

THE REGIONAL CENTER

BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

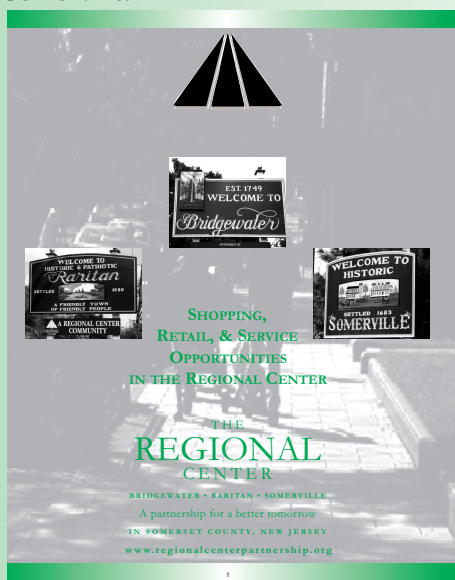
A partnership for a better tomorrow
IN SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

www.regionalcenterpartnership.org

SHOPPING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGIONAL CENTER

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership, fulfilling its mission of promoting the benefits available within the three Regional Center communities, has released an informative brochure describing the numerous and varied shopping opportunities available.

The “Shopping, Retail, and Service Opportunities in the Regional Center” follows the publication of “Business & Employment Opportunities in the Regional Center” and “Recreation and Fitness Opportunities in the Regional Center,” both of which provide a summary of available resources and key contact information for businesses and facilities in Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville.



“The Regional Center Partnership has produced three short and straightforward

REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERS WITH NJWSA TO OFFER RAIN BARREL REBATES

The initial effort in what is hoped to be an environmentally-friendly campaign that covers all three communities, the Regional Center Partnership is collaborating with the NJ Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) to serve as administrative agent for the Peters Brook Residential Rain Barrel Rebate Program. The program will provide cash rebates of up to \$200 to qualifying residents in the Peters Brook watershed area for the purchase of rain barrels.

Rooftops, driveways, roads, and other impervious areas comprise about 30% of the Peters Brook Watershed, an area that includes parts of Somerville, Bridgewater, and Raritan. Rainwater runoff flows into streams, picking up pollutants that have the capacity to negatively impact the quality of the watershed.

Rain barrels provide a system that collects and stores rainwater from a roof that would otherwise be diverted into the streams. This water may be used for gardens, car washing, etc.

Information on eligibility and the rebate application may be found on the Regional Center Partnership web site at www.regionalcenterpartnership.org.



2011 REGIONAL CENTER SUMMIT
“Economic Development in the Regional Center: Connecting Business & Government”

Friday, September 23, 2011
 8:30 A.M. to 10:30 A.M.
 Bridgewater Marriott
 700 Commons Way

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PUBLIC UPDATED ON ROUTE 22 SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

A June meeting held locally and led by representatives of the NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) provided the public with an update on plans for short-term improvements to the Route 22 corridor through the Regional Center. NJDOT representatives reaffirmed the organization's commitment to developing transportation improvements "that best balance transportation needs, the environment, community concerns, and cost."

The Short-term Improvement project extends along Route 22 between the Route 202/206 and I-287 interchanges. Through coordination with local officials, NJDOT has identified several locations along the corridor that experience high accident rates. Areas include eastbound between North Bridge Street and Grove Street; westbound at the intersection of Grove Street and the Grove Street overpass; the median U-turn near North Gaston Avenue; and the median U-turn near Adamsville Road. The Route 202/206 ramp merging onto Route 22 eastbound near Mountain Avenue has also been identified as a traffic congestion problem.

The purpose of the project is to provide short-term traffic and safety improvements at these key locations. Long-term solutions for the corridor are presently being investigated by Somerset County as part of a separate project.

Several short-term projects were constructed in the fall of 2009. These improvements include:

- Left turns prohibited to North Gaston Avenue and Adamsville Road.
- Abandoned truck weigh station was removed.
- Westbound shoulder under North Grove Street Bridge converted to auxiliary (weave) lane.
- Eastbound deceleration lane at Finderne Avenue was improved.

The proposed short-term project is entering the final design phase and consists of the following elements:

- Reconstruct Route 22 eastbound shoulder as auxiliary lane for Route 202/206 on-ramp.
- Reconfigure Mountain Avenue intersection as stop control.
- Access improvements at Buffalo Wild Wings.
- Widen and reconstruct Route 22 eastbound shoulder as an auxiliary lane from North Bridge Street past Grove Street.
- Widen shoulders along Route 22 median from North Bridge Street to Grove Street.
- Reconfigure the intersection of Grove Street

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MUNICIPAL LAND USE CENTER ADDRESSES REGIONAL CENTER

The Somerset County Regional Center welcomed Brian Reilly, M.A., Executive Director of the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Center at The College of New Jersey (MLUC), to the regular meeting of the organization on Wednesday, May 18, 2011.

The Municipal Land Use Center at The College of New Jersey works "on the ground" to help local governments engage their communities, other levels of government, and planners to create strategies and actions that maximize the value of public spaces.



MLUC works across government jurisdictions and professional disciplines and sectors—offering best practices, research-based solutions, good ideas, collaboration, external resources, training and support on a range of issues related to sustainable development including land use and transportation planning, strong economies, energy & climate, public art, natural resources and community engagement.



Mr. Reilly spoke about the work of the Sustainable Jersey initiative and the NJ Department of Transportation sponsored Mobility and Community Form

program which seeks to improve transportation effectiveness and cost efficiencies by integrating transportation planning with land use planning. Toward that, MLUC is piloting form-based zoning codes in New Jersey municipalities that will combine a community's vision for its future with streamlined regulations for future development to realize that vision.

"The mission of the Municipal Land Use Center is what the Regional Center has been addressing for almost 15 years," commented Rose Evans, Chair of the Regional Center Partnership. "Working with Mr. Reilly's organization, the Regional Center will make even greater progress to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville."

Mr. Reilly's presentation may be viewed at <http://www.regionalcenterpartnership.org/news.htm>

ROUTE 22 SHORT-TERM (CONT.)

- overpass and Grove Street.
- Eliminate median U-turns at North Gaston Avenue and Adamsville Road.
- New traffic signal at intersection of Foothill Road and Ronson Road, with left turn lane.
- Install new overhead sign for Exit Only lane on Route 22 westbound to Ronson Road.
- Highway lighting improvements.
- Install new Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) facilities along the corridor.

Current scheduling puts completion of the final design in June of 2012 with construction to begin in February of 2013 and the short-term improvements completed in August of 2014.

SHOPPING OPPORTUNITIES (CONT.)

brochures that are packed with extremely valuable information,” stated Rose Evans, Chair of the Regional Center Partnership. “We have provided a summary of the incredible resources available in our three communities. The information is as valuable for long-term residents as it is to newcomers to our communities.”

The four-page brochure offers a concise overview of the downtown retail, shopping centers, community centers, and the mall. The descriptions are divided into community location and provide a brief inventory of the type of retail and service available in each location.

All three brochures are available online at www.regionalcenterpartnership.org under the “Newsletters” link or by contacting James Ruggieri at the Regional Center Partnership at 908-231-7021.

REGIONAL CENTER RESOLVES GREENWAY BOUNDARY ISSUE WITH STATE

As an element of the consistency-review process for the Somerset County Regional Center Designation/Plan Endorsement process, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) recommended to the state Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA - successor to the Office of Smart Growth) that the Center boundaries be redrawn. The proposed plan would have excluded sections of the Raritan River Greenway and other parcels along the perimeter of the Regional Center due to the presence of environmentally sensitive features and the location within the floodplain.

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership, the Somerset County Planning Board, and the three Regional Center municipalities went on record with OPA expressing opposition to the NJDEP recommendations.

On June 30, 2011, County Planning Board staff met with OPA and NJDEP, presenting documentation affirming the Regional Center’s award-winning fifteen year track record for initiatives and projects aimed at protecting environmentally sensitive lands. Also documented were initiatives that have increased public access to the Raritan River and Peters Brook greenways, including acquisition of over 250 acres of land for the Raritan River Greenway project.

Fortunately, the state agencies listened to the presentations and realized the importance of the greenway in the overall Regional Center initiative. Upon reflection the boundary issues were resolved to the satisfaction of all Somerset County stakeholders.

The Regional Center Partnership and the County agreed that the Regional Center maps will continue to clearly depict both the floodplain boundary along the Raritan River and areas elsewhere within the Regional Center that lies within the known floodplain.

REGIONAL CENTER HONORED FOR INITIATIVES THAT PROTECT THE RARITAN RIVER

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership has been awarded the 2011 Blue Raritan River award by the Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative for work in support of planning initiatives and projects that benefit the Raritan River.

Nomination of the Regional Center Partnership Government Innovation category was made by the Somerset County Planning Board. Award announcements were made at the 3rd Annual Sustainable Raritan Conference at Cook College, Rutgers University on Thursday, June 16, 2011.

The Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative works to achieve the highest quality for the waters and riparian areas of the Raritan River basin and contributes to the overall restoration and preservation of the River. The efforts of the Collaborative focus on improved water quality, habitat restoration, public access, site remediation and pollution prevention, and balanced redevelopment.

The honor was presented for the Regional Center Partnership’s continuous work advancing planning initiatives and projects that promote and enhance the Sustainable

RARITAN RIVER PROTECTION AWARD (CONT.)

Raritan River objectives. Since 1999, the Regional Center Partnership has awarded over \$240,000 in grants to Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville for planning and visioning initiatives in connection with the Raritan River and Peters Brook Greenways to help realize at the local level the broader regional planning objectives of the Regional Center Strategic Master Plan.

Specific planning initiatives and projects that directly impact the Raritan River and Peters Brook corridors include the following:

- Somerville Landfill Development Study (2000-includes lands along Raritan River)
- Peters Brook Greenway (Bridgewater 2003)
- GIS/Riverfront Area Study (Raritan Borough 2003)
- Peters Brook Greenway Plan (Somerville, 2003)
- Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and Facility Master Plan (Somerville, 2004)
- Riverfront Study-Phase 2 (Raritan Borough, 2005)
- Orlando Drive Development Plan (Raritan Borough, 2006, includes lands along Raritan River)
- Somerville Landfill Redevelopment Plan Revision (2006)
- Peters Brook Greenway extension Phase II (Bridgewater, 2007)
- Peters Brook Greenway PAR fitness course (Somerville, 2010)
- The Partnership developed a brochure highlighting recreational and fitness opportunities available in the Regional Center many of which are located near or along the Raritan River corridor.
- The Regional Center Bicycle, Pedestrian & Greenways Systems Connection Plan identifies a system of connecting sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks, bicycle pathways and public access easements along greenways to connect popular destination points identified by the public throughout the entire Regional Center.

“The job of the Regional Center Partnership is to address smart regional planning issues,” commented Rose Evans, Chair of the Regional Center Partnership. “The Raritan River is one of the great assets of the three communities that we represent and it is our job to make certain that it is both protected for the future and utilized to maximum advantage for today. Successful efforts are sufficient reward. To be recognized for this effort is indeed a bonus.”

RARITAN RIVERFRONT RESEARCH BEGINS

The Raritan Economic Development Committee recently took the initial steps in planning the future of the riverfront on the Borough. A recent walking tour of the riverfront area resulted in a new awareness of the numerous factors that will impact riverfront development.

Among the issues to be addressed are the need for Duke Farms to formulate a new plan for circulating river water to their property; the proposed removal of the dam near the Nevius Street Bridge and its resulting effect on the water level, the fish population and recreational activities, etc; the remediation and/or sale of the old United Dyeing factory; re-zoning to facilitate the exchange of property ownership; flood control; remediation of Orlando Drive itself; possible relocation of the Basilone Statue; and addressing existing businesses that may be detrimental to the park-like vision.

The Canal Park area on the western border of the Borough has already been addressed with landscaping improvements and the installation barbecue grills for public enjoyment.

VO-TECH ATHLETIC FACILITY

STEWARDSHIP GROUP

With the completion of the feasibility study for the multipurpose athletic facility at Somerset County Vo-Tech School in Bridgewater, a Stewardship Group is being formed to explore a variety of potential funding options to implement the Master Plan developed by the Steering Advisory Committee.

The plan represents the implementation phase for upgrading the Vo-Tech facilities to meet the overwhelming demand for quality outdoor athletics.

The Stewardship Group will represent Somerset County Vo-Tech, Somerset County Freeholders, Somerset County Planning Board, Somerset County Park Commission, Regional Center Partnership, and Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville.

The full report is online at www.regionalcenterpartnership.org.

REGIONAL CENTER 2011 MEETING DATES

Wednesday, September 21 @ 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, November 9 @ 5:00 P.M.

All meetings take place in the County Administration Building Engineering Conference Room, Second Floor, 20 Grove Street, Somerville, New Jersey.

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Contact: Somerset County Planning Board • Post Office Box 3000, Somerville, New Jersey 08876

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