



THE REGIONAL CENTER

Late Summer
2010

BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

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

www.regionalcenterpartnership.org

BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGIONAL CENTER

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership, responding to the increasing need to support the efforts of business owners and members of the workforce, has developed a comprehensive summary of business resources.

The recently published "*Business & Employment Opportunities in the Regional Center*" provides a comprehensive summary of available resources and key contact information for business owners interested in establishing a business or growing a business and members of the workforce seeking employment or job training. The brochure is available online at www.regionalcenterpartnership.org under the "Announcements & Newsletters" link or by contacting James Ruggieri at the Regional Center Partnership at 908-231-7021.

"Somerset County has a wealth of resources available to business owners and to individuals who desire to grow their business or strive for personal advancement," stated Rose Evans, Chair of the Regional Center Partnership. "We have assembled all of the necessary background information in a simple document that will serve as a first step to success."

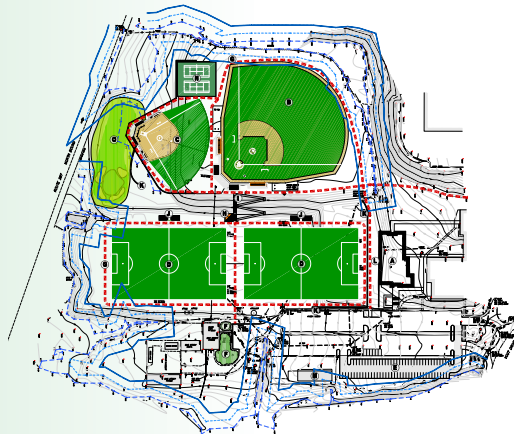
The four-page brochure offers a concise overview of economic development resources available through the Somerset County Business Partnership including the "*Long Term Economic Development Plan Report*," and the "*Somerset County Life Sciences Industry Business Plan*."

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VO-TECH MULTI-PURPOSE ATHLETIC FACILITY PLANNING ADVANCES

On July 21, 2010, the Regional Center Partnership passed a resolution accepting the Final Report for the Vo-Tech multipurpose athletic facility feasibility study.

The Regional Center Partnership participated in a series of presentations to review the concept plans for a possible multi-purpose athletic facility at the site of the existing athletic fields at the Somerset County Vocational and Technical School campus on Vogt Drive in Bridgewater.



The feasibility study was commissioned in response to the overwhelming need for quality multi-purpose athletic fields to help address the needs of schools and municipal recreation. The Somerset Regional Center Strategic Master Plan addresses the need for additional active recreation and athletic facilities within the region. Many of the existing fields are currently operating over capacity to the point where the overuse is causing the field conditions to deteriorate.

The preferred concept plan depicts a baseball field that would be high school size with 90 foot bases, a grass infield, lights, and a scoreboard. The softball field would also be high school size with 60 foot bases, dirt infield, lights, and a scoreboard. The multi-purpose fields would be high school size (80 yards by 120 yards), ideal for soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey with either natural grass or turf and would be lighted.

The preferred concept plan is respectful of Vo-Tech's educational needs and includes a demonstration landscape area as field laboratories for the Horticulture program and a concession facility that may be run by the Culinary Arts program.

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ROUTE 22 SHORT/LONG TERM IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

SHORT TERM SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Somerset County Planning and Engineering staffs have been meeting regularly with NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) representatives since June of 2009 to provide direction and feedback on the Route 22 Short Term Safety Improvements. These improvements are designed to enhance safety and traffic flow in the corridor bounded by Route 202/206 on the west and I-287 on the east.

In the fall of 2009, NJDOT completed three components of the improvement plan: removal of the abandoned NJDOT weigh station; construction of an improved deceleration lane east-bound at Finderne Avenue; and construction of a westbound acceleration lane at North Grove Street. State funding was used to complete these projects to avoid delay that would be incurred if the dedicated federal funds were applied to the project.

Design work is now underway for the next phase of short-term improvements: improvement of the northbound ramp to Route 202/206; removal of the U-turns at Gaston Avenue and Adamsville Road; and installation of a traffic signal at Ronson Road.

LONG TERM SUSTAINABLE CORRIDOR PROJECT

Somerset County received federal authorization to begin work on the long term project on November 13, 2009. At that time county staff, working with NJDOT, prepared a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to complete the concept development and feasibility assessment phase of the project. It is anticipated that the preliminary report will be submitted and public meetings scheduled in the fall of 2010.

Public input will be sought throughout the planning of the project and a website will be developed to post documents and announcements. Numerous public meetings will be scheduled in addition to focus groups, a survey, and comment forms to ensure that all issues are addressed. It is expected to take two years to complete the concept development and feasibility assessment work required by NJDOT.

BRIDGEWATER COMMITS FUNDS FOR PARKS

The township has committed \$3 million in Open Space funds to create new active and passive recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. The top five recommended projects are the following:

1. multi-purpose turf field at the municipal complex
 2. trail network, dog park, and parking at the Darby Tract on Van Holten Road
 3. proposed turf field at Bridgewater Raritan High School or a turf field at Harry Ally Park
 4. skate park at Harry Ally Park
 5. trails, parking, and bird blind off Walcutt Drive and Sky Hill Road
- These projects will be undertaken in the above order and completed based on available funding.

RAIN GARDENS & RAIN BARRELS HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

A New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) partnership with municipal governments and school districts in the Regional Center has resulted in a program of “Rain Garden” construction throughout the communities.

Recently completed was a “Rain Garden” at Somerville’s Vanderveer Elementary School on Union Avenue. The school is participating in NJWSA’s “River-Friendly Business” program, under which the school receives guidance and technical assistance to help them protect and improve water resources. The program also provides an opportunity to educate faculty, staff, students, and the community about actions that can be taken to protect water resources in the watershed where they live, work and play.



Vanderveer School Rain Garden

A rain garden is a landscaped, shallow depression that allows for rain and runoff to be collected and then either infiltrates into the soil or evapotranspires into the atmosphere. Rain gardens reduce the quantity of water that reaches our waterways and improve the quality of water by filtering polluted runoff.

At the request of the NJWSA, the Somerset County Park Commission provided a backhoe and operator and some much-needed labor to create the Rain Garden. Vanderveer is the first public elementary school in the area to register for the “River Friendly Business Certification Program” administered by the New Jersey Water Supply Authority.



Vanderveer School Rain Barrel

The NJWSA and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension held workshops at Walck Park in Somerville, Elizabeth Avenue Park in Raritan, and at Somerset County Vo-Tech in Bridgewater where residents learned how to build and install a rain barrel at their homes. The initiative will determine whether using rain barrels will improve water quality in nearby Peters Brook.

A barrel placed under a downspout will collect about 50 gallons of water that may be used to water gardens. With 40 residents expected to participate in the program, the Water Supply Authority will monitor the water quality coming out of the neighborhood and going into the Ross Brook, a main tributary of Peters Brook.

BRIDGEWATER DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE ROUTE 22 CORRIDOR

The Bridgewater Township Council recently approved a new plan to encourage positive development growth along the Route 22 corridor.

Through a series of workshops and public meetings run by the Township Planning Board, recommendations for the long-term vision for the Route 22 corridor through the Township are now incorporated into the Master Plan.

The recommendations include zoning to allow health clubs, indoor recreation, and medical support facilities in what will be known as a C-3 Office and Service Zone on the eastern and western perimeters of the corridor.

Auto dealerships, agricultural, and horticultural uses were removed from the zoning though an accommodation was made for renovation and expansion of existing auto facilities. Hotel use will be permitted in the area adjacent to the proposed Chimney Rock Road interchange.

SOMERVILLE DESIGNATED A TRANSIT VILLAGE

The New Jersey Department of Transportation announced that Somerville Borough has received designation as a Transit Village community in recognition of efforts to create walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods near public transportation.

The program encourages local officials to surround nearby transit facilities with a mix of residential, retail, and commercial uses to enhance economic growth by maximizing the use of mass transit options. Somerville's ongoing redevelopment efforts surround the Somerville Station served by NJ TRANSIT's Raritan Valley Line.

Components of the Transit Village include

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SUSTAINABLE RARITAN RIVER INITIATIVE

The Raritan River is an underutilized resource that has the potential to provide positive economic benefits to the Regional Center communities. To maximize this positive impact and to ensure the river's environmental stability, a collaborative effort of government, non-profit, and academic organizations has developed the *Sustainable Raritan River Action Plan* ([http://www.blueraritan.org/agenda/final plan.pdf](http://www.blueraritan.org/agenda/final%20plan.pdf)).

The plan focuses on ways to manage the impact of future growth and development in the region of the Raritan River while creating prosperity through the economic and environmental value that the river offers the regional economy.

A Rutgers University Bloustein School student studio course in cooperation with Somerset and Middlesex Counties is focusing on long-range planning to develop baseline data from the confluence of the river in Branchburg down to the Raritan Bay that will be the basis for scientifically-based plans for the future that will attract both businesses and residents to the area. The degree to which these natural resources are incorporated into future planning ensures the attractiveness of the region for future investment.

Key elements of the initiative include:

- Increase Awareness & Use of River Access Points & Trails
- Upgrade Current River Access Points & Develop a Plan for Future Recreational Uses
- Protect & Preserve Habitat & Biodiversity in Our River Ecosystem
- Adopt the 3Rs: Restore, Rehabilitate & Regenerate
- Maintain & Manage Preserved Open Spaces
- Remediate Contaminated Sites
- Prevent Future Pollution
- Significantly Reduce Stormwater Runoff
- Promote Restoration & Protection Plans to Address Local Subwatersheds
- Balance Redevelopment to Sustain Ecological Values in the Raritan River Watershed

The report, available at http://www.blueraritan.org/Studio/RaritanRiverStudio_Finalreport.pdf, presents the physical and ecological landscape of the river study area and outlines the challenges and opportunities for rehabilitation of the corridor. The issue requires the counties and municipalities to raise public awareness of the value of the river, reduce regional storm impacts through a collective focus on zero storm water discharges, and increase connectivity along the corridor through a continuous greenway. With a collaborative effort of public outreach and adoption of appropriate management practices, the Raritan River Basin will achieve regional distinction as a highly desirable place to live, recreate, and develop businesses.

SOMERVILLE'S WEST END REDEVELOPMENT ON THE MOVE



Following the recent demolition of the property on West Main Street in Somerville, JSM at Somerville has submitted a preliminary site plan for the development of the property. The current plan calls for two four-story buildings on West Main Street and South Doughty Avenue with retail on the first floor and apartments on the upper floors. A new supermarket is proposed for the former Pathmark location. Somerville has received an Economic Recovery Grant to help support this redevelopment.

MUNICIPAL PLAN ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

NEARS THE HOME STRETCH

A herculean effort on the part of the Planning Boards and Municipal Governments of Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville is expected to soon result in either a Certificate of Eligibility for Municipal Plan Endorsement by the New Jersey Office of Smart Growth or an Action Plan that would spell out the steps to obtain Plan Endorsement. Earning Plan Endorsement will allow continuation of the Somerset County Regional Center and the many benefits to which the municipalities are entitled.

Municipal and Regional Plan Endorsement is a voluntary review process designed to ensure the coordination of state, county, and municipal planning efforts in achieving the goals and policies of the State Planning Act. It is through Plan Endorsement that all levels of government work together to develop coordinated capital investment and planning implementation mechanisms that are consistent with the State Plan and with each other.

The focus of Plan Endorsement is to encourage development in locations that have the resources to accommodate long-term growth utilizing existing or anticipated public services and facilities. Furthermore it is intended to discourage development where it may directly or indirectly impair or destroy significant natural, historic, and agricultural resources or negatively impact planning by neighboring municipalities.

Upon endorsement of the plan, the Regional Center will continue to receive financial and technical incentives to assist in making the vision for the three communities and the Regional Center a reality.

BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT (CONT.)

Additional resources covered in the report include the Small Business Development Center at Raritan Valley Community College and the Greater Raritan Workforce Investment Board and the Greater Raritan One-Stop Career Center located and managed by the Somerset County Department of Human Services.

In the near term the Regional Center Partnership will produce a brochure focusing on “*Recreational & Physical Fitness Opportunities in the Regional Center.*”

NEW COUNTY BUS SHUTTLE SERVICE BEGINS

Somerset County recently initiated the CAT-2R ("Community Access Transit' Regional) shuttle servicing five municipalities. The 18-passenger shuttle will run weekdays through Bedminster, Bridgewater, Somerville, Raritan and Branchburg, including Raritan Valley Community College.

The “Cat” service is in response to the elimination of a NJ Transit WHEELS minibus line that stopped at the college. The shuttle will cost \$2 per one-way trip.

Casino tax revenues from the NJ Transit-administered Senior Citizen and Disabled Resident Transportation Program will provide most of the operating costs with the county funding fuel and insurance.

SOMERVILLE TRANSIT VILLAGE (CONT.)

a high quality walking and biking environment; a mix of transit-supportive uses; compact, traditional building design; attention to place making and the pedestrian realm; and transit supportive parking.

The Transit Village provides opportunities to complete projects central to the success of redevelopment efforts including:

- State of New Jersey commitment to the vision for redevelopment.
- Coordination among the State agencies that make up the Transit Village task force.
- Priority funding
- Technical assistance
- Eligibility for grants from NJDOT's dedicated Transit Village funding

The municipality is now eligible to apply for a \$100,000 grant through the Department of Transportation in support of planning efforts.

SOMERVILLE RAIL STATION RENOVATION ON SCHEDULE

NJ Transit's \$15.3 million renovation of the Somerville train station is on track to be completed early in 2011. Renovations will include new elevator cabs, a climate-controlled inbound waiting room with a ticket-agent office and rest rooms, heated platform shelters, ramps and stairs for the pedestrian tunnels.

Existing elevator shafts, the pedestrian tunnel and exterior stairs will be rehabilitated and security cameras, two new ticket-vending machines, and lighted signs will also be installed. In addition, 710-foot-long, high-level platforms will eliminate a gap between the trains and the platform.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON ROUTE 202/206 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

A groundbreaking ceremony on July 28, 2010 marked the beginning of construction on the area's second pedestrian bridge. The bridge over Route 202/206 north of the Somerville Circle is a key component of the Peters Brook Greenway, a multi-purpose pedestrian/bicycle path in Bridgewater and Somerville extending approximately 4 miles along Peters Brook from Bridgewater/Raritan High School to the Raritan River.

**WATCH FOR DETAILS ON THE
REGIONAL CENTER FALL SUMMIT
TO BE SCHEDULED IN MID-NOVEMBER.**

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BRIDGEWATER, RARITAN, SOMERVILLE • SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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