and sustainability—for better and for worse.



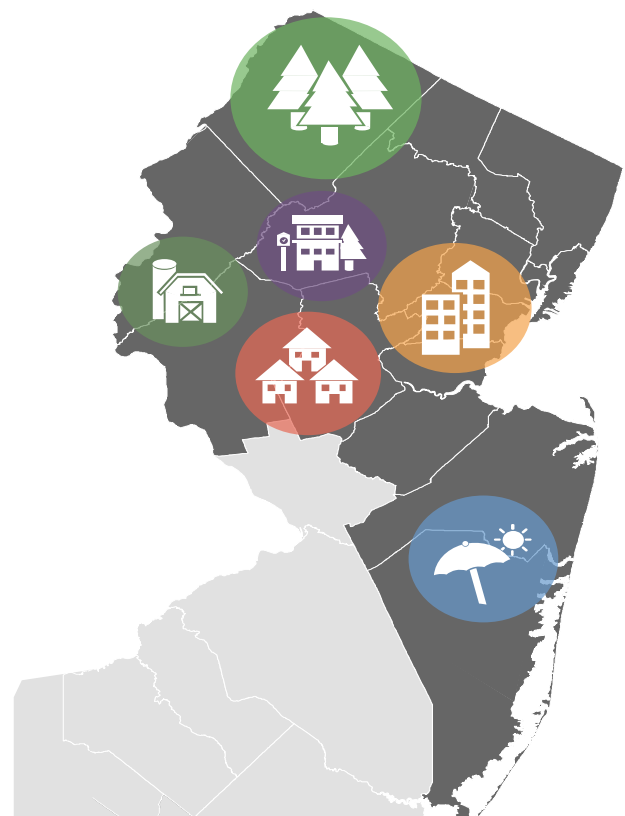
## Strengths and Assets ●

### Robust transportation ●

● Our transportation system is a defining characteristic of North Jersey and is essential to the region's economic competitiveness. We have a roadway network of more than 25,000 miles that accommodates 145 million vehicle miles of travel each day. Interstate highways and toll roads make it easy to travel throughout New Jersey, and afford convenient access to Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware and beyond. Our region also has a well-developed network of public transit services: ten commuter rail lines with 150 stations; two light rail lines with 39 stations; the PATH commuter rail service that connects Newark, Harrison and Jersey City with Lower and Midtown Manhattan; and three ferry companies operating 18 routes between New Jersey and New York City. These services support nearly a million transit trips each weekday—among the highest public transit use of any state in the nation.

### A varied and diverse landscape ●

● The Together North Jersey planning region is large, comprising over 4,200 square miles of land—approximately half of the state of New Jersey. It may surprise some people, accustomed to the region's well-





NEARLY  
**200**  
RAIL  
STATIONS



**1000+**  
MILES OF  
SIDEWALKS  
PATHS  
AND  
TRAILS



WE HAVE A  
ROADWAY  
NETWORK OF  
MORE THAN  
**25,000**  
MILES



**335**  
MILLION  
TONS OF  
FREIGHT  
PER YEAR



**18**  
FERRY  
ROUTES  
BETWEEN  
NJ AND NY

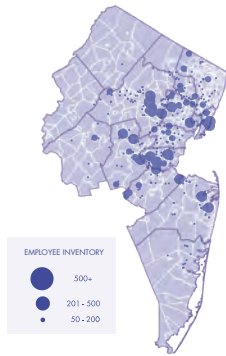
In addition, thousands of miles of sidewalks, paths and trails provide residents and visitors with bicycling and walking access to residential, retail and service, employment and recreational destinations. The region also hosts the Port of New York and New Jersey—the largest seaport on the East Coast and the third largest in the nation, serving as a gateway to North America for both imports and, increasingly, for exports. Newark Liberty International Airport is an important hub for the movement of airline passengers and air cargo. And the region’s rail freight system, offering connections to points throughout North America, is comprised of Class I carriers and major rail arteries that carry upwards of 74 freight trains per day.

known infrastructure and major cities, that North Jersey’s urban and built-up areas account for just 34 percent its total land areas. The remaining two-thirds include agricultural and forested land, parks and preserved expanses. Our region is nationally recognized for its diverse range of landscapes, from the forested ridges and rolling farmland of the Highlands in the northwest, to the pine plains and cedar swamps of the Pinelands in Ocean County and miles of white sand beaches and boardwalks along its beautiful Atlantic coastline. We are also home to a varied range of community settings, including beach towns and bayshore communities in the east, rural communities in the west and northwest, cities and older suburbs in the region’s urbanized northeast, and suburban towns in the region’s center. Some of the oldest and most historic places in the U.S. are in the Together North Jersey region, including important Revolutionary War landmarks, the homes of luminaries including the poet Walt Whitman, Thomas Edison and U.S. President Grover Cleveland, and some of the first cities settled in North America by Europeans, including Jersey City and Elizabeth. Together, the rich diversity of these settings forms a colorful tapestry of great places to live, work, play and do business.

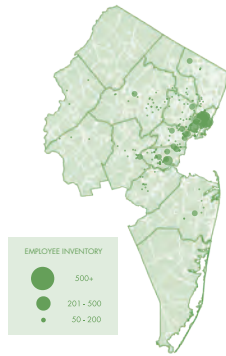


# Strengths and Assets ●

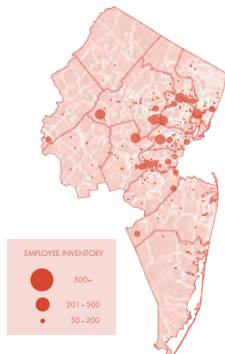
BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES



TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTICS



MANUFACTURING



## Concentration of employment in key industry clusters ●

**T**he region is home to many successful companies and businesses, including numerous corporate and regional headquarters. Compared to the nation, our region has above-average concentrations of business and employment activity in the transportation, warehousing and logistics sector, as well as in wholesale trade, professional services, finance and insurance industries, and pharmaceuticals related advance manufacturing. Recent job growth in the region shows strength in the healthcare and life sciences industries, as well as in education, utilities and leisure, hospitality and retail.

## Highly educated workforce ●

**N**ew Jersey has long been recognized as a state rich in talent and educational opportunities. According to New Jersey’s Draft State Strategic Plan, our state ranks sixth in the nation for managerial, professional and technical jobs, and seventh in the nation for the number of Ph.D. scientists and engineers per 1,000 workers. It is among the top 10 states in the U.S. for the attainment of bachelor degrees among people age 25 to 44. In the Together North Jersey region alone, the labor force numbers 3.4 million workers. Forty-five percent of the region’s population age 25 and older has received a college degree—three percent more than the statewide average and nine percent higher than the national average. The region is home to many of the state’s world-class colleges and universities, including 57 universities, colleges and technical schools conferring more than 75,000 degrees annually. These institutions of higher education not only educate future workers, but also have the potential to invest in research and development with private sector partners.



FORTY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE REGION’S POPULATION AGE 25 AND OLDER HAS RECEIVED A COLLEGE DEGREE



NJ IS AMONG THE TOP 10 STATES IN THE U.S. FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF BACHELOR DEGREES AMONG 25-44 YEAR OLDS



THE REGION IS HOME TO MANY OF THE STATE’S 57 WORLD-CLASS COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES





### High Quality of Life ●

**M**any communities throughout our region boast a high quality of life. The 13 counties that make up the Together North Jersey planning region are among the safest in New Jersey, with 10 counties having per capita arrest rates below the statewide average of 37 arrests per 1,000 people. New Jersey’s public school system is regularly ranked among the best in the country; NJ Monthly Magazine reports 88 of the top 100 high schools in New Jersey are located in our region. High test scores for reading and math proficiency, low drop-out rates and school safety all contribute to these high rankings. And our vibrant arts, cultural assets, and historic sites help to create distinctive communities that are attractive places for businesses and families to invest and grow. In 2010 there were 32,000 creative sector establishments in North Jersey including art galleries, studios and theaters, employing a total of approximately 170,900 people. New Jersey is also home to nine national parks, 36 state parks and hundreds of local parks, many of which are located within or near our region. Close proximity to New York City provides opportunities to access even more amenities and cultural resources.

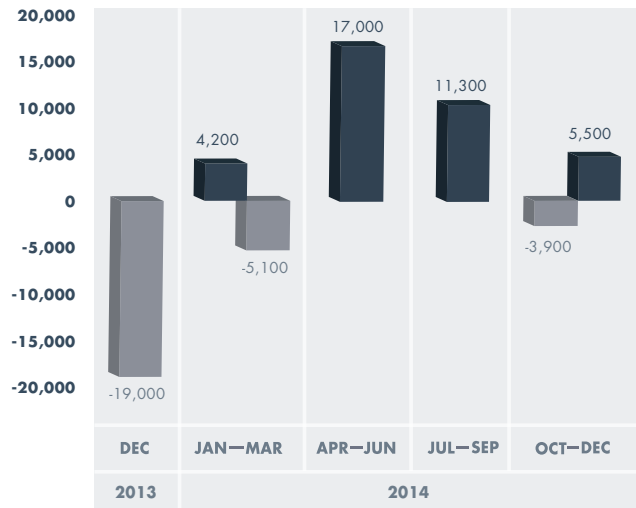


200,000

net number of jobs lost  
in New Jersey from  
2000 to 2010,  
equaling 5% of the  
state's job base.

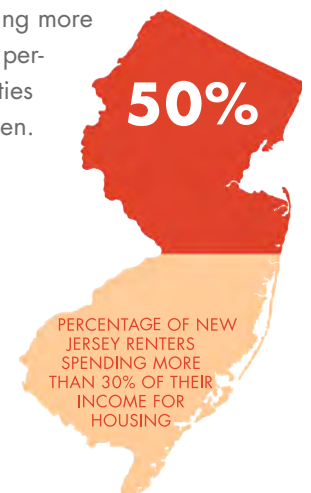
## Issues and Challenges ●

MONTHLY TOTAL EMPLOYMENT CHANGE  
NEW JERSEY: DECEMBER 2013—DECEMBER 2014



### High Cost of Housing ●

**H**ousing in the region is unaffordable for many working families, young people and retirees—especially renters. Almost half of North Jersey renters spend more than 30 percent of their income for housing. More than 28 percent of all renters pay more than half of their monthly income on housing. The average fair market rent (FMR) in the region is \$1,336 for a two-bedroom apartment; the National Low-Income Housing Coalition's 2010 "Out of Reach" report ranked New Jersey as the fifth most expensive state to rent this type of home. Of the households in our region spending more than 30 percent of income on rent, 39 percent are elderly or people with disabilities and 35 percent are families with children.

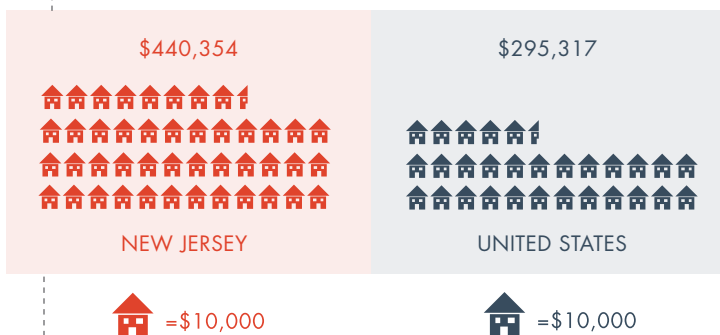


## Stagnant and Uneven Job Growth ●

**E**ven before the great national recession of 2007-2009, New Jersey's job growth was flat. The first decade of the 21st century in New Jersey has been described by leading Rutgers demographers Dr. James Hughes and Dr. Joseph Seneca as the "lost employment decade." According to data from the New Jersey Department of Labor, total employment in New Jersey peaked in December 2007, when the state had approximately 4,082,000 non-farm jobs. However, between 2000 and 2010, the state lost nearly 200,000 jobs. In 2014, the total number of jobs in New Jersey was approximately the same as it was in 1999. While economic conditions and job growth nationally have improved significantly over the past six years, Rutgers Economic Advisory Service forecasts suggest that New Jersey will not regain the number of jobs lost during the recession until late 2017.

Renters aren't the only ones facing steep housing costs in North Jersey. The cost of owning a home in the region is also high. Despite the recent drop in home prices amid a depressed housing market, prices overall are still much higher in North Jersey than in many other regions of the U.S. According to the 2014 Coldwell Banker Real Estate Home Listing Report, the average listing price of a four-bedroom, two-bathroom home in New Jersey is \$440,354, compared to \$295,317 nationally. Forty-four of the nation's top 300 most expensive communities to buy a home are in the Together North Jersey region.

### HIGH COST OF HOUSING



## High Tax Burden ●

**T**he high taxes in New Jersey and our region make it a very expensive place to live or do business. Each year, the Tax Foundation, a non-partisan research think tank based in Washington, D.C., estimates state and local tax burden (the total amount of state and local taxes paid by residents divided by the state's total income). In 2011, the latest year for which data is available, New Jersey residents had the second highest tax burden in the nation—12.3 percent. On average residents pay and estimated \$6,622 per capita compared to the national average of \$4,217.

Property taxes are particularly burdensome in our region and are among the highest in the nation. According to the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs property taxes in New Jersey rose by 2.2 percent in 2014. In our region the average residential property tax paid by homeowners was \$8,697. The highest property taxes are paid in Essex, Bergen and Union counties where average annual property tax bills exceeded \$10,000 per unit. The lowest property taxes were in Warren and Ocean counties where homeowners paid less than \$7,000 annually. Nationally the rate was \$2,043 per unit. In terms of property tax rates, 12 of the top 25 highest cost counties in the U.S. were located in our region.

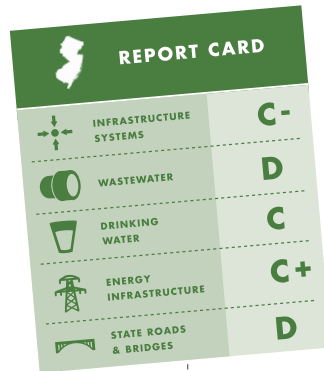


# Issues and Challenges ●

## Aging Infrastructure ●

**M**odern, efficient and resilient infrastructure (transportation networks, wastewater systems, drinking water systems, schools, open space, power and telecommunications) are essential to New Jersey's long-term economic competitiveness and are necessary to maintain a high quality of life. In decades past, New Jersey's infrastructure, especially its transportation networks, set it apart from other states. Unfortunately, the same is not true today.

Most of New Jersey's critical infrastructure (transportation, water supply, wastewater and power) was built more than a century ago and is now in poor condition. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) grades



| REPORT CARD            |    |
|------------------------|----|
| INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEMS | C- |
| WASTEWATER             | D  |
| DRINKING WATER         | C  |
| ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE  | C+ |
| STATE ROADS & BRIDGES  | D  |

New Jersey Infrastructure systems a C- overall. Wastewater systems received a grade of D, drinking water systems a C, energy infrastructure a C+ and the state's roads and bridges a D. Thirty-six percent of the state's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, meaning that they are either in poor condition or the design is outdated and not up to code. Sixty-six percent of

New Jersey's roads are considered in poor or mediocre condition, costing motorists an estimated \$3.476 million a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs—averaging approximately \$601 per driver per year.

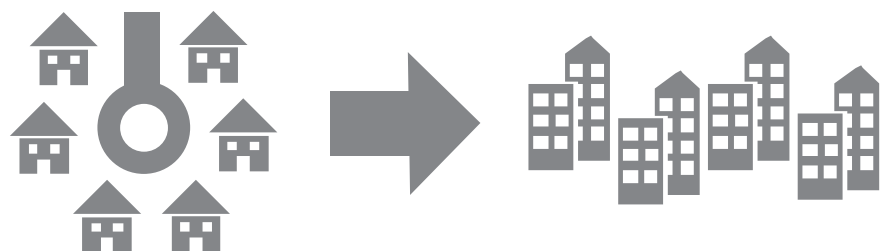
## Shifting Market Preferences ●

**T**he millennial generation, comprised of people born between 1980 and 2000, now outnumbers the baby boomer generation. Millennials' choices about where to live and work will shape communities for years to come. And those preferences are markedly different from those of earlier generations. This is a generation that places a high value on its surroundings. Rather than moving to wherever they can find work, the most recent American Community Survey prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau found that 64 percent of college-educated millennials looked for a job after they picked the city where they wanted to live. And millennials generally share a preference for urban, walkable communities with a variety of activities, amenities and housing options—not the suburbs and exurbs where many of them grew up. Companies are now prioritizing urban locations that are safe, convenient and offer 24-7 amenities to attract this rising generation of young professionals.

But millennials aren't the only group with a desire for city living—or at least, more connected communities. When considering a home purchase, Americans look for neighborhoods with abundant sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly features, and would like to see improvements to existing public transportation rather than initiatives to build new roads and developments.

## Stranded Suburban Assets ●

**O**nce New Jersey's model of economic development, large office and retail suburban centers are increasingly underutilized and causing a drain on local economies. According to data analysis by PlanSmart NJ, a "Stranded Asset" is defined as an office building that has 100,000 square feet or more of rentable building area and the building is either 100 percent vacant or has had a vacancy rate above the regional rate of 14 percent for the last five years. Since 2003, office vacancy rates in the North New Jersey market have been higher than in the rest of the United States. Currently there are 30.1 million square feet of vacant office space in Northern New Jersey, an amount equal to seven Empire State Buildings. Nearly 90 percent of these stranded assets are in suburban areas, totaling approximately 6000 acres of land.



## Changing Demographics ●

**P**olicy makers and planners have been slow to respond to changing demographics in our region. Currently, North Jersey is home to 6.6 million residents—more than 75 percent of the state’s total population. From 1980 to 2010, the region’s population increased by more than 1 million people. By 2040, we are expected to add another 1.2 million residents, bringing the total population to almost 8 million people. Over the past 30 years, the number of foreign-born residents living



in our region has grown steadily. More than four out of every 10 people in the Together North Jersey region are racial minorities—twice as many as in 1980. In 2010, five of the region’s counties (Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Passaic and Union) were “majority-minority” counties, meaning people from minority groups made up a majority of the county’s population. This pattern is expected to continue over the next 30 years, with much of the region’s population growth likely to come through immigration.

At the same time, our population is aging. Today over 40 percent of the region’s population is between the age of 35 and 64—7 percent more than in 1980. During the same period, the share of the region’s population between the age of 10 and 34 declined by more than 8 percent. The number of seniors will continue to increase over the next 20 years as the large baby boomer generation matures and average life expectancy increases.

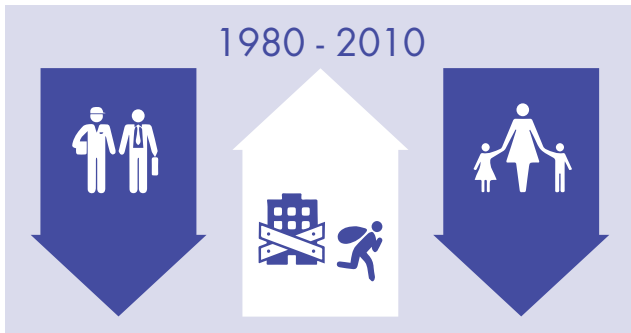
The number of single-person and single-parent households is also increasing. While the traditional nuclear family may have at one time been the norm, today young adults are increasingly putting off marriage and parenthood, more people are raising children on their own, and the aging of the baby boomer generation is creating a new wave of empty-nesters. Of the 2.4 million households in the region in 2010, 25 percent consisted of only one person, 31 percent consisted of two or more unmarried adults, and 8 percent consisted of single-parent units.

# Policy makers

have been slow to respond to changing demographics and locational preferences that will shape the region’s future.



## Issues and Challenges ●



### Underperforming Cities ●

**N**orth Jersey's urban centers offer significant human, cultural and infrastructure assets, yet most are underperforming. Over the past 50 years, quality of life in more urban parts of our region has diminished. As population and jobs moved into newer suburbs, the region's cities and many older suburbs were drained of economic resources. Once-thriving commercial districts were hollowed out, and well-maintained infrastructure fell into disrepair. Average incomes fell, crime increased, and the quality of public school systems declined. Poverty became concentrated and the region became increasingly segregated. These conditions created starkly different patterns of prosperity in the region and continue to limit access to opportunity for many residents in these communities—especially those with lower incomes.

Moreover, the shift to the car-dependent office and industrial parks—a move that propelled the region's economy in the 1980's and 1990's—now appears to be undermining the region's competitiveness. In today's economy, businesses and workers increasingly prefer urban, amenity-rich locations, yet New Jersey's cities have not kept pace with the improvements that are drawing investment and workers to places like the Washington, D.C. and Boston metropolitan areas. While crime statistics are low and school quality are high in many suburban communities, public safety and public education are of particular concern in our region's large and smaller cities and, increasingly, in nearby older towns and suburbs.

In contrast, in other states, urban centers are economic engines, generating economic activity and job creation and bringing in a disproportionately high share of state tax revenue, when compared to suburban areas. Due to the low tax base in our cities, they cannot pay for necessary public services alone. In our region, the state and, indirectly, suburban taxpayers have to help pay the high costs of public services in those cities.

### Income disparities and unequal access to opportunity ●

**I**ncome disparities in our region are prevalent—and rising rapidly. Nearly 9 percent of the 2.35 million households in the region live in poverty. Although there are pockets of poverty in each of the region's 13 counties, households in poverty are more concentrated in Hudson, Essex, Passaic and Union counties—and especially in cities. The poverty rate in Paterson is 27 percent, in Newark 24 percent, in Elizabeth 17 percent and in Jersey City 16 percent. By comparison, household poverty rates are below the regional average in the region's more suburban and rural counties, ranging from 7.8 percent in Ocean County to 3.6 percent in Somerset County. In the 2010-2011 school year approximately 35 percent of students across the region were eligible for Free and Reduced-price Meals (FARM). But in our urban centers we saw much higher rates. Eighty-seven percent of students in Newark qualified, along with 86 percent of students in

### Persistent environmental and health disparities ●

**A**s has been the case in many parts of the United States, over the past half a century, the health of New Jersey residents has improved. Death rates due to chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes have declined over the past decade, probably due primarily to advances in medical care—though heart disease and cancer remain the leading causes of death in the state—and the infant mortality rate has continued its century-long decline. At the same time, there are dramatic health outcome disparities amongst racial and ethnic groups, with non-Hispanic blacks experiencing notably higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, infant mortality, teenage preg-



Paterson, 88 percent of students in Elizabeth and 86 percent in Passaic.

There are many communities in our region where residents can attend high-performing schools, live in clean, safe neighborhoods, get to well-paying jobs in a reasonable amount of time, buy healthy foods without going far from home and receive quality local government services. Unfortunately, the high cost of housing in many of these places, combined with limited transportation options, makes it impossible

for many of our region's residents to access these opportunities. While these patterns are not new, they persist and have gotten worse in recent decades.



nancy, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse issues, and violence than other racial groups. Also, New Jersey's industrial legacy, high population density, and traffic congestion create significant environmental and public health burdens for state residents, especially those that live in our region's cities, older towns and suburbs. New Jersey suffers from poor air quality, consistently exceeding U.S. EPA air quality standards for ozone statewide and for fine particulate matter in urban areas. In addition, according to a recent study completed by New Jersey Future, there are 21 municipalities in New Jersey served by combined stormwater and sanitary sewer systems—18 of them in the Together North Jersey region. During periods of heavy rain, these systems discharge nearly seven million gallons of untreated sewage into the state's rivers and bays, compromising water quality and sewer back-ups into homes, streets and waterways regularly threaten public health.



## Still recovering from recent disasters ●

In 2011, Tropical Storm Irene made land fall in New Jersey resulting in catastrophic rainfall, flooding and property damage throughout the state. Just one year later, in October of 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused widespread flooding and destruction along the Atlantic coastline, back-bay areas and urban waterfronts throughout Northern New Jersey. Some areas of our region experienced storm surges of 14 feet or more. At the peak of the storm, 2.6 million residents statewide lost power. The storm is blamed for 43 deaths in New Jersey and resulted in tens of billions of dollars in property and infrastructure damage and other economic losses. Hurricane Sandy and Tropical Storm Irene also highlighted that many low-income areas and communities of color are particularly vulnerable to impacts from coastal storm surge, river flooding and future sea-level rise. In addition to being inundated by flood waters, urban areas have the potential to face flood waters contaminated with pollution from adjacent and nearby industrial facilities, contaminated sites and untreated sewage from nearby wastewater treatment plants. These recent disasters have highlighted our region's vulnerabilities to extreme weather and a changing climate and highlight the need to incorporate resiliency and hazard mitigation in long range planning.



**OUR REGION** has changed dramatically over the past 30 years. More than a million people have moved here and nearly a million jobs have been created. Cities have declined and suburbs have grown in areas that were mostly farmland and forests ● While the past is known, our future is uncertain. The region is poised to continue to change over the next 30 years. Continued economic globalization, changing demographics, shifting real estate market demands, technological innovation and the uncertainty of global climate change will all play a role in North Jersey's evolution—and are all largely beyond the region's ability to control. To ensure a prosperous future, we will need to adapt, innovate and manage our region's growth, development and investment. ● Regional planning is a process that allows various members of a community to work together to address problems, and to take advantage of opportunities that cross municipal, county or even state borders. Solutions developed in the planning process must reflect collective values shared across borders and neighborhoods.

# Where

## What's important to the region's residents ●

● For more than two years, we traveled around the region listening to and learning from thousands of residents, local officials, business leaders and others. We discussed the issues and challenges we face in our individual communities and as a region. We identified shared values and common interests. We explored what we think is most important for the future and we prioritized goals that we can pursue together.

**In this Section: Shared Values ● | Common Interests ● | Our Vision for the Future ●**





**we want to go** ●



## Shared values ●

**AS PART OF** this planning process, we asked residents and local leaders from around the region about the things that are important to them as individuals and in community life—the things they value most. From personal growth and well-being, to community, family, nature, education and safety/security, here is what we heard were most important to them:

**Being healthy and taking care of ourselves and others ●**

**Having good neighbors and being a good neighbor ●**

**Having time to spend together ●**

**Taking good care of our air, water and natural lands ●**

**Having opportunities to keep learning all through life ●**

**Having safe neighborhoods ●**

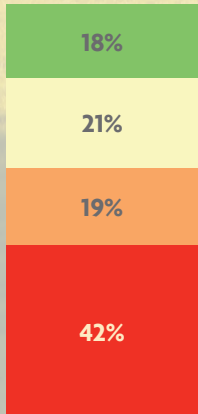
**Peace of mind about the future ●**



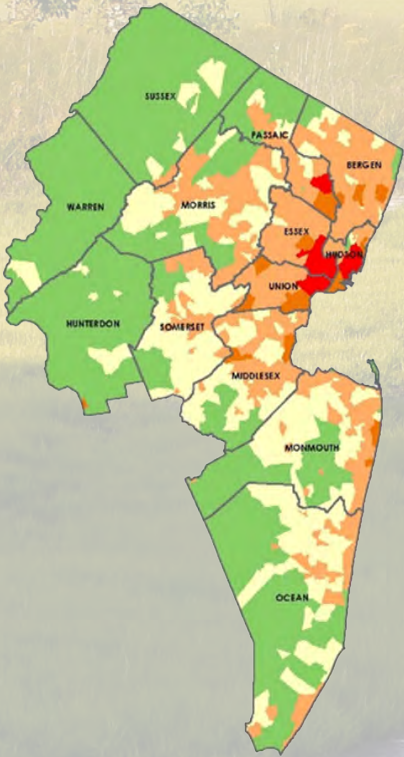
# Where should we grow?

Based on public input...

2010–2040



More than 80% of new growth in existing developed places



■ LARGER CITIES ■ SMALLER CITIES ■ OLDER SUBURBS & TOWNS ■ NEWER SUBURBS ■ RURAL TOWNS & COMMUNITIES



# Our Vision for the



**BASED ON OUR SHARED VALUES** and common interests we developed vision statements designed to “paint a picture” of the region’s future. A picture that reflects what residents, government officials, business representatives and community leaders, over the past three years, have said is important in terms of how they would like the region to function and what they would like the region to be and look like in the future. These statements represent an idealized description of what a prosperous and sustainable region could look like in the future—a region that is **competitive, efficient, livable** and **resilient**.





First, a sustainable North Jersey is **competitive**. All residents are well educated and trained for participating in an economy of cutting edge industries that offer a range of job opportunities and long-term prosperity. Entrepreneurship and public-private partnerships are valued by our residents, our leadership and the business sector. Our region has a variety of growing industries that build on the region's assets, and our public and private sectors support innovation, collaboration, partnership and entrepreneurship and work to ensure our economy can flourish in the 21st century.



# Future ●

Second, a sustainable region is **efficient**. Communities make wise use of existing infrastructure and natural resources, growth does not encroach on sensitive natural areas or excessively burden public services. Residents and businesses use energy, water and natural resources wisely and without waste, and our transportation system connects people with the places they need to go with convenient, safe, reliable and energy-efficient travel options.

Third, a sustainable region is **livable**. Everyone is able to find the type of community and the housing that fit their needs and the region boasts vibrant neighborhoods that offer a high quality of life in cities, suburbs and more rural places. People of different lifestyles and life stages can find and afford a place to live in a community that suits them.

Finally, a sustainable North Jersey region is **resilient**. Residents and communities are well prepared for extreme weather events and are adapting to a changing climate. Wetlands and other crucial ecosystems are protected, and infrastructure (transportation systems, utilities, water and sewer systems) is able to withstand extreme weather and the longer-term effects of climate change.

This definition of sustainability is not abstract or generic. It is a definition unique to the needs of Northern New Jersey, and expressed by the thousands of residents all over the region that participated in this planning process. The TNJ Regional Plan is designed to help North Jersey reach these goals and long-term outcomes.

Competitive



Efficient



Livable



Resilient



# How we get the

**WORKING TOGETHER** can be challenging, and quality of life in the region is shaped by a variety of plans, regulations, investment decisions and incentive programs at various levels of government. The Together North Jersey Regional Plan provides a framework to integrate policies and decision-making at all levels toward our shared vision for the future. This section of the plan presents a blueprint for future public policy, organized around the four broad themes that describe the region's vision—competitiveness, efficiency, livability and resiliency. Each theme incorporates aspects of all five of the priority goals identified during discovery and visioning phases of the regional planning process.





re●

## Strategic Action Plan

The framework for achieving the region's long-term vision for a competitive, efficient, livable and resilient future is organized around:

4 themes

5 goals

15 focus areas

70+ strategies

Taken together these goals, focus areas and strategies create a strategic action plan that can guide decision-making across the public, private and nonprofit sectors.

# 2040

## 4 Vision Themes



### Competitive ●

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### Resilient ●

Residents and communities in the region are well prepared for extreme weather events and are adapting to a changing climate. Wetlands and other crucial ecosystems are protected and infrastructure is able to withstand extreme weather and the longer-term effects of climate change.



| 5 PRIORITY GOALS                             |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Grow a strong and inclusive regional economy | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| Create great places                          | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| Increase access to opportunity               | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| Protect the environment                      | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |
| Work together                                | ✓  | ✓   | ✓   | ✓   |

**T**he region’s vision and goals can only be achieved through collective and individual action. Toward this end, Together North Jersey has identified 15 areas we must focus on to make our vision for a competitive, efficient, livable and resilient North Jersey region a reality. Within each focus area, we have recommended a range of strategies that local governments, regional organizations, state agencies, nonprofits, advocacy organizations, private companies, developers and others can undertake to advance implementation of The Plan. Each strategy is further detailed in the Together North Jersey Implementation Action Agenda, which is available online at [www.togethernorthjersey.com/actionplans](http://www.togethernorthjersey.com/actionplans). The Action Agenda provides a detailed outline of the specific actions needed to implement each strategy. The timeframe for implementation and suggested responsibilities are also included.

A comprehensive list of recommended strategies is presented on the next two pages. The list is organized by focus area using the shorthand FA1, FA2, etc. Each theme is color-coded and includes a visual reference icon to help you navigate through the section. The Focus Areas and Strategies are detailed on the pages that follow using the same color-coded reference scheme.

# Overview ●

## **FA1** Create and retain well-paying jobs by supporting growth in our region's key industries

- 1.1** Develop and implement a pilot program that makes it easier for businesses to obtain the permits they need to locate and expand in the region.
- 1.2** Explore creating an organization to help coordinate economic development activities region-wide.
- 1.3** Provide a forum for highlighting the economic and workforce development needs of our key industries.
- 1.4** Consider creating a North Jersey "Futures Council."
- 1.5** Connect small businesses that support the region's innovation clusters to growth and development opportunity.

## **FA2** Enhance North Jersey's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem

- 2.1** Expand the technical assistance and networking resources available to the region's startups and second-stage companies.
- 2.2** Establish a regional system of virtual incubators.
- 2.3** Foster other types of shared workspaces and connect them to economic development and finance programs.
- 2.4** Create and capitalize a regional innovation fund.

## **FA3** Strengthen the region's economy by building on existing assets and infrastructure

- 3.1** Use our region's transportation infrastructure as a framework for future investment.
- 3.2** Leverage the region's role as a major freight distribution hub.
- 3.3** Strengthen tourism by promoting North Jersey's arts, cultural, recreation, historic and natural amenities at the regional scale.
- 3.4** Support and expand agricultural businesses, urban farming and agritourism.

## **FA4** Align workforce training with industry needs

- 4.1** Align workforce development efforts with industry needs through improved data collection and enhanced coordination.
- 4.2** Expand occupational and soft skills training to address barriers to employment for disadvantaged workers.
- 4.3** Help incumbent workers transition to living-wage occupations.
- 4.4** Create regional apprenticeship and internship programs for non-college-bound students.
- 4.5** Promote skilled trades and other traditional vocational and technical programs.
- 4.6** Promote workforce development strategies to support the state's tourism industry.

## **FA5** Locate most new housing and commercial development in places with existing and planned infrastructure

- 5.1** Promote transit-oriented development (TOD).
- 5.2** Encourage infill and redevelopment on existing vacant and underutilized properties.
- 5.3** Prioritize brownfields for redevelopment.
- 5.4** Expand the use of innovative planning tools that promote smart development.

## **FA6** Create vibrant places and neighborhoods that will attract and retain residents, workers and visitors

- 6.1** Design places that meet the diverse needs of people in all age groups.
- 6.2** Create a physical vision for new development based on an understanding of the unique characteristics that define each place, including historic context.
- 6.3** Establish programming and management practices to create active, actively-managed spaces.
- 6.4** Locate development in areas that are walkable, bikeable, and accessible by public transit.
- 6.5** Invest strategically in catalyst spaces, rather than stand-alone building projects.
- 6.6** Create the local organizational framework to implement and manage these strategies.

## **FA7** Connect people and places with safe, convenient and reliable transportation

- 7.1** Maintain transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair.
- 7.2** Adopt and implement "Complete Streets" policies.
- 7.3** Improve conditions and service at "Transit Hub" locations.
- 7.4** Enhance and improve existing public and private transit services.
- 7.5** Increase transit system capacity in strategic locations.
- 7.6** Use New Jersey's State Highway Safety Plan and NJ TRANSIT Safety Programs to improve safety.
- 7.7** Use technology to improve transportation operations.

Find detailed Action Plans at:  
[togethernorthjersey.com/  
actionplans](http://togethernorthjersey.com/actionplans)

## **FA8A** Expand and diversify the region's housing supply to meet current and future demand

- 8A.1** Increase housing variety and choice by removing regulatory and other barriers to housing production.
- 8A.2** Target financial and other incentives to increase production of housing options not well-supplied.
- 8A.3** Increase the supply of housing affordable to a range of household sizes and incomes, especially in areas that are well-served by public transit.
- 8A.4** Ensure that the region's existing supply of deed-restricted affordable housing units remain affordable.

## **FA8B** Address barriers to housing mobility, increase access to areas of high opportunity and affirmatively further fair housing policies region-wide

- 8B.1** Affirmatively further fair housing policies region-wide.
- 8B.2** Promote regional housing mobility by fostering innovation in the use of Housing Choice Vouchers.
- 8B.3** Use public investment programs to create, connect, and strengthen access to opportunity.
- 8B.4** Increase the supply of affordable, accessible housing options for people with disabilities and seniors in appropriate locations.

## **FA9** Create a system of public education that prepares all students for the 21st century economy

- 9.1** Address school funding disparities.
- 9.2** Expand school programming for the 21st Century.
- 9.3** Improve access for pre-K and early childhood education.
- 9.4** Improve educational outcomes by implementing "Community Schools," wraparound services, and school-community partnerships.
- 9.5** Expand boundaries and access to high performing schools.

## **FA10** Enhance the resiliency of the region's communities and infrastructure

- 10.1** Identify the region's vulnerabilities to extreme weather and climate change.
- 10.2** Adapt communities to be resilient to extreme weather events and the impacts of climate change.
- 10.3** Expand floodplain buyout programs and return flood-prone areas to their natural function.
- 10.4** Use green infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather and climate change.

## **FA11** Transition to a clean energy economy

- 11.1** Reduce energy use through conservation and increased efficiency.
- 11.2** Transition to carbon-free electricity generation, including increased use of renewables.
- 11.3** Modernize and upgrade the region's power infrastructure.
- 11.4** Reduce petroleum use in the transportation sector.

## **FA12** Improve health outcomes for our region's residents

- 12.1** Integrate public health considerations in all aspects of planning and policy-making.
- 12.2** Increase access to affordable healthy foods and maximize access to locally produced fresh food.
- 12.3** Increase access to quality healthcare facilities, especially for medically underserved communities.
- 12.4** Enhance health education programs.
- 12.5** Create safe and healthy buildings, neighborhoods and communities through planning and design.
- 12.6** Expand the use of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies.
- 12.7** Improve conditions for communities that are disproportionately burdened by air pollution.

## **FA13** Improve stewardship of natural lands, agricultural lands, open space, parks, historic resources

- 13.1** Work with landowners to stewardship of privately owned natural lands and green space.
- 13.2** Expand programs to preserve parks, open space, natural and agricultural lands permanently.
- 13.3** Improve stewardship of public parks, open space and natural lands.
- 13.4** Implement best practices for stewardship of private and preserved agricultural lands.
- 13.5** Expand programs to preserve historic resources.
- 13.6** Improve stewardship of publicly-owned historic sites.

## **FA14** Manage water systems to improve water quality and supply

- 14.1** Improve management of stormwater runoff.
- 14.2** Protect water supplies through planning and enforcement.
- 14.3** Reduce or eliminate combined sewer overflows.

## **FA15** Revitalize and strengthen communities by expanding arts and cultural opportunities

- 15.1** Develop financing tools for arts and culture.
- 15.2** Support cultural programs and activities.
- 15.3** Integrate arts and culture into the local, county, regional, and statewide planning efforts.
- 15.4** Fund arts education for all New Jersey students.

## Strategies and Actions ●



### FOCUS AREA 1: Create and retain well-paying jobs by supporting growth in our region's key industries ●

**WHAT AND WHY** Attracting world-class companies to locate in North Jersey used to require little effort. Our region's location, highly educated workforce and high quality of life made it an easy sell to corporate America. From 1980-2000 our region emerged as one of the premier office markets in the United States. Economic development was driven by strong market demand for new office space that could meet the needs of a growing service economy.

In the 1990's and early 2000's growth in high-quality, knowledge-based jobs was strong in our region. By the mid-2000's, our region had proportionally more jobs in a range of key industries when compared to the national economy. These industries included: educational and health services; professional and business services; wholesale trade; transportation and utilities; financial services; and information services. Many of the jobs in these industries paid well and, as a result, the region's economy thrived.

Economic realities have shifted. Location is less important than it used to be and demand for office space is down. Our region, and New Jersey as a whole, has become a comparatively expensive place to do business, and market preferences for both living and work environments have shifted to favor walkable, transit-served, amenity-rich locations. Not only has this left our region with an abundance of under-utilized suburban office parks and buildings, but our region's overall declining competitiveness threatens the future prosperity of the region. Today, attracting and retaining companies and well-paying jobs demands collaboration, coordination and innovation.

One approach that has proven effective in other parts of the U.S. is to concentrate on supporting growth in "Regional Innovation Clusters" (RIC)—geographic concentrations of interconnected businesses, institutions and organizations, such as universities and talent networks, that support one another and foster innovation. New Jersey has identified seven major clusters: *Bio/Pharma and Life Sciences*; *Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution*; *Financial Services*; *Manufacturing*; *Healthcare*; *Technology*; and *Tourism*. These clusters can and should provide our region with a focus for its economic and workforce development activities.

Strong regional innovation clusters can spur job growth, boost wages, and encourage entrepreneurship. For North Jersey, we should increase our overall competitiveness by fostering regional innovation clusters in those industries that North Jersey is uniquely positioned to nurture.



Today, attracting  
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ation, coordination  
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**HOW** Successfully implementing a RIC-focused economic development approach, will require close collaboration among the private sector, local government, regional planning organizations and higher education institutions. These efforts should focus on strengthening industries that have the potential to drive the regional economy by stream-lining permit processes so that it is easier and cheaper to locate and do business in the region. We should also explore the creation of an economic development entity that can help to coordinate local efforts, bring needed financial

resources to the region and take on initiatives that will make all jurisdictions in the region more competitive. Our region should consider creating a “Futures Council,” an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to studying and improving the region’s long-term economic competitiveness. Finally, our region should create a public-private initiative designed to help the small businesses that support our region’s seven innovation clusters to expand their professional networks and grow their companies.

**STRATEGY 1.1: Develop and implement a pilot program that makes it easier for businesses to obtain the permits they need to locate and expand in the region**

Obtaining the necessary permits to locate or expand a business in North Jersey can be expensive and time-

consuming. Simplifying the regulatory process in New Jersey is essential for attracting business investment. Businesses are drawn to states and regions where they can expect predictability, consistency and efficiency in the permitting process. Working with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, the N.J. Department of

Environmental Protection, the Business Action Center in the Lieutenant Governor's office, the Office for Planning Advocacy and one or more willing local jurisdictions, our region should develop and implement a permit streamlining pilot project that includes a one-stop permit portal and expedited reviews for projects that meet certain standards. Such a program can serve as a model that can be replicated throughout the region and elsewhere in New Jersey.

**STRATEGY 1.2: Explore creating an organization to help coordinate economic development activities region-wide**

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) is authorized under federal regulations to designate Economic Development Districts (EDD) anywhere in the United States that meet certain criteria. EDDs are created to help coordinate economic development activities among member jurisdictions in a way that supports and complements state, county and local economic and workforce development initiatives. Once the Together North Jersey regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is approved, our region will meet the U.S. EDA criteria for an EDD. After the CEDS is approved, our region should request that the U.S. EDA designate the North Jersey region an EDD. This designation could make the district and its member jurisdictions eligible for various U.S. EDA funding programs that would not otherwise be available. To advance the process of having the region designated an EDD, the NJTPA should consider establishing an economic development liaison position responsible for securing EDA approval of the region's CEDS and establishing an EDD consistent with federal regulations.

**STRATEGY 1.3: Provide a forum for highlighting the economic and workforce development needs of our region's key industries**

Our region has strengths in seven key industries—Bio/Pharma and Life Sciences; Transportation, Logistics and Distribution; Financial Services; Manufacturing; Healthcare; Technology; and Tourism. The industry clusters

provide an opportunity to foster innovation, growth and job creation. Understanding the needs of these industries is an important first step in making this happen. Our region should establish a series of annual North Jersey CEO Roundtables, one for each of the seven innovation clusters identified in our region. The roundtables will provide a forum for forward-thinking industry leaders to identify ways the region can keep ahead of trends and remain competitive for the long-term. The roundtables will provide an opportunity to discuss the short and long-term economic, infrastructure and workforce needs of each innovation cluster and can improve communication and information sharing among local economic development

groups, industry organizations, companies and local businesses. NJTPA's economic development liaison should work with county economic development officials and New Jersey's seven Talent Networks to organize and convene the inaugural round of meetings.

**STRATEGY 1.4: Consider creating a North Jersey "Futures Council"**

The region should consider establishing a North Jersey Futures Council—an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to studying and improving the region's long-term economic competitiveness. The Futures Council could help to develop an overall investment agenda for the region that is informed by private sector needs and supported by independent research and analysis. The council could also employ a professional staff and be guided by prominent North Jersey private sector and institutional leaders. The

first step toward establishing a Futures Council could be to form an exploratory committee of corporate, business and institutional leaders in the region to examine how similar organizations established in other parts of the country function and explore the feasibility, costs and efficacy of creating such an organization for the North Jersey region.

**STRATEGY 1.5: Connect small businesses that support the region's innovation clusters to growth and development opportunities**

Companies thrive when they have the resources and

Companies thrive  
when they have  
the resources and  
connections they  
need to sustain  
and increase their  
business activities.



connections they need to sustain and increase their business activities. Some regions in the country have public-private initiatives designed to help small businesses that support and foster innovation in various industry clusters to expand their professional networks and increase sales and revenue by providing technical assistance, mentorships, supplier development initiatives, group purchasing and procurement arrangements. Our region should establish such an initiative to provide opportunities for

networking, matchmaking and the creation of an online marketplace to connect suppliers and buyers. Initial steps to developing such a program should be to inventory existing business assistance programs, identify needs and gaps in business services and programs and developing a plan to fill critical gaps by establishing regional programs that coordinates with local and state business assistance programs.

## GETTING STARTED



- **Develop and implement** a permit stream-lining pilot program that includes a one-stop permit portal and expedited reviews for projects that meet certain standards.
- **Establish** an economic development liaison office within NJTPA to apply for Economic Development District status and assist in the implementation of our region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

- **Organize** a group of regional leaders to serve on a North Jersey Futures Council exploratory committee.
- **Convene** a committee of statewide industry associations, Talent Networks and business groups to plan and convene CEO roundtables for each of our region's innovation clusters.
- **Identify** gaps in existing business assistance programs and develop strategies to meet those needs.





## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 2: Enhance North Jersey's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem ●

**WHAT AND WHY** Since the Great Recession, it has become clear that regional competitiveness is a defining feature of the global economy. While national performance certainly matters, geographic regions increasingly drive growth. Competitive regions may suffer from downturns, but they recover faster, and they represent an increasing share of national economic activity.

Robust entrepreneurship is vital to the long-term health of our regional economy. Communities and regions can no longer base their economic development programs on recruiting large corporate headquarters, manufacturing plants or distribution facilities. Such opportunities are rare and, even if these ventures succeed, they frequently require substantial public sector investments in the form of costly incentives and infrastructure. In today's economy, the most vital regions are those that invest in the support systems that allow talented and ambitious entrepreneurs to succeed.

North Jersey must support entrepreneurship in ways that leverage the region's existing strengths. The region should not try to recreate Silicon Valley or Seattle. It should instead look to support the talent, research and development, and industries that are already strong in the region, and create the climate and support systems needed to ensure these assets thrive.

**HOW** Our region must embrace the goal of expanding innovation and entrepreneurship by actively supporting the growth of emerging companies in a wide range of industries. To accomplish this goal we should identify the technology component of every industry; put a supportive infrastructure of workspaces, financing and technical assistance services in place; and foster connections between research institutions and entrepreneurs.

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global economy.

#### **STRATEGY 2.1: Expand the technical assistance and networking resources available to the region's startups and second-stage companies**

Access to capital and expertise are critical for startups, with the type of assistance needed varying by stage of growth. Our region needs to create both depth (a large number of resources) and diversity (multiple types) of the assistance available to start-ups and second-stage companies. This means ensuring a range of financing options are available, from traditional bank loans and small business loans (debt capital) to angel investors and venture capital funds (equity capital). Our region should also facilitate improved access to expertise through activities like hosting and promoting networking events, implementing mentoring programs, creating peer networks and linking entrepreneurs with service providers in fields

including taxation, law, human resources, marketing and Information Technology (IT).

#### **STRATEGY 2.2: Establish a regional system of virtual incubators**

Business incubators provide technical assistance and other services to startup companies. Unlike traditional incubators, which require a physical location, our region should develop a network of virtual incubators to allow clients to access services and expertise independent of their location. The main advantage of a virtual incubator is cost: little or no capital investment is required for new facilities to host businesses. Instead, virtual incubators can utilize existing office space—of which there is plenty in North Jersey. Therefore, risk is reduced and existing space is better utilized. In addition, virtual incubators can

## GETTING STARTED

- **Encourage** economic development organizations that manage physical incubators to offer virtual incubator programs.
- **Inventory** North Jersey's key industry, entrepreneurship, small business development and research assets; identify gaps in the services available and take steps to address the gaps.
- **Convene** a task force of business finance investors and experts in the region to discuss opportunities and challenges to improving access to capital for North Jersey businesses.
- **Explore** and assess options for establishing a regional network of angel and/or venture capital investors.
- **Encourage** the inclusion of shared workspaces in redevelopment of urban and suburban office buildings into mixed-use developments.
- **Encourage** regional community colleges to explore the potential to become a partner member in Innovation Fund America.
- **Research** existing innovation fund models in other states and nations to determine if the models can be adapted for our region and explore potential funding sources to start-up the fund.



operate anywhere in the region and do not need to be tied to specific communities or institutions. We can develop a regional network of virtual incubators by encouraging existing public, private, and non-profit business incubator programs that have physical space to expand their client-base by offering virtual programs that provide technical assistance, management training, and other shared services for a fee.

### **STRATEGY 2.3: Foster other types of shared workspaces and connect them to economic development and finance programs**

Co-working spaces offer an alternative to working from home (or in "third spaces," such as coffee shops) for individuals and startups that are not ready to commit to the overhead of traditional office spaces. Though typically used by office workers, alternative workspaces should be expanded to include other types of space, such as studio spaces for artists, kitchen facilities for food-based ventures, and production equipment for manufacturers. Municipalities should encourage the inclusion of shared workspaces as part of redevelopment of urban and suburban office buildings into mixed-use development, especially where there are vacant and underutilized properties that could be re-purposed. Toward this end, plans and ordinances should be amended to permit shared workspace as a permitted use and reuse. In addition, government jurisdictions and agencies should explore opportunities to include shared workspace in new public facilities, such as libraries and other government buildings.

### **STRATEGY 2.4: Create and capitalize a regional innovation fund**

North Jersey has extensive assets in terms of research institutions and labs. Nevertheless, the benefits of the research, and even the commercialization of technologies, have not accrued within the region. The ability to transfer and commercialize technologies developed in the region's research and development companies and higher education institutions is essential to the region's long-term success. The state, along with institutions of higher education and research facilities in the region, should explore the idea of creating and capitalizing an innovation fund to partner promising technology developed in the region with North Jersey entrepreneurs. North Jersey community colleges can also become an important resource for aspiring entrepreneurs by becoming a partner member in Innovation Fund America, a nonprofit organization that leverages the capacity of community colleges to promote innovative start-ups.

## Strategies and Actions ●



### FOCUS AREA 3: Strengthen the region's economy by building on existing assets and infrastructure ●

**WHAT AND WHY** World-class infrastructure and other amenities have made North Jersey a global hub of people and goods. Long-term investments in transportation infrastructure, open space and farmland protection, arts and cultural institutions and other tourism assets such as our beaches and boardwalks provide an important foundation for targeted economic development activities that can strengthen and grow our region's economy. In addition, proximity to New York City and superior transportation connections to extensive consumer and business markets in the northeast, mid-Atlantic, and mid-west states gives our region a strategic locational advantage. Our region must build on our unique assets and infrastructure and embrace nearby markets to strengthen the regional economy. This will promote economic development and tourism which can grow businesses and create jobs. These assets also contribute to the attractiveness of our communities, making them desirable places to live, work and visit.

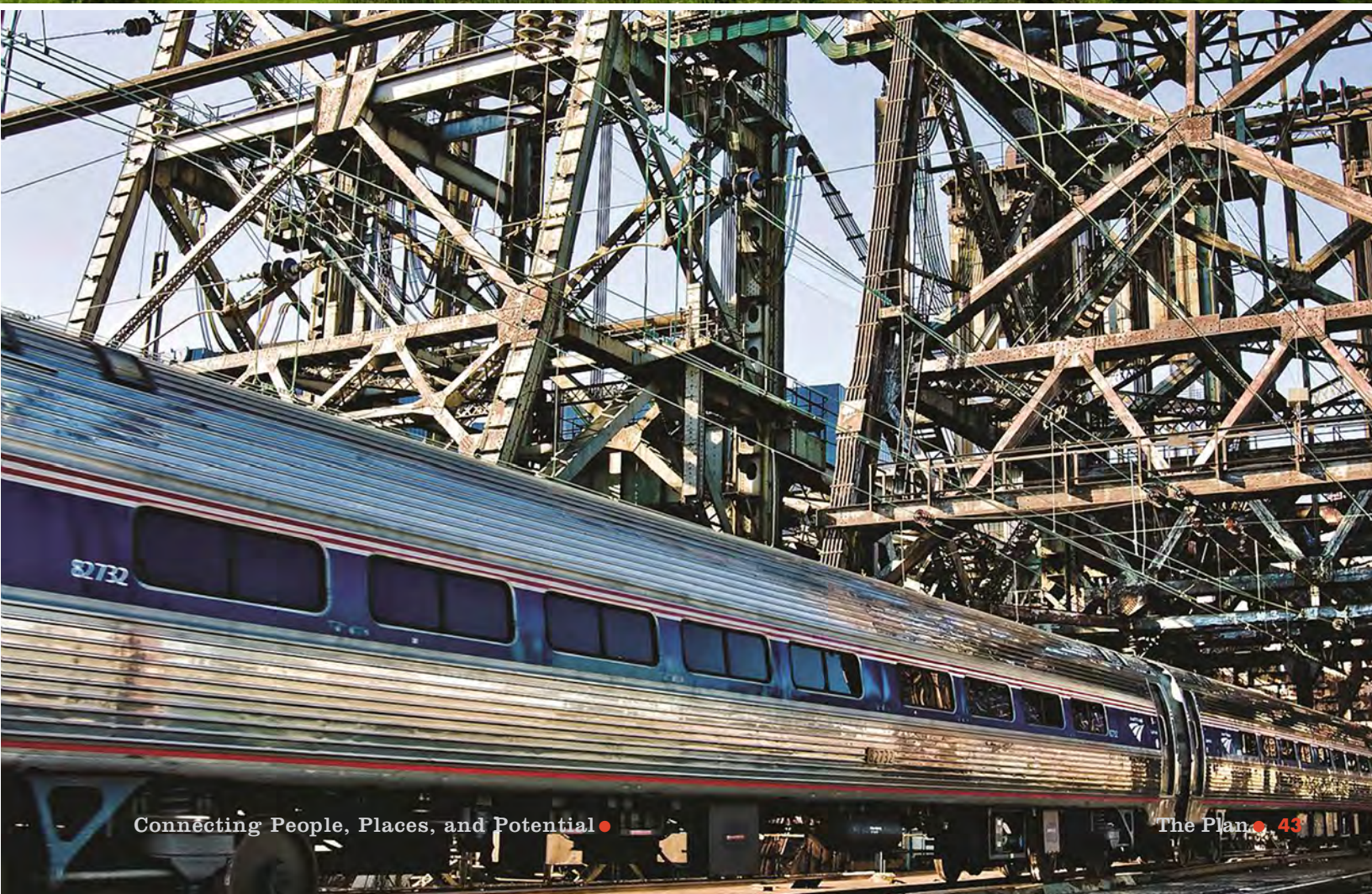
We need to use  
our region's trans-  
portation system as  
a framework for  
future investment.

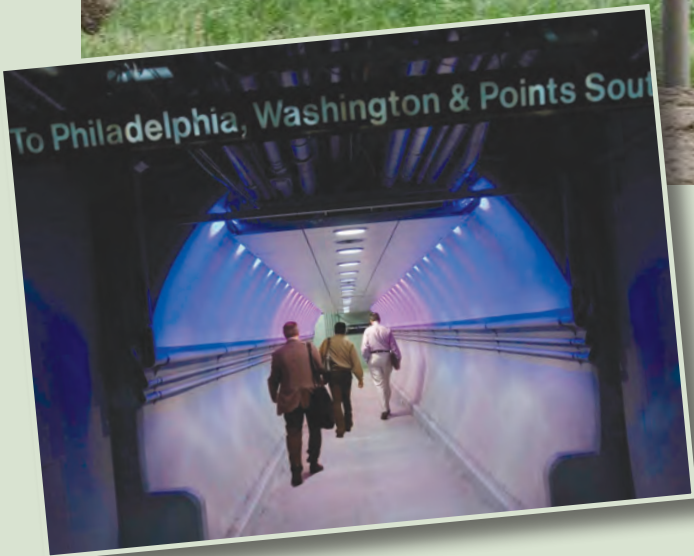
**HOW** Asset-based economic development is an approach that recognizes the important role existing infrastructure and unique local resources can play in strengthening the regional economy. It is an approach that seeks to leverage local arts, cultural, natural, historic and recreational assets into sustained economic growth that can benefit the entire region. Toward this end, we need to use our region's transportation system—especially our public transit network—as a framework for future investment. We should also continue the progress made over the past decade by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to ensure our region's seaport maintains its strategic advantage while bringing needed tax revenue and jobs to the port's host cities. Finally, we should strengthen tourism in our region and leverage New Jersey's heritage as the "Garden State" to support and expand agricultural businesses, urban farming and agritourism.

#### **STRATEGY 3.1: Use our region's transportation infrastructure as a framework for future investment.**

Our region boasts 25,000 miles of roads; 16 rail lines serving nearly 200 stations; 18 passenger ferry routes crossing the Hudson River to New York City and a system of public and private bus services that includes thousands of buses operating on more than 250 routes. This extensive network of highways, train lines, bus routes, and ferry services provides critical accessibility to the region's workforce and should provide an organizing framework for public and private investment as well as economic

development incentives and marketing. In particular, our public transportation system—one of the largest in the country—is a critical and unique asset that sets our region apart. Counties should work with municipalities and the private sector to identify priority growth and investment areas at transit stations and stops, and along highway corridors in strategic locations within their jurisdictions. Once identified, public and private investment, including economic development incentives should be targeted in these areas to spur job growth in places well served by existing transportation infrastructure.





- **Identify and designate** priority growth and investment areas at transit stations and stops, and along highway corridors in strategic locations. Target investments and economic development incentives to these locations.

### **STRATEGY 3.2: Leverage the region's role as a major freight distribution hub.**

The Port of New York and New Jersey is the gateway to one of the most concentrated and affluent consumer markets in the world. It is the largest seaport on the east coast and the third largest in the country. The majority of the port's operations are located in our region. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which manages most of the port's assets, has undertaken a number of investments and initiatives designed to ensure the port remains a global hub for the movement of goods. Our region must continue to build on this unique asset and the

progress made by the Port Authority to meet a number of additional infrastructure needs. We must ensure that port development benefits local communities by coordinating among agencies, operators, and jurisdictions; redeveloping now-vacant sites into port-related uses; and supporting growth in port-related jobs for local residents. We should also work to optimize the performance of our freight infrastructure by targeting investment to address capacity bottlenecks in the freight system; enhancing the efficiency of goods deliveries; expanding rail access; and ensuring that facilities are resilient to extreme weather and sea level rise.

- **Integrate** economic development and transportation planning and amend project prioritization criteria to include private sector economic investment metrics.
- **Target** public and private investment resources to facilitate good movement access to critical retail, manufacturing, distribution and employment areas.
- **Update** the NJTPA truck parking study.
- **Explore** regional implementation of off-peak goods movement similar to the NYCDOT Off-Hour Delivery Program.
- **Create** a network of North Jersey tourism offices and visitor bureaus to share resources and expertise and develop a coordinated tourism campaign.
- **Convene** a North Jersey agritourism working group to develop a coordinated marketing campaign and strengthen farm-to-table initiatives.
- **Initiate and fund** an urban farming demonstration program similar to the “Growing Power” model used in several mid-western cities.

**STRATEGY 3.3: Strengthen tourism by promoting North Jersey’s arts, cultural, recreation, historic and natural amenities at a regional scale.**

As one of our state’s most important economic drivers, the tourism industry generates over \$40 billion in spending and investment per year—much of it in our region. Our region is blessed with many natural resources, forests, parks, historic sites, recreational opportunities, arts destinations and amazing cultural diversity. We also have miles of beaches, bay fronts and boardwalks that attract millions of visitors each year. Building on past and current work, our region must continue to bring

together varied stakeholders to identify opportunities to coordinate and promote tourism at the regional level. We should create a network of North Jersey tourism offices and visitor bureaus to share resources and expertise between communities and develop a regional marketing campaign. We can also tap into the power of technology by developing a website and mobile app that improves tourist access to natural amenities, rural attractions, festivals, museums and more. Regional tourism efforts should coordinate with already existing national heritage tourism efforts and state-wide tourism efforts.

**STRATEGY 3.4: Support and expand agricultural businesses, urban farming and agritourism.**

Our region is home to more than 6,000 farms covering more than 366,000 acres. More than 20 percent of the region’s farmland assets—80,000 acres—are permanently preserved. In fact, there are farms in every one of our region’s counties except Hudson. While many farms—especially those in the western parts of the region—continue larger-scale operations producing feed corn, alfalfa hay, other grains and livestock production, the number of smaller niche market farms is growing. These smaller operations produce vegetables and fruit, flowers, herbs and a variety of other specialty products. The increased popularity of locally-sourced food, organic farming and small-scale food processing have allowed smaller farming operations to flourish and remain economically viable. To support and expand the agricultural sector in our region, we should continue efforts to permanently preserve farmland through existing acquisition programs. In addition, our region’s economic development and tourism organizations should partner with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension, the N.J. Department of Agriculture, the N.J. Farm Bureau, the N.J. Farmer’s Direct Marketing Association and others to develop a coordinated marketing campaign and strengthen farm-to-table initiatives. We should also build partnerships between farmers and community leaders in our region’s cities to foster growth in urban farming and improve urban residents’ access to healthy, locally-grown foods.

**Special note:** See also **Focus Area 7** which includes a number of strategies aimed at improving and enhancing our region’s transportation infrastructure and **Focus Area 5** that includes strategies aimed at promoting development around transit hubs and stations as well reimagining and retrofitting suburban office parks into vibrant mixed use developments.



## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 4: Align workforce training with industry needs●

**WHAT AND WHY** Our region's highly educated and skilled workforce has been a tremendous asset for decades. To thrive economically, our region must ensure that the skills our workers have match well with industry needs. We must make it a priority to improve the alignment between the workforce initiatives (training, education, etc.) and the skill demands of key industries. Doing so will ensure that residents have the skills they need to get and keep quality jobs and reduce hiring and turnover-related costs for employers.

Currently our region has many existing programs working towards this goal, but we must build on these existing relationships and increase opportunities for collaboration between public and private players in order to increase the likelihood of success.

Our region must ensure that the skills our workers have match well with industry needs.

**HOW** To achieve these ends, our region must emphasize workforce training initiatives that include certifications and degrees that provide pathways to careers in stable and growing industries. Programs should include training in both “soft” and occupation-specific skills and we must increase opportunities for internships and apprenticeships as well as support worker re-entry. Where successful initiatives exist, we should raise awareness of them and help leverage them fully. We must also ensure a robust flow of information, so all partners are operating with the same understanding of our region's labor market needs and the availability of workers to fill vacant positions.

#### **STRATEGY 4.1: Align workforce development efforts with industry needs through improved data collection and enhanced coordination.**

Data used to inform training and career decisions is typically based on historical trends—not what's on the horizon. Our region must develop a system to obtain better information from employers in order to understand their current and future workforce demands, while also improving data on training and educational capacity, enrollments and program completions. Toward this end, we should systematically catalog industry workforce needs, and develop a centralized repository of workforce training providers and programs in the region. Training resources should be directed towards programs designed to bridge the skills gap and lead to a credential or degree in a high-demand occupation and those that

pay higher wages. Programs that facilitate re-entry into the workforce for laid-off incumbent workers, prisoners re-entering society and other disadvantaged populations should be emphasized.

#### **STRATEGY 4.2: Expand occupational and soft skills training programs to address barriers to employment for disadvantaged workers.**

Along with more intractable issues, such as a lack of reliable transportation or affordable childcare, many residents in our region face challenges related to soft skills—such as time management, literacy issues and customer service skills—as well as language barriers, lack of a high school degree and the inability to pass employment screening. Our region should expand available programs to address these soft skills barriers faced by many workers, including but not limited to, low-income adults, minorities, veterans and former inmates looking to re-enter the workforce.





**STRATEGY 4.3: Help incumbent workers transition to living-wage occupations**

Even though workers may have successfully entered the workforce, their jobs may not pay enough to meet a reasonable standard of living or support a family. Our region needs to coordinate existing workforce development programs and create a greater variety of progressive pathways to better, livable wages. The most successful career pathway initiatives provide a series of linked education and training programs that lead to a clearly defined credential, allowing workers to advance within a targeted occupation or industry. To start, we should convene a multi-industry task force to inventory and coordinate the career pathways programs that already exist in the region. As needed, our region should pilot and evaluate new pathway initiatives and scale up those that prove the most successful.

**STRATEGY 4.4: Create a regional apprenticeship and internship program for non-college-bound students**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines an apprenticeship as “a formal relationship between a worker and sponsor,” typically an employer or labor organization, and typically a skilled trade. These programs, most commonly found in construction, manufacturing and health-care, offer a combination of on-the-job training and technical instruction, providing both practical and theoretical understanding of the occupation. Likewise, an internship program would provide on-the-job training opportunities for those occupations not typically associated with the skilled trades. Our region should inventory existing public, private and nonprofit work apprenticeship and internship programs. This inventory should be used to foster coordination and support of innovative and effective programs that include paid apprenticeship and internship opportunities. We should also work to increase funding for apprenticeships and internships, including through public sources, as well as trade associations and industry partnerships.

**STRATEGY 4.5: Promote skilled trades and other traditional vocational and technical programs**

Middle-skills jobs are those that require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree, such as construction workers, skilled trades—including plumbers, welders and electricians—drivers, mechanics and technicians. Many of these positions offer higher earnings potential than those requiring a four-year degree and are often among those listed by employers as hard to fill. Our region should raise awareness of middle-skills employment opportunities and ensure the availability of appropriate career and technical education programs. This would help employers meet demand for these positions and provide residents with viable career options that require less investment of time and money than a four-year degree. Our region should also target funding to programs that help workers obtain an industry-recognized credential in a high demand, middle-skills occupations. We can also connect young people to these opportunities by keeping school guidance counselors and teachers updated about career opportunities in skilled trades.

**STRATEGY 4.6: Promote workforce development strategies to support the state’s tourism industry**

Developing jobs in the tourism industry should be supported to the fullest extent possible. The Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism (RHT) Talent Network should be engaged as the vehicle for defining specific career pathways, and sharing resources and information with jobseekers. The RHT talent network should strengthen career pathway programs through assistance in the preparation and promotion of career resources, promoting relevant events such as Retail, Hospitality and Tourism Industry Week, and working with the education and training providers identified by the RHT talent network to ensure that pathways are clearly articulated and transferrable.

Internship programs provide on-the-job training opportunities for those occupations not typically associated with skilled trades.





- **Create** a one-stop repository of data on current and future workforce demands as well as available training and educational capacity, enrollments and program completions.
- **Address** soft skills barriers to employment for disadvantaged workers and expand programs to address these barriers.



- **Address** an inter-agency task force to better coordinate career pathway initiatives in the region and identify program expansion needs.

- **Inventory** the apprenticeship and internship program opportunities available in the region and use this information when counseling non-college bound high school students about career opportunities.
- **Support** the implementation of common standards for career and technical education.
- **Raise** awareness about middle-skills employment opportunities in construction and the skilled trades.
- **Define** job opportunities and career pathways in the tourism industry.



## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 5: Locate most new housing and commercial development in places with existing and planned infrastructure ●

**WHAT AND WHY** North Jersey's population is set to grow over the next 30 years, resulting in increased residential, commercial and other development. Choosing the right locations for this development will help maximize economic and social benefits, and minimize the negative impacts on the environment. Our region should work to direct this new development to places with existing infrastructure and capacity to grow, in order to reduce the public and private sector costs of laying down new infrastructure in more distant, less developed places. Further, concentrating development in already developed areas will help to limit encroachment on unprotected, undeveloped open space and agricultural land—including natural areas with critical resources and habitats. Directing growth to places with transit services and walkable areas (a development pattern known as Transit Oriented Development or TOD) will also encourage the use of public transportation, reduce congestion on our roads, and yield a wide range of health and environmental benefits. If designed well, such development can create interesting, vibrant areas and foster greater community interaction. Our region should also consider the reuse of vacant or abandoned office buildings for strategic redevelopment.

The North Jersey  
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nities for efficient  
development.

**HOW** The North Jersey region presents endless opportunities for efficient development. Even small municipalities boast a train station or transit hubs. There are many rehabilitation, infill development (new housing or commercial space on vacant land between existing uses) and TOD success stories throughout the region, from small Main Streets, to residential neighborhoods, to bustling downtowns. We can build on these successes by ensuring local zoning laws permit this type of development, modifying incentive programs, introducing new incentive programs and funding sources, taking stock of our assets, and raising awareness of new planning tools. Emphasis should be placed on redevelopment that is sensitive to the character of existing neighborhoods and communities and that allows green infrastructure goals to be achieved.

#### **STRATEGY 5.1: Promote transit-oriented development (TOD)**

Developers, planning boards, elected officials and other stakeholders in the region should work together to promote TOD by amending local development codes to support development of compact, mixed-use development near transit stations and stops. Our region should also work with state officials to ensure New Jersey's economic incentive programs encourage development near, or easily accessible to, public transit. This includes refining NJEDA's

Grow NJ program to foster job growth near transit, and including provisions for affordable housing in TOD grant or incentive programs. We can foster job growth near transit through close collaboration with workforce and economic development professionals. We should also provide programs or training to better educate developers, homeowners and others about the full cost of housing, which includes transportation costs.

## GETTING STARTED



- **Refine** the Grow NJ program regulations to further incentivize growth and resilient development around transit hubs, including incentives for mixed-use and affordable housing, and integrate workforce development policies.
- **Ensure** local land use regulations support mixed-use development at appropriate densities in transit station areas, especially at transit hub locations.
- **Develop and regularly update** a region-wide, one-stop brownfields inventory database.
- **Adopt and implement** abandoned property ordinances as authorized by the 1996 Urban Redevelopment Act and the 2004 Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act (APRA).
- **Implement** an outreach campaign to educate local elected officials, planners and developers about non-contiguous clustering, transfer of development rights (TDR) and other innovative land use tools.
- **Expand** technical resources available to municipalities seeking to implement non-contiguous, clustering TDR and other tools.







### **STRATEGY 5.2: Encourage infill and redevelopment on existing vacant and underutilized properties**

There are vacant or underutilized residential properties, surface parking lots, office buildings, shopping centers, old factories and empty lots throughout the region that can be reused or redeveloped. Our region should make more effective use of these properties by reorienting state and local funding, incentive programs and policies to prioritize these areas for reuse and redevelopment. We should start by inventorying these “opportunity sites” throughout the region. State infrastructure funding and incentive programs should target investments in places that would foster infill and redevelopment. This could be accomplished by modifying infrastructure funding programs to favor projects in areas that provide capacity to support redevelopment projects, fostering greater adaptive reuse of historic properties through a state historic tax credit, linking redevelopment incentives to workforce development programming and creating a pilot program for rehabilitation and repurposing of obsolete suburban shopping centers and corporate campuses.

### **STRATEGY 5.3: Prioritize brownfields for redevelopment**

Brownfields are properties that can be difficult to redevelop because of the presence of hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants that must be cleaned up prior to reuse. Due to our region’s industrial heritage, brownfield sites are particularly common in North Jersey and impede redevelopment efforts in our region’s cities, as well as many older towns and suburbs. We should make it easier to identify and reuse these sites by developing a comprehensive and regularly updated brownfields inventory that monitors site status, clean up and use. The database should be accompanied by a set of criteria to determine possible reuses of each specific brownfield site given their location, zoning and surrounding land uses. State and federal agencies should then work with local governments to address regulatory barriers to redevelopment, provide incentives and prioritize funding to encourage private sector investment in redeveloping the sites.

### **STRATEGY 5.4: Expand the use of innovative planning tools that promote smart development**

There are a number of planning tools that can help encourage “smart” land development. Traditional examples include performance-based zoning, design standards and guidelines, and redevelopment plans. Other less often used tools include: “form-based codes”, non-contiguous cluster development and Transfer of Development Rights or TDR. Form-based codes aim to regulate the form and function of development rather than that particular use of property, essentially letting the market decide what the best use of the land is. Non-contiguous cluster development allows one parcel to be preserved while its density is transferred and instead developed on a different, non-contiguous parcel. Transfer of Development Rights moves an owner’s right to build from one site where development is prohibited or discouraged to a location more optimal for development. An important step in fostering use of these tools will be public outreach and education. We must ensure that developers, local officials and the public are aware of how these tools work and the potential benefits of using these options for development. We should also expand the level of technical assistance and incentives available to municipalities to encourage them to use these tools more frequently and appropriately in particular how the tools can be used effectively while at the same time protecting the rights of individual property owners.



### FOCUS AREA 6: Create vibrant places and neighborhoods that will attract and retain residents, workers and visitors ●

**WHAT AND WHY** To be competitive in today's economy, we must make North Jersey a place that attracts and retains workers, residents and visitors of all generations. Our region must focus on creating and sustaining the kind of places that appeal to all age groups—especially baby boomers and millennials, who will play an outsized role in shaping market demand in next 20 years.

Both of these groups show strong preferences for areas with residential neighborhoods, work environments, retail and cultural amenities, and public spaces that are accessible by walking, biking and public transit. As baby boomers age, they will be less able to drive, increasing the need for public transportation and safe places to walk. Meanwhile, millennials have a documented preference for living and working in walkable, dynamic places, with a diversity of amenities and mobility options. At a time when “talent is mobile”—meaning people with high-value skills are able and willing to relocate to communities that match their lifestyle preferences—communities and employers must adapt to attract and retain talented young professionals.

Communities and developers need to think holistically about the kind of public and private spaces they build, ensuring that their work collectively yields homes, business, public spaces, cultural and commercial centers that are accessible, vibrant, amenity-rich and in keeping with local culture and traditions. Investing in efforts to increase the attractiveness of the region's communities—if done in coordination with a larger economic development strategy—can help drive growth and create more sustainable patterns of development. It can also establish a framework for stewardship, long-term maintenance and upkeep of public infrastructure.

Creating quality places is not just about buildings and infrastructure.

**HOW** Creating quality places is not just about buildings and infrastructure.

It's also about the kind of active, engaged programming and management that requires sustained focus and attention over time and new partnerships between private, institutional and public sector players. Creating lively, livable communities requires a local vision, design guidelines and historic preservation ordinances that capture the unique character of a particular place, and active programming and management should be integrated into the on-going community planning process and economic development decision-making.

#### **STRATEGY 6.1: Design places that meet the diverse needs of people in all age groups**

Our region should focus on creating and maintaining places that appeal to diverse groups of people. These places should connect residential neighborhoods and work environments to retail and cultural amenities. They

should link public environments to their surrounding communities by both streets and facilities for walking, biking and public transit. They should also include small, attractive parks and plazas with street-oriented retail, arts and cultural attractions and wireless networks, all while building upon local character and culture. We can build such places and spaces by identifying opportunities for infill







- **Create** a vision and a strategy to establish place-making leadership at the local and state level.
- **Redesign** existing streets to allow for pedestrians, bikes, and green infrastructure.
- **Prioritize** public space enhancements into municipal infrastructure budgets and programming.
- **Zone** to allow for compact and mixed-use development in appropriate locations.

- **Work** with the region's leading corporations, local business leaders and institutions to establish nonprofit downtown development corporations.

housing, retail amenities and healthcare services, and by revamping zoning ordinances, community plans and transportation plans to accommodate transit-connected, mixed-used development that offers a range of needed services and diversified amenities.

**STRATEGY 6.2: Create a physical vision for new development based on an understanding of the unique characteristics that define each place**

People like to visit, live, work and play in places that feel special and unique. Therefore, development decisions should take into account the local landscape, customs and history. Development should complement open space, be

appropriately scaled for people rather than fast-moving automobiles, and create a cohesive, welcoming environment that encourages people to come and stay in the community. We can accomplish these goals by providing resources for communities to develop vision plans; marketing our region to emphasize its most unique and attractive qualities; educating residents, business owners, community groups and elected officials on the process of developing sustainable design and unique, vibrant places; and appointing officials at the state and local level to oversee design standards and implementation.

**STRATEGY 6.3: Establish programming and management practices to create active, actively-managed spaces**

Public spaces can be “activated” by creating programs and attractions that draw people to those places—farmers markets, walks and runs, night-out events, public art festivals, and streetfairs are all examples of ways to activate a public space. Streetscapes, public gathering places and outdoor spaces should be creatively designed, effectively managed, and activated to complement street-oriented retail and arts and cultural facilities. We can foster active spaces by organizing and supporting Business Improvement Districts, prioritizing public space enhancements in municipal infrastructure budgets, and by revamping zoning ordinances to ensure buildings are well integrated with the street, ensuring foot traffic and activity.

**STRATEGY 6.4: Locate development in areas that are walkable, bikeable, and accessible by public transit**

Local municipalities should ensure that planning and redevelopment efforts create places and spaces that are accessible to surrounding districts by foot and bike—whether they be new or reimagined existing development. This means locating new development in areas that are or can be made walkable and bikeable as well as completing pedestrian networks to better link areas of existing development. In places where pedestrian and bike connections do not exist, new public spaces, such

as parks and plazas, can provide a framework for adding new infrastructure and fostering biking and walking as an enjoyable activity and convenient means of transportation.

**STRATEGY 6.5: Invest strategically in catalyst spaces, rather than stand-alone building projects**

Catalyst spaces are public areas such as small parks, streets and village centers that are designed in concert with the associated buildings. At their best, these spaces have demonstrated an ability to serve as the focal points for new development, attract private investment and create value for the surrounding community. Communities

should approach land use planning and manage the development process by considering the best locations for investing in catalyst spaces. Research into the costs and benefits of public space can bolster this approach. We should also develop public incentives and revamp zoning to encourage development around public spaces, and work to identify strategic investment opportunities.

**STRATEGY 6.6: Create the local organizational framework to implement and manage these strategies**

Creating and sustaining vibrant places and neighborhoods requires the coordinated efforts of many different players at the local level, including developers, property owners, residents, local civic and municipal leaders, with the support of state,

county and transit agencies. Supporting and sustaining these complex efforts requires an organizational framework and resources. Toward this end, communities should consider establishing and supporting local organizations like Business Improvement Districts and merchants associations; creating community development corporations and nonprofit real estate development organizations; and fostering partnerships between key organizations and institutions to increase their capacity to attract resources and implement shared development goals.

Development  
decisions should  
take into  
account the local  
landscape, customs  
and history.



## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 7: Connect people and places with safe, convenient and reliable transportation ●

**WHAT AND WHY** North Jersey’s transportation system includes a diverse and extensive network of facilities and services. While our transportation system serves many of us well, others in the region have difficulty getting where they need to go. Travel options are limited in some places, and overcrowded and inconvenient in others. Congestion causes delays on the region’s roadways, and walking and biking are impossible or unsafe in many areas.

Northern New Jersey needs a safe, convenient and reliable transportation system that is well-maintained, and in which all the parts connect seamlessly. A safer system would save lives, and reduce the suffering and costs associated with crashes and accidents. A seamless and reliable system could connect people with

Northern New  
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transportation  
system.

the places they need to go, increasing their access to well-paying jobs, good schools, shopping, needed services, recreation and arts and cultural resources. Improving the capacity and connectivity of the transportation system can reduce travel times and increase travel and route options. Greater support for shared-ride modes, including public transit and shuttles for people without access to private vehicles, not only expands access to opportunity for these individuals but also helps reduce energy use and harmful pollutants. Furthermore, creating more options for walking and bicycling will contribute to better public health and healthier communities.

**HOW** Connecting people, places, and goods with safe, convenient and reliable transportation will take coordinated action by a range of agencies, stakeholders and communities. It will require fiscally prudent transportation projects and investments, and close coordination with local economic activity, development projects and land use. Given the combination of budget constraints and strong demand from residents and businesses for improved transportation, diverse stakeholders across the region will need to work together to make the most of existing transportation infrastructure, and to expand the transportation system’s capacity in ways that are economically feasible and environmentally sound.

The following strategies are recommended to improve transportation operations, strengthen linkages among modes, create a more convenient, safe, and seamless travel experience, and maintain the system over time.

#### **STRATEGY 7.1: Maintain transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair**

As population and freight movement in the region continue to grow, our transportation infrastructure will be put under increasing strain. Scarce resources must be used strategically and efficiently to maximize the value of our

transportation network. Jurisdictions and agencies must also collaborate to ensure transportation infrastructure is preserved, rehabilitated and restored as needed to maintain it in a state of good repair. Our region should implement asset management techniques to prioritize preventive maintenance and to avoid costly repair and



replacement. The tools to enable asset management should be widely and collaboratively deployed, and we should proactively respond to new federal requirements that support this approach.

**STRATEGY 7.2: Adopt and implement “Complete Streets” policies**

“Complete Streets” are designed to make all modes of travel (driving, public transportation, walking, biking and goods movement) accessible to all users, regardless of age, income, or physical ability. Our region should continue efforts to encourage municipalities and counties to adopt Complete Streets policies. In addition, our region should take the necessary steps to ensure Complete Streets policies are implemented. These steps should include: public and stakeholder education on the benefits of implementing Complete Streets; adoption and use of flexible design guidelines in subdivision and zoning ordinances; training for planning, design, engineering and public works professionals; roadway redesigns; and action by elected officials and agency leaders to prioritize Complete Streets implementation.

**STRATEGY 7.3: Improve conditions and service at “Transit Hub” locations**

“Transit Hubs” are locations such as rail stations and bus stops, where passengers may switch their mode of travel and pursue various routes. Transit Hubs can also provide a focal point for local economic and community development, as many shops, restaurants and other businesses find access to the hub attractive to workers and customers alike. We should identify existing and planned Transit Hub locations throughout the region and prioritize them for improvement. Improvements should include: enhanced customer amenities such as food vendors, shops and artwork to enliven the hubs; aligning the routes and schedules of different transportation modes to ensure passengers can change from one vehicle or form of transportation to another with minimum

delay and inconvenience; increasing service where ridership demand is high and where it is economically feasible; improving pedestrian and bicycle access and amenities leading to and at Transit Hubs; improving traveler information; and implementing parking management and zoning changes that can encourage riders to use transit more and improve the overall traveler experience.

**STRATEGY 7.4: Enhance and improve existing public and private transit services**

Our region should support continued long-term growth in public transit use by continually improving existing transit services, and by introducing new and expanded services where ridership demand exists and the return on investment is reasonable. Improvements should include:

increasing the speed, reliability and efficiency of bus transit; modernizing transit system infrastructure; creating new and innovative service models for transportation serving seniors, people with disabilities who do not drive, and low-income people without other reliable travel options; improving linkages between public and private transportation services; and managing the deployment of entrepreneurial transportation services such as Uber, Lyft and other ride-sharing services that can expand travel options for the public. Policy makers should take the steps necessary to ensure such services are operated in a way that protects the rights and safety of drivers and users of those services.

**STRATEGY 7.5: Increase transit system capacity in strategic locations.**

Projected growth in population and employment in the region is expected to place an even greater burden on the region’s already strained transportation infrastructure. To remain economically competitive, our region must develop and implement a coordinated multi-agency strategy to increase Hudson passenger transportation capacity. At the same time, we must expand and strengthen infrastructure that facilitates intraregional travel and improves the resilience of core system components. Those components include, but are not limited to, NJ TRANSIT’s Hudson-Bergen Light Rail system, commuter rail network and inter- and intra-regional bus service.

Transit Hubs can also provide a focal point for local economic and community development.



## GETTING STARTED

- **Develop** new training programs for Complete Streets and find ways to give priority to funding for projects with Complete Streets elements.
- **Develop** a strategic plan identifying where current Transit Hubs should be improved, where new ones should be developed, and how to improve local transit that serves them.
- **Look** for ways to allow modern buses to use weight-restricted roadways and identify improvements that will allow buses to more quickly and reliably travel along congested highways.
- **Identify** ways to encourage entrepreneurial investment in emerging transportation technologies that benefit drivers and transit customers.
- **Improve** and expand trans-Hudson transit capacity and modernize the Port Authority Bus Terminal complex.
- **Ramp up** education, training, outreach and field audit programs to reduce crashes and improve transportation safety.
- **Increase** real-time sharing of travel data among highway and transit agencies, and with local and private carrier transit.

### STRATEGY 7.6: Use New Jersey's State Highway Safety Plan and NJ TRANSIT Safety Programs to improve transportation safety

In December 2014, New Jersey Department of Transportation completed an update to the state's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). The plan recommends projects and programs that address 16 emphasis areas and process improvements, including engineering, enforcement, education and emergency response strategies. Our region should use the SHSP as a blueprint to improve roadway safety throughout the region. In addition, NJ TRANSIT should continue its efforts to promote bus and rail system safety. This should include completing an internal safety audit to review the agency's existing safety practices, training, personnel procedures and physical systems. The agency should also continue and expand commuter outreach programs where necessary to raise awareness about safety and reduce the number of preventable injuries and fatalities associated with transit use and operations.

### STRATEGY 7.7: Use technology to improve transportation operations

Our region's transportation agencies use a variety of technologies to share information and maximize the efficiency of travel modes. However, these tools and systems typically only focus on one mode of transportation at a time (such as bus or train or automobile traffic). Our region needs to develop an integrated system of technologies that allow for a more big picture view of our transportation network. This can be accomplished by better utilizing "big data" and by implementing regional communications and information systems. We should

also improve real-time information for consumers by taking advantage of social media tools, and take steps to simplify the way transit fares are collected.

**Special note:** Goods movement and logistics are important transportation issues. See **Focus Area 3,**

**Strategy 2** for ways the region can leverage its role as a freight and distribution hub.





### FOCUS AREA 8A: Expand and diversify the region's housing supply to meet current and future demand ●

**WHAT AND WHY** A home does more than just provide shelter. Having a quality home that meets one's physical needs and lifestyle preferences is essential to achieving a high quality of life. For those who can afford to buy a home, doing so is often a key way to accumulate wealth—wealth that can help pay for a child's education, support a person's retirement or provide a nest egg that can be passed on to future generations.

But North Jersey's current housing supply is not meeting the demands of its increasingly diverse population. The supply of housing affordable to many of our region's residents, especially low- and middle-income households, is inadequate. Families spend so much on costly housing in North Jersey that many have little disposable income leftover to spend or save. High housing costs are also undermining the region's economic competitiveness, making it hard for companies to attract talent and driving up the cost of doing business here. Many

existing and prospective employers recognize the lack of affordable workforce housing as a significant impediment to economic growth and expansion.

Having a range of housing types in convenient, appealing locations would yield many social and economic benefits for the region. Offering greater diversity and supply of housing types—especially smaller units, rental apartments and other housing options affordable to workers in a greater range of jobs—will make the region more attractive both to workers and employers facing stiff competition for talent. More housing choice will also help meet the changing lifestyle demands of a diverse population, providing appropriately sized, affordable living options for millennials, retiring baby boomers and arriving immigrants. These groups represent an increasing share of our region's population today and are expected to continue to grow in coming decades.

The supply of  
housing affordable  
to many of our  
regions' residents  
is inadequate.

**HOW** The strategies recommended as part of this Focus Area are designed to create more diverse and affordable housing options. These strategies include: removing regulatory and other barriers to housing production; providing incentives to encourage production of needed housing types, including housing affordable to a range of incomes levels; protecting the affordability of deed-restricted affordable units; and fostering innovation in the housing sector through pilot programs and demonstration projects.

#### **STRATEGY 8A.1: Increase housing variety and choice by removing regulatory and other barriers to housing production**

Local plans, laws and regulations largely dictate where housing can be built, what type of housing is allowed, how big housing units must be and the number of units allowed on each lot. In many communities, local plans

and regulations limit the variety and choice of housing that is available. Local governments in the region should review and revise their ordinances to make it easier for builders and developers to construct a greater variety of housing choices. Plans and regulations should allow a range of housing types and sizes to be built that matches the profile of current and future residents, including





families at all income levels, young people just starting out and older residents wishing to age in the communities they already call home. Housing types not widely available in many North Jersey communities include: multi-family buildings, apartments, mixed-use housing over retail, “micro” dwelling units (less than 600 sq. feet), accessory apartments (sometimes called “granny flats”), starter homes on small lots, live-work units and others.

**STRATEGY 8A.2: Target financial and other incentives to increase production of housing options not well-supplied in the region**

Builders and developers make decisions about new housing by evaluating market and economic forces such as changing family size, consumer preferences, the cost and availability of land, available financing and many others. In addition to eliminating regulatory barriers that limit housing variety and choice, our region should use financial and other incentives to encourage the construction of housing types that are not widely available but in high demand. Financial incentives for builders and developers should include low or no-interest loans, grants, and tax breaks. Municipalities can also encourage builders and developers to create needed housing types by waiving certain fees or expediting the review of projects that meet certain criteria. In addition, the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency should create and fund a “micro-unit” pilot program that includes development of both multi-family and single-family micro housing units of less than 600 square feet (per unit). Such a program could demonstrate the viability of ultra-small dwelling units as a living option that has the potential to promote market-driven affordability.

**STRATEGY 8A.3: Increase the supply of housing affordable to a range of household sizes and incomes, especially in areas that are well-served by public transit**

Federal and state funding to support the construction of housing affordable to low- and middle-income individuals and families has decreased by more than 50 percent in the past decade. In addition, there is frequently wide-

spread public opposition to the construction of new housing of any type—especially housing restricted as affordable. This is often due to concerns over traffic, density and an influx of school-aged children, but could also be fueled by negative stereotypes and discrimination.

To remain competitive, our region must take the difficult steps necessary to increase the supply of housing affordable to a range of households and incomes in our region. This should include educating the public and local leaders about the true nature of affordable housing in order to dispel myths and stereotypes. Municipalities should change local ordinances to require that new housing

developments in locations served by (or planned to be served by) public transit include a minimum of 20 percent affordable units and comply with their obligations under the Fair Housing Act. The legislature should amend the municipal land use law to identify new housing developments that include a significant portion of affordable units as an “inherently beneficial” that promotes the general welfare. Determining the threshold that constitutes an inherently beneficial use should be a matter of public discussion and debate. Finally, municipalities should use a range of tools and incentives to encourage developers to build affordable housing, including land banking, relief from parking requirements in transit-accessible locations, expedited review, fee waivers and tax credits. Municipalities should also consider re-purposing vacant or underutilized office buildings and complexes into mixed-use, mixed-income multifamily housing in locations where access to transit could be provided.

Municipalities  
should use a range  
of tools and  
incentives to  
encourage  
developers to build  
affordable housing.

**STRATEGY 8A.4: Ensure that the region’s existing supply of deed-restricted affordable housing units remain affordable**

According to state records, 80,000 deed-restricted affordable housing units have been constructed or rehabilitated since the New Jersey Supreme Court decision known as Mount Laurel II and the New Jersey Fair Housing Act was passed in the mid-1980’s. These units are critically important to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income fami-



- **Amend** municipal ordinances to allow for increased density, mixed-use development, new and innovative housing types (e.g. micro-units), and accessory housing (e.g. basement, attic apartments).
- **Work** with the private sector to identify and implement a meaningful package of financial and other incentives



- **Inventory** existing deed-restricted affordable housing units that are at risk for conversion to market-rate units and take steps to preserve the affordability of those units.
- **Create** and fund a “micro-unit” pilot program that includes development of both multi-family and single-family micro housing.



at the state and local level that will encourage the production of needed housing types, including affordable units.

lies across our region. The long-term affordability controls placed on these units usually expire after a period of time ranging from 15 to 45 years. Consequently, the affordability controls on many of the earlier units built under Fair Housing Act requirements are or will be expiring very soon. There are a variety of ways municipalities can preserve or extend affordability restrictions. Municipalities

should identify affordable housing units in their jurisdiction that are at risk for conversion to market-rate units and work with the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing, homeowners, tenants and rental property owners to extend affordability controls where feasible.

## Strategies and Actions ●



### FOCUS AREA 8B: Address barriers to housing mobility, increase access to areas of high opportunity and affirmatively further fair housing policies region-wide ●

**WHAT AND WHY** According to federal and state law, people have a right to “fair housing,” meaning everyone, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, family status, disability, ancestry or military status, can secure the housing they want in a neighborhood of their choice. It also means that housing should be structurally accessible to and useable by all persons, particularly people with disabilities. The New Jersey Fair Housing Act states that “municipalities cannot discriminate against low- and moderate-income persons and households. The Supreme Court of New Jersey in its Mount Laurel decisions demands that municipal land use regulations affirmatively afford a reasonable opportunity for a variety and choice of housing, including low- and moderate-cost housing, to meet the needs of people desiring to live there. While provision for the actual construction of that housing by municipalities is not required, they are encouraged but not mandated to expend their own resources to help provide low- and moderate-income housing. (NJAC 52:27D-302 h).

Given that fair housing is a right guaranteed by law, government agencies must take affirmative steps to protect against and eliminate discrimination, and promote housing choice for all persons. But despite decades of governmental efforts to subsidize affordable housing and to address disparities in housing opportunities, North Jersey remains divided. The majority of lower income and minority residents live in the region’s cities and older suburbs, with far less access to the higher quality housing, neighborhoods, public services, schools and employment opportunities enjoyed by white, higher income residents of wealthier suburbs.

Our region must tackle the problems of persistent segregated housing patterns and unequal access to opportunity. Not only will doing so improve the lives of tens of thousands of individuals, but it will also improve the region’s long-term economic competitiveness. All of our region’s residents should have a fair chance to find the housing they need where they choose to live. As more people gain access to opportunity, our region as a whole will benefit from greater stability, security, and prosperity.

**HOW** Improving access to well-paying jobs, safe neighborhoods, quality public services and high performing schools will require two key changes. First, our region must increase housing mobility for lower income residents. We must make it easier for low-income residents to move to and afford to live in places where better opportunities exist. Second, our region must improve conditions in the places where lower income residents currently live, and build better connections between these neighborhoods and areas where there are better opportunities. These goals can be achieved by taking steps to ensure fair housing policies and plans are in place and enforced, implementing long-term residential mobility strategies, and using public investment programs to create, connect, and strengthen access to opportunity.

Our region must  
increase housing  
mobility for lower  
income residents.





- **Explore** the creation of a North Jersey Fair Housing Council to build capacity in the region, undertake fair housing assessments consistent with new federal requirements, and adopt and implement fair housing policies region-wide.
- **Improve** fair housing decision-making and enforcement by improving data collection and accuracy, and improve transparency by making the data available online.

- **Develop and implement** a regional Housing Choice Voucher program that increases housing mobility for voucher recipients.
- **Allocate** federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) to emphasize the location of family-oriented affordable housing in higher-opportunity suburban communities.
- **Review and revise** the project selection criteria used to prioritize transportation investments and allocate Grow New Jersey incentives to give priority to projects that promote fair housing and increase access to opportunity for low-income residents.

**STRATEGY 8B.1: Affirmatively further fair housing policies region-wide**

Ensuring fair housing polices and plans are in place and enforced requires the establishment of a comprehensive, region-wide assessment process that systematically identifies impediments and barriers to fair housing and

the actions needed to eliminate those barriers. Toward this end, counties, municipalities and public housing authorities in our region should work with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs to prepare and routinely update assessments of fair housing that comply with the requirements of state and federal laws and regulations. The assessment processes should ensure

transparency and create a stronger link to planned public investments that can promote fair housing and increase access to opportunity. Data and analysis from the *Together North Jersey Regional Fair Housing and Equity Assessment* should be used to inform these assessments. To promote regional planning and coordination in fair housing policy, our region should explore the creation of a North Jersey Fair Housing Coalition, similar in structure to those that exist in other regions of the country. Such a group could: help to coordinate fair housing assessments, support investigations of housing discrimination complaints, examine enforcement of fair housing laws, and help coordinate regional initiatives such as mobility counseling and efforts to enhance voucher portability.

**STRATEGY 8B.2: Promote regional housing mobility by fostering innovation in the use of Housing Choice Vouchers**

The tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, has great potential to improve low- and moderate-income households' access to communities with high-performing schools, quality housing and jobs. However, the current structure of the program tends to restrict the low- and moderate-income families who receive vouchers from moving beyond our region's cities and older suburbs. For example, the way vouchers are allocated provides an incentive to retain users within the jurisdiction of the agency administering the vouchers. Knowledge of the program among landlords outside of urban areas is limited, so few participate in the program; and services to help program participants understand fully the options available are not readily available or accessed. To achieve the program's full potential, our region must promote more innovation in how voucher programs are implemented. These innovations should reward public housing authorities that promote regional housing mobility; provide incentives to consolidate administration of programs to optimize limited resources and expand the services available to tenants, such as mobility counseling; and link housing choice vouchers with school funding allocations so that communities that takes steps to promote more inclusive patterns of family housing get more funding to support their schools.

**STRATEGY 8B.3: Use public investment programs to create, connect, and strengthen access to opportunity**

Our region invests hundreds of millions of dollars each year in public infrastructure, transportation, community development, housing, education, workforce development and economic development projects and programs.

These funds can be used in innovative ways to help create, connect and strengthen access to opportunity. The agencies and organizations that manage the budgeting and allocation of these funds should develop, adopt and utilize project criteria that give priority to projects that promote fair housing and increase access to opportunity for low-income residents and communities of color. For example, priority can be given to transportation projects that improve transportation options between low-income neighborhoods and job concentrations; or a portion of Low Income Tax Credit investments can be targeted to places where there are more and better job opportunities and high-performing schools. Investment decisions and outcomes should be monitored and evaluated over time to understand the benefits and burdens of various investments, and help shape future prioritization decisions.

**STRATEGY 8B.4: Increase the supply of affordable, accessible housing options for people with disabilities and seniors in appropriate locations**

Affordable, accessible housing is an important component of making a community more livable for people with disabilities and older adults. Today, 40 percent of our region's population is between the age of 35 and 64—7 percent more than in 1980. The number of seniors will continue to increase over the next 20 years as the large baby boomer generation ages, and as average life expectancy increases. In addition, according to the 2010 census, nearly 10 percent of New Jerseyans report having at least one type of disability. People with disabilities and the growing number of older adults in our region require a greater supply of housing options with accessibility features such as wider doorways, ramps, lifts and elevators; modified kitchens and grab bars in bathrooms; and increased security. Municipalities, counties and state agencies should identify regional needs for accessible housing. Our region should encourage and/or mandate the inclusion of accessibility features in at least a portion of new housing units, and target a portion of affordable housing program resources to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Municipalities and state agencies should also provide incentives to encourage the construction of more affordable, accessible housing units in locations where residents can walk and take transit to get where they need to go.



### FOCUS AREA 9: Create a system of public education that prepares all students for the 21st century economy ●

**WHAT AND WHY** New Jersey has always been a leader in public education and innovation. We consistently score in the top 10 percent of states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a nationally administered standardized test that assesses what students know and their ability to perform certain tasks in various subjects. Nearly three-quarters of high school students take at least one Advanced Placement exam and our students graduate high school and obtain bachelor's degrees at a higher rate than the national average. At the same time, we have one of the country's highest rates of educational disparity in academic achievement. Simply put, in New Jersey, low-income students are far less likely to perform well academically than wealthier peers.

One key explanation for this has to do with concentration of poverty and lack of housing mobility. Families of limited means often can afford to live only in areas served by poor performing schools. For many

students in lower income areas, graduating from high school is a struggle. They will likely attend schools where the majority of other students are also low-income and face significant challenges, including overcrowding, lack of resources, few extracurricular programs, limited or no Advanced Placement courses, and fewer experienced, highly qualified teachers.

The future of our region's economy depends on improving outcomes for these low-income students and we must focus on preparing all of our children for the 21st century economy. By fulfilling the promise of equitable funding stated in the School Funding Reform Act of 2008, increasing access to high quality schools, and preparing all of our children for college and careers, New Jersey will be able to maintain our position as an innovative state with a highly skilled labor force.

New Jersey has  
always been a  
leader in public  
education and  
innovation.

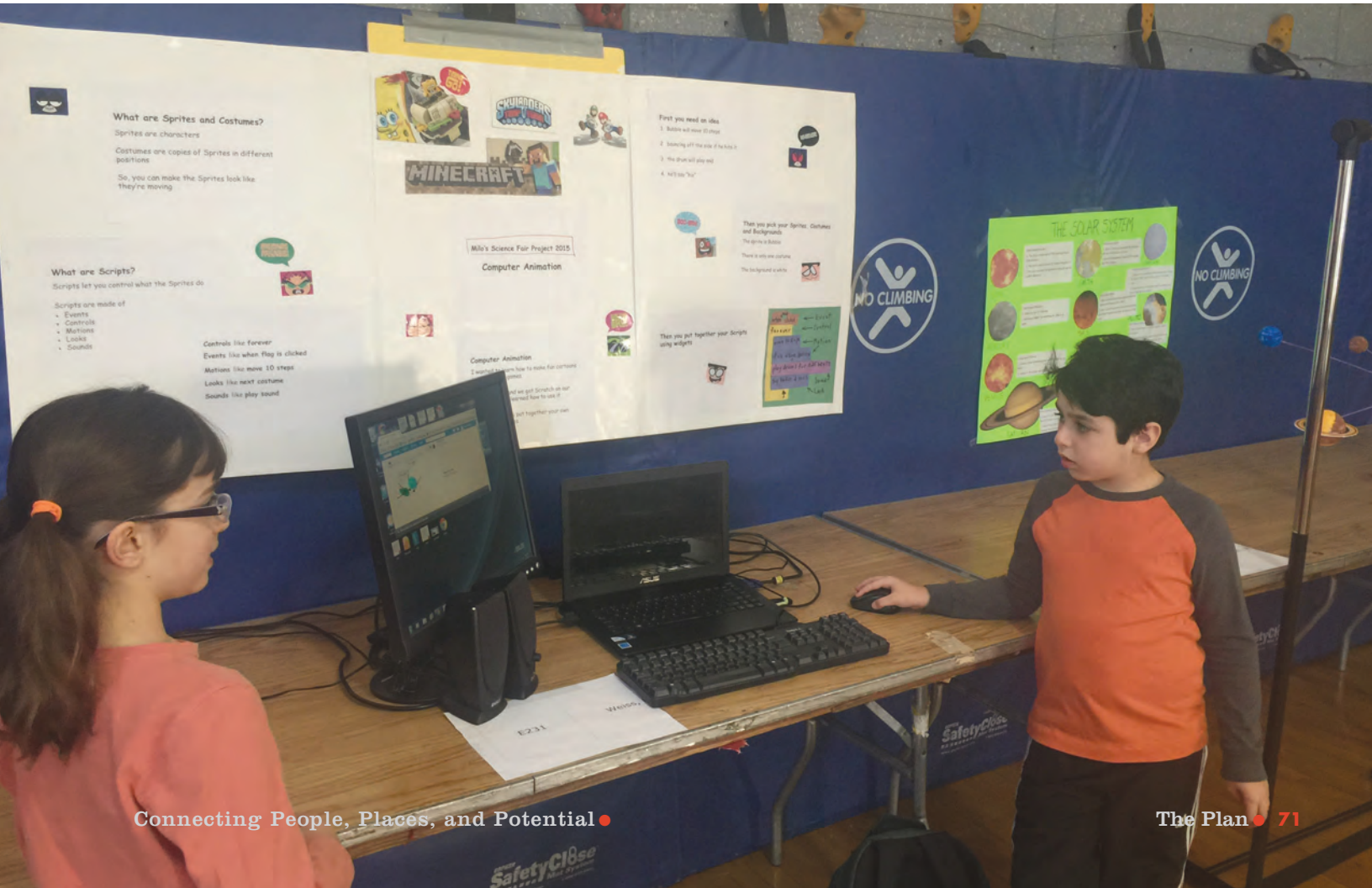
**HOW** This Focus Area recommends five strategies to support the creation of a public education system that prepares all North Jersey students for the modern economy. By emphasizing creativity, innovation, cross-cultural communication, problem solving and other 21st century skills, we can leverage the existing system of public education and push forward innovations in education policy that have proven to be successful in other parts of the country. These include public/private partnerships, rethinking school district boundaries, expanding STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) programs, establishing universal pre-kindergarten and implementing community school programs.

#### **STRATEGY 9.1: Address school funding disparities**

With one of the most progressive school funding formulas in the nation, New Jersey already has a strong framework for providing equitable funding for all of our schools.

Ensuring that all schools have the needed funding will allow, among other things, for schools to maintain smaller class sizes, retain highly effective teachers, and provide supplemental services to high needs students. Unfortunately, while we have a progressive formula in place, the





State of New Jersey has not executed that formula to the full extent, under-funding schools and not living up to the formula's potential to provide equitable funding. In order to address current school funding disparities, we need full and adequate state funding for the existing formula. In addition, our region should also encourage the development of outside funding sources to supplement public funding, including the development of public-private partnerships, and experimenting with other innovative ways of sharing costs across municipal/school district lines.

**STRATEGY 9.2: Expand school programming for the 21st Century economy**

STEAM programming—science, technology, engineering, arts and math—helps to prepare students for the new high-tech, information-based economy by blending design and creativity into the hard sciences. Our region should expand access to STEAM programming to all students, with special consideration given to underserved districts and schools. Expanded programming will require extended learning time, meaningful partnerships with area employers and colleges/universities, and financial and technical support for school districts to develop STEAM curriculum.

**STRATEGY 9.3: Improve access for pre-K and early childhood education**

Funding pre-K education for all low-income students in the region, as mandated by the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA), would contribute significantly to reducing the region's performance disparities between districts. Investing in early childhood education yields high long-term returns, both in financial and academic terms, and reduces the need for costly educational interventions in the future. To improve access to early childhood education, our region needs awareness campaigns to demonstrate the value of early education. Programs are also needed to help parents support young children in the development of prerequisite skills such as language acquisition, number and pattern recognition, and developmentally appropriate command of spatial intelligence.

**STRATEGY 9.4: Improve educational outcomes by implementing community schools, wraparound services for students and families, and school-community partnerships**

The community schools model maximizes the use of existing school buildings—places that are familiar to members of the community—by using them as bases of operations to provide wraparound services for students, families and communities. Our region should implement public-public and public-private partnerships that transform our public schools into community centers, where children, youth, families and community members can access a

wide range of support services that improve the child's ability to perform in school. For example, community schools can offer adult education courses, on-site preventative health services, mental health counselors, food pantries, early childhood education, and citizenship and English language classes. Some community schools even include farmers markets and laundromats.

**STRATEGY 9.5: Expand boundaries and access to high performing schools**

Currently, educational opportunities for poor and minority students are limited by where they live. Helping students access a quality education, regardless of their zip code, is critical to our region's long-term success. New Jersey has a fragmented system of school options that includes traditional public schools, charter schools, magnet schools and the Inter-district Public School Choice Program.

North Jersey needs a more coherent approach to school options, stronger partnerships geared towards shared services, and a thorough review of the current options available for improving access to high quality schools. This approach should include a feasibility study to evaluate options for district consolidation and regionalization.

Helping students  
access a quality  
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long-term success.



- **Provide** full and equitable funding for the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA).
- **Provide** support for districts and municipalities to explore cost cutting and cost sharing measures.

Explore grant funding options for local school districts that partner with nongovernmental organizations.

- **Encourage** local school districts to develop partnerships with the private sector, colleges/universities, and non-profits.
- **Support** the maintenance and development of STEAM programs and curriculum.
- **Increase** access of high quality pre-K for low-income families.
- **Conduct** a feasibility study to evaluate options for school district consolidation and regionalization.



## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 10: Enhance the resiliency of the region's communities and infrastructure ●

**WHAT AND WHY** The effects of climate change in New Jersey are well documented. Temperatures and sea levels are rising and precipitation increasing. These changes are expected to continue throughout this century, and will have serious consequences for North Jersey communities, infrastructure and natural ecosystems. The impacts of recent extreme weather events like Hurricanes Sandy and Tropical Storm Irene were devastating in our region. While it is difficult to say that individual weather events are caused by climate change, scientists expect extreme weather events to become more frequent and perhaps more severe as the effects of climate change continue in the years and decades to come. Local and state officials must take steps to ensure that the North Jersey region is prepared for, can withstand, and recover quickly from adverse events.

Even as measures to reduce global warming are developed, we must adapt our communities to the inevitably changing climate. New Jersey sustained roughly \$30 billion in economic losses from Hurricane Sandy,

due in part to inadequate flood protection, land use policies that resulted in development of flood-prone areas, and a lack of understanding about the risks associated with severe storms. Much of this loss was sustained in our region, where extensive damage and repairs disrupted lives, businesses, ports, tourism and the fiscal health of many communities. Resiliency strategies must be incorporated into the land use, hazard mitigation and capital planning process at all levels of government so that future community development and infrastructure investments address the risks associated with extreme weather and a changing climate.

We must adapt  
our communities  
to the inevitably  
changing climate.

**HOW** This focus area seeks to improve the resilience of both communities and infrastructure in our region. This can be achieved by: identifying better the region's vulnerabilities; implementing measures to adapt our communities and infrastructure to a changing environment; expanding floodplain buyout programs; and using green infrastructure to mitigate the effects of extreme weather and climate change.

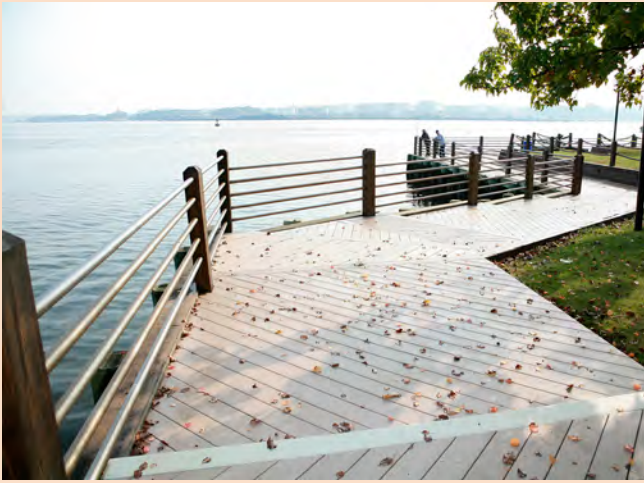
#### **STRATEGY 10.1: Identify the region's vulnerabilities to extreme weather and climate change**

Identifying solutions that can reduce the impact of flooding, storm surge, sea-level rise and other climate and weather risks must start by developing a deep, broad understanding of what the region's vulnerabilities are. Each community has unique needs, depending on its particular infrastructure, topography and location. Our region must implement a comprehensive assessment process that can help identify potential impacts—on communities, infrastructure and our economy—and assess our region's level of preparedness in dealing with those

impacts. We should also establish a regional climate change working group to coordinate the assessment process, provide technical assistance and guide implementation. Understanding our vulnerabilities will allow the region to develop the policies and investment strategies necessary to protect residents, property, businesses, infrastructure and natural systems.

#### **STRATEGY 10.2: Adapt communities and infrastructure to be resilient to extreme weather events and the impacts of climate change**

Adapting communities and infrastructure to be more resilient to extreme weather events and the impacts of climate



## GETTING STARTED

- **Create** a climate change working group to inventory statewide financial, organizational and human resources for resiliency planning in the region.
- **Conduct** municipal vulnerability and risk assessments of communities and local infrastructure that are vulnerable to extreme weather and climate change.
- **Increase** municipal participation in FEMA’s community rating system (CRS) program.
- **Map and catalogue** areas of repetitive flooding, as well as areas vulnerable to future flooding for future buyout programs.
- **Solicit** organizations and agencies to act as champions for one or more of the actions in this Focus Area.

change will minimize future costs in damage, suffering and loss. Our region’s communities—our homes, commercial properties, public services and infrastructure (energy, drinking water, wastewater, transportation, and telecommunications systems) must be upgraded and adapted to standards that allow them to not just withstand, but to perform optimally under future weather and climate

conditions. Adaptation strategies should include elevation or relocation of buildings and/or infrastructure, wet flood proofing (letting water pass through to minimize structural damage or using water resistant materials), dry flood proofing (making the structure impermeable) and other types of retrofitting.

### **STRATEGY 10.3: Expand floodplain buyout programs and return flood-prone areas to their natural function**

The process by which a government or non-profit buys property in a flood prone area, relocates or demolishes any building improvements on the site and returns the property to its natural state is call a floodplain buyout. These programs are important tools because they compensate landowners for their property, take residents out of harm’s way and re-establish natural systems —such as wetlands—that can provide a buffer from future flooding. Our region should expand floodplain buyout programs to remove development in flood-prone areas to reduce both the risk to individuals and the shared recovery costs. In order to do this effectively, our region needs stable funding for the existing state, county and local Blue Acres buyout programs. We should also introduce new and innovative approaches that incorporate buyouts into municipal and county comprehensive, open space and hazard mitigation plans.

### **STRATEGY 10.4: Use green infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather and climate change**

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, green infrastructure uses vegetation, soils, and natural processes to manage water and create healthier urban environments. At the scale of a city or county, green infrastructure refers to the patchwork of natural areas that provides habitat, flood protection, cleaner air, and cleaner water. At the scale of a neighborhood or site, green infrastructure refers to stormwater management systems that mimic nature by soaking up and storing water. Green infrastructure can provide protection from flooding and storm surges, defend against sea level rise, and lower the number of incidents of combined storm and sewer overflows, particularly in urban areas where much of the surface is paved and impervious to water. Our region needs to eliminate policies and regulations that prevent the use of green infrastructure, implement education programs to improve understanding of green infrastructure’s value and widen the range of incentives available for property owners and local governments to adopt green infrastructure strategies.



## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 11: Transition to a clean energy economy ●

**WHAT AND WHY** Almost all commercial activity and modern home life in North Jersey is made possible by our energy infrastructure. Our need for electricity, natural gas, gasoline and other sources of energy have many economic, environmental and political implications that directly affect quality of life in the region. Currently, our energy infrastructure is heavily dependent on fossil fuels and is the single largest contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the North Jersey region.

Fortunately, there are significant opportunities to improve the way we generate and use energy. By using existing technologies, adopting new policies and taking advantage of market mechanisms that are already known and proven, we can transition to a more sustainable energy infrastructure. This will allow our region to benefit from energy that is cleaner, more affordable, more secure and more reliable, without the emissions that contribute to climate change, harm public health and degrade the environment.

**HOW** Implementation of the following strategies can reduce overall energy consumption and replace the use of fossil fuels with more sustainable alternatives, such as solar, wind and other renewable energy sources by increasing conservation and efficiency; modernizing energy infrastructure, including generation plants, high-voltage transmission lines, substations, and distribution lines and meters that connect individual customers; and reducing petroleum use in the transportation sector.

We must take a  
wide range  
of actions to  
utilize renewable  
energy assets  
more fully.

#### **STRATEGY 11.1: Reduce energy use through conservation and increased efficiency**

The easiest way to reduce our energy use in North Jersey is to change the way that we use energy—in our homes, in our offices and in our cars. This applies not only to individuals, but to companies, government agencies, schools, local businesses and any other organizations that consumes energy. Our region should work with state officials and power utilities to expand and revamp the existing NJ Clean Energy Program to offer stronger and more effectively targeted rebates, low or no interest financing and energy audits. Municipalities can improve energy efficiency by incorporating more aggressive “green design” standards (such as LEED and Energy Star) into local codes and ordinances. Our region and state should also invest in creating a “clean energy economy” through training and job development, financing solutions and building private investor confidence.

#### **STRATEGY 11.2: Transition to carbon-free electricity generation, including increased use of renewables**

Today, much of our electricity is generated from fossil fuels, which results in significant GHG (and other) emissions and leaves our region vulnerable to supply disruptions. Fortunately, North Jersey possesses vast renewable energy resources, in particular biomass and solar, that have the potential to replace most of our fossil fuel use in North Jersey and the state as a whole. We must take a wide range of actions to utilize renewable energy assets more fully, resulting in a much cleaner, more affordable, less vulnerable supply of electricity. Our region should make greater use of distributed generation (energy produced on site, for example from solar panels). North Jersey should also implement changes in the energy mar-



## GETTING STARTED

- **Expand and revamp** the existing NJ Clean Energy Program to offer stronger and more effectively targeted rebates, low or no interest financing and energy audits to encourage adoption of energy efficiency measures.
- **Develop** local programs, through organizations and municipal governments, that make consumer adoption of conservation and efficiency solutions easy and cost effective.
- **Identify** regional opportunities for collaboration, especially market mechanisms, policy initiatives, regulatory frameworks and planning activities.
- **Invest** in consumer awareness for both energy conservation and energy efficiency solutions.



ket structure, including how energy is priced and sold to consumers in order to make alternative generation more competitive.

### **STRATEGY 11.3: Modernize and upgrade the region's power infrastructure**

North Jersey's current power grid—the generation plants that produce power, high-voltage transmission lines, substations, and distribution lines and meters that connect individual customers—is fairly traditional. North Jersey will need to transition to a more sustainable, more flexible and more reliable energy infrastructure in order to accommodate a growing mix of more sophisticated solutions, including energy efficiency technologies, renewable energy sources and distributed generation. Our power grid must also be made more resilient to weather events and flooding. Important improvements include improved electricity storage, more sophisticated control mechanisms that help manage both generation and consumption of electricity, and revised regulatory frameworks that specifically enable this new “Grid 2.0” architecture. A key component of this strategy is fostering a New Jersey market for technological solutions that address electricity storage, resiliency and smarter management controls.

### **STRATEGY 11.4: Reduce transportation petroleum use**

A significant proportion of our region's energy use comes from the transportation sector (cars, trucks, buses and trains). Today transportation is heavily reliant on fossil fuels. There are many things our region must do to reduce petroleum use in the transportation sector. We should adopt policies, make investments and provide incentives that: reduce congestion delays from roadway incidents; improve traffic flow with better highway access management; and reduce miles traveled driving alone by encouraging ridesharing. Our region should also work with state officials and the private sector to speed the adoption of new vehicle technologies, especially electric, hybrid and other alternative fuel vehicles. This should be done by implementing incentive programs, investments and other measures to encourage the purchase and use of these vehicles by individuals and fleet owners and significantly expanding the number public and private electric vehicle charging stations and alternative fuel vehicle refueling stations available in our region and statewide.



## FOCUS AREA 12: Improve health outcomes for our region's residents ●

**WHAT AND WHY** While a community's plan to build a supermarket or road may not sound like health policy at first, public decisions like these can have a profound effect on residents' health. Heavy construction could create air pollution that harms people in the surrounding neighborhoods, but a new supermarket could make it more convenient for them to buy healthy food. A new bike lane could increase physical fitness of residents and provide alternative transportation options that reduce stress, but it could increase the number of bicycle accidents and potential injuries to cyclists.

Genetics play an important role in health, but social conditions, such as a family's ability to afford safe housing or medical care, also affect health outcomes. Physical environment is also important, including

air and water quality, proximity to outdoor and recreational opportunities, affordability and accessibility of fresh, healthy foods, and the safety of streets and neighborhoods.

Health Impact  
Assessment (HIA)  
is an emerging  
practice in the  
United States.

Improving the health of the region's residents and communities is critically important to ensuring the region's long-term sustainability. Improving health can reduce health care costs, increase social cohesion, and boost overall well-being and satisfaction—all of which are key elements of sustainability. Building healthy communities requires a "health in all policies" approach by all partners within the region. This means that no matter what their primary mission is—transportation, recreation, arts and culture, housing, natural resource protection or community development—the policies they develop should take potential health impacts into account.

**HOW** This focus area seeks to improve the health of North Jersey residents by integrating the consideration of health outcomes into all policies and planning. Some specific areas for improvement include: increasing access to healthy food and healthcare facilities; enhancing health education programs; creating safe and healthy buildings and neighborhoods; reducing crime in dangerous neighborhoods through better planning and design; and improving conditions in communities that are disproportionately burdened by air pollution and other environmental hazards.

### **STRATEGY 12.1: Integrate public health considerations in all aspects of planning and policy-making**

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is an emerging practice in the United States that illustrates how policy and planning decisions might impact public health. HIAs can be done for all kinds of plans or policies, including anything from installing bike lanes or building a new housing development to choosing a site for a landfill. HIA practitioners collect and analyze data on associated health

impacts of a plan or policy, engage the public and local leaders in the process of considering health risks and benefits and make recommendations based on what they find. In order to increase the prevalence of HIAs in North Jersey we need to provide training for local planners, engineers and public health officials in HIA methods; integrate HIA in the policy-making process; conduct research; and document outcomes of HIAs to establish how important they can be in decision-making processes.





**STRATEGY 12.2: Increase access to affordable healthy foods and maximize access to locally produced fresh food**

Our region has a high number of “food deserts”—areas where there is very limited (or no) access to fresh foods. We can improve health outcomes for north Jersey residents by identifying the location of these food deserts and building coalitions of government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to make fresh and nutritious food accessible to all residents, regardless of income. Efforts to eliminate food deserts can boost local economies; reduce emissions and other environmental impacts from the transportation of foods to market; and promote exercise if supermarkets, farmers markets, community gardens and other sources of healthy, local food are located in downtown areas, especially near public transit.

**STRATEGY 12.3: Increase access to quality health care facilities, especially for medically underserved communities**

Residents in the region should have ready access to medical facilities that meet their health needs—regardless of their income level or where they live. We can improve access to healthcare by opening more medical facilities throughout the region, ensuring that these facilities are accessible by public transit as well as personal vehicles, and conducting outreach to inform the public about available health care resources and options for receiving affordable healthcare.

**STRATEGY 12.4: Enhance health education programs**

Educating residents about healthy lifestyle choices is an important complement to building healthy communities. Effective education programs must be easy for residents to access and attend, and must meet the specific needs of local populations. They must be offered in the languages commonly spoken by participants, include special accommodations for senior citizens and children and/or focus on the specific issues that can most improve health for residents in each community. Our region should

establish a multi-lingual “Building Healthier Communities” initiative to promote healthy lifestyles, physical activity, nutrition and personal preventative care for all residents in the region.

**STRATEGY 12.5: Create safe and healthy buildings, neighborhoods and communities through planning and design**

Local governments must adopt and implement policies and programs that protect residents from sources of pollution, especially in communities that already experience significant environmental burdens. Municipalities should: establish and enforce smoking restrictions; reduce the density of stores that primarily sell unhealthy products including alcohol, tobacco and fast food; and limit advertising (e.g. billboards) that promote such establishments—especially near schools and in neighborhoods with a high number of children. In addition, municipalities should ensure that property maintenance codes are properly enforced and should develop new standards that promote healthy homes and green design. Expanding community policing efforts can also reduce crime and enhance community-police relations. Programs should be developed to educate residents about lead and radon testing and abatement.

**STRATEGY 12.6: Expand the use of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies to integrate safety considerations into community planning and design**

CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach that seeks to deter criminal behavior and fear of crime through the design of buildings and neighborhoods. For example, windows can be configured to give residents and business-owners a clear view of the street, vacant lots can be renovated as actively programmed parklets and abandoned properties can be secured from trespassing. CPTED incorporates collaborative efforts involving law enforcement, city planners, landscape and interior designers, residents and architects. Our region should expand the use of CPTED by: developing a CPTED toolkit that can be used as the basis for a voluntary municipal certification programs; establishing an ongoing program of CPTED continuing education training;

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and promoting the use of CPTED principles and practices by planning departments, police departments, nonprofit organizations and research institutions in the region to identify specific elements of municipal master plans and ordinances that can make neighborhoods safer.

**STRATEGY 12.7: Improve conditions for communities that are disproportionately burdened by air pollution**

While air quality in many parts of the region has improved over the past several decades, 30 census tracts in 12 municipalities located in the northeast corner of the region are severely burdened by the cumulative impacts

of multiple sources of air pollution, including automobile and truck traffic and industrial facilities. While we should take steps to improve air quality generally, specific actions are required to improve conditions in these overburdened areas, including adopting improved data collection and analysis techniques; implementing land use policies and green infrastructure projects that have proven successful in reducing emissions and mitigating pollution impacts; and ensuring continued financial and institutional commitment to implementing the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's Clean Air Strategy.

**GETTING STARTED**

- **Identify** opportunities to work with the newly created New Jersey Health Impact Collaborative ([www.njhic.rutgers.edu](http://www.njhic.rutgers.edu)) to offer training and education on Health Impact Assessment approaches.

- **Identify** opportunities to use tools such as the County Environmental Health Act and data generated under the

Environmental Public Health Tracking Program to expand state and local efforts to reduce exposure to pollutants.

- **Identify and classify** specific geographic locations in the region where access to fresh food is limited and develop a pilot program to eliminate food deserts region-wide.

- **Create** opportunities for peer-learning between mature urban and community gardening programs to encourage the establishment of community gardening programs in other communities.

- **Identify** specific geographic locations in the region where residents have limited physical access to health care facilities and develop a pilot program to improve access.

- **Conduct** a survey of local law enforcement and zoning officials throughout the region to identify common obstacles to implementing

and enforcing property maintenance codes, no smoking restrictions and other health-enhancing standards.

- **Identify** sources for funding and grants for community organizations to implement local health initiatives.





## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 13: Improve stewardship of natural lands, agricultural lands, open space, parks, and historic resources ●

**WHAT AND WHY** Both human activities and natural processes are degrading the ecological integrity of forests, fields, and wetlands in the North Jersey region. For example, over-population of white-tail deer has led to numerous environmental problems, including loss of native plants and trees and increased incidence of Lyme disease. Invasive plant and tree species have displaced native flora, reducing biodiversity. In fact, the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team has over 150 invasive species on its “2014 DO NOT PLANT LIST.” The maintenance of the massive lawns common in many areas of North Jersey leads to excess water consumption. Fertilizer and pesticides used in lawn treatment and farming operations contaminate our region’s soil and water supplies. In addition to natural lands, North Jersey has also lost numerous historic sites to development, redevelopment and neglect of historic resources by both public and private entities.

Effective stewardship of land and historic resources can mitigate these negative effects, and can help to protect and restore important natural processes. Stewardship is a practice that allows both public and private property owners to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of natural lands, agricultural areas, open space, and parks and the character and condition of historic sites. It involves a combination of property management, resource conservation and maintenance through activities such as preservation, easement enforcement, erosion control, wildlife control, invasive species removal, planting of native flora and control of improper uses.

**HOW** Stewardship of land and historic resources can be initiated through raising awareness about the importance of stewardship, educating landowners on programs and techniques they can use, and providing financial incentives for undertaking stewardship activities. Our region should work to expand and improve public efforts to protect and steward parks and open spaces; and governments, non-profit organizations and private citizens should be encouraged to preserve historic sites through governmental action, non-profit stewardship and maintenance of historic structures by private citizens.

#### **STRATEGY 13.1: Work with land owners to improve stewardship of privately owned natural lands and green space.**

The majority of our region’s remaining natural lands are in private ownership. Much of this private land takes the form of large lot commercial and residential development. It runs the gamut from woodlots, to portions of parcels left undisturbed because of environmental constraints, to large lawns maintained by property owners. We need to

create incentives for private property owners to implement best stewardship practices and dedicate portions of their property to conservation. The NJDEP and non-profits should work together to educate landowners through best practice guides and outreach campaigns and should develop and implement effective stewardship incentive programs.

Stewardship of  
land resources can  
be initiated  
through raising  
awareness.





- **Implement** an education and outreach campaign about stewardship best management practices, targeted toward government organizations and private land owners.

- **Continue and expand** the use of municipal, county and state open space taxes as a means of funding acquisition and stewardship programs.

**STRATEGY 13.2: Expand programs to preserve parks, open space, natural and agricultural lands permanently**

New Jersey has successfully preserved millions of acres of open space and farmland through a combination of state and local initiatives over the past 30 years or more. Preservation efforts must continue. Land owners (both public and private) can preserve land by applying a deed restriction that permanently prohibits substantial future development on a parcel of land. While preservation alone does not ensure proper stewardship, it does help to limit development and can be used to create con-

tiguous swaths of natural areas necessary to support critical habitats, drinking water recharge areas and resources critical to our region’s quality of life, especially clean air and water supplies. While a constitutional amendment approved by New Jersey voters in 2014 appropriates new business tax revenues to open space preservation, our region should leverage these funds to employ municipal open space taxes, preservation tax credits and resource fees to fund and encourage the protection of land and natural resources. Land use strategies such as cluster development, non-contiguous clustering, and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) should be employed to protect natural areas while respecting private property rights and accommodating growth.

- **Adequately fund** New Jersey Historic Trust capital grant programs.
- **Re-establish** a historic preservation certificate program to provide expertise to the historic preservation community.
- **Implement** regional land-use strategies that use private market forces to permanently preserve land, including cluster development, non-contiguous clustering and Transfer of Development Rights.
- **Increase** New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife and Division of Parks enforcement fines. Return enforcement fines to the relevant enforcing agency, rather than the state general fund.
- **Reinstitute** funding for the New Jersey Soil and Water Conservation Grant program.



### **STRATEGY 13.3: Improve stewardship of public parks, open space and natural lands**

A key step towards improving stewardship of parks, open space and natural lands is a reorientation of funding and revenues to strengthen the operations of the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife and Division of Parks and local parks departments. State agencies should retain enforcement fines and concession fees—revenues that are currently diverted to the state’s general fund. The state should also increase funding for the division’s activities. All levels of government in the region (state, county and municipal) should develop stewardship best practices and prioritize stewardship as part of conservation planning.

### **STRATEGY 13.4: Implement best practices for stewardship of private and preserved agricultural lands**

On farmland, stewardship involves the adoption of responsible and sustainable methods for agricultural land use, including water conservation, erosion control, integrated pest management and proper treatment of animal farm wastes. To promote farmland conservation, the state should restore funding for the New Jersey Soil and Water Conservation Grant program and increase staffing to complete farm conservation plans in a timely manner. We should also provide incentives for new and existing farms to participate in natural resources conservation service programs to encourage stream, wetlands and forest protection and stewardship.

### **STRATEGY 13.5. Expand programs to preserve historic resources**

New Jersey has spent millions of dollars to preserve historic sites throughout the state. These efforts must continue. The New Jersey Historic Trust capital preservation program should be adequately funded on a yearly basis. Counties should be encouraged to establish historic preservation grant programs through their Open Space, Farmland, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust funds. The preservation grant programs in place in Somerset and Morris counties can serve as models for the region. Municipalities should be encouraged to adopt historic preservation ordinances consistent with the Municipal Land Use Law and to also establish preservation grant programs as part of their open space programs. A historic preservation certificate program should be re-established to provide historic preservation expertise to members of preservation commissions, citizen members of planning and zoning boards, not-for-profit boards and other private citizens.

### **STRATEGY 13.6. Improve stewardship of publicly-owned historic sites**

North Jersey’s historic places have powerful stories to tell, but they cannot speak for themselves. Historic sites need to be properly interpreted to teach citizens about their communities’ past in ways that everyone can understand. In addition, proper interpretation, staffing and amenities are important in making historic sites tourist destinations that promote economic activity. Funding from the New Jersey Historical Commission and other state sources should be expanded to provide assistance to not-for-profit and publicly owned historic sites to bring their stories to life and provide amenities to make these sites tourist-ready and enjoyable destinations.



## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 14: Manage water systems to improve water quality and supply ●

**WHAT AND WHY** Ample, clean water is essential to the health of North Jersey’s residents, economy and environment. But the region’s water supply is currently stressed by inefficient water use and pollution. Problems include industrial processes, such as disposal of toxins in manufacturing and cleaning agents by dry-cleaning facilities, that contaminate groundwater in localized areas, as well as outdated water systems that combine sewer and stormwater treatment. These combined sewer systems often dump untreated sewage into our waterways during heavy rain storms. Also of concern are “nonpoint sources” of pollution such as parking lots, farms and subdivisions, which can produce polluted stormwater runoff that can contaminate our water supplies.

The region’s water supply is currently stressed by inefficient water use and pollution.

A variety of approaches can help protect North Jersey’s water systems. Proper management of stormwater runoff in urban areas, such as the use of “green infrastructure” that captures water where it falls, would improve water quality and help recharge water supplies, as would comprehensive efforts to address the problem associated with combined sewer systems. For example, stormwater credits could be offered to property owners who retain stormwater on-site. Protecting water-supply sources, including lakes, rivers and underground aquifers involves a multi-faceted approach that addresses water use, development patterns and water infrastructure.

Protection of water resources ensures a dependable supply of clean, safe drinking water, supports healthy ecosystems, preserves resources needed for business and agriculture, and helps to maintain quality of life for current and future residents, businesses and agriculture. Improved stormwater management provides important benefits that are crucial to maintaining clean water as well as a healthy living environment. Without it, non-point source pollution, flooding and environmental damage will continue.

**HOW** We can improve water quality and protect supplies by improving stormwater management, expanding the use of “green infrastructure” and modernizing “grey” infrastructure systems such as drinking water and wastewater treatment plants and pipes, and assisting communities to eliminate combined sewer overflows.

#### **STRATEGY 14.1: Improve management of stormwater runoff**

Stormwater runoff is water from rain or melting snow that “runs off” across the land instead of seeping into the ground. It usually flows into the nearest stream or waterway without being treated and carries pollutants and toxins into

water supplies. We can mitigate the effects of stormwater runoff through more effective stormwater management practices, including training government officials and planners and putting in place more stringent state regulations. Also needed are updates to municipal stormwater ordinances, and the adoption of policies that promote “green infrastructure” solutions that manage stormwater with innovative techniques that mimic natural processes.





- **Educate** elected and appointed officials, wastewater utilities, utility managers, local planning, transportation and parks experts, community groups and the public about the water supply and quality challenges we face and potential solutions.
- **Finalize and release** NJDEP's updated Statewide Water Supply Plan and invite public comment.
- **Update** municipal stormwater management plans and ordinances to emphasize the use of green infrastructure approaches and establish a strong standard for onsite stormwater retention for development and redevelopment. The forthcoming Sustainable Jersey model ordinance can be used as a guide.
- **Conduct** community training sessions on the

importance of stormwater management and the forthcoming Sustainable Jersey model ordinance.



**STRATEGY 14.2: Protect water supplies through planning and enforcement**

Water supply protection focuses on infrastructure, state and regional planning, wetlands protection, water conservation and mitigation of contaminated groundwater as measures to help ensure water supply safety. Our region should work to upgrade drinking water and sewer pipes, set limitations on development in septic

management areas, and protect wetlands through the Wetlands Mitigation Council. We should also provide financial incentives to encourage water conservation actions by individuals, property and business owners and developers.

**STRATEGY 14.3: Reduce or eliminate combined sewer overflows (CSO)**

Eighteen municipalities in the region are served by wastewater treatment plant that have outdated combined sewer and stormwater systems that discharge raw sewage into the region's bays and rivers during heavy rains. The DEP issued final permits to these entities in January 2015, providing three to five years to develop and adopt long term control plans that describe how they will upgrade their systems. Once approved, the plans must be implemented, which will be costly. Our region should pursue CSO solutions that enhance resilience, reduce flooding, improve wastewater services to customers and promote economic development. We need to establish best practices and engage local leaders, residents and businesses through education campaigns. As typical CSO communities are among the region's less affluent and may lack technical capacity, we should provide municipalities, utility operators and community groups with technical assistance and training. Stormwater fees and a statewide water assessment can help to raise needed revenues, and a certification program that rewards wastewater utilities for using best practices will help ensure low-cost, high-performance systems.



## Strategies and Actions ●

### FOCUS AREA 15: Revitalize and strengthen communities by expanding arts and cultural opportunities ●

**WHAT AND WHY** Arts and culture enhance quality of life for residents in a variety of ways, from fostering community pride and identity to boosting local economies by creating jobs, attracting tourists and spurring business investment. Any community in North Jersey, whether a bustling business district or a rural hamlet, can draw on unique local culture, local talent and love of the arts to create great and distinct places, a process known as Creative Placemaking.

Communities can use the arts as a way to revive public spaces, strengthen community bonds, and attract investment. Artists of all types tend to be flexible in their use of space and resources. Vacant housing can be converted into artist housing, studios and galleries. A brick wall can serve as a canvas for a mural. A local restaurant can serve as a venue for an up-and-coming band. Towns and cities as diverse as Rahway, Somerville, Newark, Red Bank and others have successfully revived downtowns and Main Streets and empowered underprivileged neighborhoods by implementing Creative Placemaking strategies.

While the creative sector can play an important role in all North Jersey communities, artistic venues (museums, galleries, performing arts centers, art festivals and other venues) tend to thrive in centrally located, highly-trafficked places with access to transit. They also frequently lend themselves to the reuse of vacant, abandoned, and underutilized properties. Creative Placemaking strategies will therefore support our region's goals of efficient land use and increasing use of and access to transit.

**HOW** A four-pronged approach can help our region utilize the arts as a tool for community development and revitalization, with steps including: incentivizing artistic and cultural activities; encouraging public investment in arts organizations and artists; integrating cultural leaders and artists in all levels of planning; and strengthening arts education programs.

#### **STRATEGY 15.1: Develop financing tools for arts and culture**

Developing a wider variety of financial tools, such as enhanced tax increment financing, tax credits and cooperative purchasing programs can help creative and cultural sector organizations grow—especially in low-income areas. Our region should provide density bonuses that would allow developers to build extra floor space in excess of zoning restrictions in return for the inclusion of artistic and cultural amenities such a gallery, sculpture

garden, or performance space. Municipalities should also include arts programming as an allowable expense to state agency grant opportunities in transportation, health, human services, community development and labor. We can also increase funding by supporting proposed legislation that would restore funding for the arts. The proposed legislation would increase funding over a three year period to the minimum levels of dedicated support from the NJ Hotel/Motel Occupancy Fee to the level originally intended in the 2003 law.

Creative  
Placemaking  
strategies will  
support our  
region's goals of  
efficient land use.





UNION COUNTY  
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
RHS WINTER SHOW 12/4  
LLOYD GARRISON 12/6  
ORCH. OF ST. PETER 12/8  
WWW.UCPAC.ORG 732-499-8226

UNION COUNTY  
*Performing*  
ARTS CENTER

### **STRATEGY 15.2: Support cultural programs and activities**

Arts and culture-related activities are also important economic engines, attracting jobs, innovation and community redevelopment. To realize these benefits, communities must lay the groundwork by identifying public spaces suitable for arts and cultural events, developing cultural districts and creating regional promotional campaigns. To connect municipalities to the economic and community development benefits of the arts, local officials should create a creative team (or arts council), an assets inventory or a creative placemaking plan. Municipalities and counties should also invest in local arts activities through already existing budgets, including economic development, libraries, recreation, transportation, schools, etc.

### **STRATEGY 15.3: Integrate arts and culture into local, county, regional and statewide planning efforts**

For North Jersey communities to reap the benefits of the arts, cultural leaders and artists must be invited to the planning tables when developing economic development plans, municipal master plans, redevelopment plans, special improvement district plans and regional and statewide plans. Therefore, our region should work to amend the Municipal Land Use Law to include an arts element in master planning. We also need land use policies that can help provide housing options affordable to artists and we should consider redeveloping vacant and underutilized properties for arts-related activities, such as studios and theaters.

### **STRATEGY 15.4: Fund arts education for all New Jersey students**

New Jersey has a unique mandate to provide all students with sequential arts instruction by qualified teachers in all four art forms through K-12 education. Despite this mandate, arts education is not being adequately funded, and therefore not properly provided in all schools in the state. Various studies have identified links between involvement in the visual and performing arts and improved attendance, school engagement, increased academic performance, decreased drop out and discipline rates, as well as higher levels of college attendance. Creative education prepares students with the kind of skills needed for innovative work, including advanced problem solving skills, collaboration, communication and leadership skills. We should fully fund the visual arts, dance, theater and music in our region's schools. Local arts organizations can also support arts education by providing field trip opportunities and on-campus engagement.



## **GETTING STARTED**

- **Create** an arts and culture assets inventory to provide a context to start community building.
- **Connect** with neighboring municipalities and communities to collaborate on events and festivals, bringing artists and audiences together locally in shared public spaces.
- **Identify** possible buildings or neighborhoods that have underutilized or vacant space that could be converted into space for creative businesses, performance spaces or live/work rental for artists.
- **Devise** marketing plans to increase awareness of cultural products in the region through maps, signs and other products.
- **Launch** a community festival related to a heritage theme.
- **Promote** pop-up arts installations and programs.

# Leading the Way ●

**ALREADY, TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY'S** work has made a difference for communities across the region. Since 2012, we have invested nearly half of Together North Jersey's funds and leveraged local resources in local planning projects throughout North Jersey communities through three different initiatives—the Local Demonstration Project Program, the Local Government Capacity Grant Program and the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Micro-Grant program. Not only do these local plans tackle specific problems in various communities—such as making roadways safer for pedestrians and cyclists, improving access to jobs, building the local economy through the



arts, or improving transportation options—they also helped us to test solutions to these problems in the real world. Many of these projects demonstrated how diverse communities and municipalities facing common challenges can effectively collaborate to develop a shared vision and plan for a sustainable future. ● The Local Demonstration Project (LDP) program developed 18 action plans around the North Jersey region. These plans highlight ways to make communities more competitive, livable, efficient and resilient—many with a focus on community design, improving transit connections and transit-oriented development. These projects, which were competitively selected,

## Leading the Way ●

were awarded to a consortia of partners and had to include municipal, county and nonprofit partners working collectively to solve a local problem. Local leaders and residents worked with the Together North Jersey team to shape the plans, lending their expertise to ensure the final product reflected their communities' unique needs. Some municipalities are now already actively pursuing implementation of these plans, which aim to reinvent entire districts as vibrant, livable and well-connected places. And in some cases active working groups that reach across municipal boundaries were formed to implement these LDP plans.

A second initiative, the NGO Micro-Grant program, provided grants to eight local nonprofit organizations for projects aimed at making their communities safer, healthier and more enjoyable places to live and work. As part of the micro-grant program, we worked closely with groups that interact with low-income and minority communities. Projects in Newark and Jersey City explored how communities can reduce crime with neighborhood, street and other design improvements. The United Way of Passaic County focused on improving access to healthy food. These partnerships allowed us to offer material assistance to these communities while building relationships that helped ensure the communities' needs are fully and accurately reflected in our regional plan.





Finally, the Local Government Capacity Grant (LGCG) program provided funding and technical assistance to the counties and cities that were members of the Together North Jersey Steering Committee. Unlike the LDP program, which provided funding to coalitions and partnerships, these funds were given specifically to the county and city governments that chose to participate in the program to undertake strategic planning activities designed to promote sustainable and livable communities. As described in the examples that follow, the projects serve as models for collaborative and comprehensive approaches to local planning. The program also cultivated a network of local Together North Jersey champions that will be essential to implementing the recommendations of our plan.

Individually each local project was intended to demonstrate to decision-makers how the issues and challenges identified by North Jersey residents can be addressed by the principles and approaches laid out in this plan. The idea was to provide examples of how the strategies recommended in The Plan can be put into practice within North Jersey, with the hope that the lessons of these projects could be applied to other parts of the region. While many of the example projects described over the next few pages are multi-faceted, we've loosely organized them by the the four Together North Jersey vision themes. We hope that this arrangement helps illustrate how communities can achieve a more competitive, efficient, liveable and resilient future.



# Competitive ●

**A**t a time when the living preferences of high-skilled workers are changing, our region will have to achieve a quality of life that is attractive to both employers and talent. Local economic efforts will need to invest in making great places, rather than just isolated projects. In cases of established downtowns, this will mean improving existing public spaces to be more attractive to a new generation of users—walkable, multi-use community spaces. In more suburban and rural communities, it will mean re-envisioning what are now car-oriented corridors to create the kinds of environments that will attract young residents.



- The ***Together 202*** LDP identified alternative opportunities to create new clusters of development along Route 202, and to reposition obsolete office parks to transform the business environment. Together 202 looked at the communities along Route 202 in Hunterdon and Somerset Counties together to encourage coordinated decision-making on shared concerns like transit and land use, and to create a cohesive corridor-wide vision to guide these decisions.
- The ***Countywide Economic System Evaluation and Analysis, Characterization and Future Growth Analysis for Sussex County Study***, a follow-up to the County's 2005 Strategic Growth Plan, developed strategies to reduce or reverse the loss of population and economic base that the county has been experiencing in recent years. The project resulted in a Plan of Action that focuses on policy and partnerships, as well as small-scale projects and programs.
- The ***Hunterdon County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*** is the first economic plan in Hunterdon County's 300 year history. The CEDS will serve as the blueprint for the county's economic future, emphasizing support for entrepreneurship, repurposing underutilized commercial and industrial properties, and developing and marketing the county's arts, cultural, recreational and historic assets, such as theaters, farms, national parks, historic mills and quaint towns.



- The **Newark Access to Opportunity Study** identified the specific barriers to employment facing residents of four Newark neighborhoods, and put forward strategies to help residents find pedestrian- and transit-accessible living wage jobs by building on the work of local community-based organizations.
- The **Regional Workforce Collaboration Study** looked at regional solutions to workforce issues as well as strategies to address the gaps in transportation service between population centers and employment destinations. This project helped increase understanding of the gaps between skills available in the workforce and the needs of the employers. It also helped identify the need for improved bus routes and employer-sponsored shuttle services.
- The **Pompton Lakes Transit Access Study** looked at local demand for public transit and explored different types of transit service improvements that could support efforts to revive historic downtown Pompton Lakes Borough through the Pompton Lakes Downtown Redevelopment Area. Study recommendations addressed regional bus service, local shuttle service, bus stop area improvements and creating suburban commuter park & ride lots with service to New York City on existing underutilized parking lots in strategic locations.
- The **Woodbridge Rahway Regional Access to the Arts** plan builds on the efforts of Woodbridge Township and the City of Rahway to advance an arts-driven, transit-oriented, downtown revitalization strategy. The towns are hoping to create an inter-county arts region



encompassing both Union and Middlesex counties that will be based on transit connections, compatibility of programming and venues and cross-promotion of events. The result will be an arts region that will be unique in New Jersey and attract more visitors and investment to both municipalities.

- The **Route 37 Economic Corridor Vision Plan** created an economic development corridor spanning Toms River Township, Berkeley Township, Lakehurst Borough, Manchester Township and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in Ocean County. The focus of the plan was on developing better use of existing assets and linking technology-oriented employment and mixed use development to improve the corridor. Strategies include preparing a detailed market study and inventory of existing commercial space, master plan updates for all the communities, expanding upon and exploring new educational partnerships, zoning changes to allow mixed use development and exploring ways to bring additional transportation options to the area.
- The **Paterson Northside Community Action Plan** provides a set of strategies for improving quality of life in the area through enhanced public safety, economic development, increased access to job opportunities and plans for new open space and recreation. The Action Plan builds on Paterson Habitat for Humanity's revitalization work and the "Building Pride in the Northside" Community Revitalization Plan.

# Efficient●

**I**mproving the efficiency of communities requires us to consider how we can best use our land to meet growing demand for walkable, transit-friendly environments. It also requires that we make better use of existing public infrastructure and ensure that there are varied and ample opportunities for people to



live near their work or transit. This will improve access to jobs, recreation and other opportunities for residents and help to reduce the amount of time we all spend traveling to the places we need to go.

- The *Kingwood Implementation of the Route 12 Center-based Scenic Corridor Economic Strategy* provides a plan for how Kingwood Township in Hunterdon County can balance anticipated future growth of development and transportation while maintaining the area's scenic rural character along Route 12. Together North Jersey's project team helped Kingwood explore the market potential for transferring development rights from its more rural western end to the eastern end of the corridor.
- The *Monmouth County Bus Rapid Transit Opportunities Study* assessed the current conditions of transit in Monmouth County. The study found that while regional express bus services enjoy high ridership, the region would benefit from more improvements to local bus services and facilities, exploring new bus routes and stops and implementing bus rapid transit features as opportunities arise. Following this project, the draft Monmouth County Master Plan update included the recommendations to improve bus service along critical corridors.
- The *Exploration of a Public Bike Share Program in Hudson County* study produced recommendations for implementation of a bike share system that can be used across multiple cities or towns in either urban or suburban areas. The study identified a potential service area in Hudson county and potential locations for bike share stations, developed forecasts for ridership and membership, and recommendations



for a low- or no-cost bike share membership model for social equity. This project also developed an assessment methodology that other areas in the region could use if they are considering a bike share program.

- **The Urban Essex Strategic Corridor Plan** developed a coordinated vision for revitalization around five existing train stations along the Inner Morris and Essex Rail Line (M&E) with a focus on fostering development with easy access to transit, vibrant arts districts and other important amenities. The project successfully created the Urban Essex Coalition for Smart Growth and hired staff to pursue funding for corridor-wide priorities.
- **Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County: Phase 1** focused on characterizing the socio-economic, real estate, land use, infrastructure and other assets, strengths and needs for each of the County's 24 Priority Growth Investment Areas (PGIAs). Data from the Somerset County study is being incorporated into two additional studies that will develop specific recommendations for policy changes and investment priorities for the county's PGAs.
- The **McGinley Square-Montgomery Street Mobility Plan** identifies needed transportation, pedestrian and bicycle access improvements along the corridor in Jersey City. These improvements have an ultimate goal of improving the economic viability of the redevelopment of McGinley Square. This Plan includes a

set of comprehensive transportation improvements addressing transit, pedestrian improvements and traffic calming, bicycle integration, streetscape and urban design.

- The **Irvington Avenue: Creating a Complete Corridor Plan** re-envisioning Irvington Avenue, which winds through South Orange, Newark and Maplewood, as a complete street with revitalized public space capable of supporting new development. The project seeks to develop the eastern end of the corridor as a new anchor entitled "Maplewood Corners." A central feature of the plan is to develop a corridor-long bike route. This not only has the potential to better unite the communities, but it will make bicycling a viable mode to access the train station.
- The **Perth Amboy Bay City Transit District Strategy** creates a new vision for Downtown Perth Amboy, oriented around transit. The plan includes ideas for redeveloping the train station, reusing upper levels of old commercial buildings to develop more residential housing, capitalizing on the downtown's existing Latino niche market and food offerings and rezoning downtown in order to encourage mixed use development. The plan is built around a number of key places including a new "Station Green" and a revitalized five points intersection, which will anchor the downtown's main commercial corridor along Smith Street.



# Livable ●

**W**e heard over and over throughout our public outreach that residents in our region want to live in places that are healthy, safe and vibrant. More and more, communities in our region are looking for ways to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles and enhance the public realm. Communities are expanding off-road trails and greenways to increase recreational opportunities and are looking for ways to offer expanded access to transit and other community destinations.



- The **Essex County Complete Streets Implementation Action Plan** turns the county's 2012 Complete Streets policy into on-the-ground improvements. The Plan serves as a roadmap for implementing complete streets strategies and projects in order to create networks of safe streets county-wide. The checklists and protocols provided in the action plan will be used for future Essex County road maintenance, resurfacing, and design & construction projects starting in the Spring of 2015.
- In Morristown, **Beyond the Curb** explored the potential for a new type of public open space using on-street parking spaces, called parklets, to enhance New Jersey's downtowns. Using Morristown as a test case, Beyond the Curb demonstrated the potential of parklets to create a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly downtown and showed how parklets can be used to bring public art and recreation space into downtowns.
- The **Morris Ave Corridor Vision & Mobility Plan** in Springfield illustrated how improving the pedestrian experience along a typical suburban transportation corridor can transform an automobile-dominated thoroughfare into the linchpin of a more walkable and vibrant suburban downtown. The plan enabled the township to win a grant from the Port Authority to update its master plan. The township has also entered into redeveloper agreements on two sites in the study area and is incorporating design recommendations from the vision plan.



- The **Middlesex Greenway Access Plan** created strategies to expand the use of the existing Middlesex Greenway through Edison, Metuchen and Woodbridge. This includes promoting new partnerships and identifying new connections to link the Greenway to nearby public transit stops, schools, activity centers, parks and places of employment, as well as ways to market the Greenway in order to attract visitors and support economic development. As part of the Middlesex Greenway Access Plan, Together North Jersey also partnered with the New Jersey Health Impact Collaborative to complete a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) that evaluated the potential positive and negative health effects of expanded Greenway use.
- The City of New Brunswick used Together North Jersey resources to pilot and evaluate the **New Brunswick Ciclovía Program**. A ciclovía—a Spanish term that means “cycleway”—involves opening up certain streets to pedestrians and bicyclists by temporarily restricting use of the streets by automobiles. New Brunswick shut down traffic along a 3.4 mile route. Held in June 2013, the Ciclovía allowed 4,000 participants of all ages and abilities to enjoy free physical activity and recreation, from biking to dancing, in a safe and inclusive environment. The City of New Brunswick has expanded its Ciclovía program, holding three additional Ciclovías in 2015 and plans to continue hosting Ciclovías into 2016 and beyond.



- **Food Environment in the First Ward of Paterson** was an effort by the United Way of Passaic County to assess people’s access to healthy food in the City of Paterson. Two surveys and a mapping exercise revealed unsafe and unsanitary practices in some shops and showed that the cost of food, the time it takes to shop and distance to the store were the issues of most concern for local residents.
- The City of Paterson conducted a **Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) Training and Audit** project, which included an intensive two-month training program for city and community stakeholders, extensive outreach and engagement with the community and identification of potential changes to the physical environment to improve safety in six high-crime areas. A written toolkit of CPTED strategies that can be applied to other areas of the city was produced.
  - Additional CPTED training for community groups from across the region was conducted in Newark and Jersey City. Teams from each organization learned technical skills to analyze high-crime areas within the communities they serve and prepared specific strategies for making their communities safer.

# Livable ●



- **The Fairmount Heights Community Playground: SafeGrowth Plan**, was developed by Urban League of Essex County in Newark. **SafeGrowth Villa Victoria** was developed by La Casa de Don Pedro in Newark, and **Bergen Hill—The Potential of Monticello Avenue: A SafeGrowth Plan** was developed by Women Rising of Jersey City.
- The City of Elizabeth developed a **Complete Streets Concept Plan for Morris Avenue** to increase the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers along a 1.2-mile section Morris Avenue, a gateway corridor that connects the Midtown Elizabeth Train Station to Kean University and functions as the heart of “Little Colombia.” The concept plan proposes low, medium and high cost options to improve safety and security, to support walking, biking and transit use and increase neighborhood vitality.
- **The Connecting Community Corridors** project, which included Asbury Park, Bradley Beach and Neptune Township in Monmouth County, explored ways to invigorate their downtowns through strategies such as new residential development and retail uses, enhanced shuttle services, traffic calming measures, leveraging the area’s renowned music history and its shore culture and even urban gardening to fill vacant lots.
- The **Valley We Design: Art from the Heart of Community** project presents a plan for improving the public space of the Valley Arts District in the City of Orange. Through public art and urban design, the





district's streets and other public areas will be used to connect the many art amenities located throughout the area. The plan follows the growing trend of creative placemaking as a way of revitalizing communities. Local artists were engaged in every aspect of preparing the plan, ensuring that the project is authentically local and invested in by the creative community, residents and businesses.

- The **Bloomfield Avenue Complete Corridor Plan** brought together the municipalities of Bloomfield, Montclair, Glen Ridge and Verona to create a plan for transforming a 4½ mile section of Bloomfield Avenue from an automobile-dominated regional arterial into a "complete street," enabling safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.
- The **Smith Street Central Business District Study** developed a vision for the Gateway area in Perth Amboy. The reimagined Gateway area would be an interesting, eclectic market, combined with art and cultural events that attract visitors.

To achieve this vision, the plan lays out several strategies including traffic calming measures, better regulated parking, better connections to the waterfront and potential redevelopment projects. The Gateway area would be directly connected to a redeveloped

"transition" area which in turn would connect to a revamped station area with improved pedestrian walkways, streetscaping, green public space and zoning that promotes the use of transit.

- **Sustainable Development in Union County: A Livability Guide** provides strategy recommendations for county and municipal decision-makers involved in policy-making and planning. Based on the six Principles of Livability developed by the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities, the guide identifies specific opportunities to formulate and coordinate county and municipal policies and programs to advance a countywide livability program.
- **Safe Route to School and Walkability in Elizabeth** was a project of Groundwork Elizabeth to implement a Safe Routes to School initiative in the Elizabethport neighborhood of Elizabeth. Safe Routes to School is a Federal program managed in New Jersey by the State Department of Transportation (NJDOT) with the goal of enabling and encouraging children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school.



# Resilient●

**A** resilient community is one that is prepared for, can recover quickly from and takes steps to lessen the impacts of adverse events. Recent storms, including Tropical Storm Irene and Hurricane Sandy, have highlighted our region's need to secure vulnerable coastal and riverine communities from the catastrophic effects of extreme weather and climate change. Harmful effects of climate change, such as chronic stormwater flooding and damaging coastal storms are anticipated to increase in frequency in the years ahead. Flooding and stormwater management have major impacts on people's lives and property as well as public infrastructure.

- The *Hoboken Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan* created a model for how municipalities can integrate green infrastructure into the design and construction of public improvements, private development and open space projects. Green infrastructure is an efficient and cost effective method of managing stormwater and reducing flooding through natural systems. The plan is a key component of the Hoboken's "Strategic Recovery Planning Report," which lays out a roadmap for improving the city's resiliency.
- The *Passaic Eastside Transit Oriented Development Strategic Plan* creates new strategies to protect the Passaic Eastside, a community that lies almost entirely within the flood plain. The plan proposes a resilient and livable Eastside that reengages the community with the Passaic River—the lifeblood of the city going back to the colonial era—through the construction of a multipurpose levee that can also serve as a recreational trail along the banks of the river. The plan demonstrates, for other similarly-placed cities, how resiliency improvements can also serve to make communities more livable.





- The **Newark Greenstreets Initiative** identified opportunities to implement green stormwater infrastructure pilot projects in three neighborhoods of the City of Newark. Green infrastructure would

not only absorb rainwater, but could also improve health and quality of life, create job opportunities, and enhance the vibrancy of Newark’s business environment. The pilot projects focus on publicly-owned land, including streets and sidewalks, vacant city lots and schools.



- The **Ocean County Long-Term Community Recovery Plan** developed a post-Sandy vision for a year-round community that is environmentally, economically, socially and culturally stronger. Participants developed a set of potential project ideas that will help achieve this vision, including a countywide infrastructure assessment report, a grant advisor program, residential resiliency improvements for all income groups and improvements to the county evacuation plan.



- The **Jersey City Visualizations of Adaptation Scenarios Project** developed graphic visualizations for potential adaptation concepts designed to prevent and/or mitigate the effects of coastal flooding from storms on neighborhoods in Jersey City. The grant also funded a next steps white paper to guide the city in future decision-making and pursuit of a comprehensive flood adaptation strategy.



**TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY'S** three local planning initiatives—the Local Demonstration Project Program, the Local Government Capacity Grant Program and the NGO Micro-grant Program—shed light on many common challenges facing communities throughout the region. They also provided some important big-picture lessons for planners, public officials, citizen advocates, developers and others seeking to create more competitive, efficient, livable and resilient communities throughout North Jersey.

# Lessons learned ●

## Northern Jersey is changing ●

New Jersey is undergoing four significant demographic shifts related to age, income and diversity that will deeply impact development in the region. First, as the baby boomer generation ages they will become more dependent on public transit and walkable streets. Many are already choosing to downsize their homes and move to walkable, amenity-



rich places. Second, Millennials show a preference for walkable, dynamic places with a diversity of amenities and mobility options. Third, foreign born individuals are making up an ever-greater share of the region's residents. This growing diversity brings with it demand for a greater range of housing options and a stronger emphasis on walking, biking and public transit to meet everyday needs. Finally, a shrinking middle class and shifting patterns of poverty present new challenges and opportunities for economic development and revitalization.

***Creative approaches are needed to overcome limited resources*** The Great Recession has affected the region's ability to support new development at the local and state level. At the local level, governments and nonprofits have limited staff resources to complete planning activities and seek funding opportunities. Tight municipal budgets also impact a community's ability to hire additional staff to support project implementation. At the state level, many of the assistance programs available five or 10 years ago are no longer in existence or are severely curtailed. Discretionary grants and incentives are likely to continue to be a limited resource to assist implementation. Further, the state no longer is expected to continue to employ the same level of non-essential staff, limiting its ability to support regulatory review and financial or technical assistance. Creative approaches to funding and advancing projects are crucial to helping them become a reality.

***Collaboration is essential for success*** The issues facing the region go beyond municipal boundaries. Because of this, coordinated efforts among and between local governments are essential. The local planning initiatives funded by Together North Jersey succeeded in identifying opportunities for collaborations and developed concrete models to coordinate efforts between municipalities, counties, nonprofits and community-based organizations (CBOs). While many municipalities cooperate on an ad-hoc basis, resources and support are needed to encourage a more structured framework to work together. More frequent and deliberate collaboration will be needed to address the challenges faced in our region and to support implementation of the Together North Jersey plan.

***Partnerships play a critical role*** New Jersey state agencies were key partners on many of the local planning initiative projects, especially the Local Demonstration Projects. Agency participation in the LDPs provided local project teams and stakeholders with valuable information about technical assistance and funding programs. Agency partnerships were particularly helpful in providing assistance with frequently changing deadlines,

eligibility requirements for state funding and troubleshooting during the implementation action planning phase. The local projects also provided an opportunity for state officials to get in the field and familiarize themselves with local projects early on. This early participation by state agency staff often sparked the interest and understanding needed to develop implementable recommendations.

***New approaches to engagement can broaden participation*** In order to expand outreach to under-represented populations, many of the local projects partnered with nonprofit organizations and CBOs. These CBOs were able to leverage their relationships with the communities they serve to give the project teams insight on the best way with which to engage the local population, including public forums, workshops, walking tours, online and in-person surveys, door knocking and focus groups. The NGO Micro-grant recipients served this role for the larger regional planning initiative and were instrumental in bringing CBOs into the regional planning process, an important perspective that otherwise may have gone unheard.

***Early wins are very important*** One of the primary goals of the local planning projects was to create implementable plans that could serve as success stories for other communities in the region and state. To date, the program has recorded several early wins. These early wins include: the creation of the Urban Essex Coalition for Smart Growth based on the Inner M&E Strategic Corridor Plan; passage of a complete streets policy and replacement of downtown bus shelters in Perth Amboy based on the Perth Amboy Bay City Transit District Strategy; the adoption of the Hoboken Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan by the City of Hoboken; the Middlesex Greenway Access Plan led Woodbridge Township to pursue Green Acres park development funding; and the Springfield Township Morris Ave Corridor Vision & Mobility Plan enabled the township to win a grant from the Port Authority to update its Master Plan incorporating the Vision Plan's recommendations.

***Start with a compelling vision*** Implementing a local project is complicated and takes time to understand, plan and visualize. This process often entails navigating many steps, building consensus among a multitude of stakeholders and officials and advancing projects through multiple layers of review and approvals. Starting with a compelling vision, combined with careful and creative planning, will generate the enthusiasm that any ambitious project or plan needs to move forward.

# Making it all

**TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY** (TNJ) is a voluntary partnership of jurisdictions, agencies, non-profits and others that came together more than three years ago to plan for a more prosperous future. Implementation of this plan will require more than just planning. Our future depends on both individual and collective action by all those concerned about making North Jersey a better place to live, work, do business and visit. This will take sustained collaboration, cooperation and coordination in a number of key areas over the long-term. It will not be easy. It will not happen overnight. But it can be done.





# happen ●





### **Investing in our future** ●

Many of the strategies recommended in The Plan call for public and private investments. Others call for financial incentives designed to encourage implementation of the recommended strategies. Perhaps the greatest impediments to achieving our vision are the constraints on the availability of financial resources for implementation—whether real or perceived.

First, there are real constraints that must be understood and addressed. New Jersey faces a growing state debt crisis, including unfunded long term pension and healthcare liabilities and no plan in place to fund the level of infrastructure investment we need. To make matters worse, traditionally stable sources of infrastructure funding and financing can no longer be relied upon. The federal and New Jersey Transportation Trust funds are both approaching insolvency and there is little public or political support to recapitalize the funds with on-going stable sources of funding, such as increases to the federal and state gas tax.

In addition, the primary public source of funding to support water infrastructure investments, the NJ Environmental Infrastructure Trust, has funded only \$6 billion worth of projects over the past 26 years. This is far short of the capacity required to meet our estimated need. On a local level, North Jersey must continually balance the need to increase property taxes to pay for investments with the potential negative impact that increase might have on the region's residents and overall competitiveness in the region.

On the other hand, some fiscal constraints may be more perceived than real. Our region—and the state—already collects billions in tax dollars and user fees, and we already invest billions of dollars every year in transportation, education, economic development, workforce initiatives, environmental protection, open space preservation and community development projects and programs. Although existing funds may not be enough to address our mounting needs, the significant resources we already do have to invest in our region can be directed and/or redirected in a more strategically aligned way to support implementation of the priorities articulated in this plan.



However, we cannot escape the fact that we face critical short term needs, especially with regard to transportation funding. Given the urgency of this need, over the next 6–12 months our region should focus on building awareness and promoting informed public discussion about the need to create and maintain stable, long-term, constitutionally dedicated sources of funding for transportation investments. This should include passing legislation to increase the gas tax as a means to recapitalize New Jersey’s Transportation Trust Fund.

We must also address the reality that our current system of funding and financing improvements is inadequate to meet current and future needs. This will require a longer term effort that is built upon specific answers to a number of important questions about North Jersey’s infrastructure and funding needs: What specific projects are needed? What benefits will the projects provide? How much will the projects cost? Who will pay for the projects? And how can we ensure the public and private institutions entrusted to implement the projects will do so efficiently and with transparency and accountability?

Currently, the public is distrustful of government’s ability to manage and invest public funds wisely. This need not be the case. If the region and state can work together more strategically to answer these questions, while also exploring innovative funding approaches and working more creatively with the private sector to finance investments, we can address these negative perceptions and build critical constituent support for funding and financing the improvements we need. In addition, our region needs to be transparent about funding decisions in order to build stronger trust with the public—both residents and businesses. At the same time, Together North Jersey should also promote more active civic engagement in our communities, so that elected leaders feel accountable to the public, and transparency becomes an expectation not just an aspiration.

#### **Next steps**

- Create and maintain a strong and diverse “Invest in our Future” coalition to support the development of leading-edge infrastructure funding and finance policy and practices in our region and New Jersey.
- Launch a coordinated “Invest in our Future” campaign that includes a strong effort to educate elected officials, civic leaders and the public about the region’s infrastructure needs and how we can pay for them.
- Provide opportunities for informed public discussion and debate regarding the need to invest for a competitive, efficient, livable and resilient future.

## **A Looming Crisis**

**I**n April of 2013, a volunteer Leadership Group of nearly twenty former New Jersey government executives and public servants published *Facing Our Future*, a report that documents the State’s growing infrastructure maintenance needs. According to the report, the looming crisis facing the State includes the need to invest approximately **\$25** billion over the next 5 years to meet short-term critical transportation infrastructure needs; more than **\$40** billion over the next 5-20 years to maintain



and upgrade water system infrastructure and protect drinking water supplies; and approximately **\$9** billion over the next 10 years to upgrade the State’s electric power infrastructure and make systems more resilient. These estimates were made prior to Hurricane Sandy and do not account for climate change nor do the estimates incorporate scenarios for transitioning to greater reliance on distributed, alternative energy systems. Further, the *Facing Our Future* report did not include needed investments in schools, affordable housing, open space or arts and culture.

Source: [www.cnjg.org/resources/2013-facing-our-future-report-and-documents](http://www.cnjg.org/resources/2013-facing-our-future-report-and-documents)

- Explore how longer-term infrastructure funding/finance innovations might work in our region and develop detailed and specific plans for what new funding will be used for and what the benefits of investment will bring.
- Consider new models for offering economic incentives to the private sector and utilities to lead the proliferation and adoption of clean energy, resilience and infrastructure maintenance efforts.

### **Aligning existing plans, programs, incentives and decision-making**

As mentioned above, our region already invests billions of dollars each year in a wide range of projects and programs. There are literally hundreds of jurisdictions, agencies, authorities, councils, boards, organizations, utilities and private sector companies making planning and investment decisions every day that affect quality of life in our region. We need to promote efficiency, make the most of existing revenues and use the resources we have wisely and in a way that will advance the region's vision.

To start, we must review existing plans, policies, incentive programs and regulations to see how well they align with our regional priorities. Many probably already align well, but those that don't can and should be modified to support implementation. Plans to consider should include but not be limited to: municipal master plans and county plans, the NJTPA's Regional Transportation Plan, wastewater management plans, the New Jersey State-wide Water Supply Master Plan, the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, as well as other significant regional plans governing land-use decision-making, such as the New Jersey Highlands Council Regional Master Plan and the New Jersey Pinelands Commission Comprehensive Management Plan.

One example of good alignment is in the area of workforce development. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Education and Department of Higher Education have already begun discussions with private sector employers to understand their needs and ensure workforce training and education initiatives align with these needs. This aligns well with the Together North Jersey Regional plan. Focus Area 4 recommends strategies and actions to ensure education and workforce development programs foster employment opportunities and develop and retain talented workers with the skills to meet current and future employer needs.

Another example is the Grow NJ Assistance Program, which is designed to make efficient use of limited economic development incentives. A recent analysis of program investments found that most program grants



## **IMPORTANT DECISION-MAKERS**

### **384 Municipalities**

- Mayors and governing bodies
- Public safety departments
- Public works departments
- Planning/zoning boards
- Engineers

### **13 Counties**

- Freeholder boards
- County executives
- County planning boards
- Engineers

### **State agencies and authorities**

- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Community Affairs
- Department of Education
- Department of Environmental Protection
- New Jersey State Council on the Arts

# Demonstration Project (LDP) Program



- Department of Human Services
- Department of Health and Senior Services
- Department of Labor and Workforce Development
- Department of Transportation
- NJ TRANSIT
- Office for Planning Advocacy
- Business Action Center
- NJ Sports and Exposition Authority
- Economic Development Authority
- NJ Redevelopment Authority
- NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency
- The Board of Public Utilities

**Transportation Agencies**

- Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
- Transportation Management Authorities
- County paratransit agencies

**Regional Commissions and Councils**

- Highlands Regional Council
- New Jersey Pinelands Commission

**Colleges and universities**

**Boards of Education**

**Water utilities**

**Business Improvement Districts**

**Housing Authorities**

**Utility authorities and companies**

**Community-based organizations**

**Builders/developers**

**Banks and other financial institutions**

**Federal agencies**

**Others**

# Policy innovation

will be important to  
realizing the vision  
we have for our  
region's future.



were made to projects that retain jobs and spur capital investments in places with existing infrastructure, though more could be done to encourage growth in places better served by public transit. Focus Area 5 recommends that economic development incentives be targeted more specifically to foster transit-oriented development and to promote the reuse and redevelopment of underutilized properties. Grow NJ could better align with TNJ by rethinking their funding priorities and placing a clearer emphasis on transit-oriented development.

These are just two examples of the alignment we must strive for. While progress is being made, there is a great deal of work left to be done to ensure the efficient and strategic use of available resources.

## **Next Steps**

- Work with counties and their constituent municipalities to identify priority areas for growth and preservation and target public and private investment to these areas. Somerset County has made significant progress in this regard. Their approach to working with the municipalities and private sector representatives to identify and plan for priority growth investment areas in their county should be replicated throughout the region.
- Work with state agency partners to review agency functional plans, programs and regulations to see how well they align with the strategies recommended in the plan. Modify plans, programs and regulations where feasible to support implementation.
- Convene a roundtable of philanthropic foundations to review how they are currently investing their funds in our region and identify opportunities to target some of their grant-making to advance our regional priorities.
- Work with the staff and governing boards of regional transportation agencies to review their plans and programs as well as their project selection and prioritization criteria against TNJ goals and strategies and amend the criteria where possible to support plan implementation.
- Support the independence and statutory authority of the Highlands Council and the Pinelands Commission and use these entities as knowledgeable resources and partners that can support coordination and implementation.
- Work with counties and their constituent municipalities to incorporate affordable housing planning and practices into their development efforts that meet Fair Housing Act requirements



### **Fostering policy and planning innovation** ●

In today's fiscally constrained policy environment we must accomplish more with less. Many of the complex challenges we face in our region require new ideas and experimentation with models used successfully elsewhere or with completely new approaches that may have never been tried before. Just as private sector innovation and entrepreneurship are important to growing a strong economy, policy innovation will be important to realizing the vision we have for our region's future. With this in mind, The Plan recommends a range of pilot programs and demonstration projects designed to allow us to experiment, innovate and see what approaches might work best in our region.

Examples of the recommended pilot program include demonstrating how best to streamline permitting processes, improving transit service and customer amenities at transit hub locations and encouraging the production micro-unit single family and apartment-style homes to encourage market-based affordability in our region's housing. Similar ideas have been tried successfully elsewhere in the United States and, if successful in

our region, they can pave the way for more widespread implementation in other locations and communities in North Jersey.

### **Next Steps**

- Select 2–4 pilot programs or projects to advance over the next 12 to 18 months.
- Once selected, convene a planning and implementation committee for each project/program.
- Explore whether any existing State, regional, county, municipal, non-profit or private programs or initiatives can be adapted to support implementation of the pilots.
- Work with the planning and implementation committees to develop detailed implementation plans that clearly define program/project goals, resources needed for implementation, how success will be evaluated, over what time frame and what it will take to scale the project/program up if successful.
- Secure commitments for demonstration sites and the funding necessary to launch the pilot projects or programs.
- Monitor and evaluate project/program success.



### Taking action at the local level ●

Many of the strategies recommended in The Plan call on local governments to take action. Indeed, full implementation of plan recommendations will never happen without the support of municipalities throughout the region. The key role municipalities play in sustainable development was recognized as early as 2006 when The College of New Jersey, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the New Jersey League of Municipalities, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities came together to develop the program that eventually became Sustainable Jersey™.

Sustainable Jersey will be a key pathway for implementing the TNJ vision at the local level. Launched in 2009, Sustainable Jersey provides a certification program for municipalities who want to go green, save money and take steps to sustain their quality of life over the long term.

Working with hundreds of leaders, experts, organizations and businesses, Sustainable Jersey identifies best practices that municipalities can undertake to

become more sustainable, with each accomplishment earning points towards eventual certification. The program also provides access to tools, training and financial incentives to assist municipalities in achieving sustainability goals.

Of the 423 New Jersey municipalities participating in the program, 287 of them are in our region. The municipalities have green teams that are responsible for shepherding the local certification process for their town. Green team members often include elected officials, municipal staff, local organizations and volunteer members of the community. Currently there are two levels of certification—Bronze and Silver. Once a municipality has succeeded in implementing some first important steps towards sustainability, it receives a Bronze certification. After making significant progress, a municipality can apply for a Silver Certification.

Thirty-three percent of the municipalities in the North Jersey region are certified—111 at the Bronze level and 15 at the Silver level. Together these towns have achieved thousands of local successes, ranging from community gardens, to solar energy projects, to complete streets polices and much more.

### Next Steps:

- Continue to enhance the Sustainable Jersey program to support progress at the local level.
- Expand the current slate of energy related actions to reduce overall energy consumption of municipalities
- Implement a new suite of actions aimed at local governments playing a lead role in land use policies and public investments that will increase the resiliency of communities and infrastructure.
- Increase collaborations among green teams within our region and across the state by continuing to encourage and support these partnerships through technical assistance programs.
- Develop new Sustainable Jersey actions in line with the Together North Jersey Plan and work with municipalities to drive implementation.
- Expand the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program to better engage schools and students in sustainability efforts.
- Create a Gold level of certification program to continue to drive our municipalities further towards comprehensive sustainability goals.

### Continue to work together ●

One of the most important lessons we have learned over the past three years is the immense value of bringing people together. Throughout the planning process Together North Jersey has played the role of convener—bringing groups of people together whose paths might never otherwise cross. That process has sparked new partnerships, new ideas and brought our region several steps closer to realizing the future we've envisioned.

The three "C's"—collaboration, cooperation and coordination—have been a hallmark of the Together North Jersey planning process. Over the past three years, hundreds of elected officials, experts, civic leaders and other stakeholders have worked together to develop The Plan and complete dozens of local projects. Implementation of The Plan will be most successful if we continue to work together. We can accomplish more as a coordinated group than as individual actors—after all a chorus is louder than a single voice.

The Implementation Action Agenda that accompanies The Plan provides a script for advancing each strategy recommended in The Plan. However, the agenda is long and resources are limited. Strategic direction will be needed to effectively execute the actions described.

# Together North Jersey

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# The Plan

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coalition.



Many of those involved in the TNJ planning process have expressed interest in exploring ways to maintain the voluntary partnership we started three years ago. Continuation of the partnership could provide important structure and focus for a variety of key elements for success. These include setting implementation priorities; convening leaders and experts on key topics; providing a forum for regional discussions on topics like housing, education, arts and culture and others that can complement NJTPA's voice on transportation; advancing priority recommendations; providing technical assistance; and helping to obtain grants to support implementation.

## **Next Steps:**

- Convene a steering committee retreat to discuss continuation of the TNJ partnership—TNJ 2.0—and review and modify as needed the TNJ's membership and management structure. The management structure was created to support the regional planning process. Changes may be needed to support a TNJ 2.0 focus on implementation.
- Identify and explore options for memorializing TNJ 2.0 participation in the form of a modified memorandum of understanding, implementation compact, or similar approach.
- Review the Implementation Action Agenda and prioritize actions for the next 12–18 months.
- Identify potential sources of funding to support implementation and assist TNJ jurisdictions and organization in applying for implementation grants.
- Identify implementation capacity needs and provide technical assistance where feasible to address the needs.
- Regularly convene the TNJ State Agency Partnership, regional representatives of our federal agency partners, local project steering committees and others as needed to advance specific plan recommendations and the Plan Implementation Agendas identified in the LDP final reports.

## **A special note**

There are a number of recommendations in the plan that suggest the establishment of new organizations, councils, coalitions, initiatives, partnerships and programs. The intent of these recommendations is not to create additional layers of bureaucracy or to usurp the appropriate role of existing government institutions. In all cases, the recommendations are made to promote the idea of building broad and diverse partnerships to address key issues





facing the region and to continue the important conversations begun as part of the TNJ planning process.

This goal can be accomplished in many ways, including the creation of new entities or broadening the focus, mission and programs of existing agencies, organizations and institutions. In fact, in an era of constrained resources, the later approach may be preferred. For example, The Plan calls for creating a strong and diverse “Invest in our Future” coalition to support the development of leading-edge infrastructure funding and finance policy and practices in our region and New Jersey. Currently, efforts to promote infrastructure investment in the region and New Jersey are disjointed and generally single-sector oriented. They also tend to focus on a single solution (e.g., passing a ballot measure, or increasing the gas tax). A more holistic and coordinated approach could benefit the region.

To address this gap it might be possible to broaden the mission of the Forward NJ coalition—a group of 85 public, private and nonprofit sector organizations and other leaders that has emerged over the past year as a strong voice for refunding the NJ Transportation Trust Fund—to address a broader agenda of infrastructure

needs overall. Similarly, The Plan recommends consideration be given to creating a civic sector-led “North Jersey Futures Council” dedicated to studying and improving the region’s long-term economic competitiveness. The Plan suggests that such a council could be established as an independent non-profit organization, as has been the case in other regions of the U.S. However, the same function might be served as an initiative of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the State Chamber of Commerce, or an institution of higher education.

As implementation efforts advance, Together North Jersey should take steps to avoid duplication of effort, recognizing the important roles and responsibilities of existing public, private and non-profit entities already play in the region. Coordinating activities through existing institutions may be the most efficient way to move ahead with plan recommendations.



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