



THE REGIONAL CENTER

BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

A partnership for a better today & tomorrow
IN SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

REGIONAL CENTER LAUNCHES NEW & MORE INFORMATIVE WEB SITE

www.regionalcenterpartnership.org

The continuing effort to communicate the mission, the agenda, and the accomplishments of the Somerset County Regional Center has resulted in the development of a new and more user-friendly web site.

The easily navigated site will direct visitors to a full compliment of information on the formation, purpose, and history of the Regional Center; completed projects; updates on current initiatives; and details on future plans..

Key components of the site are:

- A historical summary that provides a complete background on the development of the Regional Center
- Geographical boundaries and demographic data
- Benefits of the Regional Center designation
- Visioning & Strategic Planning documents
- Municipal Challenge Grant program accomplishments
- Major Project descriptions
- Member organizations
- Board Member list
- Meeting dates & location
- Newsletter archive
- News updates
- Contact Information

PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE & GREENWAY SYSTEMS CONNECTION PLAN

Utilizing a \$176,000 grant from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and \$44,000 in in-kind services from Somerset County, the Regional Center has undertaken a study to develop a comprehensive improvement plan to enhance connectivity through bicycling, walking, and greenways trails in the three communities. The study will focus on creating a strategic plan that will improve the pedestrian and bicycle safety network within the Regional Center.

The Plan will focus on improving connectivity between existing transit services and neighborhoods while enhancing access to community facilities with emphasis on routes to schools. The Plan will improve overall mobility and health in the Regional Center by reducing traffic congestion through increased use of non-motorized transportation.

Through a series of public meetings, county representatives are gathering information from the public to help define trail priorities and draft concept plans for the various projects. A consultant has been contracted to address mobility issues and project planning. Stakeholders in each of the three communities will continue to be an integral part of the planning process.

ROUTE 22 UPDATE

SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Construction is tentatively scheduled for FY2010 according to the 2008 – 2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP allocated for FY 2009 \$750,000 for design work and \$250,000 for right-of-way acquisition and for FY 2010 \$5,888,000 for construction.

LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Somerset County is expected to receive an agreement from The New Jersey Department of Transportation that will allow the County to assume control of the long-term improvements planned for Route 22 through the Regional Center. This agreement will trigger a series of public meetings to inform residents and business people of the overall plan and elicit input from the public.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

Wednesday, November 12-5:00 P.M.

*All meetings are held at the County
Administration Building, 20 Grove Street,
Somerville in the Engineering Conference Room
on the 2nd floor.*

REGIONAL CENTER INITIATES PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership has initiated a marketing campaign that will both inform the public about the goals and accomplishments of the Regional Center and communicate the advantages to the municipal

done in the past. In addition, the three communities have been asked to include the Regional Center logo on all newly printed materials.

A Regional Center history is available on the web site at www.regionalcenterpartnership.org, providing a detailed overview of the Regional Center. This document will also be available in libraries and municipal offices.

On Wednesday, October 29, 2008, the Regional Center will hold a “Business Summit” as part of the Somerset County Business Partnership “Spotlight on Somerset” week-long series of events. (Details may be found on page 3.)

The newly designed web site will serve as the key resource for information on the Regional Center. With regular updates focusing on projects and accomplishments, the site will also provide details of the activities of the Partnership through the posting of meeting minutes and schedules.

SOMERVILLE REDEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Somerville Borough is aggressively pursuing four designated redevelopment areas, all with adopted redevelopment plans and currently in various stages of redevelopment.

The East End Redevelopment, an area roughly bounded by South Bridge Street, Veterans Memorial Drive, Park Avenue and Mechanic Street, has recently seen the completion and occupation of a third office building that is part of the large office complex along East Main Street, Warren Street, Veterans Memorial Drive.

Following a series of public participation workshops, the Borough Council recently adopted a Redevelopment Plan for the Kirby Avenue Area which includes the former Baker & Taylor warehouse and a number of properties bounded by Kirby Avenue, Fairview Avenue, Loeser Avenue, South Adamsville Road and the NJTRANSIT railway tracks. A Request For Proposal from developers will be issued in the upcoming months.

The former Somerville Landfill area is the largest single redevelopment area in the region and includes the Somerville Rail station, adjacent properties, and the landfill proper. Somerville is currently assessing a response to a Request for Proposals issued in October of 2007. When this evaluation is complete, decisions will be made as to the next steps and timing for this project.


The Borough is currently evaluating the developer’s revised proposal for the Landmark/West End redevelopment area along West Main.

THAT WHICH IS OFTEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED...
IS GENERALLY THE RESULT OF A SIGNIFICANT EFFORT...
ON THE PART OF MANY, WORKING TOGETHER AS A UNIT.


SOMERSET COUNTY REGIONAL CENTER
BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

A public-private partnership among Bridgewater, Raritan, Somerville, Somerset County government, businesses, & residents, acting as a cooperative entity to address quality of life issues within the region.


Among the Wealth of Regional Center Assisted Projects...




Mountain Avenue Pedestrian Overpass



Grove Street Overpass Sidewalks




Torpey Athletic Complex



Peters Brook Greenway

- Regional Center Route 22 Sustainable Corridor Plan
- Improvements to Finderne Avenue/Route 28 & Finderne Avenue/East Main Street Intersections
- Downtown Revitalization Projects Funded Through Regional Center Challenge Grant Program
- Somerset Street Streetscape Linkage Project
- Finderne Neighborhood Plan
- Regional Center Traffic Calming Study
- Regional Center Route 28 Strategic Needs Study
- Bus Shelter Enhancements
- Somerville Landfill Public Input Initiative
- Retail Design Standards
- Regional Center Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan



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governments, businesses, and residents of Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville. The program is designed to make the Regional Center Partnership an integral part of the “first-call” resource for projects to improve the future and enhance the quality of life in Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville.

To assist in communicating the message, the “Courier News Cares” program has been running a series of print ads focusing on a definition of the Regional Center and a presentation of the organization’s accomplishments and future projects.

A comprehensive brochure providing an overview of Regional Center activities will be available throughout the three communities and newsletters will continue to be produced, though with wider distribution than has been

REGIONAL CENTER SUMMIT - OCTOBER 29, 2008

The first Regional Center Summit, "Economic, Environmental & Infrastructure Advantages," will be held on Wednesday, October 29, 2008 from 8:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M. at the Somerville Elks, 375 Union Avenue in Bridgewater.

The Summit will serve as an educational forum addressing the advantages of the Regional Center designation to businesses and residents of Raritan, Somerville, and a portion of Bridgewater. The goal is to create an awareness of the available benefits in New Jersey's first intermunicipal Regional Center; to engage state level representatives in support of the Regional Center; to review the accomplishments of the Regional Center Partnership; to present the Regional Center vision for the future; and to elicit recommendations for future Regional Center initiatives.

Everyone working, living, and serving in an official capacity with the Regional Center will be encouraged to attend and participate in the various panel discussions, breakout sessions, and question/answer sessions with the key presenters.

Among the topics to be addressed are:

- a) Business retention & expansion,
- b) Green Design,
- c) Retail support initiatives,
- d) Parking issues,
- e) Open space & greenways,
- f) Transportation issues (Route 22, Route 202, etc.), linkages, etc.
- g) Review of the Regional Center Strategic Master Plan

Presenters scheduled to be invited to participate include:

Chair of the State Planning Commission
Representative from the Somerset County Planning Division
Representative from State Department of Transportation
Green Design expert
Representative from NJ Retail Merchants Association
Representative from Somerset County Park Commission
Economic Development professional

Complete details of the Summit will be forthcoming.

RARITAN RIVER GREENWAY PLAN UPDATE

Ray Brown, Secretary/Director of the Somerset County Park Commission provided an overview of the progress being made on the Raritan River Greenway Plan. The Greenway, which will ultimately serve as an east/west walking and biking path from one end of the county to the other, is slowly but surely growing through acquisitions by the Open Space Trust Fund.

Plans for the path system between Raritan Borough and Duke Island Park along the former Raritan Water Power Canal and Orlando Drive are moving forward with the recent opening of the canal walk along Old York Road. The plans for the Orlando Drive Greenway are in development and will provide linkages to the Torpey Athletic

Complex. Also, the recent acquisition by the Park Commission of the former Manville Landfill will add another linkage along the south side of the Raritan River.

PETERS BROOK BIKE PATH PROJECT

John Kendzulak, Project Manager for the Peters Brook Bike Path Project, presented an overview of the plans for the pedestrian overpass proposed for Route 202/206 just north of the Somerville Circle. The new structure will connect the Peters Brook Greenway with Clark's Woods and the Somerset Shopping Center.

The overpass will be an integral part of the greenway that will connect the Raritan River Greenway with Bridgewater-Raritan High School and the Bridgewater Commons.

REGIONAL CENTER SETS ANNUAL WORK PROGRAM

The Regional Center Partnership annually adopts a Work Plan to accompany the budget. Among the items under consideration are:

- Attainment of State Plan Endorsement of Strategic Master Plan
- Economic Development Initiatives
- Recreation/Open Space Planning
- Route 22 Corridor Improvement Support
- Shared Services/Facilities Studies
- Workshops/Seminars as needed
- Municipal Challenge Grant funding

Among the issues addressed in the Strategic Master Plan that have received priority attention are:

- Development of a park in proximity to Raritan's Basilone Statue. Working with the Somerset County Park Commission, the Borough will investigate methods of enhancing the buffer around the statue at the western end of Somerset Street;
- With the help of the Somerset County Business Partnership Shared Services Coordinating Council, Somerville and Raritan will investigate the possibility of a shared Public Works garage. The Partnership will pursue a SHARE Grant from the state to partially fund the project;
- To help satisfy the growing need for public-use ball fields in the Regional Center, a feasibility study will be commissioned to determine the potential for the development of a multi-purpose athletic field contemplated for the grounds of Somerset County Vocational and Technical Schools in Bridgewater.



Photo courtesy of Somerset County Park Commission

NEWS FROM THE REGIONAL CENTER MUNICIPALITIES

SOMERVILLE, NJ - Somerville's Special Improvement District was one of six municipalities statewide to receive designation as a "New Jersey Main Street Community." Main Street New Jersey provides historic downtowns with technical assistance and training to help improve the economy, appearance, and image of their central business districts through the organization of local citizens and resources.

SOMERVILLE, NJ - The recently released Council on Affordable Housing requirements for all New Jersey communities are of significant concern to the governments of the three Regional Center communities. The new regulations dramatically increase the number of low and moderate income units required for each community. The Regional Center Partnership will work with the communities and various county and state agencies to address the new standards.

BRIDGEWATER, NJ - The Regional Center Partnership heard a preliminary presentation on the proposed FINDERNE Neighborhood Plan. The Plan will address aesthetic improvements in both the residential and commercial sectors of the neighborhood. Initial public input has drawn attention to the need to improve the visual features of the East Main Street/Finderne Avenue intersection and explore the potential for relocating utilities underground.

SOMERVILLE, NJ - The Borough of Somerville received the New Jersey Future Smart Growth award for the extensive public visioning process for the Landfill Redevelopment Project.

BRIDGEWATER, NJ - The Regional Center Partnership will support Bridgewater's efforts to overcome the existing shortage of multiple-use ballfields for the Township's recreation activities. Bridgewater Recreation is in need of a minimum of two fields to accommodate the growing number of people participating in organized programs. The Regional Center has requested technical support from County Planning and the Park Commission.

SOMERVILLE, NJ - The Borough of Somerville has received a grant of \$250,000 from the Safe Routes to School program. The award is one of the largest in the

State of New Jersey and will be used to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout the borough.

RARITAN, NJ - The Raritan Council has asked the Regional Center Partnership for assistance in relocating the flood-prone Public Works Building from its current location on Orlando Drive. The Borough government would like to explore the feasibility of a joint public works facility with Somerville. The Business Partnership Shared Services Coordinating Committee will assist in determining the potential for a shared services agreement. With the support of the Business Partnership and the Regional Center Partnership, a SHARE Grant to partially fund the project will be pursued.

RARITAN, NJ - The Borough of Raritan is moving forward with redevelopment plans for the underutilized commercial area on the Somerville Circle. The area to be addressed is the southwest corner of the Circle at the intersection of Routes 202 and 206 south.

In addition, the Orlando Drive Corridor Visioning project has continued with a series of public meetings and engaging of a consultant to evaluate public input and development options for coordinating pedestrian and bicycle access with development and redevelopment activities.

SOMERVILLE, NJ - A shared services agreement between the Borough of Somerville Recreation Department and the recreation offices of Bridgewater and Raritan will allow residents of the two communities to use the Somerville Skate Board Park at the same rate as Somerville residents. Bridgewater and Raritan will contribute to the cost of maintenance of the facility.

SOMERSET COUNTY, NJ - The Board of Chosen Freeholders has endorsed a plan to establish the Somerset County Energy Council to focus attention on alternative energy sources, energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and reducing green-house gas emission. The Regional Center Partnership has pledged to support the efforts of the Energy Council in the three communities.

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