

INVESTMENT SOMERSET

COUNTY OF
SOMERSET
NEW JERSEY

A Collaborative Blueprint for Economic Growth



MAY 2013

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Acknowledgements

Without the selfless dedication of the following individuals, the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report that follows, along with the many growth initiatives it ignites, would not be possible.

Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders (2012)

Freeholder Director Patricia Walsh

Deputy Freeholder Director Peter Palmer

Freeholder Robert Zaborowski

Freeholder Patrick Scaglione

Freeholder Mark Caliguire

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Robert Bzik, Somerset County Planning Board

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Linda Dousis, Administrative Service & Consulting

As the only accredited Chamber in New Jersey, the SCBP is a true partnership between the private, public, and non-profit sectors that speaks with a united voice to advance a strategic agenda to achieve economic vitality in Somerset County.

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Members, SCBP Board of Directors (cont. from previous pg.)

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CEDS Governing Committee

A subcommittee of the SCBP, the CEDS Governing Committee engaged the private and public sectors to identify and prioritize strategies to build, grow, and sustain economic opportunity throughout Somerset County and the region.

This governing body includes a cross-section of professionals from interrelated areas that are integral to economic development, including government administration, workforce delivery, life sciences, finance, transportation, planning, education, tourism, energy, infrastructure, non-profits, technology, and sustainability.

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Donna Vieiro, Franklin Township

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A Note to the Reader

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report for Somerset County, New Jersey, identifies and prioritizes economic development strategies that will further job creation and private-sector investment in our region of central New Jersey. These strategies are predicated on robust planning and research efforts, visioning and vetting of concepts and their intended consequences, and the deliberate collaboration among partners across the public and private sectors. Strategies identified here are largely based on the premise that limited public-sector investments should be focused where they can have the greatest impact on job creation and to leverage private-sector investment. We also recognize the significant impact that public policy plays in defining our economic future, and we seek to establish one voice for the business community in public policy decision-making.

Despite efforts to be inclusive and exhaustive throughout this process, we realize we cannot be all things to all people. We do not seek to supplant the role of planning, regulatory, or policy-making bodies, but rather, are compelled to communicate the importance of employment opportunities and value-added investments in this region of the Garden State.

There is much good work underway in Somerset County, New Jersey. In this CEDS report, we have connected that good work to a series of strategies to expand our economic development success. We welcome your comments and observations, and encourage you to engage with us as we implement strategies that we believe will be measurably impactful and sustainable.

Sincerely,



Troy Fischer, Chairperson
Somerset County Business Partnership
Board of Directors



Peter Palmer, Freeholder Director
Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders (2013)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INVESTMENT SOMERSET | A COLLABORATIVE BLUEPRINT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH | SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

The Somerset County CEDS report and its implementation will continue to be guided by three Cs – coordination, collaboration, and communication.

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report is the culmination of 18 months of planning, idea sharing, collaboration, deliberation, task coordination, visioning, research, best practice analysis, and prioritization that teamed dozens of public- and private-sector leaders and stakeholders from across Somerset County, New Jersey, and beyond. Their skill-sets, expertise, and individual and institutional insights have resulted in this focused, collaborative blueprint for economic growth. It is a living document, inasmuch as it is meant to be revisited.

On August 1, 2011, a collaborative effort officially began between the United States Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (USEDA), the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and the Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP) as a result of a \$73,556 USED A Financial Assistance Award to produce a CEDS report for Somerset County, New Jersey. A demonstration of robust community commitment, this award was “over-matched” by \$89,000 in local contributions. Uniquely demonstrative of the need for regional partnerships across New Jersey and elsewhere, the SCBP was called out as an example of an “encouraging trend” of public-private partnerships in New Jersey’s *State Strategic Plan*.¹

While the USED A’s vision for the CEDS report is to serve as an economic road map to diversify, strengthen, and sustain regional economies, Somerset County’s goals are to continue to engage participants in defining, prioritizing, and implementing strategies to improve the County’s ever-changing economic future.

Consistent with USED A guidance, this CEDS report

- provides a demographic and socioeconomic snapshot,
- defines the vision and goals of the community,
- identifies issue areas and opportunities for sustainable, effective change,
- prioritizes strategies to accomplish goals, and identifies projects and steps for implementation, and
- provides for evaluation and updates.

The SCBP, as lead agent and “caretaker” of this CEDS report, is pledged to ensure that this clear set of economic development priorities ultimately is embraced regionally, and that the greatest number of agencies and institutions support these priorities so that limited public resources can be thoughtfully targeted to where the greatest positive economic impact can be realized and leveraged by further private investment.



¹ *State Strategic Plan: New Jersey’s State Development & Redevelopment Plan*, New Jersey State Planning Commission, Final Plan, p. 33.

*The Somerset County
CEDS report is
consistent with goals
identified in
state and regional
planning documents.*

Consistent with guidelines established by the USEDA, the Somerset County CEDS report is in concert with both New Jersey’s *State Strategic Plan* for “bottom-up” planning, as well as the *Somerset County Investment Framework*, which provides for geographic planning initiatives across Somerset County.

While the first six months of the CEDS process were dedicated to compiling appropriate background information and documenting an economic vision for Somerset County, the second six months involved extensive visioning through deliberate outreach sessions. The final six months focused on detailing documentation – all consistent with USEDA guidance – that sets forth an action plan for economic growth.

Using a well-defined subcommittee structure, the CEDS process was deliberately inclusive of individuals from a wide variety of interest areas, including workforce delivery, tourism, energy efficiency, infrastructure, municipal management, and sustainability disciplines. The Somerset County CEDS report reflects and supports opportunities to attract and grow industries of statewide and regional importance, particularly as many of them are clustered in Somerset County.

There were more than 190 project ideas offered through the extensive business outreach “visioning” process. The Somerset County CEDS Governing Committee, charged with establishing priority policy direction, identified priorities that strategically focus on job creation and private-sector economic investment, specifically around five primary and four secondary focus areas. While all nine focus areas impact and influence economic health throughout the region, we believe the primary focus areas address priorities, which we have defined as job creation and private-sector economic investment.

Prioritization

The CEDS Governing Committee recognizes that while all nine focus areas are important, certain areas have a greater connection to our **primary goals of job creation and private-sector economic investment**. As the Somerset County-wide economic development agency, it will be incumbent on the SCBP to lead the implementation of priority economic development projects, programs, and activities.

To ensure that an appropriate investment of time and resources is directed at our highest priorities, the volunteer leadership of the SCBP undertook a paired comparison prioritization analysis. This methodology is commonly used to help sort and order the importance of options relative to one another. In turn, this enables participants to choose the most important problems to solve or to set priorities where there are conflicting demands on fixed resources.

The paired comparison exercise resulted in the establishment of high, medium, and low priorities, as follows:



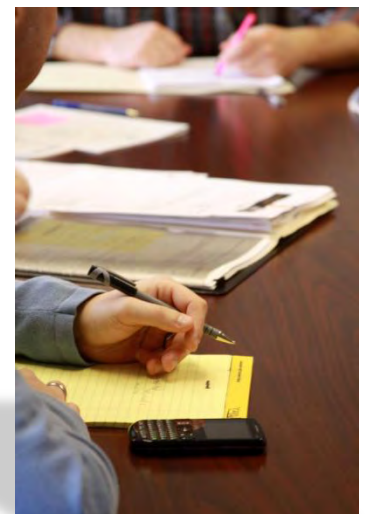
The SCBP recognizes that implementation of strategic economic priorities needs to be a regional effort. It has prioritized a focus on the delivery of business resources, the re-use of properties, and reducing the regulatory burden on business. This prioritization effort prompts two questions: (1) To what extent does the availability of external resources affect prioritization? and (2) To what extent will the SCBP be positioned to assist other organizations in implementing CEDS priorities?

Primary Focus Areas

BUSINESS RESOURCES (HIGH PRIORITY)

Business resources and services — such as hiring incentives, job training programs, financial assistance programs, entrepreneurial resources, help for displaced workers, and energy efficiency improvement programs — should be leveraged to attract and retain industries and companies consistent with existing infrastructure, physical structures, and workforce assets. There is a link between the development and delivery

Priority projects identified in this CEDS report focus on bolstering job creation and fostering and leveraging private-sector investment.



of business resources and the regulatory burden on business, the re-use of priority properties, and the enhancement of workforce delivery.

Goals and Objectives to Bolster Business Resources

- Communicate changes in demographics, economic conditions, and business drivers to assist local and regional policy makers in their decision-making processes with respect to land use, zoning, incentives, and resources.
- Engage in regional, national, and international business-attraction marketing efforts, in partnership with Choose NJ, to improve Somerset County's competitiveness in attracting industries with a high likelihood of locating in Somerset County.
- Create greater visibility for Somerset County among companies and site location consultants through the communication of industry-specific (or specialized) demographic and statistical data.
- Focus on targeted entrepreneurial businesses to facilitate the delivery of growth and expansion resources to businesses that are relocating and expanding.



Priority Projects to Bolster Business Resources

- Market Conditions Report
- Demographic, Housing, Economic Report
- Targeted Marketing Program
- Regulatory and Approval Streamlining
- Data Clearinghouse Network
- Annual Trend/Data Forum
- Targeted Industries Task Forces
- Regulatory Modifications



RE-USE OF SIGNIFICANT PROPERTIES (HIGH PRIORITY)

We believe the re-use of significant properties, office complexes, and industrial facilities should incentivize the growth of targeted industries and the needs of business for competitive, efficient, and functional facilities. This focus area connects with other priorities, such as delivering business resources, reducing the regulatory burden, and enhancing workforce delivery.

Goals and Objectives to Re-use Significant Properties

- Identify and prioritize significant properties for re-use to enable incentives and resources that facilitate productive occupancy.
- Facilitate the efficiency of existing properties, supported by benchmark data, to connect regional goals with state and federal priorities.
- Enhance the competitiveness of existing occupied and vacant commercial buildings by encouraging and incentivizing energy conservation and efficiency.



- Increase tenant access to NJ Clean Energy Programs to improve energy efficiency and to reduce energy consumption in leased office and industrial spaces.

Priority Projects for Re-use of Significant Properties

- Incentives Package
- *State Strategic Plan* Implementation
- Targeted Marketing Program
- Regulatory Reform
- Data Clearinghouse Network
- NJ Clean Energy Programs

REDUCE THE REGULATORY BURDEN (HIGH PRIORITY)

We believe the regulatory burden on business should be reduced through simplified, consistent, efficient, and customer-oriented permitting and approval processes. Reducing the regulatory burden on business connects directly to the delivery of business resources and the re-use of significant properties.

Goals and Objectives to Reduce the Regulatory Burden

- Seek investments in technology at the local and regional levels to provide management information systems that evaluate performance and help to eliminate inconsistencies in the application and approval processes.
- Focus on a regulatory environment that targets emerging, entrepreneurial, and agricultural industries to facilitate their growth.
- Facilitate a better understanding of demographic and economic drivers, combined with appropriate management information systems, to promote local land use, planning, and zoning tools as incentives for private-sector economic investment.
- Encourage and facilitate streamlined, timely, and skilled technical reviews of permit applications associated with alternative energy and energy conservation projects to result in cost savings and to promote the growth of the energy industry.



Priority Projects to Reduce the Regulatory Burden

- Online Land Development Process
- Benchmarking Accounting System

WORKFORCE DELIVERY (MEDIUM PRIORITY)

We recognize and support the significant and necessary role our workforce development partners play in advancing employee capacity, inasmuch as workforce capacity and availability are key in corporate site location decision making. While the region's education and human services partners often deliver specific resources, such as unemployment benefits, job readiness, customized training, skills training certificates, and associate-level degrees, we believe the delivery of employer-focused resources needs to be more collaborative.



Goals and Objectives to Enhance Workforce Delivery

- Engender collaborative partnerships between institutions of higher education, vocational and technical training, and the business community to help transform the workforce development system into a workforce delivery system based on the future human resource needs of employers.
- Leverage the resources of the local and state workforce training and development systems to facilitate the delivery of qualified individuals to employers, while focusing on employment-based outcomes.
- Focus on the changing nature of employment, including entrepreneurship and 1099 income, to leverage the human resources assets of Somerset County.
- Facilitate connections among targeted industries, including emerging, entrepreneurial, and agricultural businesses, to provide unique employment growth opportunities.



Priority Projects to Enhance Workforce Delivery

- Research and Technology Transfer
- Facilitate Collaboration
- Institutionalize Services for Displaced Workers
- Workforce Partner Focus on Targeted Industries

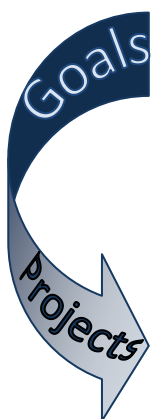
TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUTING (MEDIUM PRIORITY)

Transportation and commuting resources connect directly to the economic strategies of re-use of significant properties and workforce delivery. As a suburban region, there are many factors impacting safe, efficient, and affordable transportation in Somerset County. Perhaps more here than in any of the other economic strategies, it is critical that limited public resources are targeted to have the greatest positive economic impact.



Goals and Objectives to Improve Transportation and Commuting

- Use job creation and private-sector economic investment metrics to prioritize the use of limited public resources in planning infrastructure investments.
- Define and target audiences with the greatest need for and the highest likelihood to use alternative commuting resources to result in more efficient access between population and employment centers.
- Develop a new model for soliciting private-sector input on transportation plans and infrastructure investments to help ensure a job-creation and economic-investment focus.
- Advocate for stable federal and state funding resources to advance needed transportation projects. Available funding should match the improvement and maintenance needs of the transportation system.



Priority Projects to Improve Transportation and Commuting

- Commuter Hubs
- Integrate Economic Strategies
- Public Transportation
- Community Connections
- Comprehensive Regional Transportation Vision
- Technology-Efficient Commuting
- Multi-Media Outreach
- Local Transportation Planning

Secondary Focus Areas

The CEDS Governing Committee recognizes that economic development activity does not operate in isolation. To that end, we believe it is important to recognize the impacts that **hazard mitigation (medium priority), quality of life (medium priority), tourism (low priority), and agriculture development (low priority)** and have on our regional economy. Secondary focus areas are examined in greater detail in our CEDS Plan of Action that appears later in this document.

Summary

The Somerset County, New Jersey, CEDS Governing Committee reviewed all input received from our four outreach sessions and online surveys. This review resulted in the identification of nine Focus Areas as priorities for further examination. As an initial prioritization, the Governing Committee identified Business Resources, the Re-use of Significant Properties, Reducing the Regulatory Burden, Workforce Delivery, and Transportation and Commuting as focus areas that are primary to satisfying the CEDS goals of job creation and private-sector economic investment. These five “Primary Focus Areas” received the bulk of our attention for discussion, dissemination, and investigation. The remaining four CEDS Focus Areas – Hazard Mitigation, Quality of Life, Tourism, and Agriculture Development — while receiving our attention in the CEDS Plan of Action, were not as widely discussed or deliberated. However, programs, project, and activities were reviewed by the CEDS Governing Committee.

A further prioritization of the nine CEDS Focus Areas, for implementation purposes, was undertaken by the volunteer leadership of the SCBP as the county-wide economic development agency for our region. This prioritization factored in additional considerations beyond the job creation and private-sector economic investment goals of the CEDS. Specifically, the SCBP considered how to leverage the limited financial and human resources of the organization to achieve beneficial outcomes. This review, which resulted in the identification of high, medium, and low priorities, resulted in consensus that economic development implementation activities of the organization would focus on Business Resources, the Re-use of Significant Properties, and Reducing the Regulatory Burden outcomes.

Next Steps

The SCBP will lead the implementation of the primary economic development-related priorities and will support partner organizations’ efforts to advance additional concepts put forth in this CEDS report.

There remains tremendous opportunity to further align state interests with local and regional strategies to attract and retain businesses.

This CEDS report is a critical tool to help bridge those gaps through collaborative partnerships. We welcome the community’s active participation.

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Purpose and Objective

360° Vision

Vision isn't simply about seeing the future; it's about looking back to assess what patterns and events of the past, coupled with the assets and ideas of today, can render measurable and sustainable progress — in this case — for economic expansion.

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report, predicated on lessons learned and an inventory of Somerset County's unique and diverse assets, deliberately leverages the evolving economic landscape to capitalize on targeted, prioritized, economic growth potential in concert with local vision and a future perspective. It is quantitative, inasmuch as it measures what has been, what is, and what can be. It is qualitative, such that it has actively engaged a diverse set of stakeholders over its 18-month evolution to capture views and to capitalize on innovative ideas. It is focused, yet flexible.

The County of Somerset, New Jersey, and the Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP) are catalytic leaders for measured, regional economic expansion based on this 360° vision. They recognize that historic growth pressures resulting from a sharp and steady rise in population, coupled with a rapidly changing economy and emerging industries, require planning and community partnerships across the public and private sectors. This Somerset County CEDS report is the next step — a collaborative economic blueprint — to maximizing indigenous assets and building on budding opportunities for job creation and private-sector economic investment, while preserving the quality of life that distinguishes this north-central region of the Garden State.

This CEDS initiative represents the best of public-private partnerships, demonstrated by the federal, municipal, industry, and private participation and funding it has received to date. The objective of this CEDS report is to engage partner-participants in the development and prioritization of regionally implemented economic development strategies that are dynamic, inclusive, game-changing, measurable, and sustainable.

Overview

Somerset County is located in north-central New Jersey, about 40 miles west of New York City and 60 miles northeast of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It is an interior county; it is only one of two counties in the state that does not border another state or the Atlantic Ocean.

As one of America's oldest counties, Somerset County is steeped in colonial and Revolutionary War History. The County was established by charter on May 22, 1688, with land conveyances dating to 1651. Historic sites, monuments, and buildings are found in virtually every town across the County. The County's 21 municipalities encompass 305 square miles that are characterized by diverse landscapes, ranging from urban and suburban neighborhoods to rural countryside. The County has 11,600 acres of parkland, 7,753 acres of preserved farmland, and 3,253 acres of greenways, along with a distinct mix of municipalities, ranging from small boroughs to large suburban townships.

New Jersey is known as a strong home rule state. Somerset County is governed and managed by a Board of Chosen Freeholders. The Board consists of five members; one or two are elected each year at large to serve three-year terms. There also are three elected constitutional officers: the County clerk, sheriff, and surrogate. Somerville is the County seat.

Each of Somerset County's 21 municipalities adopts its own land use ordinances, zoning ordinances, and master plan to guide development patterns. In addition, the County has oversight for land development as it impacts County facilities, while the State of New Jersey exercises regulatory authority in a number of areas, including environmental protection.

County government provides regional services that municipalities could not otherwise offer individually. These include county road and bridge maintenance, curbside recycling collection, transportation services for elderly and disabled residents, education, recreation and nutrition programs for seniors, a county park system, regional planning initiatives, and many others.

Perhaps best known as home to Fortune 500 companies including Verizon, Pfizer, J&J, and AT&T, Somerset County is home to over 12,000 businesses, more than half of which employ between 10 and 100 workers each. The County is home to over 324,000 residents, with nearly half the population both residing and working in the County. In 2011 (latest data year available), Somerset County ranked first in New Jersey in per capita personal income.²

Somerset County celebrates its 325th "birthday" in 2013.



² State of New Jersey, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, County Personal Income, http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/industry/incpov/incpoverty_index.html.

Somerset County's educational facilities – Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) and Somerset County Vocational & Technical Schools – are among the finest in New



Raritan Valley Community College provides valuable continuing education, worker training, professional development, and trade instruction to individuals throughout Somerset County.

Jersey. The community college, a two-year school in Branchburg, includes a library/theater complex and a planetarium.

RVCC plays an important role in providing both post-secondary education, as well as workforce and professional development, instruction in numerous trades, and continuing education, to name a few offerings. Moreover, the RVCC offers corporate training, small business assistance, and access to SCORE, a nonprofit association of volunteer business counselors.

Somerset County boasts an educated workforce, with 28% of its population holding a bachelor's degree, compared to the statewide average of 21%.³

Somerset County businesses of all sizes have access to local, regional, and global financial markets, a highly-trained workforce, a state-of-the-art transportation network, and an extensive utility infrastructure.

Combined with easy access to major transportation arteries, the County's central location and strong labor pool has contributed to an unemployment rate that historically tracks below state and national averages. Offering many transportation options to businesses, residents, workers, commuters, and visitors, Somerset County has a blend of accessible commuter and freight rail, roads, bridges, and bus and shuttle services. Additionally, programs directed at employee commuting needs and those with functional and access needs are available.

There are numerous resources available through state and federal agencies that aid private-sector job creation and economic investment. These programs typically serve the specific needs of an employer, and may include employee job training, facility expansion, and/or energy efficiency improvements in concert with state and federal objectives.

³ US Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

Demographic, Socioeconomic Profile

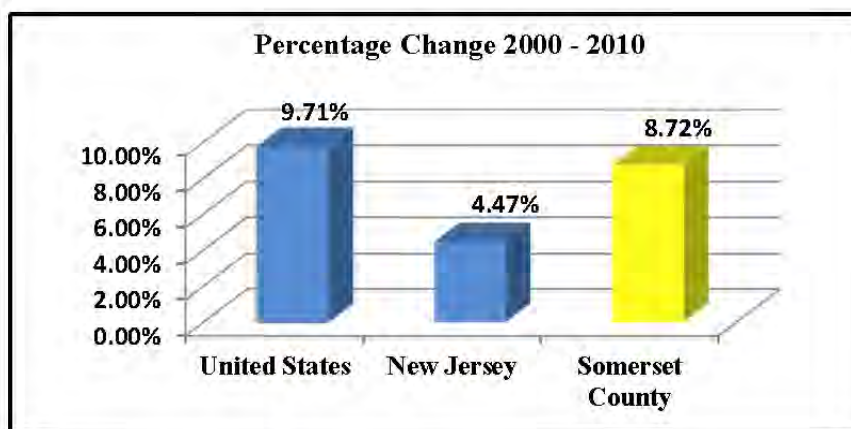
The following data and associated discussion provide a snapshot of Somerset County’s residents, workforce, and economy, and are based on a variety of sources, all of which are identified among addenda that follow this CEDS report, unless otherwise specifically noted.

Population

Where People Live

Somerset County is the fastest growing county within the fastest growing region of New Jersey, geographically defined to include Somerset, Hunterdon, Mercer, and Middlesex Counties. Somerset County’s population of 323,444 (2010 Census) has seen dramatic growth since the turn of the millennium, almost double the population growth rate of New Jersey, the eleventh-most-populous state in the nation. Table 1 below depicts the comparative growth rate of the United States, New Jersey, and Somerset County from 2000 - 2010.

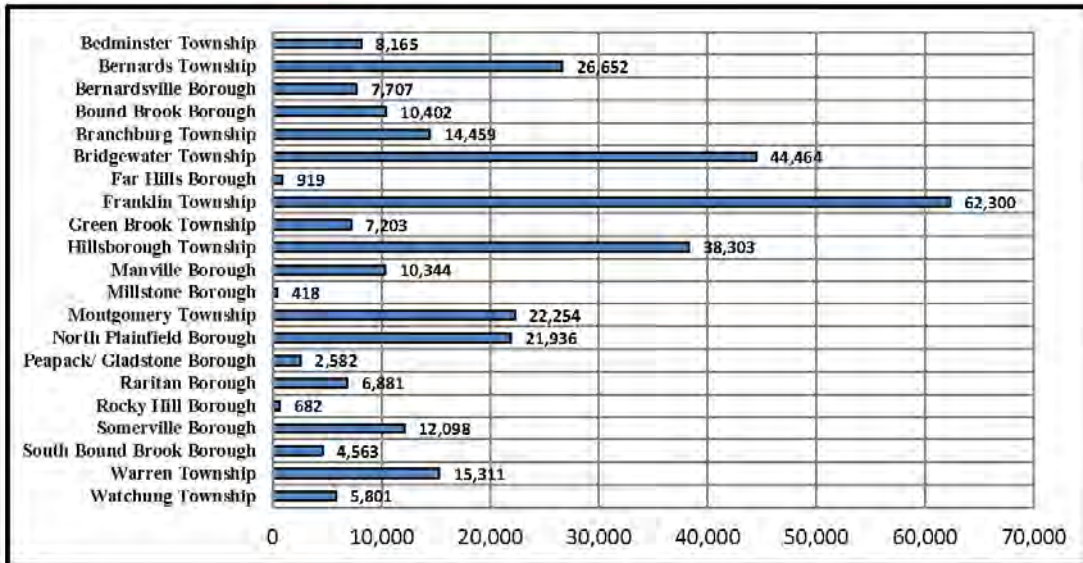
Table 1: Comparative Growth Change



Source: 2010 US Census

Over half of Somerset County’s population resides in its four most populous municipalities, namely, Franklin, Bridgewater, Hillsborough, and Bernards Townships. Franklin, Bernards, and Montgomery Townships grew at the greatest rates between 2000 and 2010. Three municipalities declined in population during this same period - Bedminster Township, Branchburg Township and Somerville Borough - with Somerville declining at the highest rate in the County. Table 2 below depicts population by Somerset County municipality in 2010.

Table 2: Population by Somerset County Municipality, 2010

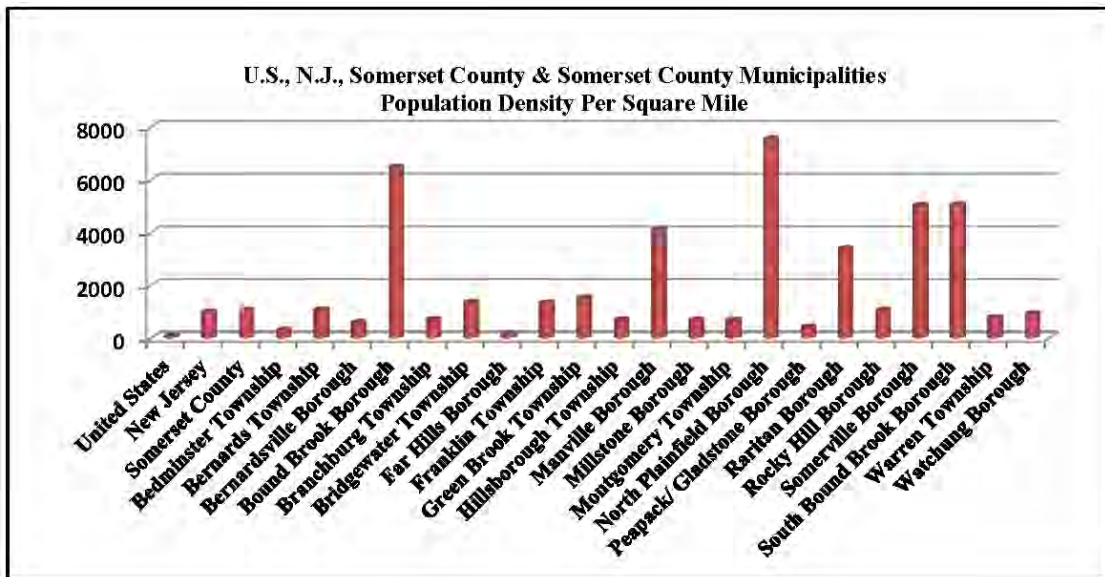


Source: 2010 US Census

Density

Somerset County’s population density is more than 1,000 people per square mile; this density is only slightly less than the population density of the entire State of New Jersey, at 1,185 people per square mile, as indicated by US 2010 Census data. However, population density in Somerset County ranges widely, from just over 180 people per square mile in Far Hills Borough, to over 7,500 people per square mile in North Plainfield Borough.

Table 3: Population Density by Somerset County Municipality, 2010



Source: 2010 US Census

Household Characteristics

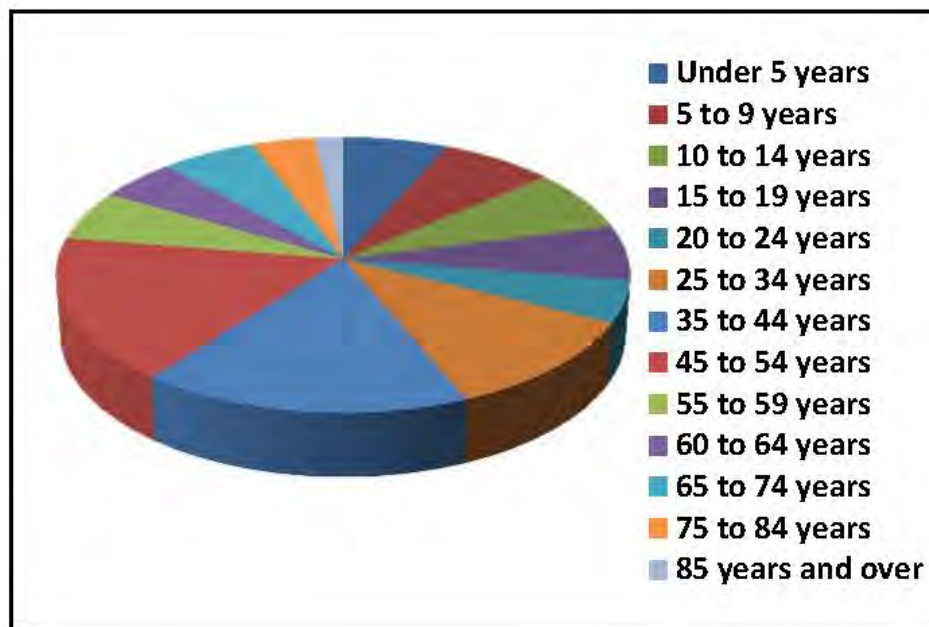
The total number of households in Somerset County in 2009 was 115,121, of which almost three-quarters were family households. The average household size was 2.79 persons, which has increased slightly from 2000 to 2010.

Who We Are

AGE

From 2000 to 2010, Somerset County’s growing population also has increasingly aged. With a median age of 40.2 years in 2010, the County’s population has aged by three years since the 2000 Census. This is slightly older than the median age across New Jersey at 39.0 years. While Somerset County’s young, working-age population (ages 18-34) decreased from the 2000 Census, the County’s middle-aged population (ages 35-54) increased. Meanwhile, the most senior population (ages 65+) in the County only increased by 1% during this same period. Table 4 below depicts Somerset County’s age distribution in 2010. (See Addenda 1 and 2.)

Table 4: Somerset County Age Distribution, 2010



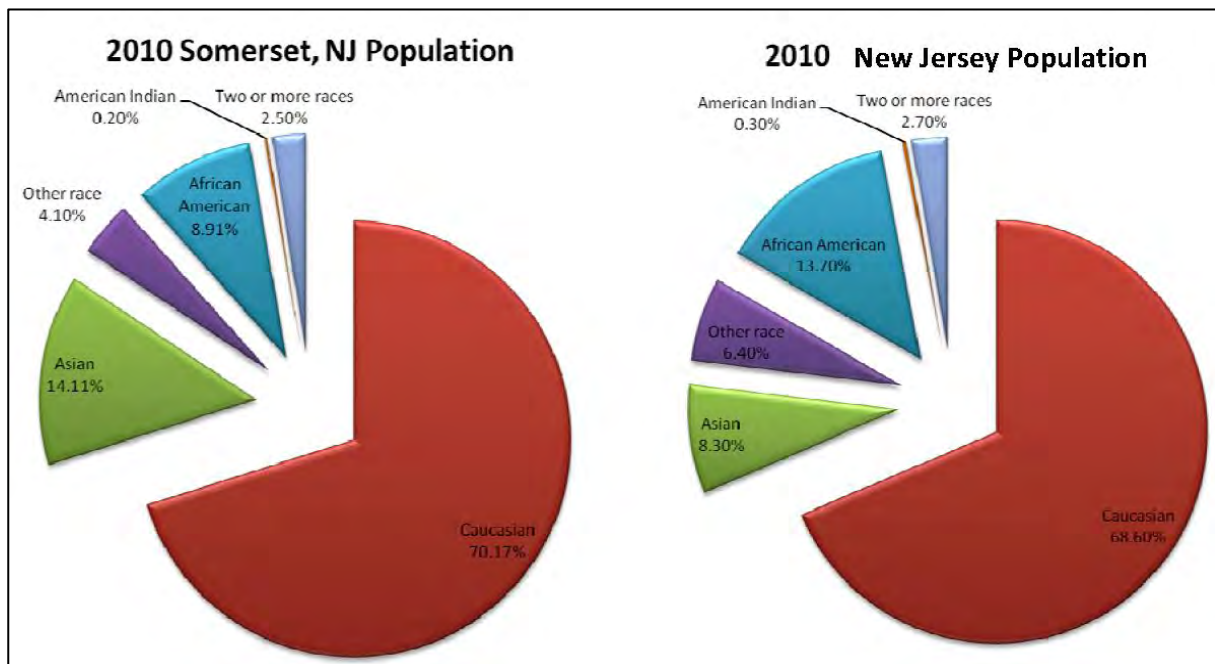
Source: 2010 US Census

DIVERSITY

Somerset County is expected to become increasingly diverse.

According to 2010 US Census data, the Diversity Index in Somerset County was 59.9; this is projected to grow to 66.0 by 2017. Meanwhile, the Diversity Index for all of New Jersey in 2010 was 64.9, and is projected to grow to 68.6 by 2017.⁴ The Diversity Index measures the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race or ethnic groups. The higher the number in the Diversity Index, the more diverse the population. Table 5 shows proportional diversity in Somerset County.

Table 5: Diversity in Somerset County



Source: 2010 US Census

Our Workers

Our Training

Somerset County has the most highly educated workforce in New Jersey, with almost half of all adults over 25 years of age holding a bachelor’s degree or higher and of those 21% hold post-baccalaurette degrees.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Raritan Valley Community College, located in Branchburg, Somerset County, offers a wide variety of associate degrees, certificate programs, and professional

⁴ ESRI Community Profile based on source data from US Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File 1. ESRI forecasts for 2017.

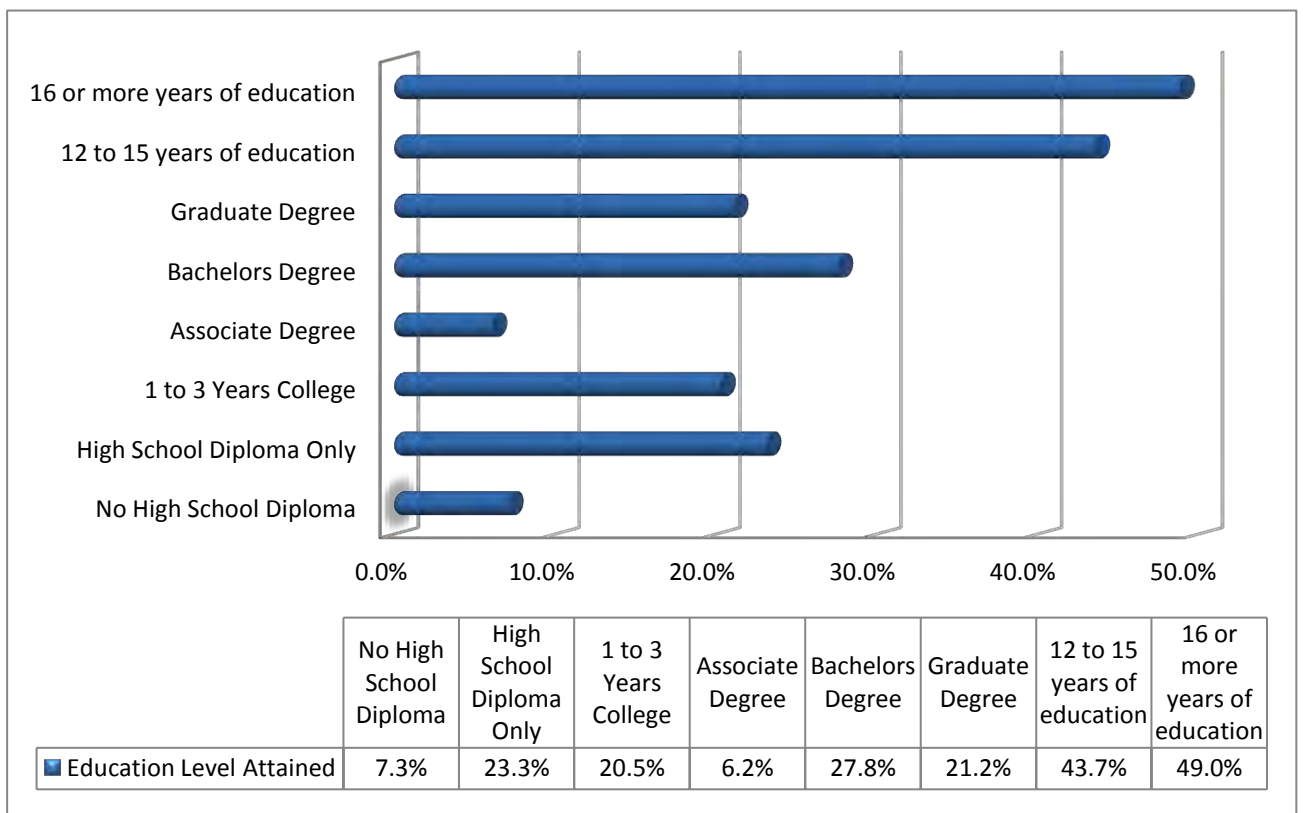
development training. The community college plays an important role in worker training and retraining. Additionally, there are 16 institutions of higher education within a 10-mile radius of Somerset County’s boundaries.

SECONDARY EDUCATION



There are 18 school districts in Somerset County, with a collective 12 high schools, including seven regional high schools and the Somerset County Vocational & Technical (Vo-Tech) School. In 2011, the Somerset County Vo-Tech was ranked by *U.S News and World Report* and the Washington, D.C.-based American Institutes for Research as one of the best high schools in the United States. Students trained in the trades offered at the Vo-Tech school typically work in jobs with family sustaining wages. Those jobs will continue to be particularly important in the construction of new and expanded businesses, as well as the reconstruction of properties destroyed or damaged by Hurricane Sandy and subsequent blizzard activity that ravaged the northeastern seaboard thereafter.

Table 6: Somerset County Educational Attainment, 2010



Source: 2010 US Census

Our Experience

Somerset County has a higher concentration of experienced workers between the ages of 40 and 54, compared with New Jersey. Generally, Somerset County’s population age groups track the state overall, with the exception of a higher percentage of people between the ages of 40 and 54 years and a lower percentage of people between the ages of 20 and 29.

Employment by Occupation

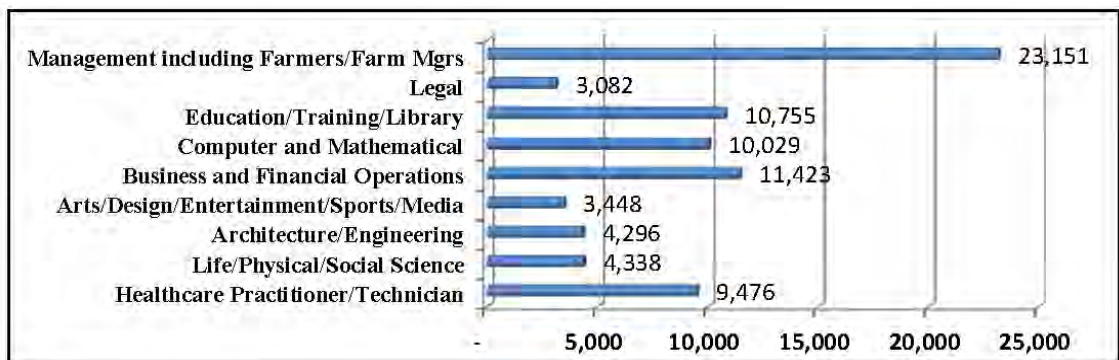
In 2009, Somerset County’s dominant employment sectors were Healthcare and Social Assistance (19,631 workers), Retail Trade (18,956 workers) and Manufacturing (16,393 workers).⁵ The Manufacturing sector incorporates the chemical manufacturing sub-sector and thus, pharmaceutical employment. A cross-reference with Economic Census Data shows 38 establishments and over 4,200 employees worked in the chemical manufacturing sub-sector in Somerset County in 2009. It is estimated that over 50% of the civilian labor force in Somerset County is employed in management, business, science, and arts occupations, with over 10% employed in service occupations. White-collar employment represented 83% (138,925) of occupations in Somerset County in 2011, while blue-collar employment represented approximately 17% of occupations, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (USBLS). Further detail on employment can be found at Addendum 2.

A higher percentage of Somerset County workers were employed in high-knowledge jobs (48%), compared to knowledge workers employed nationwide (31%) in 2010.

High-Knowledge Jobs

In 2010, 80,000 (or 48.15%) of all people employed in Somerset County worked in high-knowledge jobs, including those in healthcare, life/physical/social science; architecture/engineering; arts/design/entertainment/sports/media; business and financial operation; computer and mathematical occupations; education/training/library/legal; and management -farmers/farm managers.

Table 7: Employment in High-Knowledge Occupations, Somerset County



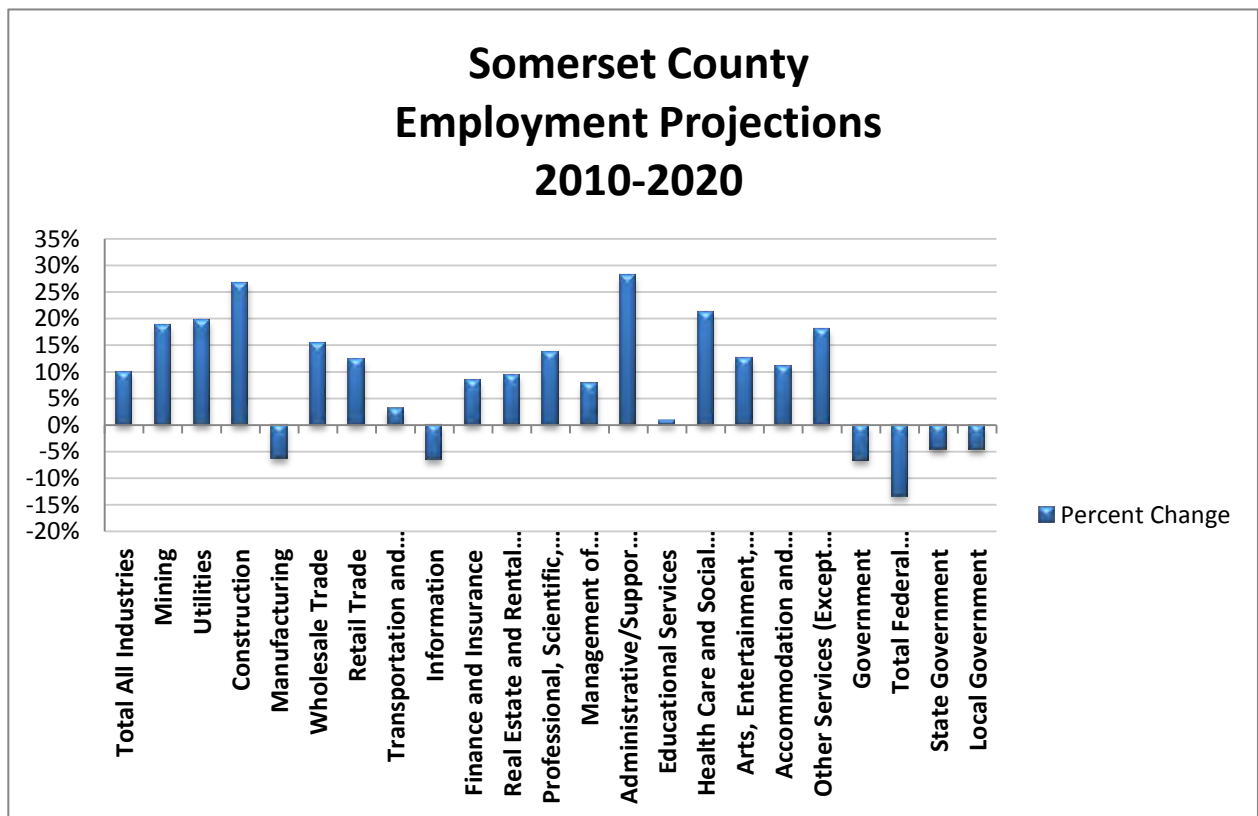
Source: 2011 Somerset County Community Profile

⁵ US Bureau of Labor Statistics Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages for 2009.

Employment Projections

According to the USBLS, the civilian labor force in Somerset County grew by 8% from 2000 to 2010, from 165,638 to 180,007. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development projects employment in Somerset County to grow 1% per year from 2010 to 2020. Employment in the Wholesale Trade and Retail Trade sectors are predicted to be the highest employment growth sectors, at 15.4% and 12.3% respectively, while Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are predicted to grow at a rate of 13.8% over the same decade. Excluding public sector employment, employment in the Information sector is predicted to have the greatest decline in the County at 6.5% during this same period.

Table 8: Somerset County Employment Projections, 2010-2020



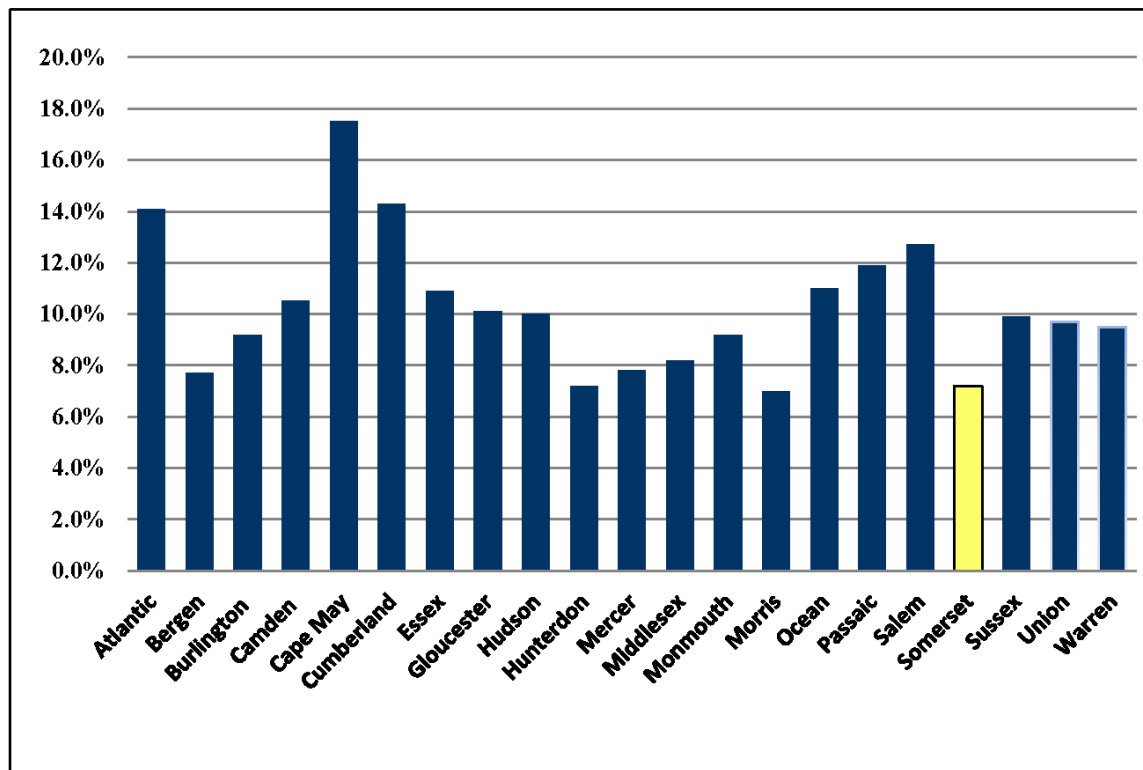
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment

Somerset County, New Jersey, ended 2011 with an unemployment rate of 7.1%, according to the USBLS – up significantly from the year 2000 unemployment rate of 2.6%. Comparatively, the average annual unemployment rate in the United States was 8.9% in 2011, while the average unemployment rate in New Jersey that year was 9.3%. Somerset County had the third-lowest unemployment rate among all New Jersey counties in 2012. Table 9 below depicts unemployment rates among New Jersey counties in January 2012.



Table 9: Unemployment Rates by New Jersey Counties, January 2012

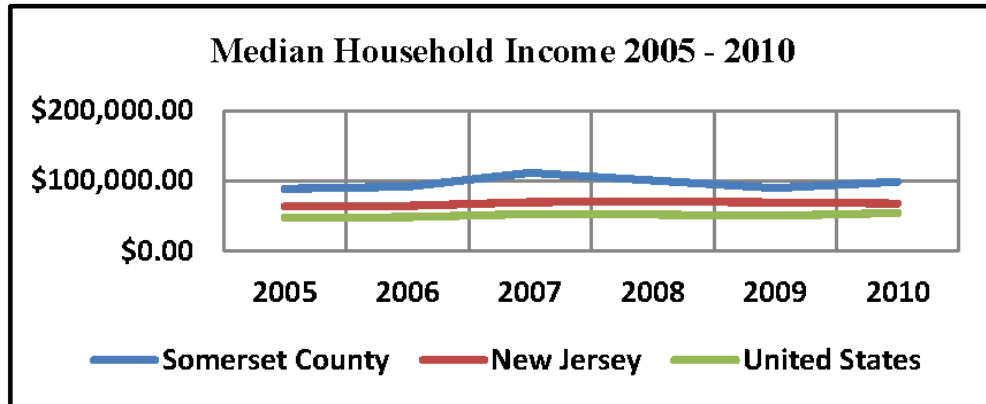


Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics, New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Income Characteristics

The median household income in Somerset County was estimated at \$98,703 in 2010, making Somerset County the third-highest-income-earning county in New Jersey and the sixth-highest-income-earning county in the United States.

Table 10: Median Household Income



Source: 2010 US Census

Per Capita Income

The Somerset County population has comparatively high per capita and median household incomes. The County has the highest per capita income in New Jersey at \$69,385 and is the ninth-wealthiest county in the United States (see Addendum 2).

Poverty

In 2009, Somerset County had the third-lowest percentage of people living below the poverty level (4.4% of the population) among all New Jersey counties. This was an increase from 3.8% reported in 2000 Census data. New Jersey had 9.4% (2009) to 10.3% (2010) of people living below the poverty level, while the United States had 14.5% (2009) to 15.1% (2010) of people living below the poverty level.

Our Economy

“Within a day’s drive of the Garden State, truckers can reach 40% of the US population, or 100 million consumers who purchase \$2 trillion in merchandise each year.”

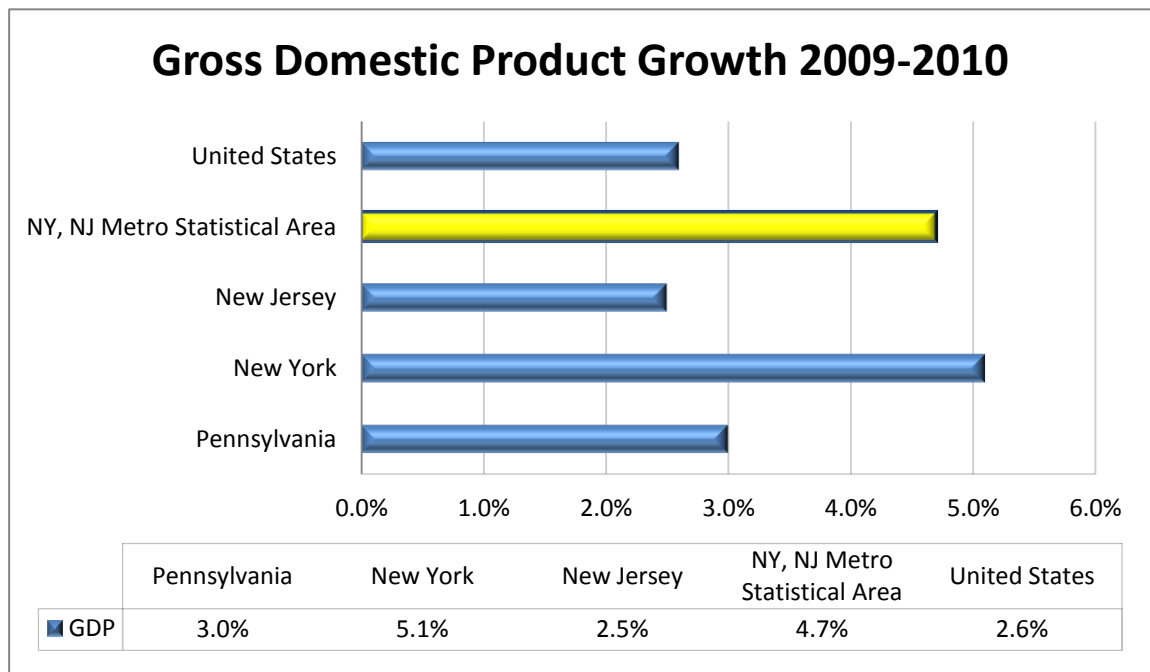
-New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development

The narrative that follows provides an overview of Somerset County’s economy. Corroborating data and further detail can be found in the addenda that accompany this CEDS narrative; see the Table of Contents for identification of specific addenda.

Gross Domestic Product

Somerset County, as part of the New York Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), showed a large gross domestic product (GDP) increase from 2009 to 2010. During this same period, the GDP of New York, Northern New Jersey, and the Long Island MSA, of which Somerset County is a part, grew faster than all other MSAs of the United States at 4.7%, with the exception of the Boston statistical area. The GDP of the mid-eastern United States grew by 3.8% during that same period, while New Jersey’s state GDP grew by only 2.5%, and is weaker than the surrounding states of Pennsylvania or New York, with GDPs of 3.0% and 5.1%, respectively. These compare with the US real GDP that increased by 2.6% over that same period.

Table 11: GDP Growth Comparison



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis

Key Industry Clusters

Industry clusters are the engines that drive job and economic expansion by attracting new businesses.

Key Industry Clusters Somerset County, NJ

Advanced Manufacturing

*Bio/Pharmaceuticals and
Life Sciences*

Finance

Healthcare

*Leisure, Hospitality,
Retail*

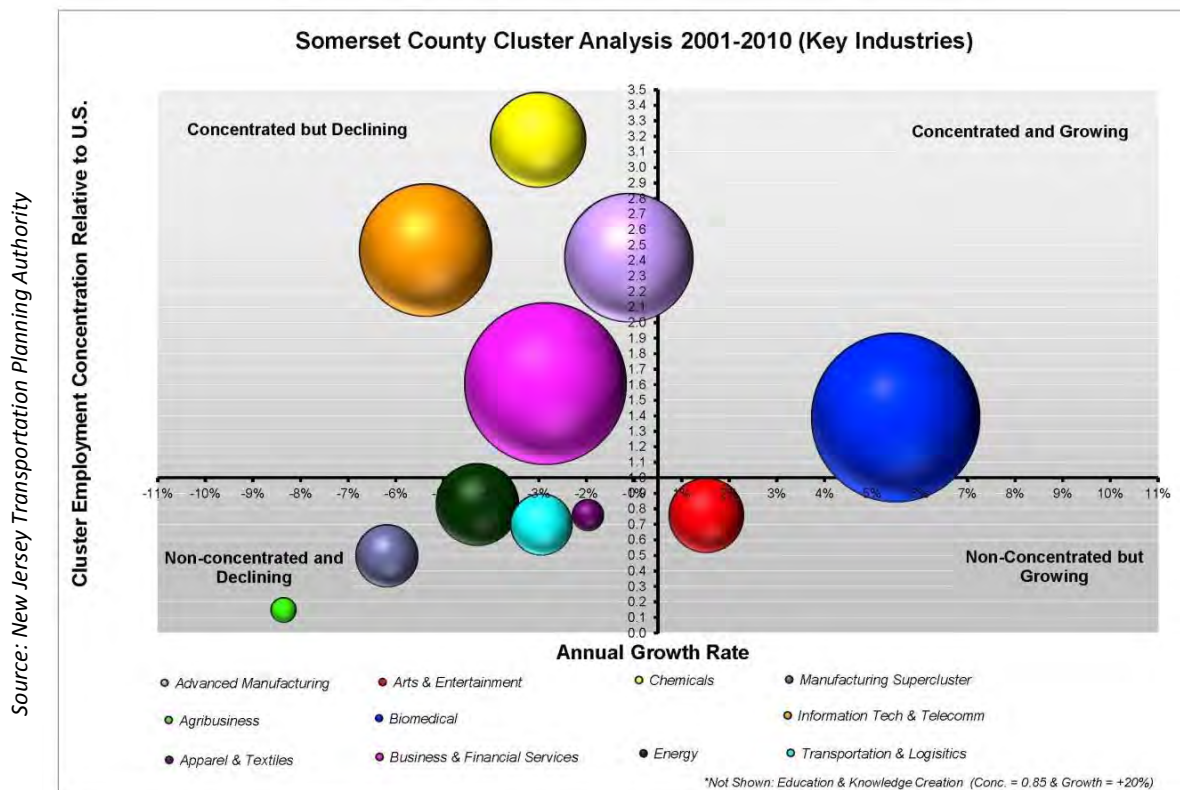
Technology

*Transportation, Logistics,
Distribution*

The International Economic Development Council defines clusters as “geographic concentrations of interdependent, complementary and/or competing businesses in related industries that trade with each other. Clusters develop and change over time, stemming from the long-term economic history, companies and demand for products, and services locally. Clusters act as a powerful magnet for business location and create diverse pools of skilled workers. They also attract new suppliers that congregate nearby for increased efficiency. Clusters thrive on a steady stream of skilled workers, finance, infrastructure and a good business climate. Spin-off businesses started up by experienced workers also foster a competitive spirit that stimulates growth and innovative strategic alliances. Built around core export orientated firms, industry clusters generate new wealth in a region.”

There are seven key industry clusters noted for New Jersey: Bio/Pharmaceuticals and Life Sciences; Transportation, Logistics, Distribution; Finance; Advanced Manufacturing; Healthcare; Technology; and Leisure, Hospitality, and Retail. Of these key industry clusters, four have a major presence in Somerset County.

Table 12: Somerset County Key Industries



Real Estate Markets

Commercial Real Estate Market

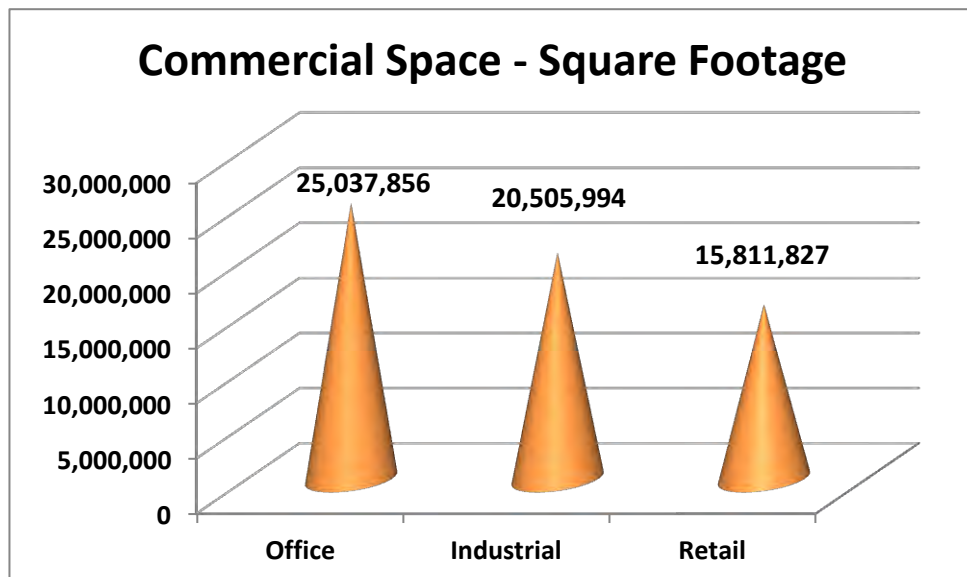
Somerset County, New Jersey, has an inventory of 25,037,856 square feet of office space, 20,505,994 square feet of industrial space, and 15,811,827 square feet of retail space, according to *CoStar Reports* (November 2011). Current and future projected vacancy rate information is available in Addendum 4 of this report.

Somerset County’s office vacancy rate in the last quarter of 2011 was 19%. Within Somerset County, the market and vacancy rate for various types of office buildings can vary. Specifically, the office vacancy rates for Somerset County was double what the office vacancy rate was for the Somerset/Interstate 78 corridor’s Class A office buildings.

The total direct available industrial space in Somerset County is approximately 2,200,000 square feet. The industrial building vacancy rate is approximately 11%. Retail vacancy in Somerset County is approximately 1,900,000 square feet, and the vacancy rate is approximately 12%.

Addendum 4 offers additional New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania metropolitan area market information for the commercial office, industrial, and retail real estate markets, as well as a more regional view in central New Jersey.

Table 13: Somerset County Commercial Real Estate Space



Source: *CoStar Reports*, November 2011

Residential Real Estate Market

The residential median monthly housing costs for homes and condos with a mortgage in Somerset County in 2009 was \$2,650, while the median monthly housing cost of rental-occupied housing units was \$1,162 compared to the statewide median of \$962/month.



Meanwhile, the estimated median house or condo value in 2009 was \$401,900 in Somerset County (up from \$222,400 in the year 2000), compared to the median house or condo value across all of New Jersey at \$348,300.⁶

Addendum 4 of this report includes Selected Housing Characteristics for Somerset County, New Jersey, as compiled by the US Census Bureau, 2010.

⁶ See http://www.city-data.com/county/Somerset_County-NJ.html#ixzz2NzTsmQfY.

Geography and Special Land Uses

Somerset County is located in north-central New Jersey, about 40 miles west of New York City and 60 miles northeast of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It is an “interior county,” such that it is only one of two counties in the state that does not border another state or the Atlantic Ocean.



Somerset County encompasses 305 square miles and is composed of 21 unique municipalities that range from small boroughs to large suburban townships. The landscapes in Somerset County vary from urban townscapes and suburban neighborhoods to rural countryside.

The County has 11,600 acres of parkland, 7,753 acres of preserved farmland and 3,253 acres of greenways. New Jersey is known as a strong home rule state. Each municipality in the County adopts its own unique land use ordinances, zoning ordinances, and master plan to guide development patterns. In addition, the County oversees land development as it impacts County facilities, and the State of New Jersey exercises regulatory authority in a number of areas, including environmental protection.

Development Patterns

Somerset County municipalities have varied development patterns. Initially, the County was developed first along the Raritan River, railroad, and historic highway corridors. Today, historic villages and traditional towns are scattered throughout the County, as are agricultural farms.

Corridor, retail, office clusters, and livable, dense town centers augment the surrounding suburban residential and rural areas. Development and redevelopment continues within Somerset County, as shown by its continued population growth. Although development is driven by private investment, the framework for development, redevelopment, and municipal density is provided by municipal master plans, land use zoning ordinances, and redevelopment plans.



Business (Special) Improvement Districts



A Business (Special) Improvement District (SID) is an organization, management, and financing tool used by local businesses to provide specialized services that complement, rather than replace, the existing municipal government services as part of a downtown revitalization plan. A SID is created under state law and enacted by a municipal ordinance.

The law permits property owners and businesses to organize and assess themselves to pay for needed services. A District Plan and a nonprofit District Management Association (DMA), or a municipal commission, are responsible for governing the operations of the SID. The DMA is responsible for all decisions relating to assessments, budgets, and management of specialized services. Two Somerset County municipalities — Somerville Borough and Franklin Township — have SIDs.

Designated Redevelopment Areas

There are 16 designated redevelopment areas in Somerset County, pursuant to the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law. Almost half of the redevelopment area plans are designated as fully residential projects or open space projects. Many of the current areas designated in need of redevelopment within Somerset County — using the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law — are also brownfield sites. Addendum 6 of this report includes the designated redevelopment areas compiled from information from the Somerset County Planning Division.

BROWNFIELD SITES



Somerset County continues to support cleanup and reuse efforts for known or suspected contaminated sites, known as brownfields. The New Jersey Office of Brownfield Reuse (OBR) is charged with coordinating remediation and reuse efforts at specific brownfield sites, and piloting innovative approaches to expedite the revitalization process. One available program is the Brownfield Development Area (BDA) Program. This program works in partnership with municipalities and neighborhoods impacted by multiple brownfield sites. The BDA Program coordinates planning, resource acquisition, and remediation with a focus on reuse. Individual BDAs are designated through a highly selective application process.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Program is a loan and grant program to investigate and remediate contaminated sites. This program reimburses developers up to 75% of remediation costs based on certain new taxes that are generated from a brownfield project. Meanwhile, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Landfill Redevelopment Program focuses on the proper remediation and closure of landfills to support redevelopment.

Agriculture Development

Although the agricultural industry in Somerset County is small according to traditional economic development measures, the significant public investment directed at the retention of this industry in the County warrants examination. The May 2008 *County of Somerset Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan Update* notes that the average size of agricultural parcels is 82 acres and that 45% of Somerset County's farms realized a net gain of \$23,335 per year per farm. The *Plan Update* notes that net gain may be low because much of the County's farm acreage is used for hay production that is not sold, but used on-site.



Hazard Mitigation

FLOOD CONTROL

Somerset County is replete with rivers and brooks, and includes three Watershed Management Areas: the Passaic, the Upper Raritan Basin, and the Lower Raritan.

Flooding along the Raritan River continues to affect the downtown cores of Bound Brook Borough, Manville Borough, and to a lesser amount, Somerville Borough.

Other towns affected by flooding include Franklin Township, South Bound Brook Borough, Millstone Borough, Raritan Borough, Branchburg Township, and Bridgewater Township. In 2011, Somerset County, along with other parts of New Jersey, was included in a Presidential Disaster Declaration as a result of Hurricane Irene. Previously,

Hurricane Floyd rendered significant flooding across the County in 1999. Flood mitigation techniques for the area include a \$130 million



flood protection project for the Borough of Bound Brook along the Raritan River that ultimately will include a series of levees, flood walls, closure gates, and pumps; home buy-outs or home elevations for Manville and North Branch Village; and the regeneration of 495 river-front acres from agricultural use land back to wetlands.⁷

Two groups of “river municipalities” have created flood control commissions in Somerset County. The Green Brook Flood Control Commission, which arose in response to major floods in 1971 and 1973 as a local movement, was authorized by the State of New Jersey and today consists of volunteer representatives appointed by the flood-affected municipalities and counties, as well as the State of New Jersey. The Commission regularly holds open meetings to discuss their goal of a comprehensive flood control solution for the entire Green Brook Basin.

After 30 years of effort, the Green Brook Flood Control Project is finally providing flood protection for the Borough of Bound Brook.

The Millstone and Raritan Flood Control Commission was established in 2011 and includes the Somerset County Freeholders and representatives from the municipalities of Bridgewater, Franklin, Hillsborough, Millstone, Montgomery, Rocky Hill, Somerville, and South Bound Brook. This Commission was created to coordinate efforts for the study and possible mitigation of flooding, as well as to encourage state and federal financial aid for the region. The US Army Corps of Engineers presently is working on a multi-year study of flooding along the Raritan and Millstone Rivers that is projected to cost \$6.8 million.

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council

Portions of five northern municipalities in Somerset County are part of the Highlands Region: Bedminster Township, Bernards Township, Bernardsville Borough, Far Hills Borough, and Peapack and Gladstone Borough. The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council, established as a water protection region by the New Jersey State Legislature, approved the Highlands Regional Master Plan on July 17, 2008. The Highlands Region is divided into Preservation and Planning Areas. Municipal Master Plan Conformance with the Highlands Master Plan is mandatory for all municipalities in the Highlands Preservation Area. The Highlands Master Plan Conformance process determines build-out capacity for each participating municipality.

Bedminster Township is within both the Highlands Preservation and Planning Areas and is working on municipal conformance with the Highlands Master Plan for the Preservation Area. Bernardsville Township and Far Hills Borough have voluntarily opted in, while Bernards Township and Peapack and Gladstone Borough have decided not to enter the Highlands Master Plan Conformance Process, as of this writing.

⁷ See <http://www.boundbrook-nj.org>.

Public Policy

Public policies and associated regulations often directly impact and influence job creation and private-sector economic investment decision-making and opportunities. There are several significant state, regional, county, and municipal plans and practices that affect land use, job creation, and economic development in Somerset County.

The Somerset County CEDS aims to connect job creation and private-sector economic investment opportunities with land use planning efforts underway at the local, county, regional, and state levels.

Tax Structure

Taxation in New Jersey is levied at the state, county, and municipal levels. New Jersey state taxes include a sales tax (7%), a personal income tax (8.97% maximum), a gasoline motor fuels tax (14.5 cents/gallon), a corporate business tax (9%), as well as both workers compensation insurance and state unemployment insurance taxes. County and municipal governments have the authority to levy taxes on real property, which is applied against the value of land and any associated improvements. Statewide, property taxes average \$2,372 per capita.⁸

Legislation enacted in 2003 (P.L. 2003, c. 114) imposed a State Occupancy Fee on the rent for every occupancy of a room in a hotel, motel, or similar facility in most New Jersey municipalities. For occupancies on and after July 1, 2004, the fee is 5%. The State Occupancy Fee is imposed on room rentals that are currently subject to the 7% New Jersey sales tax and is in addition to the sales tax. New Jersey municipalities may adopt an ordinance that imposes a uniform municipal tax on occupancies in that municipality. The municipal tax may be imposed at a rate less than or equal to 3%.

State

New Jersey's State Strategic Plan

New Jersey's *State Development and Redevelopment Plan*, developed under the guidance of the New Jersey State Planning Commission, aims to "coordinate planning activities and establish statewide planning objectives in the following areas: land use, housing, economic development, transportation, natural resource conservation, agriculture and farmland retention, recreation, urban and suburban redevelopment, historic preservation, public facilities and services, and intergovernmental coordination."⁹ Relative to municipal, county and regional land use planning alignment, the *State Strategic Plan* recognizes that planning requires cooperation among

⁸ Rates are current as of March 4, 2013.

⁹ N.J.S.A. 52:18A-200(f).

government and private entities. “An encouraging trend is the establishment of regional planning partnerships. Examples include the Somerset County Business Partnership.”¹⁰

The *State Strategic Plan* pledges to foster targeted job growth, support effective regional planning, and preserve the state’s critical resources.

“Traditional statewide land use planning must give way to strategic, action-oriented planning that integrates all relevant state resources. A conscious shift from managing growth to planning for physical change is also required. Coordinated investment will be the foundation for a new model that recognizes market conditions as a significant driver for change. Moving forward, New Jersey will focus its policies and investments on vibrant regions by fostering targeted job growth, supporting effective regional planning and preserving the State’s critical resources.”¹¹



New Jersey State Unified Workforce Investment Plan

The *New Jersey State Unified Workforce Investment Plan* outlines statewide workforce investment strategies and details targeted industry sectors, a number of which are important in Somerset County. This plan connects with the *State Strategic Plan* in an economic development context.

New Jersey Energy Master Plan

As the Christie administration’s strategic vision for the use, management, and development of energy in New Jersey over the next decade, the *2011 New Jersey Energy Master Plan* (EMP) and its implementation strategies will continue to affect business investment decisions across the state. The EMP indicates that “the Administration will manage energy in a manner which saves money, stimulates the economy, creates jobs, protects the environment, mitigates long-term cumulative impacts, and is consistent with the goals of the *State Strategic Plan*.”¹²

¹⁰ *State Strategic Plan: New Jersey’s State Development and Redevelopment Plan*, New Jersey State Planning Commission, awaiting final adoption, p. 39.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *2011 New Jersey Energy Master Plan*, December 6, 2011, p. 1.



Regional

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority's Transportation Improvement Plan

Somerset County is within the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), which is the federally authorized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 13-county northern New Jersey region. As such, the NJTPA oversees more than \$2 billion in transportation improvement projects and provides a forum for interagency cooperation and public input

into funding decisions. It also sponsors and conducts studies, assists county planning agencies, and monitors compliance with national air quality goals.

Somerset County

Somerset County Master Plan (and its Circulation Element)

The Somerset County Planning Board is responsible for developing the *Somerset County Master Plan*, which contains a required "Circulation Element." Additionally, the County develops a *Capital Plan* for improvements in County-owned roads and bridges. The Somerset County Planning Board is exploring infrastructure investments connected to 20 redevelopment/targeted growth areas identified in *Sustainable Somerset: The Strategic Plan for Somerset County*.

Somerset County Investment Framework

In 2009, Somerset County began to explore an alternative approach for identifying areas for growth, agriculture, open space conservation and other appropriate designations, as specified by the State Planning Act. This resulted in the creation of the *Somerset County Investment Framework*, which is intended to provide the geographic basis for coordinating land use and infrastructure planning. This *Framework* focuses on Priority Growth Investment Areas (PGIAs) suitable for significant economic growth. The Office for Planning Advocacy within the New Jersey Business Action Center has recognized the work of Somerset County in developing PGIAs consistent with state policy. Addendum 6 provides details of the *Somerset County Investment Framework*.

Somerset County Long-Term Economic Development Plan

Three emerging industries – nanotech/biotech, bio-related technology, and geospatial technology – were identified for Somerset County in the *Long-Term Economic Plan - Phase I Feasibility Analysis* conducted by Wadley, Donovan, Gutshaw Consulting under contract by the Somerset County Business Partnership (see Addenda 3 and 6). These three emerging industries were specifically identified based on the County's existing industry base, education and technical support, future employment opportunities, the broadening of economic development, and the creation of a significant number of jobs over the next 5 to 10 years.

Somerset County Wastewater Management Plan

The *Somerset County Wastewater Management Plan* is being updated to establish specific sewer service delivery areas and will define areas that will be ineligible to receive sewer service. To the extent that sewer service is a prerequisite to private-sector economic investment, the *Wastewater Management Plan* will affect economic development strategies.

Municipal***Permitting***

New Jersey is known as a strong home rule state, where the land development permitting process includes municipal, and often county and state approvals. Each municipality in Somerset County adopts its own unique land use ordinances, zoning ordinances, and Master Plan to guide development patterns. In addition, the County has regulatory oversight for land development as it impacts County facilities such as County roads, bridges, and stormwater facilities.

Policy Consistency

Consistent with guidelines established by the USEDA, the Somerset County CEDS report is in concert with both New Jersey's *State Strategic Plan* for "bottom-up" planning, as well as the *Somerset County Investment Framework*, which provides for geographic planning initiatives across Somerset County. There remains tremendous opportunity to further align state interests with local and regional strategies to attract and retain businesses. This CEDS report is a critical tool to help bridge those gaps through collaborative partnerships. We welcome the community's active participation.

Additional Resources for Economic Growth

Government

New Jersey Department of Labor

The New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDL) offers customized training grants to businesses to create and upgrade workers’ skills and to retain jobs to ensure that New Jersey employers are competitive in the world economy. Somerset County’s businesses have a successful history of accessing this customized training.



New Jersey Economic Development Authority

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) assists businesses with gaining access to capital through tax-exempt and taxable bond financing, loans, loan guarantees, and business and tax incentives to expand, relocate, or redevelop in New Jersey. The NJEDA also offers real estate development assistance, and the agency maintains state-of-the-art facilities, such as the Technology Centre of New Jersey in North Brunswick and the Waterfront Technology Center at Camden. The New Jersey Economic Development Authority Programs List is located at Addendum 5.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY BUSINESS PORTAL AND BUSINESS ACTION CENTER

Governor Christie consolidated all state economic development activities under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno, creating the New Jersey Business Action Center (BAC) in the Department of State. The BAC plays a key role in helping grow, retain, and attract business to the state. The center serves as a “one-stop” shop for business. The Center’s staff works to encourage entrepreneurship by supporting New Jersey’s businesses of all sizes, supporting the global competitiveness of New Jersey companies, as well as promoting the state’s attractiveness as a vacation destination and business investment location nationally and internationally.

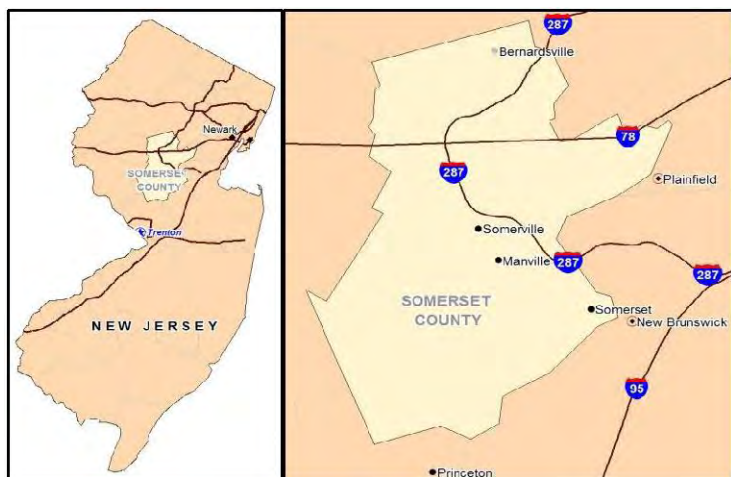
Specifically, the BAC facilitates business locations and expansions in the state with site selection services, financial and incentive program solutions, and resolution of regulatory issues and complicated technical and compliance issues. The BAC’s business advocates encourage entrepreneurship by supporting businesses of all sizes, thereby advancing the global competitiveness of New Jersey companies. For more information, go to <http://nj.gov/state/bac>.

The New Jersey Business Portal is a “one-stop shop” for business resources. It includes informaton on how to start and grow a business, and how to access a variety of workforce information and services.

Transportation

Infrastructure

Somerset County has an extensive transportation network that includes principal and major arterial highways, major and minor collector roads, and local road, airports, transit and buses, and freight rail, although the maintenance and expansion of these systems to serve employee commuting needs is fragmented and complex. The jurisdictions responsible for transportation improvements — municipalities, counties, state, federal, quasi-public, and private — have differing priorities and financial resources. The Somerset County Circulation Element, part of the *Somerset County Master Plan*, largely addresses County transportation system deficiencies and the aging road and mass transit system.



ROADS

The road hierarchy in Somerset County includes federal interstates, US highways, and state and county highways that create access linkages to Philadelphia, New York City, the northeastern United States, and beyond. Interstate 287 (I-287, N/S) and Interstate 78 (I-78, E/W) intersect in the heart of Somerset County. I-287 serves as the outer beltway west of New York City through the north-central section of Somerset County. Meanwhile, I-78 spans east to west in the northern third of Somerset County, and connects to New York City, as well as

Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley (Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton) and beyond. Three additional local access highways complete the federal and state highway network in Somerset County.

AIR TRAVEL

Travelers can connect via air to Newark (New Jersey), New York City, and Philadelphia via three Somerset County airports located in Manville Borough, Bedminster, and Montgomery Townships. The County also includes



many corporate heliports. Newark-Liberty International Airport in Newark, New Jersey, is the closest international airport, only 23 miles from the center of Somerset County.

PASSENGER RAIL AND BUS TRAVEL

Somerset County is served primarily by New Jersey Transit (NJ Transit) and Lakeland Bus Lines, which is augmented by Somerset County's Office of Transportation. Somerset County's Office of Transportation offers seven shuttle bus routes in the County as part of a regional network.

Passenger rail service in Somerset County connects to New York (NY), Philadelphia (PA), and Trenton (NJ), through Penn Station in Newark, New Jersey. Somerset County's passenger rail service is provided through NJ Transit via two lines that connect passengers to Newark, New Jersey, and New York City. NJ Transit runs two passenger lines through Somerset County that further connects to New York City through the Port Authority of New York and the New Jersey Trans-Hudson (PATH) connection.

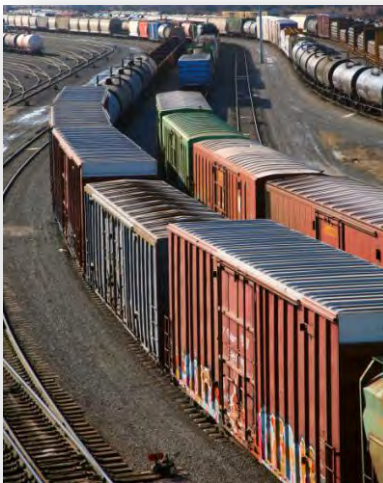
The Raritan Valley passenger rail line runs through five Somerset County municipalities to High Bridge in Hunterdon County, with rail stations in

Branchburg Township, Raritan and Somerville

Boroughs, Bridgewater Township, and Bound Brook Borough. The Gladstone Branch - Morris & Essex Line - runs through four Somerset County municipalities with rail stations in Peapack and Gladstone Borough, Far Hills Borough, Bernardsville Borough, and Bernards Township.

FREIGHT RAIL

The three freight rail lines in Somerset County include the Norfolk Southern line that connects Bound Brook to High Bridge, New Jersey; the Norfolk Southern line that branches in Bound Brook and eventually connects north to Belvidere, New Jersey; and the CSX Trenton Line that branches in Bridgewater in Somerset County and connects to the Philadelphia SEPTA and Lehigh rail lines.



RIDEWISE

Somerset County is served by RideWise, one of the state's eight transportation management associations (TMAs) that works with businesses to develop sustainable travel alternatives to improve mobility, reduce traffic congestion, and decrease carbon emissions. Ride Wise is an independent, nonprofit agency that is funded through grants from NJTPA, NJ Transit, and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT).

Utilities and Essential Services

Somerset County has an extensive network of utilities and essential services, including telecommunications, electricity, natural gas, water, wastewater, trash/recycling, and hazardous materials disposal.

Telecommunications

Given its location within the New York City metropolitan area, Somerset County has a strong network of telecommunications resources. Multiple cellular telephone network

service providers are available, and all communities are served by cable television providers, which have become significant sources of voice and data communication services for residential and commercial customers. Fiber optic networks are accessible, as proven by the many "data centers" located within the County. Traditional "telephone company" services are available for voice, data, and in most cases, television services.



Electricity

All of Somerset County is connected or is able to be connected to electric power service. The electric distribution providers in Somerset County are Jersey Central Power and Light (a FirstEnergy

Company) and PSE&G. FirstEnergy includes 10 electric utility operating companies and comprises the nation's largest investor-owned electric system.

Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G) is headquartered in Newark, New Jersey, PSE&G serves nearly three-quarters of New Jersey's population in a service area spanning a 2,600-square-mile diagonal corridor across the state, from Bergen to Gloucester Counties. Electricity is deregulated in New Jersey, and commercial customers can negotiate rates with their service provider of choice.

Natural Gas

Much of Somerset County has access to natural gas. The natural gas providers include Elizabethtown Gas, First Energy/Jersey Central Power and Light, and PSE&G. Natural gas is also deregulated in New Jersey, and commercial customers can negotiate rates with their service provider of choice.

Water

Somerset County draws its water from public and private water companies and single-source wells. Most of Somerset County has public (municipal) water service, but sections of the County are still on private wells. Water service in Somerset County is provided by the New Jersey American Water Company (investor-owned), Elizabethtown Water Company, and several municipal companies, including the Manville Water Department, the Rocky Hill Municipal Well, and the Hillsborough Municipal Utility.

Wastewater

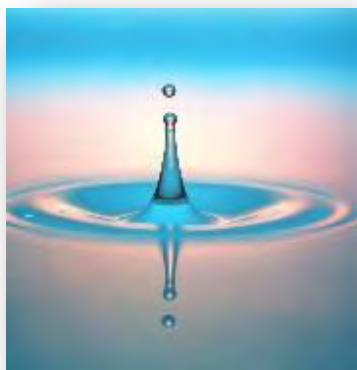
Most of Somerset County has sewer service, although some residents have private septic systems. The largest sewage authorities include the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewage Authority and the Middlesex County Utility Authority. Additionally, there are three mid-sized service providers in the County: the Berkeley Heights Water Pollution Control Plant, the Bernards Sewer Authority, and the Stony Brook Regional Sewer Authority. There are also small wastewater service providers that service specific development projects.

Trash/Recycling

Somerset County maintains a significant residential and commercial recycling program. Owners, operators, or managers of business and commercial establishments must ensure that a recycling system is in place that provides for the separation of mandatory recyclable trash. The Somerset County Recycling Center is available to small businesses as an alternative to contracting for recycling services at their establishments.

Hazardous Waste Disposal Services

Commercial establishments generating medical, biological, solid, or other hazardous waste products are regulated under various agencies, potentially at both the state and federal levels. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection typically is the lead agency for businesses with waste disposal considerations.



VISION



Collective vision is a necessary element to the successful implementation of a sustainable regional economic development strategy. To that end, a robust business outreach effort was conducted by the Somerset County Business Partnership to both cull opinions and to coalesce them into a collective vision for economic growth. Outreach efforts included four facilitated visioning sessions, the use of electronic surveys, multiple meetings with local economic development representatives, community partners, and extensive discussions with the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Governing Committee.

The following focus areas of consensus were determined through the outreach process. They represent a five-year economic vision for Somerset County, New Jersey.

Somerset County, New Jersey, will be a place where...

- **BUSINESS RESOURCES AND SERVICES ARE DEVELOPED TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN INDUSTRIES AND COMPANIES** consistent with the infrastructure, buildings, and workforce assets of the region;
- **RE-USE OF SIGNIFICANT PROPERTIES, OFFICE COMPLEXES, AND INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES WILL GROW TARGETED INDUSTRIES** and meet the needs of business to enhance their competitiveness, efficiency, and functionality;
- **THE REGULATORY BURDEN ON BUSINESS IS REDUCED** through simplified, consistent, efficient, and customer-oriented permitting and approval processes;
- **WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND INCENTIVES ARE FOCUSED** on the future needs of the employer; and
- **ROAD, BRIDGE, AND MASS TRANSIT INVESTMENTS ADVANCE** job growth, private-sector economic investment, and efficient employee commuting.

Imperatives

Success must be clearly defined and measured.

Somerset County must be proactive in leveraging its quality workforce.

Sound public policy decisions need to recognize employment, labor, and economic dynamics.

Visioning Sessions

Visioning Policy

“We will ensure an inclusive visioning process of no less than three sessions to be conducted regionally throughout the County in partnership with local business, trade, and economic development entities, and to include the community as a whole.”

Recognizing that people generally support what they help to create, members of the CEDS Governing Committee personally invited individuals they believed would be engaged contributors to a robust discussion focused on developing a future economic to advance the region. The four sites where the sessions were held were deliberately dispersed geographically around Somerset County and held at different times of day and days of the week to encourage maximum attendance. Participants were then congregated into smaller groups that focused on specific areas of interest each participant identified in advance of the session as having the most importance or impact to them, their community, and/or business.



Public input was also accepted throughout the CEDS development process through the Somerset County Business Partnership/CEDS website, as well as at each CEDS Governing Committee meeting.

Prevailing Themes

- Business attraction, retention, incentives, and space
- Education and training of the workforce
- Streamlining regulation
- Transportation and transit

Session 1

A total of 29 participants attended the first business outreach or “visioning” session that was held on February 24, 2012, at the Olde Mill Inn & Grain House in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. This session was held in partnership with the Somerset Hills Business Network. Brian Reilly of the Municipal Land Use Center facilitated.

Key Issues and Opportunities

Participants identified seven key issues and opportunities for economic expansion.

- Business attraction and retention
- Collaboration of the hospitality industry, and arts/historic organizations and location of businesses to package and promote tourism
- Education and training
- Housing
- Regulatory road blocks
- Research and development for jobs, high-end facility space
- Transportation

The research and development industry, identified as a source of job creation and tourism, was recognized as an emerging industry. Specific Somerset County issues that relate to transportation, regulation inconsistencies, education, and workforce housing were also discussed.

Strategic Vision

- Attract workers to live in Somerset County by making quality-of-life amenities and workforce housing increasingly available.
- Build a Somerset County Research and Technology Incubator.
- Create a Marketing Plan for Somerset County.
- Create a County Economic Development Corporation to access federal/state funds.
- Consolidate regulations across all 21 Somerset County municipalities and county government to eliminate redundant, inconsistent, and unnecessary regulations.
- Focus development on the seven New Jersey Key Industry Clusters (Advanced Manufacturing; Bio/Pharmaceuticals and Life Sciences; Finance; Healthcare; Leisure, Hospitality, and Retail; Technology; and Transportation, Logistics, Distribution).
- Leverage the County’s numerous assets (commercial real estate, transportation infrastructure, etc.).
- Link with regional colleges and state universities.
- Target science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education and training.
- Provide better intra-county transportation, commuter transportation (rail and highway) to the southern portions of Somerset County and “Last Mile” transportation connections.

Session 2

A total of 44 participants attended the second business outreach session that was held on February 29, 2012 at the MiddleBrook Crossing Business Park in Bridgewater, New Jersey. Brian Reilly of the Municipal Land Use Center facilitated.

Key Issues and Opportunities

Participants identified 10 key issues and opportunities for economic expansion.

- 
- Economic incentives for emerging industries
 - Energy infrastructure and stability
 - Entrepreneurship and start-ups
 - Green building
 - How to create high-value jobs
 - Improve “quality of life” services for workers living in Somerset County
 - Local/county/state regulatory complexity and cost
 - Quicker approvals
 - Sufficient and capable workforce
 - Transportation, transit, and “Last Mile”

Entrepreneurial development was identified as a source of job creation and energy stability was identified as a specific need. Specific Somerset County issues related to transportation, regulatory complexity, and higher education were also discussed.



Strategic Vision


- Accommodate expanded transportation to and from density housing sites.
- Align transportation linkages between downtown entertainment, tourism/hospitality venues, and transit (parking, hours, promotions).
- Build a public-private partnership Technology Park.
- Create energy generation infrastructure capacity to ensure emergency preparedness, day-to-day business operations, and future needs.
- Develop a County Economic Development Corporation.
- Emphasize STEM education and training.
- Encourage Transit Village Development (i.e., Somerville, Bound Brook).
- Establish entrepreneur and economic investment funding through a revolving growth loan fund and venture capital linkages.
- Expand freight handling capacity.
- Focus on entrepreneurial start-ups through one central organization that targets specific industries, young workers, and potential entrepreneurs from the displaced workforce.
- Grow the “advanced manufacturing” industry through specific career training.
- Implement essential, high-quality, nonprofit support services through collaboration and cooperation.
- Produce transit across county lines (to Princeton, New Brunswick, Morristown, Flemington), to the regional airports, and direct train or express bus lines to New York City.
- Provide road improvements to Route 22, Route 206, and the Interstate 287/202-206 merge area.
- Revise the New Jersey Municipal Land Use laws to allow economic factors to become testimony during municipal land use board deliberations.
- Simplify the approval process, reduce fees, and create predictable timing for permitting at municipal, county, and state levels.
- Support and encourage “green” building as a business advantage.
- Strengthen Somerset County’s interconnections with colleges and universities, even in other counties (Rutgers, Princeton, NJIT), hospitals, biotechnology start-ups, and venture capital firms.

Session 3

A total of 27 participants attended the third business outreach session that was held on March 14, 2012 at 27 Warren Street in Somerville, New Jersey, in collaboration with the Somerset County Regional Partnership. John Maddocks of the Somerset County Business Partnership facilitated.

This third session focused on defining success, infrastructure improvements, and the renovation of existing, under-utilized properties. Targeted industries, employment training, and entrepreneurial support were also topics of discussion.

Key Issues and Opportunities

- 
- External economic drivers
 - Definition of success needs to be agreed on.
 - Policy makers must recognize the individuality of corporate user requirements and provide flexible zoning regulations.
 - Internal community and economic drivers need to be identified.
 - Quality-of-life items such as schools, amenities, and arts/ entertainment need to be linked to economic development.
 - Renovation of outdated industrial and commercial building stock should be encouraged and should include energy efficiency and location interconnections.
 - Water, road, and sewer infrastructure improvements should be targeted where other existing infrastructure exists and a need is identified.

Strategic Vision

- Target appropriate industries for Somerset County, such as computer and science-related industries, health science, energy engineering, and construction industries.
- Match employment and training resources with employer needs.
- Deliver resources to potential entrepreneurs, such as facilities and finances.

Session 4

A total of 26 participants attended the fourth business outreach visioning session held on April 19, 2012, at Somerset County Vocational & Technical School in Bridgewater, New Jersey. This visioning session specifically engaged the Board of Directors of the Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP). Brian Reilly of the Municipal Land Use Center facilitated.

Key Issues and Opportunities

As representatives of the Somerset County business community, the SCBP Board concurred with observations and vision statements made across the previous three outreach sessions and suggested five summarizing focus areas:

- Business resources
- Re-use of significant properties
- Transportation
- Regulations as a cost of doing business
- Workforce quality and availability

Survey

Between February 1 and April 30, 2012, an online survey was hosted on the SCBP's website, inviting businesses and community partners to participate in the visioning process. Invitations were circulated through the SCBP's weekly e-newsletter and at various briefings and presentations conducted throughout the community. The survey enabled participants to rank the issues of greatest importance and impact.

Highly Important Issues	Issues with Greatest Impact on Business	Industries Targeted for Expansion/Retention
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job Training• Higher Education• K-12 Education• Business Incentives and Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost of Doing Business• Labor/ Workforce Quality + Availability• Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advanced Manufacturing• Life Science• Renewable Energy• Transportation

NOTE: The ordering of bullets here is not meant to suggest prioritization.



Our Community's Business Plan

It is important to reflect on our community strengths: a low crime rate, exceptional public schools, abundant recreational and cultural offerings, diverse housing, superb healthcare, and committed public- and private-sector leadership. All of these strengths contribute to making Somerset County a great location to live, work, and recreate.

The Somerset County CEDS Plan of Action that follows is a “Community Business Plan” that recognizes the direct links between broad goals, specific objectives, and leveraged resources – both human and capital. In times of limited government resources, it is particularly incumbent on the business community to define priorities that have the greatest likelihood of positively impacting job creation and private-sector economic investment. This Business Plan does just that.

The Somerset County business community, in conjunction with other regional stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, gathered in facilitated sessions on four occasions in February, March, and April 2012 to identify priorities for job growth and private-sector economic investment opportunities in the region (discussed in the previous Vision section of this CEDS report). An online survey distributed in the business community augmented these facilitated sessions. These outreach efforts led to an understanding of what the business community in Somerset County, New Jersey, requires to be competitive.

Ultimately, it is intended that this CEDS report be used as a foundation to initiate and sustain job creation and private-sector economic investment programs and activities. The SCBP, serving as the economic development agency for Somerset County, is committed to developing initiatives consistent with the vision and business plan set forth here, and with state and local workforce investment and economic development strategies.

This CEDS plan of action for our regional economy identifies a deliberate “crosswalk” that links challenges and issues, leverages existing resources, and establishes measurable actions that ...



Collaboration among a variety of partners is critical to retaining existing businesses.

The Somerset County CEDS Governing Committee views its role as one of establishing priority policy direction. Recognizing the diversity of organizations and individuals potentially engaged in economic development strategy implementation, the Governing Committee believes it best to communicate a strategic focus for job creation and private-sector economic investment activities, while leaving implementation strategies to management and staff. This approach would not be possible if the Governing Committee did not first recognize the competencies of individuals and organizations in the CEDS implementation process. Somerset County is fortunate to have committed, engaged, and capable individuals to help carry out CEDS priorities.

Primary Determining Factors

Strategic policies have been identified based on three primary factors:

- 1 DOES THE POLICY HAVE SUPPORT CONSISTENT WITH THE RESULTS OF THE BUSINESS OUTREACH “VISIONING” EFFORT?**
- 2 DOES THE PRIORITY POLICY PROMOTE MORE THAN ONE OF THE FIVE PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS OR FOUR SECONDARY FOCUS AREAS APPROVED BY THE CEDS GOVERNING COMMITTEE AND THE SOMERSET COUNTY BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF DIRECTORS?**
- 3 IS THERE SUPPORT WITHIN THE STRATEGIC PROJECT INVENTORY FOR THE PRIORITY POLICY?**

Prioritization

While all nine priority focus areas are important, certain areas have a greater connection to our primary goals of job creation and private-sector economic investment.

The Somerset County CEDS Governing Committee spent significant time reviewing the individual comments received through the four business outreach visioning sessions and online surveys. This extensive review resulted in the adoption of nine priority focus areas (five primary, four secondary) expressed in the Visioning Sessions Economic Strategies (see Addendum 5).

The CEDS Governing Committee recognizes that while all nine focus areas described below are important, certain areas have a greater connection to our primary goals of job creation and private-sector economic investment. As the Somerset County economic development agency, it will be incumbent on the SCBP to lead the implementation of priority economic development projects, programs, and activities.

To ensure that an appropriate investment of time and resources is directed at our highest priorities, the volunteer leadership of the SCBP undertook a paired comparison prioritization analysis exercise on April 11, 2013. Paired comparison analysis is a commonly used methodology that helps to sort and order the importance of options relative to one another. In turn, this enables participants to choose the most important problems to solve or to set priorities where there are conflicting demands on fixed resources. Many agree that this is our situation as we move to implement this CEDS.

The paired comparison exercise resulted in the establishment of high, medium, and low priorities, as follows:



The SCBP recognizes that the implementation of strategic economic priorities needs to be a regional effort and has prioritized the need to focus on the delivery of business resources, the re-use of properties, and reducing the regulatory burden on business. This prioritization effort prompts two questions: (1) To what extent does the availability of external resources affect prioritization? and (2) To what extent will the SCBP be in a position to assist other organizations in implementing CEDS priorities?

A case-in-point that exemplifies the availability of external resources is tourism efforts. The SCBP has been designated as the Destination Marketing Organization for Somerset County. This designation has resulted in some \$100,000 made available annually for tourism marketing activities. Although these activities are ranked as a low priority in this CEDS, the availability of external funding may impact the overall allocation of organizational resources or result in new strategic approaches to tourism promotion.

Additionally, while agricultural development was ranked as a low priority, there has been significant public investment in the preservation of farmland, implying that some support of farming operations is in order. The SCBP acknowledges that the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board has a significant understanding of the needs of the farm community. The SCBP is pledged to work collaboratively with the County Agricultural Development Board, as appropriate.

Primary Focus Area #1: Business Resources (High Priority)***Analysis***

Business resources and services, such as hiring incentives, job training programs, financial assistance programs, entrepreneurial resources, help for displaced workers, and energy efficiency improvement programs should be leveraged to attract and retain industries and companies consistent with existing infrastructure, physical structures, and workforce assets. We also recognize the link between the development and delivery of business resources and the regulatory burden on business, the re-use of priority properties, and necessary enhancement of the workforce delivery.



The needs of individual businesses are unique and are driven by many factors, such as a new product line, a new customer, a change in strategic direction, an acquisition, technology improvements, a lease expiration, or a building sale, to name a few. Moreover, the delivery of resources to entrepreneurial and start-up businesses poses its own set of unique challenges. From an economic strategy perspective, delivering the right resources at the right time to the right business is critical. Efforts to retain businesses differ from efforts to attract new companies. A wide variety of federal, state, regional, and local players potentially participate in the delivery of these resources.

Serving the needs of existing companies is largely a business advocacy role. To a significant degree, existing businesses are already familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the region. Their employees use the local transportation network; they pay taxes; their children attend local schools; they may have engaged in the local permitting and approvals processes; and they may have a need to interact with state regulatory agencies.

Communicating the current economic conditions and future trends in Somerset County, attracting new appropriate businesses to the region, serving the needs of existing businesses, and targeting entrepreneurial companies represent significant opportunities for future economic growth. However, there is an apparent lack of data and information developed for and distributed to public policy makers to help them understand underlying economic drivers behind job creation and private-sector economic investment decisions.



From an agricultural ...

Over its history, Somerset County has transitioned from an agricultural economy to a manufacturing economy, and today, to a knowledge-based economy. Each of these transitions changed our communities – from the types of businesses that locate here to the type of workforce that is employed by those businesses.



to a manufacturing ...

Without sufficient data that speaks to the economic drivers of job creation and private-sector investments, public policy can only be reactionary to economic changes. One such trend that has become apparent in Somerset County is the restructuring of the pharmaceutical industry. Inasmuch as demographics and the restructuring of industries will determine our economic future, it is incumbent on us to understand these changes and be proactive in decision-making.



to a knowledge-based economy.

Somerset County has been fortunate to attract businesses to the region due to its location, infrastructure, quality of life, and formidable workforce. With relatively little effort, the county has benefitted from corporate relocations from New York City and Europe. Attracting new companies has become much more competitive, however, and the County presently has no formal effort to ensure it is growing targeted industries by capitalizing on and communicating the region's strengths.

One key challenge in the attraction of new business enterprises is rooted in the way in which demographic and statistical data is currently recorded and reported. Somerset County is part of a larger metropolitan reporting area for demographic and statistical information. The net result of this data aggregation is that the County is less "visible" to corporate site location consultants. Without location-specific data, it is possible this region is not considered as a geographic point for business relocations.

Goals and Objectives

- Communicate changes in demographics, economic conditions, and business drivers to assist local and regional policy makers in their decision-making processes with respect to land use, zoning, incentives, and resources.
- Engage in regional, national, and international business attraction marketing efforts, in partnership with Choose NJ, to improve Somerset County's competitiveness in attracting industries with a high likelihood of locating in the County.
- Create greater visibility for Somerset County among companies and site location consultants through the communication of industry-specific (or specialized) demographic and statistical data.
- Facilitate the delivery of business growth and expansion resources to targeted entrepreneurial businesses.

Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

The strategic projects, programs, and activities on the following page were specifically designed to implement the goals and objectives for Primary Focus Area #1: Business Resources, identified above. Addendum 5 includes an inventory of all strategic projects, programs, and activities as submitted by the community. Of this inventory, the following page contains items that are considered vital projects for Somerset County relative to business resources.

CEDS PLAN OF ACTION ACRONYMS

GRWIB = Greater Raritan Workforce Investment Board
NJBAC = New Jersey Business Action Center
NJBPU = New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
NJDCA = New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
NJDOL = New Jersey Department of Labor

NJDOT = New Jersey Department of Transportation
NJTPA = New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
RVCC = Raritan Valley Community College
SCBP = Somerset County Business Partnership
USEDA = United States Economic Development Administration
USHUD = United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

VITAL PROJECTS: BUSINESS RESOURCES		
PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING SOURCES
MARKET CONDITIONS REPORT	Commission a market conditions report for presentation to municipal governing bodies and planning boards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJTPA • SCBP • Somerset County
DEMOGRAPHIC, HOUSING, ECONOMIC REPORT	Prepare a population, housing, and economic report based on International Economic Development Council standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJTPA • SCBP • Somerset County
REGULATORY AND APPROVAL STREAMLINING	Assist the State of New Jersey in delivering on its promise to offer a clearer path and quicker answers on permitting and approval applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJBAC • NJDCA • SCBP
DATA CLEARINGHOUSE NETWORK	Develop a joint clearinghouse and network for demographic, economic, and other data and GIS map resources via a web-based portal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJ State Data Center • SCBP • Somerset County
ANNUAL TREND/DATA FORUM	Host an annual forum to communicate trends and new market data, and provide hands-on workshops on how to access and utilize data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCBP • Somerset County
TARGETED-INDUSTRIES TASK FORCES	Identify targeted industries and establish industry-specific taskforces to remove barriers to growth and retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJBAC • SCBP
REGULATORY MODIFICATIONS	Prepare a policy plan to identify top economic drivers and how local land use, zoning, and regulations can be modified to address changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCBP • Somerset County

Primary Focus Area #2: Re-use of Significant Properties (High Priority)

Analysis

The re-use of significant properties, office complexes, and industrial facilities should incentivize the growth of targeted industries and the needs of business for competitive, efficient, and functional facilities. This focus area connects with other priorities, including the delivery of business resources, reducing the regulatory burden, and enhancing workforce delivery. Vital projects identified below are consistent with New Jersey's *State Strategic Plan*, the Somerset County Planning Board's Priority Growth Investment Areas, and the *New Jersey Unified Workforce Investment Plan's* industry targets.

As a primarily suburban, commercial-office real estate market, Somerset County is challenged by changing demographics (increased diversity, aging population), the restructuring of critical industries – including pharmaceutical and healthcare – an aging commercial office building inventory, and a lack of incentives and tools to help revive suburban office occupancy. Further, the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, the New Jersey County Enabling Act, and the New Jersey Housing and Redevelopment Law dictate local and county roles and responsibilities with respect to land use, zoning, and redevelopment. While these provide a framework for land use development and the re-use of properties, they often constrain the efforts of municipalities to be flexible and responsive to changing market conditions.

An often-overlooked asset is the considerable inventory of light industrial and distribution space available in Somerset County that lends itself to advanced manufacturing uses. Vacant and under-occupied corporate campus developments are apparent in the region. A prioritized inventory of significant properties for re-use will aid the development and delivery of new and existing incentives and resources to facilitate productive occupancy.

With an aging commercial building inventory, the region faces efficiency of occupancy challenges. Often, the aging commercial building inventory requires significant capital investment to meet current technology and energy efficiency demands of occupants. Access by tenants to NJ Clean Energy Programs will help to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption in leased office and industrial spaces. In this approach, a localized vision for increasing the efficiency of existing properties, supported by benchmark data, will connect regional goals to state and federal priorities.

Goals and Objectives

- Identify and prioritize significant properties for re-use to formulate incentives and resources that facilitate productive occupancy.
- Seek out ways to increase access by tenants to NJ Clean Energy Programs to improve energy efficiency and to reduce energy consumption in leased office and industrial spaces.
- Facilitate the efficiency of existing properties, supported by benchmark data, to connect regional goals with state and federal priorities.
- Enhance the competitiveness of existing occupied and vacant commercial buildings by encouraging and incentivizing energy conservation and efficiency upgrades.

Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

The strategic projects, programs, and activities that follow were specifically designed to implement the goals and objectives of Primary Focus Area #2: Re-use of Significant Properties. Addendum 5 includes an inventory of all strategic projects, programs, and activities submitted by the community. Of this inventory, the following are considered vital projects for the re-use of significant properties in Somerset County.

VITAL PROJECTS: RE-USE OF SIGNIFICANT PROPERTIES		
PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING SOURCES
INCENTIVES PACKAGE	Propose a statewide incentives package targeted at job creation and private-sector investment in suburban office markets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJBAC • SCBP
STATE STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	Ensure that implementation of the <i>State Strategic Plan</i> benefits suburban communities through infrastructure investments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJBAC • Somerset County
TARGETED MARKETING PROGRAM	Deliver on the Somerset County Circulation Element objective to develop a marketing program to attract targeted businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCBP
REGULATORY REFORM	Advocate for state reform of local planning and land use to enable greater local-level flexibility to respond to changing market conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJBAC • NJDCA • SCBP
DATA CLEARINGHOUSE NETWORK	Develop a joint clearinghouse and network for demographic and economic data, and GIS map resources via a web-based portal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCBP
NJ CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAMS	Advocate for access to NJ Clean Energy Programs by tenants of commercial and industrial properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJBPU

Primary Focus Area #3: Reduce the Regulatory Burden (High Priority)

Analysis

The regulatory burden on business should be reduced through simplified, consistent, efficient, and customer-oriented permitting and approval processes. Reducing the regulatory burden on business connects directly to the delivery of business resources and the re-use of significant properties.

There has been much discussion about permitting, approvals, and other regulatory challenges that businesses face in our region. While New Jersey is traditionally a strong home-rule state, much of the regulatory burden on business exists at the state level.



The *New Jersey State Strategic Plan* seeks to address many of these regulatory issues by requiring state departments and agencies to prioritize plans that recognize job growth and private-sector economic investment.

The local regulatory environment related to job creation and private-sector economic investment is focused on land use approvals, construction code permitting and approvals, and construction code enforcement. All 21 municipalities in Somerset County operate slightly differently in planning and construction approvals. The

focus here is on strategies that result in efficient decision-making processes. Since each application for permission to build or renovate an employment location is unique, generalizations about individual agency performance are difficult and only serve to polarize.

A better understanding of demographic and economic drivers affecting our region is essential to sound and timely policy making. Combining a knowledge of economic drivers with appropriate management information systems will elevate local land use, planning, and zoning tools from a regulatory function to an incentives-based tool, potentially providing an expedited path for desired targeted investments.

Land use master plans, land use ordinances, and zoning ordinances are public policy documents that drive the decision-making processes of planning boards, zoning boards of adjustment, and in some cases, the local governing body. Local and county land use master plans, which ultimately drive land use and zoning ordinances, are required to examine housing, circulation, and the regional environment.

A productive approach focuses on outcomes rather than processes. In the context of land use and construction permitting approvals, the outcome is a decision rendered in an efficient and timely manner, whether positive or negative.

Data-driven public policy may present opportunities to establish priorities, such as addressing the specific needs of targeted industries, to grow employment in the region.

Municipalities and counties may adopt an economic element in this Master Plan. It is this economic element of land use master plans that so few of our communities have adopted. Economic elements provide valuable information on demographic and industry trends that can be used to formulate job creation and private-sector economic investment policies for incorporation into land use and zoning ordinances.

Pharmaceutical industry trends have left the region with under-utilized and vacant facilities that no longer fit the needs of that industry. Inasmuch as embedded land use and zoning reflect outdated needs, only changes in local policy will further the productive re-use of these properties.

A focus on predictability, efficiencies, and timeliness of permitting and approval processes will help all interested parties. Local boards will not be burdened with a seemingly endless stream of applications, and applicants will receive decisions – whether positive or negative – without incurring unnecessary and burdensome investments of time and finances. Investments in technology at the local and regional levels can provide management information systems to help evaluate performance and eliminate inconsistencies in the application and approval processes. These systems would also provide applicants with timely information about the status of submissions.

A proactive analysis of demographic and industry trends, and commensurate adoption of public policies consistent with analysis, will lead to a stronger environment for job creation and private-sector economic investment in our region. For example, a streamlined, timely, and skilled technical review of permit applications associated with alternative energy and energy conservation projects could result in cost savings for building occupants, promote growth in the energy industry, and make the region a more competitive location for businesses.

Goals and Objectives

- Advocate for investments in technology at the local and regional levels to provide management information systems that evaluate performance and help to eliminate inconsistencies in the application and approval processes.
- Focus on a regulatory environment that targets emerging, entrepreneurial, and agricultural industries to facilitate growth.
- Facilitate a better understanding of demographic and economic drivers, combined with appropriate management information systems, to promote an understanding of local land use, planning, and zoning tools as incentives for private-sector economic investment.



- Encourage and facilitate streamlined, timely, skilled technical reviews of permit applications associated with alternative energy and energy conservation projects to result in cost savings and growth of the energy industry.

Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

The following strategic projects, programs, and activities were specifically designed to implement the goals and objectives for Primary Focus Area #3: Reduce the Regulatory Burden. Addendum 5 includes an inventory of all strategic projects, programs, and activities submitted by the community. Of this inventory, the following are considered vital projects to reduce the regulatory burden in Somerset County.

VITAL PROJECTS: REDUCE THE REGULATORY BURDEN		
PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING SOURCES
ONLINE LAND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	Explore the design and deployment of a county and municipal online land development application and construction permit submission and tracking system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJDCA • Somerset County
ENCOURAGE BENCHMARKING ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS	Encourage the use of benchmarking accounting systems to measure energy savings following implementation of energy improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJBPU • Somerset County

Primary Focus Area #4: Workforce Delivery (Medium Priority)

Analysis

Workforce development traditionally focuses on the individual, while a workforce delivery model focuses on the needs of the employer.

It is important to distinguish between **workforce development** and **workforce delivery**. Workforce development traditionally focuses on broadening the education, training, and skill enhancement of the individual, while workforce delivery focuses on the needs of the employer. The ultimate goal is to keep worker skills relevant and targeted to the types of workers that meet the needs of employers in our region, with a particular focus on retaining and growing key industry clusters.

We recognize and support the significant and necessary role workforce development partners play in advancing employee capacity, inasmuch as workforce capacity and availability is key in corporate site location decision-making. While the region’s education and human services partners often deliver specific resources, such as unemployment benefits, job readiness, customized training, skills training certificates, and associate-level degrees, the delivery of employer-focused resources needs to be more collaborative.

The workforce development system in New Jersey is diverse and tends to focus on silos of services, as opposed to a comprehensive delivery of resources. Often, workforce development silos are dictated by grant funding and program revenue streams.



The local entity responsible for expressing employer needs, the GRWIB, is driven by the *New Jersey State Unified Workforce Investment Plan*. This Plan outlines statewide workforce investment strategies and details targeted industry sectors, a number of which are important in Somerset County. In fact, there are seven key industry clusters noted for New Jersey, four of which have a major presence in Somerset County (see discussion of key industry clusters in the Background section of this document). Further, the *New Jersey State Unified Workforce Investment Plan* connects with the *New Jersey State Strategic Plan* in an economic development context.

In August 2012, the United Way of Northern New Jersey released a report documenting a population identified as Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE).

The ALICE report states that “future income opportunities will be limited for ALICE households due to high underemployment, continued dominance of low-paying jobs, and the lack of demand for jobs requiring more education.”¹³

Workforce development partners have a significant interest in business expansion and attraction to further job creation in higher-wage occupations. With the growth of higher-wage occupations in the region, workforce development partners will be positioned to direct services to the underemployed, thereby growing personal income.

While RVCC in Somerset County offers a wide variety of degree and professional development offerings, opportunities for university-led scientific research and technology transfer have not been fully explored, even though there are 16 institutions of higher education within a 10-mile radius of Somerset County. Business-higher education partnerships help academic institutions tailor curriculum to better meet changing business conditions, while providing for the “re-tooling” of the existing workforce. Also, groups such as the NJ Life Sciences Talent Network provide targeted employment services to companies in the region. These connections need to be coordinated and exploited, so we can fully engage the region’s human resource assets.

¹³ ALICE, *Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed: A Study of Financial Hardship in New Jersey*, United Way of Northern New Jersey, August 2012.

Goals and Objectives

- Establish collaborative partnerships between institutions of higher education, vocational and technical training, and the business community to help transform the workforce development system into a workforce delivery system based on the future human resource needs of employers.
- Leverage the resources of the local and state workforce training and development systems to facilitate the delivery of qualified individuals to employers, while providing a focus on employment-based outcomes.
- Focus on the changing nature of employment, including entrepreneurship and 1099 income, to leverage the human resources assets in Somerset County.
- Facilitate connections among targeted industries, including emerging, entrepreneurial, and agricultural businesses, to provide unique employment growth opportunities.

Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

The following strategic projects, programs, and activities were specifically designed to implement the goals and objectives for Primary Focus Area #4: Workforce Delivery. Addendum 5 includes an inventory of all strategic projects, programs, and activities submitted by the community. Of this inventory, the following are considered vital projects related to workforce delivery in Somerset County.

VITAL PROJECTS: WORKFORCE DELIVERY		
PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING SOURCES
RESEARCH AND TECH TRANSFER	Focus collaborative efforts on research and technology transfer from higher education to business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry Trade Groups • RVCC • SCBP
FACILITATE COLLABORATION	Facilitate collaboration among workforce and economic development interests to insure a focus on business as the customer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRWIB • NJDOL • SCBP
INSTITUTIONALIZE SERVICES FOR DISPLACED WORKERS	Institutionalize the delivery of services for displaced workers, including resources on new paths to employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRWIB • SCBP
WORKFORCE PARTNER FOCUS ON TARGETED INDUSTRIES	Ensure that workforce partners are active players in the retention and attraction of new targeted industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRWIB • SCBP

Primary Focus Area #5: Transportation and Commuting (Medium Priority)

Transportation and commuting resources connect directly to the economic strategies of re-use of significant properties and workforce delivery. As a suburban region, there are many factors impacting safe, efficient, and affordable transportation in Somerset County. Perhaps more here than in any of the other economic strategies, it is critical that limited public resources are targeted to have the greatest positive economic impact.



The NJDOT, the NJTPA, the Somerset County Planning Board, and RideWise – Somerset County’s transportation management association – are all partners in transportation planning and implementation. The Somerset County Office of Transportation also performs planning and delivers transportation resources regionally.

Development patterns along road and rail networks make expansion of our existing infrastructure challenging. Impacts to surrounding properties, right-of-way acquisition, and regulatory burdens all constrain infrastructure investments that would improve level-of-service conditions along transportation corridors. Long-standing community opposition to major road improvements and expansions has constrained north-south travel in the region.

It is unlikely that Somerset County will ever achieve the densities of land use where traditional mass transportation options would become viable. The region must

consider alternative, efficient commuting options. Employment locations in Somerset County are dispersed, rather than being clustered in an urban core. Bus and rail systems effectively deliver commuters to destinations, but discharge points are generally a distance from the traveler’s final destination. This condition is particularly acute in the last mile of travel to places of employment. As one of only two “interior” New Jersey counties, the region is subject to a high amount of “pass-through” traffic. The needs of local commuters, as well as pass-through commuters and commercial truck traffic, create conflicts with local destination and origin travel.



Somerset County attracts companies that employ high-knowledge, high-wage earners to this suburban location. In most instances, commuting by a single-occupancy vehicle to those jobs is still viewed as more efficient by these workers, whether measured by an investment of time or of money for gasoline, insurance, etc.

Ultimately, alternative commuting options will need to be perceived as being more valuable to the individual than current transportation methods.

Present and historic land use decisions at the state and local levels have served as a planning framework for infrastructure investments. Many studies and plans for the improvement of certain corridors in the region have been undertaken, but for limited public resources, have not been implemented.

As a set of economic strategies, this Somerset County CEDS report is based on a fairly narrow set of defined outcomes as they relate to transportation and commuting. Employers desire that their employees have safe and efficient means of travel to and from work, regardless of how that occurs. This may mean road improvements need to be prioritized to retain and attract employers, as such private-sector economic investment metrics must be factored and prioritized into public-sector infrastructure investments.

Service industry workers, social services clients, and others who may have limited resources for personal transportation to employment and amenities represent ideal users of high-occupancy public transportation. The public and private sectors must find

new ways to collaboratively ensure that priority transportation investments are made in ways that benefit the public, while serving the needs of employers. This level of communication has not often occurred, leaving public bodies with limited or incomplete information when making transportation-related public policy decisions.



Goals and Objectives

- Use job creation and private-sector economic investment metrics to help prioritize the use of limited public resources in planning infrastructure investments.
- Define and target audiences with the greatest need for and highest likelihood of using alternative commuting resources to result in more efficient access between population and employment centers.
- Develop a new model for soliciting private-sector input on transportation plans and infrastructure investments to help ensure a job creation and economic investment focus.
- Advocate for stable federal and state funding resources to advance needed transportation projects. Available funding should match the improvement and maintenance needs of the transportation system.

Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

The following strategic projects, programs, and activities were specifically designed to implement the goals and objectives for Primary Focus Area #5: Transportation and Commuting. Addendum 5 includes an inventory of all strategic projects, programs, and activities submitted by the community. Of this inventory, the following are considered vital projects related to transportation and commuting in Somerset County.

VITAL PROJECTS: TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUTING		
PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING SOURCES
COMMUTER HUBS	Focus on establishing commuter hubs as a means to integrate highway corridor improvements, last-mile travel options, and expanded bus, rail, and shuttle services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJDOT • NJTPA • RideWise • Somerset County
INTEGRATE ECONOMIC STRATEGIES	Integrate economic strategies, including job creation and private-sector economic investment metrics, in all transportation planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJDOT • NJTPA • Somerset County
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION	Target publicly supported transportation options at audiences with the greatest need and highest likelihood of utilization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJTPA • NJ Transit • Somerset County
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS	Connect residents and visitors with cultural, educational, tourism, and healthcare facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJ Transit • RideWise • SCBP
COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION VISION	Create a comprehensive transportation vision for the region that focuses on the immediate needs of the business community and residents, and is responsive to the future demands of the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJTPA • SCBP • Somerset County
TECHNOLOGY-EFFICIENT COMMUTING	Utilize technology, including vehicle GPS/announcements/APC to improve commuting efficiency in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJTPA • RideWise
MULTI-MEDIA OUTREACH	Implement a multi-media approach to engaging the business community in discussions on employee commuting priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJTPA • RideWise
LOCAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING	Support local transportation planning and investments consistent with the Somerset County CEDS Strategic Project Inventory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJTPA • SCBP • Somerset County

The CEDS Governing Committee recognizes that economic development activity does not operate in isolation, but instead is impacted by many other factors. While all nine focus areas impact and influence economic health throughout the region, we believe the primary focus areas address priorities, which we have defined as job creation and private-sector economic investment. To that end, the CEDS Governing Committee recognizes the importance of several secondary focus areas, including hazard mitigation, tourism promotion, agri-business development, and quality of life.

Secondary Focus Area #6: Hazard Mitigation (Medium Priority)

NOTE: Recognizing that the October 29 and 30, 2012 impacts of Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy on the region had not yet been felt at the time our CEDS priority of Hazard Mitigation was discussed and deliberated, and that economic recovery from this natural disaster requires our attention, we added an analysis of storm impacts to the end of our CEDS Plan of Action. It is envisioned that a full review of Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy programs, projects, and activities will be undertaken as part of our first CEDS update.



Flood control tops the list of local and regional concerns that impact both businesses and residents in Somerset County. This is particularly acute along towns that border the Raritan River, including Bound Brook, Manville, Raritan, Somerville, and South Bound Brook. The Township of Green Brook and the Borough of North Plainfield, although not specifically along the Raritan River, also experience similar flooding effects after storms.

Flooding most acutely impacts central business districts, traditional downtowns, and centers of commerce. It is not unusual that during a major storm event, entire downtown districts may be wholly inaccessible, forcing temporary business closures and resulting in the loss of revenue and employment. Often, these temporary closures lead to permanent business closures, due to loss of inventory and other factors that create challenging conditions for businesses to re-open. Moreover, clean-up efforts after a major storm hamper a community's ability to attract customers.

Goals and Objectives

- Encourage investments in flood protection and planning measures to help mitigate negative impacts on commerce and economic activity.
- Collaborate in the development of comprehensive stormwater management and flood mitigation strategies to reduce property losses and risks to businesses and residents.

Example Projects, Programs, and Activities

The following are examples of projects related to hazard mitigation and disaster resiliency that are contained in the Strategic Project Inventory found at Addendum 5.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS: HAZARD MITIGATION		
PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING SOURCES
STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS	Manville and Main Street streetscape improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJEDA • USEDA • USHUD
FLOOD SHELTER IMPROVEMENTS	Manville flood shelter improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJEDA • USEDA • USHUD
MANVILLE, N. MAIN STREET UNDERPASS PUMP STATION	Manville and North Main Street Underpass Pump Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJEDA • USEDA • USHUD
MANVILLE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS FACILITY	Relocate the Manville Department of Public Works facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJEDA • USEDA • USHUD
US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS MILLSTONE RIVER STUDY	US Army Corps of Engineers Millstone River Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJEDA • US ARMY CORPS of ENGINEERS • USEDA • USHUD
BOUND BROOK INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS	Bound Brook infrastructure improvements at the NJ Transit rail station, including a commuter and central business district parking facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJEDA • USEDA • USHUD

Secondary Focus Area #7: Quality of Life (Medium Priority)

The quality of life in Somerset County is one of its greatest assets and contributes to a complete economy. Although the County lacks a formal “city,” downtown environments, such as those found in Manville, Raritan, Somerville, Bound Brook, South Bound Brook, and North Plainfield boroughs provide a diverse mix of shopping, retail, and residential environments.

Our County park system provides passive and active recreational opportunities, while the theater at Raritan Valley Community College features live performances. Unique assets, such as the privately held Duke Farms, are open to the public.

We recognize that our ability to provide public investment in quality-of-life resources is largely driven by our overall economic health. But for a vibrant economy that provides the public revenue necessary to support open space purchases, we would not have the Raritan River Greenway. Similarly, investments in environmental clean-up improves our quality of life and expands our economy.

Secondary Focus Area #8: Tourism (Low Priority)

Although tourism is a billion-dollar industry in Somerset County, tourism assets have traditionally been under-valued. Recently, the County implemented efforts to leverage tourism-related assets that include hotels and motels, a convention center, significant catering facilities, historic sites, extensive parks and recreation facilities (including the County Parks system and Duke Farms), and major annual events, such as the Tour of Somerville Bicycle Race and the Far Hill Race Meeting. The County is fortunate to be home to the US Golf Association and the US Equestrian Team. These assets, as well as historical features dating back to colonial times, present opportunities to increase tourism-related economic activity in the region.

Goals and Objectives

- Deploy resources necessary to manage attendance and visitation to high-attendance events, thus reducing community road and highway impacts.
- Implement targeted tourism promotional activities to leverage local hospitality industry assets and to increase regional economic activity.

Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

The following are examples of projects related to tourism promotion that are contained in the Strategic Project Inventory found at Addendum 5.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS: TOURISM		
PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING SOURCES
HISTORIC TOWNS NETWORK	Create a Historic Towns of Somerset/Main Street Network to publicize and market attractions and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Street New Jersey • New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism • SCBP
EQUINE CONNECTIONS	Enhance equine industry connections with New Jersey’s tourism industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism • New Jersey Travel Industry Association
TV AND TOURISM	Expand the Somerset County CEDS by examining tourism-related strategies and actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism • USEDA

**Secondary Focus Area #9: Agriculture Development
(Low Priority)**

Fluctuating weather and commodity market challenges, aging farm operators, relatively low operating revenues, and smaller-scale farm operations present challenges across Somerset County.

Goals and Objectives

- Enhance agri-tourism business opportunities for preserved farms to help ensure long-term use of these properties consistent with public investment.
- Deploy technologies and create greater connections with educational institutions to enhance business operations on preserved farms to help ensure long-term use of these properties consistent with public investment.
- Adopt a broader, flexible regulatory view of farms as unique business enterprises that contribute to increased commercial activity.

Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

The following are examples of projects related to agriculture development that are contained in the Strategic Project Inventory found at Addendum 5.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS: AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT		
PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING SOURCES
CONNECT FARMERS WITH CONSUMERS	Connect farmers with their consumers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Jersey Department of Agriculture • Somerset County Agriculture Development Board
FARM MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE	Integrate farm management software into agricultural operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Jersey Department of Agriculture • Somerset County Agriculture Development Board
SOMERSET COUNTY AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD WEBINAR SERIES	Offer webinar series for farmers and municipal officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Jersey Department of Agriculture • Somerset County Agriculture Development Board

Timeline for Action



As noted among the strategic programs, projects, and activities above, the Somerset County CEDS Governing Committee is responsible for establishing priority policies to further job creation and private-sector economic investment initiatives. The CEDS Governing Committee believes that collaboration among partners will be the key to successful strategy implementation. In this context, the CEDS Governing Committee defines collaboration as “shared planning and decision making.” This requires partner organizations to formulate their individual programs, projects, and activities (shared planning), and agree on areas of mutual interest and responsibility (shared decision making).

Given the relationship between the CEDS Governing Committee and the SCBP Board of Directors, there will be an immediate focus on the SCBP’s 2013 program of work. Throughout 2013, the CEDS Governing Committee will communicate the priority policies outlined in this CEDS report to partner organizations, and pledges to discuss collaborative approaches for implementation of strategies to achieve CEDS priorities.

Conclusion

Political dynamics, economic conditions, the availability of public funding, and overall public policy significantly influence opportunities for the implementation of strategic economic development programs, projects, and activities. In addition to instituting job creation and private-sector economic investment metrics, the SCBP will evaluate its performance, based on the amount of federal and state funding secured to implement priority activities. Most pressing at the time of publication of this CEDS report are disaster resiliency investments to mitigate future impacts from natural disasters.

The SCBP has prioritized those focus areas most important to the business community; the organization will implement an annual program of work for economic development consistent with these priorities. The organization, through publication of this CEDS report, is positioned to collaboratively support implementation of other priorities spearheaded by partner organizations.

The SCBP, representing the economic interests in the region, will continually assess the economic and political environments in which it operates, and evaluate our performance in achieving the outlined goals and objectives, many of which can take months or years to fully complete.

A Note on Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy

Somerset County, New Jersey, had nearly completed its CEDS effort when, beginning on October 29, 2013, Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy made landfall near Atlantic City, New Jersey. The resulting economic impacts of this storm, which was followed a week later by a Nor’Easter, requires our further attention.



Somerset County is no stranger to economic recovery efforts necessitated by natural disasters, with our first successful economic-specific recovery effort dating back to Hurricane Floyd in 1999. The impacts from Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy were unlike those previously experienced in Somerset County. Previous natural disasters had been almost entirely severe storm flooding events. By contrast, Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy impacts in Somerset County were almost entirely attributable to electric utility distribution system disruptions.

Our existing CEDS priority of Hazard Mitigation recognizes our experience in addressing unmet

economic recovery needs from storm flooding events. Specifically, we have experience with disaster resiliency investments in the relocation of facilities out of floodplains, strategic installations of flood water pump stations, the flood-proofing of strategic facilities, and long-term efforts in flood control management along the Raritan and Millstone Rivers. While we must continue to plan for and invest in flood-related mitigation and resiliency efforts, a new view of our infrastructure that includes the resiliency of critical communications and electric distribution systems is an economic development imperative.

Somerset County has begun to integrate its Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy experience in long-term economic and business recovery strategies. Recognizing that a more in-depth analysis of Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy impacts is required in the context of our economic strategies, the SCBP, as project manager for this CEDS effort, has reviewed and analyzed opportunities contained in the January 29, 2013 federal Disaster Relief Appropriations Act. Additionally, the project team has reviewed the March 27, 2013 New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Action Plan.

Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy affected a large geographic region. As such, the County will be competing with others for limited federal economic recovery resources. There are certain steps we can take to improve the likelihood of our success in securing assistance to mitigate the future potential impacts of natural disasters, and to address the long-term needs of our business community. We will take these initial steps with our first update to this CEDS report, beginning in June 2013.

There are certain steps we can take to improve the likelihood of our success in securing assistance to mitigate the future potential impacts of natural disasters, and to address the long-term needs of our business community.

**2014 Somerset County
Board of Chosen Freeholders**

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Patrick Scaglione, Alternate to Freeholder
Adam Slutsky, Alternate to County Engineer
Robert P. Bzik, AICP/PP, Director of Planning
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