



THE
REGIONAL
CENTER

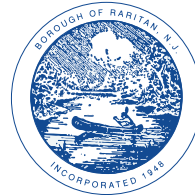
BRIDGEWATER ♦ RARITAN ♦ SOMERVILLE

A partnership for a better tomorrow

IN SOMERSET COUNTY, NJ

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Each year, the Regional Center Partnership (RCP) publishes an Annual Report summarizing the Regional Center member's accomplishments and major initiatives for the four interrelated and complementary themes guiding the Regional Center Strategic Plan. The annual report highlights key initiatives and events that contribute to making the Regional Center a vibrant place of thriving and interconnected communities in the heart of Somerset County.



ABOUT REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP

The **Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County, Inc. (RCP)**, is a non-profit public/private partnership that brings together the vision and planning of three communities, the County, various non-profit agencies, and the private sector to collaboratively work together to guide development and investment.

Members

Somerset County Board of County Commissioners

Somerset County Planning Board

Bridgewater Township

Raritan Borough

Somerville Borough

Somerset County Business Partnership

Somerset County Park Commission

At-large Private/Institutional Sector Representatives

Bridgewater Commons

Dameo Trucking, Inc.

RWJBarnabas Health

Johnson & Johnson Engineering & Property Services



33,000
Population



Distance to Major Cities
New York City (1 hour)
Philadelphia (1.5 hour)



\$100,000
Median Household Income



\$250,000
Median Home Sale Price



12+ Major Employers
45,379 Labor-force



11 Historic Sites (National Register)
2 Public Libraries



Transportation
1 Interstate Highway
4 US & State Highways
3 Train Stations
12 Bus Lines & Shuttles



Retail & Restaurants
1 Shopping Mall
6 Shopping Centers
3 Downtown & Main Street Districts
20+ Restaurant Cuisines



Health & Wellness
4 Health & Wellness Centers
1 Hospital
1 Urgent Care



Parks & Recreation
6 County Parks
26 Municipal Parks
5+ Miles Paved Bike/Ped Pathways

MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

THE FOUR MAJOR THEMES

The Regional Center Strategic Plan was adopted in 2018 to inform and guide the Regional Center Partnership where to focus its resources to implement top priority projects. This annual report is organized around the four major themes of that plan.



Health & Wellness

Research indicates that Americans suffer from obesity, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions that can be influenced by the way we live. These trends are compelling planners to increasingly focus on the relationship between public health and urban planning. The Regional Center promotes healthier lifestyles through low-cost strategies that are relatively easy to implement and that help capitalize on existing health and wellness related assets and resources within the region.



Resiliency

The Resiliency initiative is designed to enhance municipal and county coordination in pre-disaster preparedness and post-disaster response while encouraging business continuity planning. Key recommendations include encouraging multi-jurisdictional coordination efforts to prepare contingency plans for major incidents or disasters and coordinating with Somerset County's Hazard Mitigation Plan.



Embracing the Raritan River

A keystone and gem of the Regional Center is the Raritan River. Embracing the Raritan River as a theme embodies so much of what characterizes the Regional Center in terms of quality-of-life amenities and the opportunities to create vibrancy and interconnectedness. This strategic initiative includes increasing access to the Raritan River Greenway to expand opportunities for physical mobility and recreation by making connections between the Raritan River and nearby downtowns and marketing the river as a tourism amenity.



Job Growth & Private Sector Investment

The Economic Development theme embraces interrelated focus areas that impact the Regional Center's economic vitality, including Redevelopment, Economic Development, and Community Design; Train Station Areas; Neighborhoods and Housing; Circulation; Recreation, Open Space and Greenways; and Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources.

01

Members put on a variety of community and health focused events, with some returning after a COVID related hiatus.



Members made improvements to health related personnel and infrastructure in their communities.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Members provided opportunities for residents to learn about and address health concerns.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Member Achievements

- Bridgewater hosted a Community Day with the JCC and a Founders Day.
- Bridgewater moved forward on the development of a free to the public Outdoor Fitness Court, part of the *2022 National Fitness Campaign*.
- After a two-year hiatus, Somerville brought back its cycling race, *Tour of Somerville*. RideWise conducted outreach at the event.
- Somerville Borough hosted its annual St Patrick's Parade that honored healthcare heroes from RWJUH Somerset.
- Somerville worked with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in South Bound Brook to raise support for the refugees from Poland and Ukraine.
- Somerville broke ground on its new EMS building, opening in early 2024.
- Somerville created a new uniformed non-law enforcement position called "*Town Ambassador*" to walks the streets, interact with people, and help promote the downtown.
- Somerville added five new police officers, assigning 1-2 as foot patrols to be present during major public events.
- RWJBarnabas Health and the State of New Jersey opened a vaccination megasite in the vacant Lord & Taylor store at Bridgewater Commons Mall.
- RideWise partnered with the *Community Police Alliance* to put on a Bicycle Rodeo and helmet drive in Bridgewater.
- RideWise surveyed and identified locations for new bike racks in Raritan.
- RideWise hosted a first responders event in Hillsborough.



02

The Somerset County Planning Board adopted a new Preservation Plan that includes preservation strategies for climate change mitigation.



RESILIENCY

Several members made progress towards infrastructure improvements aimed at resiliency.

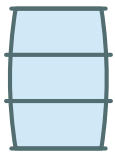
The Raritan River Barrel Rebate Program provided rebates to Somerset County residents, adding a total of 6 rain barrels with a 122 barrel gallon capacity.

RESILIENCY

Member Achievements

- The Somerset County Planning Board adopted a new Preservation Plan that includes preservation strategies for climate change mitigation.
- Bridgewater prepared a drainage improvement plan to help deal with drainage issues that became apparent during Hurricane Ida in 2021.
- Raritan focused on infrastructure projects, including \$600,000 in repairs to the sanitary sewer system and \$600,000 in construction to transportation infrastructure.
- The public referendum passed in Somerville to enable the sale of the public sewer system to a private entity, relieving the Borough of maintenance expenses and bringing funds back to the Borough.
- RideWise constructed a parklet for *Earth Day* in Somerville in front of Starbucks.

Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program



Rain Barrel Count

6 Added in 2022
122 Added Since 2011



Rain Barrel Capacity

326 Gallons Added in 2022
6,678 Gallons Added Since 2011

What is a rain barrel?

A rain barrel collects and stores rainwater from a roof. It prevents the rainwater from becoming stormwater runoff that picks up pollutants and carries them into storm drains, streets, or streams. Rain barrels allow you to store and conserve water while at the same time, help to keep our rivers and reservoirs clean.

Why are the NJ Water Supply Authority and the Regional Center Partnership offering rebates on rain barrels?

Because there are so many rooftops, driveways, and roads in Somerville, Bridgewater and Raritan, this area is a concern for water quality. Programs here can make a difference in reducing pollution and easing stream erosion caused by heavy stormwater. The Regional Center Partnership administers the Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program with a grant funded by the NJ Water Supply Authority.



03

Progress was made in improving connectivity to Duke Island Park and Duke Farms.



EMBRACING THE RARITAN RIVER

Actions were taken to protect the Raritan River from flooding .

Members continued to provide maintenance and make improvements to the Raritan River Greenway.

EMBRACING THE RARITAN RIVER

Member Achievements

- Somerset County cleaned the old gold driving range and progress was made with a connection over Route 206 from Somerville to Raritan to ultimately connect to Duke Island Park/Duke Farms.
- Raritan received an NJ DOT TAP Grant, which is being used to help increase connectivity between transit and Duke Farms.
- Somerville secured approximately \$2.5 million to remediate and restore Chambres Park on Southside Avenue, which is adjacent to the Peters Brook Greenway that leads to the Raritan River.
- Somerset County Park Commission paved the greenway trail at Duke Island Park.
- Somerset County Park Commission repaired the Canal path.

Raritan River Greenway

One of the signature amenities of the Regional Center and Somerset County is the Raritan River Greenway, a linear system of interconnected pathways extending along the Raritan River through central Somerset County including Bridgewater, Raritan and Somerville. The Raritan River Greenway includes a multi-use pathway providing opportunities for walking, biking, jogging, sightseeing and access to fishing sites. The Raritan River Greenway extends through Duke Island Park, connects with the Peters Brook Greenway in Bridgewater and Somerville, and now extends from the Nevius Street pedestrian bridge in Raritan to connect with the North Gate entrance to Duke Farms in Hillsborough. The Raritan River Greenway is further discussed in the Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan under “Embracing the Raritan River.”



04

JOB GROWTH & PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT



Members focused on tourism by putting on community events, advertising special attractions, and adopting plans that highlighted various types of tourism.

Business attraction/retention became a priority with the launch of "Why Somerset," a major planning and marketing campaign focused on job retention and attracting businesses.

Members continued to celebrate existing businesses with restaurant week events and new businesses with ribbon cutting events.

Members saw a large variety of redevelopment projects be approved and break ground in their communities.

JOB GROWTH & PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

Member Achievements

- The Somerset County Board of County Commissioners debuted the harvest edition of “*Sip & See Somerset*” focusing on the county’s historic sites, Weekend Journey to the Past, and the county’s best leaf-peeping destinations. The Somerset County Business Partnership collaborated on the “Sip and See Somerset” campaign to increase tourism to Somerset County.
- The Somerset County Planning Board adopted a new Preservation Plan, which includes a plan for Farmland, Open Space, and Historic Preservation. The plan includes topics on Heritage Tourism, Eco Tourism, and Agri-Tourism.
- Bridgewater moved forward several projects in line with the Bridgewater Township Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, including opening up Camp Cromwell to the public.
- Bridgewater’s road improvement program identified and addressed 62 roads in need of improvement, and approved an \$8 Million bond ordinance.
- Bridgewater announced plans for “*Hearts of Bridgewater*,” a public art project funded by a Regional Center Creative Placemaking Grant.
- Bridgewater held a ribbon cutting for the newly renovated innovation center at Nouryon Chemicals on Finderne Avenue.
- *Gloria Jean’s Coffees* opened up in Bridgewater Commons, *Fortunoff Backyard Store* opened in the Somerset Shopping Center, and *Bridgewater Cafe* opened in Bridgewater.
- *Big Pink BBQ*, a food truck in Bridgewater, was featured on the Food Network show, *Diners, Drive-ins & Dives*.
- Bridgewater was again named one of the best places to live in New Jersey according to [Niche.com](https://www.niche.com).
- The Raritan Economic Development Committee proposed a multi faceted plan to revitalize the Borough’s business district using the concepts from the *Sustainable Economic Development Plan*.
- Raritan saw three redevelopment projects implemented and \$1M in capital improvement projects.
- Raritan designated the Raritan Mall as Area in Need of Redevelopment in their efforts to bring new economic life to the Mall.
- Improvements were made to the strip mall next to the Raritan Mall.
- The Raritan Planning Board has approved a 2,476 sq. ft. medical marijuana



JOB GROWTH & PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

Member Achievements (Continued)

- dispensary on Route 202.
- *Edgewood Raritan* has been approved to convert the former Raritan Intermediate School into 14 one bedroom apartments that will include affordable units.
- Raritan Borough Council approved a WWII memorial exhibit planned for the Municipal Building.
- Raritan hosted community events, including Restaurant Week and its 3rd Annual Discovering Raritan.
- *Ambee Coffee* opened in Raritan.
- *DeLucia's Brick Oven Pizza* celebrated over 100 years in Raritan and was heralded as one of the best pizzerias in New Jersey.
- Bridgewater Raritan High School (BRHS) has been ranked as the 80th top high school in the state according to the latest U.S. News & World report.
- The redevelopment project at the southeast corner of East Main and South Bridge Streets in Somerville moved from the concept stage to a formal Planning Board proposal.
- The Planning Board in Somerville approved the *Oak Somerville* project on East Main and South Bridge Streets, bringing two multi-story mixed use buildings offering magnificent views. *Thee Oaks Steakhouse* is planned to open summer of 2023.
- The Somerville Planning Board approved construction of 58 apartments at 2337 South Bridge Street.
- Demolition was completed on the site of the former Baker & Taylor book distribution warehouse on Kirby Avenue in Somerville in preparation for the construction of eight two-story buildings on the site with 174 apartments.
- Somerville broke ground on their new emergency services complex at the corner of Gaston Avenue and Cliff Street, scheduled for completion in 2024.
- Somerville approved a \$5 million bond to create a new road that improves access to Highway 206 North to coincide with the train station development.
- Somerville hosted community events, including Thursday Night movies, street fair, Friday night car show, Summer Stage, Somerville Street Fair, Classic Cruisers, Memorial Day Bike Race, and Legal Run Around for Law Foundation.
- The Downtown Somerville Alliance announced the expansion of the weekly live entertainment with "*Street Sound Sundays*."



JOB GROWTH & PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

Member Achievements (Continued)

- *Even More Epic* ice cream shop and bakery opened in Somerville.
- Downtown NJ recognized Somerville and the Downtown Somerville Alliance for the educational walk-through exhibits that were featured on the Division Street pedestrian mall.
- RWJUH Somerset proposed an expansion that included a two story, 76,000 square foot expansion above the emergency room building.
- Somerset County's Destination Marketing Organization received funding from the New Jersey Emergency Rental Assistance Program to enhance its ability to advertise special attractions in the Regional Center.
- The Somerset County Business Partnership launched a new division and [website](#) called "*Why Somerset*" geared towards the attraction and retention of businesses in Somerset County. This is a major planning and advertising campaign focusing on job retention and attracting businesses.
- The Somerset County Film Commission announced launched a [website](#) to promote the various locations for film, television, and digital productions.
- Somerset County Park Commission returned to its regular programming, including July 4th fireworks, the Rose Festival, 4H fair, summer concert series, and activities at the Environmental Education Center.
- NJ Department of Transportation is planning safety improvements to the intersection of East Main, Warren, Bridge, and Grove Streets in Somerville.
- Somerset County was featured in "Travel & Leisure" magazine among the "*10 Best Cheap Vacations in the U.S.*" The magazine highlighted the abundance of parks, preserves, and gardens in addition to fresh seasonal produce and locally crafted beers.





— THE —
**REGIONAL
CENTER**

BRIDGEWATER ♦ RARITAN ♦ SOMERVILLE

A partnership for a better tomorrow

IN SOMERSET COUNTY, NJ

THE REGIONAL CENTER
BRIDGEWATER, RARITAN, SOMERVILLE • SOMERSET COUNTY, NJ

Somerset County Planning Board
PO Box 3000, Somerville, NJ 08876

Phone 908-231-7021

www.rcpsomersetnj.org