



THE REGIONAL CENTER

Winter
2013-2014

BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

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

SMC WILL CONTINUE TO ANCHOR THE REGIONAL CENTER

With the anticipated approval of state and federal regulators, the agreed upon merger of Somerset Medical Center (SMC) and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick will be finalized in 2014.

SMC leadership assured the public that “the mission of providing premier-quality, comprehensive healthcare services to residents of Central New Jersey” will continue unabated well into the future with a new opportunity for growth.

The SMC/RWJ merger reflects a nationwide trend among hospitals of all sizes to pursue operational agreements to address increasing financial challenges within the healthcare industry.

The relationship between the two hospitals has a long and positive history with many of the medical professionals on staff at both facilities.

Somerset Medical Center is a 355-bed acute care hospital. It is nationally recognized as a Magnet® hospital for nursing excellence. The Steeplechase Cancer Center is designated as a Comprehensive Community

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REGIONAL CENTER GRANTED PLAN ENDORSEMENT

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership has achieved a major milestone in its evolution with confirmation by the New Jersey State Planning Commission that all qualifications have been satisfied for the regional planning organization to be granted Plan Endorsement. The Commission has determined that the Regional Center, the Boroughs of Raritan and Somerville, and the Township of Bridgewater



Regional Center representatives accept Plan Endorsement Certificate at a recent Partnership meeting. (l to r) Jason Dameo, Somerville Mayor Brian Gallagher, Don Christensen, Jay Driscoll, Raritan Mayor Jo-Ann Liptak, Jim Ruggieri, Bridgewater Mayor Dan Hayes, Barry Ableman, Glenn McCreech, Mike Kerwin, Rick St. Pierre.

have satisfactorily met all requirements to allow the organization to continue to operate as an interlocal planning entity for the next ten years.

At a hearing held in Trenton on Wednesday, October 16, 2013, members of the Commission approved the submission of an application that was the result of a comprehensive five year effort by the Partnership and the three communities.

Plan Endorsement is a review process that ensures the coordination of state, county, and municipal planning efforts in achieving the goals and policies of the State Planning Act. Through Plan Endorsement, all levels of the three governments contribute to coordinated capital investment and planning implementation mechanisms that are consistent with the State Plan and with

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PLAN ENDORSEMENT GRANTED (CONT.)

each other. With endorsement the Regional Center is now in a better position to receive financial and technical incentives to assist in accomplishing the goals of the organization's master plan.



(l to r) Jim Ruggieri, Regional Center Secretary; Troy Fischer, Regional Center Chair; State Planning Commission Chair Edward McKenna, Barry Abelman of the Office for Planning Advocacy; Laurette Kratina of Somerset County Planning Board; and Dave Maski, Raritan Borough Planner.

“This represents a major accomplishment in the 20-year history of the Regional Center,” commented Chair Troy Fischer. “In the eyes of the state we have successfully addressed and completed our mission of the first two decades. We have now been given another ten years in a priority position for access to state and federal financial and technical support that will make the vision for the three communities and the Regional Center a reality and an even better place to live, work, and enjoy.”

Among the Regional Center initiatives that led to successful Plan Endorsement are the development and implementation of the 1999 Vision Plan, the 2002 Strategic Issues Report, the 2005 Charting an Action Agenda, and the Regional Center Strategic Master Plan. Projects identified in these documents that have been completed or are in progress are the 2 pedestrian overpasses, Orlando Drive/Raritan Greenway Implementation Plan, Traffic Calming Study & Implementation, Rain Barrel Rebate Program, Grove Street Overpass Sidewalks, Route 22 Sustainable Corridor Plan, Route 28 corridor improvements and more.

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY APPROVED BY USEDA

The United States Economic Development Agency (USEDA) has approved the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), *Investment Somerset, a Collaborative Blueprint for Economic Growth*. Somerset County is the latest New Jersey region to have an approved CEDS plan.

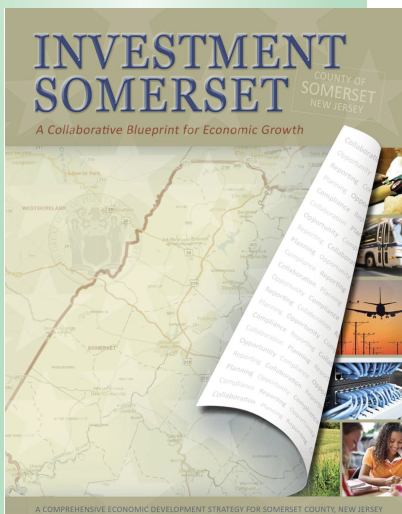
Utilizing a Financial Assistance Award from the USED A, the CEDS is an economic road map to diversify and strengthen regional economies. *A Collaborative Blueprint for Economic Success* is built on nine Priority Focus Areas, within which are 33 goals supported by nearly 200 discrete projects, programs, and activities.

The approval letter from the USED A states, “The priorities and focuses outlined within your CEDS document will help form the foundation of how EDA reviews applications of Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs from your region.”

“A remarkable effort by the public and private sectors has now been rewarded with the formal approval of the CEDS,” commented Freeholder Director Peter S. Palmer. “This cooperative effort has positioned Somerset County as New Jersey’s leader in strategic economic planning and places us in a priority position for state and federal funding.”

Initially identifying initiatives that will “afford the highest degree of local success in implementing job creation and private sector economic investment strategies,” the CEDS report identifies strategies that developed from robust planning and research efforts, visioning and vetting of concepts and their intended consequences, and the collaboration among partners across the public and private sectors.

With a focus on job creation and private sector economic investment, the result of the 18-month effort is the prioritization of nine focus areas dedicated to three priorities - business resources, re-use of properties and reducing the regulatory



SOMERVILLE EARNS DOWNTOWN NEW JERSEY EXCELLENCE AWARD

Each year Downtown New Jersey recognizes the state's best downtown projects and programs that have been completed within the previous 2 years.

The highest recognition given is the Platinum Award, this year was given in the 'Built Projects' category to Somerville's Division Street Plaza. Criteria for recognition are projects considered models worthy of emulation.

The renovation of Division Street transformed the one block in the core of the central business district from atwo-way thoroughfae to a vibrant pedestrian mall.

The redesign has created an arts and cultural center for the community with exhibits and live entertainment throughout the year. The borough is expected to enact zoning changes to encourage artist studios and apartments and allow for spontaneous live entertainment

Downtown New Jersey is non-profit corporation comprised of individuals, business leaders, government and non-profit representatives that are passionate about downtowns.



SOMERVILLE PROJECT INCLUDED IN ACCESS & MOBILITY STUDY

The Somerset County Access & Mobility Improvements Study defines seven key areas for redevelopment and targeted growth across Somerset County. Included among this list is the Somerville East Central Business District. Developed from a community-based planning process to guide the effort and build consensus on achievable goals and recommendations, the study isolated a 35-acre site of mixed residential and commercial uses at the east end of Somerville's central business district.

Based on the benefits of excellent transit access and a dense mixed-use business district with pedestrian mobility, the proposed redevelopment strategy focuses on a mix of residential, office, and retail uses. Implementation of a 'Complete Streets' design will allow safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

SMC/RWJUH MERGER (CONT.)

Cancer Center by the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer and the Joint Surgery Institute has earned the Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for total knee and total hip replacement surgery. The medical center is designated as a Primary Stroke Center by the Joint Commission and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) is a 600-bed academic medical center and the principal hospital of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Brunswick, NJ. Centers of Excellence include cardiovascular care, from minimally invasive heart surgery to transplantation; cancer care; and women's and children's care, including The Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital (BMSCH) at RWJUH (www.bmsch.org). The hospital is a Level I Trauma Center and is a four-time recipient of the prestigious Magnet Award® for Nursing Excellence.



SOMERVILLE ADDRESSES THE FUTURE OF VETERANS MEMORIAL DRIVE & NORTH GASTON AVENUE

Sidewalk improvements along **Veterans Memorial Drive** have been completed. A key element of the Transit Oriented Development initiative, the project included a retaining wall along the Raritan Valley Line train tracks and new sidewalks and curbs.

Defined in the June, 2013 “Supporting Priority Investment In Somerset County Through Access and Mobility Improvements Study Summary Presentation,” prepared by Somerset County and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, the project is one of seven pilot sites that are intended to enhance the county’s transportation infrastructure.

The future development of North Gaston Avenue was vetted in a series of stakeholder meetings to analyze the zoning, structures, and general conditions along the Gaston Avenue corridor between Union Avenue and East Main Street. This study, titled the “**Gaston Avenue Corridor Study**” was funded through a Somerset Regional Center Challenge grant.

Recommendations to the Planning Board included: Make no change to the PO-R zone extending along Gaston Avenue from East Main Street to East Cliff Street; Revise zoning in the B4 zone to allow growth from East Cliff Street to Union Avenue and including a portion of Union Avenue; Recommend that financial incentives be incorporated into the B4 zone district to foster redevelopment/adaptive reuse of properties; Conduct a traffic study for Gaston Avenue and the surrounding streets including the timing of the traffic signals at East Main Street, Gaston Avenue and South Gaston Avenue.

CEDS APPROVAL (CONT.)

burden that are supported by 12 goals/objectives.

Strategies in the final report 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 while establishing one voice for the business community in public policy decision-making.

Investment Somerset is available online at <http://www.scbp.org/economic-development/ceds>.

SOMERSET COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM IS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE REGIONAL CENTER

Brian Auger, Director of the Somerset County Library System, was invited to a recent Regional Center Partnership meeting to provide an overview of the library facilities and services and discuss the value provided to business, the public, and specifically, the Regional Center communities.

Mr. Auger explained that the Somerset County Library System is made up of 10 branches including the Regional Center communities of Bridgewater and Somerville (the Raritan Library has remained independent of the County system).

The entire system serves 15 communities and more than 188,000 citizens. The various facilities contain more than one million volumes with 3.3 million items borrowed in the past year.

Providing services far beyond that of a lending library, Mr. Auger explained that the Library System works with member and non-member library directors to provide innovative programs to increase accessibility to a wide range of information resources including workforce training. The Library System earned a 2012 Economic Vitality award from the Business Partnership for their efforts in this area.

The Library Commission’s Strategic Plan for 2012-2017, “Transforming Lives Strengthening Communities” includes an initiative to create new space in each branch that will help make the library facilities an attractive and relevant resource to the public and community groups.

REGIONAL CENTER 2014 MEETING DATES

Wednesday, January 15th @ 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, March 19th @ 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, May 21st @ 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, July 16th @ 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, September 17th @ 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, November 12th @ 5:00 P.M.

All meetings take place in the County Administration Building Engineering Conference Room, 2nd Floor, 20 Grove Street, Somerville, New Jersey.

THE REGIONAL CENTER

BRIDGEWATER, RARITAN, SOMERVILLE • SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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

Phone 908-231-7021 • www.rcpartnership.org