



THE REGIONAL CENTER

Fall/Winter
2015-2016

BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

A partnership for a better tomorrow

IN SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

REGIONAL CENTER POISED FOR THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

Using the Regional Center communities as their laboratory, graduate students from the Bloustein School at Rutgers University developed a roadmap to lead the millennial generation to Somerset County, New Jersey.

Somerset County Development Opportunities: A Millennial Perspective. is a report commissioned by the Somerset County Freeholders and the Somerset County Business Partnership.

The purpose of the study was to understand the potential of Somerset County as a place that appeals to Millennials – from the perspective of Millennials - so that business and government leaders can ascertain the steps to be undertaken to assure that the county will be an attractive place for the generation to settle and age. The millennial generation includes individuals born between 1982 and 2004.

Somerville served as the focal point for the analysis due to its central location, its potential as a model to other municipalities in Somerset County, and due to the ongoing efforts of Somerset County and Somerville planners to transform the municipality into a vibrant urban core.

REGIONAL CENTER VISIONING OUTLINES PLANS FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS

The Regional Center Partnership 2015 “Visioning Session” was held at the Somerset County Park Commission Headquarters in Bridgewater with participants from the Partnership Board and key stakeholders

The results of the Workshop will help direct the organization’s agenda for the next five years. The specific objectives were to determine the current priorities and issues on which the Regional Center Partnership will focus its resources. Of key consideration are the Regional Center communities’ relationship to the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Somerset County Priority Growth Investment Areas (PGIA).

Facilitating the meeting was Courtenay Mercer, New Jersey Director for the Regional Plan Association (RPA). The main topics for breakout sessions were Transportation Linkages, Economic Competitiveness, and Recreation, Tourism, & Health.

Chairman Troy Fischer led off the session stating that it is time to assess the Regional Center’s accomplishments since the adoption of the 2006 Regional Center Strategic Master Plan and determine the steps to be taken through 2020. He noted that times have changed, land use patterns have shifted, and the Millennial generation has created new demands, all requiring a greater resiliency on local and regional levels.

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COUNTY RANKS HIGH IN ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

Somerset County is one of the top two New Jersey counties based on local investment and economic expansion, according to New York-based financial technology company SmartAsset.

SmartAsset recently completed a study of counties receiving the greatest amount of investment in their local economies to uncover the places poised to grow. Factors considered included business establishment growth, GDP growth, new building permits and municipal bond investment.

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SUPPORTING PRIORITY INVESTMENT IN SOMERSET COUNTY PHASES I & II COMPLETED

The recently completed *Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Phase I* study provides a detailed existing conditions analysis for each of 24 areas designated for investment and growth (called Priority Growth Investment Areas, or PGIAs) in Somerset County. The study was commissioned by the County through a Local Government Capacity Grant from Together North Jersey.

PGIAs are “areas where primary economic growth and community development strategies that enhance quality of life are preferred and where growth-inducing investments are encouraged. PGIAs are often areas where development and infrastructure assets are already concentrated.” Channeling development to these areas helps reduce sprawl and generate efficiencies due to concentrated infrastructure, transportation resources, and housing. The study examined 24 PGIAs with the **Somerset County Regional Center** the largest, covering parts of three municipalities (Bridgewater Township, Raritan and Somerville Boroughs).

The Phase II study, funded by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), identifies recommendations for transportation improvements, infrastructure investments, and land use and zoning changes that advance implementation of the Somerset County Investment Framework and New Jersey’s Draft Final State Strategic Plan. Goals are to reduce sprawl; analyze economic strengths and growth opportunities; promote repurposing or demolition of vacant, outdated office facilities; ensuring an adequate supply of affordable, high-quality housing near transit and places of employment.

Seven PGIAs were analyzed in Phase II including the Chimney Rock Interchange area, the area between Route 22 and Easton Turnpike at Raritan Valley Community College, Hillsborough Town Center, Route 22 corridor in Watchung, Mt. Bethel Road corridor in Warren, I-287 Industrial Complex in Franklin, and Rustic Mall in Manville. The Phase II report was released in the summer of 2015.

The Somerset County Regional Center will be analyzed in the Phase III study, funded by the NJTPA. The analysis will help determine where desired growth can be or should be directed in a sustainable manner. The Phase III report, expected to begin in early 2016, has been funded and will address the balance of the PGIAs.

The Phase I and Phase II reports may be found at <https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/planweb/sustainable/sscommunities.htm>

SOMERVILLE LANDFILL CLEAN UP EARNS GREEN LIGHT

The Somerville Landfill cleanup, under active discussion since the early 1980’s, has earned an important step that will lead to development of one of the prime sites remaining in Central Jersey.

The state Department of Environmental Protection recently issued permits for the project allowing the Borough to issue bid requests for the \$16 million “green seam” clean up project. It is anticipated that the clean up will begin shortly and continue well into 2016. Remediation of the site will prevent contaminated groundwater from leaving the landfill and ready the site for future economic development and the creation of parkland.



COUNTY RANKS HIGH (CONT.)

Somerset County has received top rankings in other areas as well. In 2014 it was ranked 5th in the Movoto Real Estate blog’s list of Best Counties in the United States. Also in 2014, Somerset, Middlesex and Hunterdon counties made the list of Top 10 Happiest Metro Areas as selected by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

VISIONING SESSION ADDRESSES REGIONAL CENTER'S NEXT 5 YEARS (CONT.)

Ms. Mercer introduced the RPA's Fragile Success study that describes the vulnerability of the metro region, highlighting factors that should be considered when defining the Regional Center's five-year plan.

She noted that the average household income in the region has declined in the last 25 years at a faster rate than the national average with discretionary income dwindling and an affordability crisis approaching. Job growth has yet to reach pre-recession levels and major infrastructure projects have taken too long and have generally come in well over budget. Commuting between New Jersey and New York is facing a crisis with peak hour capacity now at 24 trains per hour. With the potential closure of one tunnel for necessary repairs sometime in the next 20 years, capacity will be reduced to six trains per hour.

The session outlined issues to be addressed in the next 5 years that will help support the Regional Center mission of providing leadership, technical support, and assistance to the county and three municipalities that will shape planning policies to ensure that the Regional Center will continue to be the premier location to live, work and play.

Among the most obvious topics to be addressed will be the need to define alternative transportation sources for people movement both locally and regionally. In addition to the stated problems getting to and from New York City, there are issues of "The Last Mile" connectivity from local train stations to the work place and the increasing demand for bike/pedestrian mobility.

There is also a need to explore alternative funding sources for infrastructure improvements, safety initiatives, and marketing, including renewed stress on health and wellness initiatives. With a renewed focus on resiliency, the Regional Center of Somerset County will serve residents effectively and efficiently for the next five years.

ROUTE 22/CHIMNEY ROCK INTERCHANGE OPENS TO TRAFFIC

Traffic is currently utilizing the newly constructed Route 22 eastbound/westbound Express and Route 22 Eastbound Local lanes. The proposed corridor of Chimney Rock Road to and from Martinsville over Route 22 opened to traffic on October 6, 2015. Participating in the ceremonial ribbon cutting were (l to r) Freeholder Pat Walsh, Freeholder Peter Palmer, Freeholder Patrick Scaglione, Bridgewater Council President Howard Norgalis, Bridgewater Councilman Allen Kurdyla, Freeholder Director Mark Caliguire, Bridgewater Councilwoman Christine Henderson-Rose, Freeholder Brian Levine, and Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli.

"We had two goals for this project. The first was to improve safety in this heavily traveled area," said Freeholder Director Caliguire. "The interchange improvement accomplishes that by moving traffic more efficiently and safely along the Route 22 corridor. "(It) will have the added benefit of providing economic development opportunities along Route 22 and Chimney Rock Road."



ADDITIONAL DRIVER FEEDBACK SIGNS INSTALLED

Continuing the effort to enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety in the Regional Center communities, the Regional Center Partnership authorized the purchase of an additional 6 driver feedback signs. Twelve signs (4 in each community) were installed in 2014. The additional two signs per community were installed in the fall of 2015.

MUNICIPAL UPDATES

BRIDGEWATER

Whole Foods has signed a lease with the proposed Chimney Rock Crossing shopping center for location at Route 22 and Chimney Rock Road. The project is located on the former quarry property at the new Chimney Rock Road interchange. The proposed location is south of the Public Works facility between the New Frontier Road realignment and Route 22 West. The store will be approximately 50,000 square feet and is planned to open late in 2017.

Seasons 52, the township's newest restaurant, has opened on the site of the Bridgewater Commons near Bloomingdales. Seasons 52 presents seasonally inspired ingredients with rustic cooking techniques to bring out natural flavors. Redstone American Grill, a high end barbecue restaurant featuring open spaces around a central bar and open kitchen with a wood-burning grill and rotisserie has been approved for construction at the Bridgewater Commons.

RARITAN

To provide greater coordination with the numerous proactive initiatives in the Borough, the Economic Development Committee has taken the reins of the local Chamber of Commerce. The committee is expected to more effectively promote the Borough to potential businesses and residents.

SOMERVILLE

The Downtown Somerville Alliance has introduced a new website outlining products, cuisines, and services available in the central business district. The site may be accessed at www.findsomerville.com.

2016 REGIONAL CENTER MEETING DATES

Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, May 18, 2016 at 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, July 20, 2016 at 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday, September 21, 2016 at 4:30 P.M.*

Thursday, November 10, 2016 at 5:00 P.M.

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

*Location of meeting - Raritan Municipal Building,
22 First Street, Raritan, NJ

2016 REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP

Chair: Troy Fischer
Vice-Chair: Jason Dameo
Treasurer: Freeholder Patrick Scaglione
Secretary: James Ruggieri (non-voting position)

At-large Private/Institutional Sector Representatives

Troy Fischer, Chair, Senior General Manager,
Bridgewater Commons*
Jason Dameo, Vice-chair, General Manager, Dameo
Companies*
James Driscoll, Site Manager, Workplace Solutions,
Johnson & Johnson Company*
Victoria Allen, Executive Director-Marketing &
Public Relations, RWJUH Somerset

Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Freeholder Patrick Scaglione*
(Brian Levine, Freeholder Alternate*)

Somerset County Planning Board

Bernie Navatto, Chair, Somerset County Planning Board
Walter Lane, Director of Planning, Somerset County

Bridgewater Township

Mayor Daniel J. Hayes, Jr.*
Council President Filipe Pedroso
Planner Scarlett Doyle
Henry E. Reynolds, Jr., local private/institutional
representative

Raritan Borough

Mayor Chuck McMullin*
Councilman Andrew Sibia
Engineer Stanley Schrek
Nicole Patente, local private/institutional
representative

Somerville Borough

Mayor Brian Gallagher*
Councilman Ken Utter
Planning Board Vice-Chair Lisa Werner
Rick St. Pierre, local private/institutional representative

Somerset County Business Partnership

Michael Kerwin, President/CEO
(John Maddocks, Alternate)

Somerset County Park Commission

Ray Brown, Secretary/Executive Director
(Cynthia Sullivan, Alternate)

*RCP Executive Committee member

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BRIDGEWATER, RARITAN, SOMERVILLE • SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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