

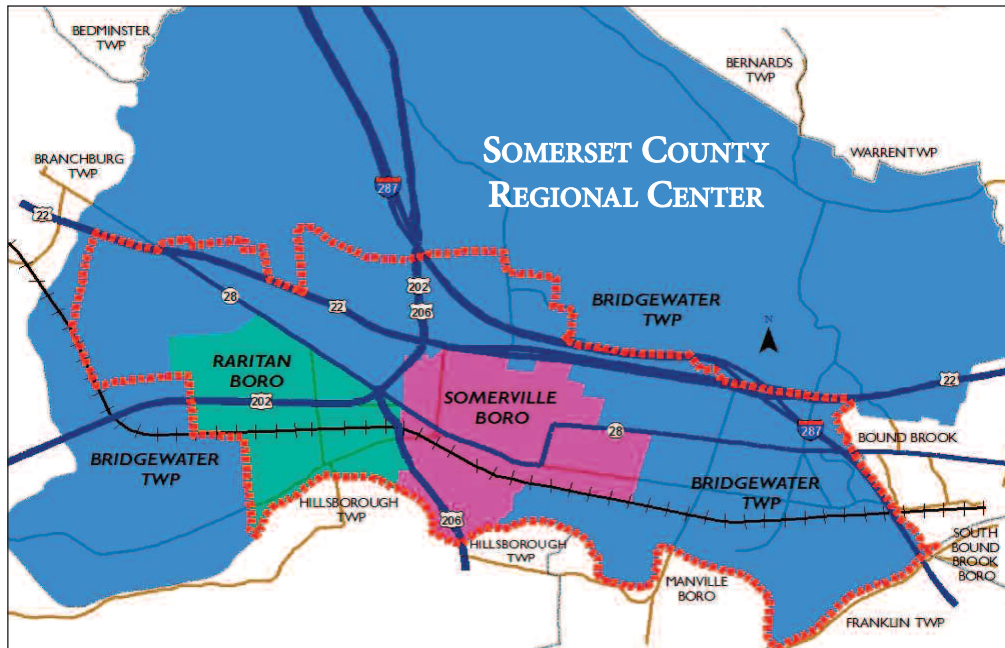


PLANNING THE FUTURE OF THE  
SOMERSET COUNTY REGIONAL CENTER

ANNUAL  
ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT  
2015



## THE SOMERSET COUNTY REGIONAL CENTER



*The Somerset County Regional Center provides a mechanism for a unique level of cooperation between government and business to foster an environment of smart planning and cooperative growth utilizing resources unavailable elsewhere.*

### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

TROY FISCHER

Another year has passed and the Regional Center of Somerset County has again brought the leadership of three communities together at one table to discuss and implement programs that benefit the Region as a whole.



2015 was one of great progress for the Regional Center and Somerset County.

- Our friends at Duke Farms saw a record number of visits supporting a tourism initiative that benefits all businesses in the Regional Center.
- The Bridgewater Commons and Downtown Somerville saw an influx of new retail, service businesses, and restaurants that will serve Somerset County residents for years to come.
- Residential developers in Raritan and Somerville began the process of renting hundreds of new units, attracting a range of new citizens representing all generations.
- Major international corporations announced that they were relocating to the County, the most significant of which were Nestlé and Linde. Representatives of these companies stated that Somerset County was chosen because of the educated workforce, the progressive actions of business leaders and government, and of course, location.

I would be remiss if I did not thank former Raritan Mayor Jo-Ann Liptak for her contribution to the Regional Center. Mayor Liptak served on the steering committee that defined our original agenda and continued as a member of the group until deciding not to seek re-election. Her input was always valued, her effort was appreciated, and her leadership helped us move forward.

## VISIONING FORUM SETS 5-YEAR PRIORITIES

The Regional Center of Somerset County stakeholders met in 2015 to review the accomplishments achieved since the 2005 Regional Center Visioning Initiative and the adoption of the 2006 Regional Center Strategic Master Plan. The goal of the gathering was to define the agenda and prioritize resources for the next five years with focus on how the world has changed since 2006. Broad topics under consideration were Gaps in Transportation Linkages; Opportunities in Economic Development; and Gaps in Recreation & Health.

The Visioning Workshop included members of the Board of the Regional Center, elected officials, and representatives of key organizations that impact the three communities. Guest Facilitator was Courtenay Mercer, New Jersey Director for the Regional Plan Association. Additional contributors who brought an outsider's perspective to the workshop included Dr. Judy Shaw, Director of the Sustainable Raritan River Initiative at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University; Zenobia Fields, Department Director of Planning for the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority; Donna Allison, Executive Director, Ridewise of Raritan valley; Bob O'Neil, Principal Watershed Protection Specialist, NJ Water Supply Authority; and Barry Abelman, New Jersey Office for Planning Advocacy.

The starting point was to highlight accomplishments over the past ten years:

- Attainment of Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission, recognizing the Regional Center of Somerset County as the model for multi-jurisdictional cooperative regional planning.
- Route 22 Short Term Safety Improvements
- Route 22/Chimney Rock Interchange
- Route 28 Corridor improvements
- Expansion of the Raritan River Greenway
- Award-Winning Sustainable Raritan River Initiatives

- Administration of the Challenge Grant Program providing funds for community improvement projects that help implement the goals of the Regional Center
- Installation of Driver Feedback Signage to enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety.
  - Grove Street Overpass Sidewalk Improvements
  - Pedestrian Overpass Construction



Among the factors influencing the Planning Forum was the *Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*, completed in 2013, and providing an economic road map for Somerset County. The CEDS focuses on the

identification of *Projects of Regional Significance* which will have a positive impact on job creation, private sector investment, and diversification of the Somerset County economy.

An additional key factor was the *Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Phase I* study, the product of a detailed existing conditions analysis for each of 24 areas designated for investment and growth (called

Priority Growth Investment Areas, or PGIAs). The Regional Center of Somerset County is the largest of the 24 areas.



The 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." This study identifies recommendations for transportation improvements, infrastructure investments, and land use and zoning changes that were addressed at the Regional Center Visioning Workshop.

The conclusions reached at the workshop led to the following action items to be prioritized by the Regional Center Partnership as the 5-Year Strategic Plan is formulated:

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## VISIONING FORUM (CONT.)

- Follow Somerset County Priority Growth Investment Area recommendations.
- Investigate transportation alternatives to determine how to get people from transportation hubs to the workplace.
- Address the traffic congestion issues on Route 202, in particular the First Avenue intersection in Raritan.
- Address the costs and funding sources for transportation improvements.
- What is the general level of interest for change to residential mixed use in the Regional Center communities?
- How to address “Last Mile” solutions? - funding sources, enhanced “bike to work” opportunities, etc.
- Maximize investment in Greenways for community use.



First Avenue & Route 202

- How can the Regional Center support implementation of a “Complete Streets” plan in the 3 communities?
- Develop intermunicipal connections along the Raritan River Greenway.
- Develop recreation and health initiatives that include RWJ University Hospital Somerset and neighboring pharmaceutical companies.
- Connect Raritan Valley Community College with RWJ Somerset.
- Develop a “Health & Wellness District” or “Theme” for the Regional Center, with RWJ Somerset as a possible hub, addressing zoning issues as necessary.
- Develop a bicycle/pedestrian plan to enable safe passage between the three communities.
- Make effective use of the Regional Center 501(c)3 designation to pursue grants and attract alternative funding sources.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a public bicycle sharing program that would include Duke Farms.
- Communicate the importance of a new Trans-Hudson Tunnel to the Regional Center communities.
- Develop a social media initiative to support restaurants and retail.
- Promote the Regional Center’s competitive economic advantage.
- Support development of “workforce housing.”
- Examine expedited permitting within the Regional Center.
- Enhance transportation connectivity utilizing shuttles and greenways.
- Cooperatively promote arts, culture, and night life in the 3 communities.
- Partner with the Office of Emergency Management, County and towns to coordinate resiliency efforts.



RWJ Somerset

## STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN UPDATE

In November of 2015 the Regional Center Partnership allocated a total of \$35,000 toward the cost of revising and updating the 2006 *Regional Center Strategic Master Plan* and also began preparing the Scope of Work for the Request for Proposals to update the Plan and to ensure the Plan reflected the recommendations that came out of the Visioning Session.

## REGIONAL CENTER POISED FOR THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION



Using the Regional Center communities as their laboratory, graduate students from the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy 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 report is available at: <http://www.scbp.org/media/press/369>

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.



## SOMERSET COUNTY RANKS HIGH IN ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

In 2015 Somerset County was recognized as one of the top two New Jersey counties based on local investment and economic expansion, according to New York-based financial technology company SmartAsset.

The study of counties graded those receiving the greatest amount of investment in their local economies. Factors considered included business establishment growth, GDP growth, new building permits and municipal bond investment.

Somerset County has also received top rankings in other areas. 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.

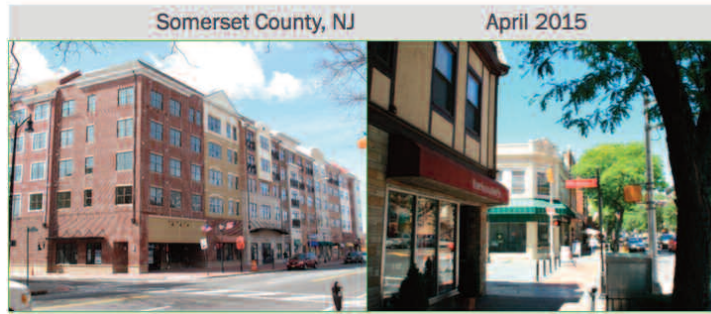
# SUPPORTING PRIORITY INVESTMENT IN SOMERSET COUNTY

## PHASES I & II COMPLETED



### SUPPORTING PRIORITY INVESTMENT IN SOMERSET COUNTY

#### Executive Summary



The *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** being 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; and ensure 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, also 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, which began 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 <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/master-plan/thriving-communities>



## 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.

According to radarsign.com, speeders will slow down up to 80% of the time when alerted by a radar sign with typical speed reductions at 10-20% and overall compliance with the posted speed limit will go up by 30-60%.

## RAIN BARREL REBATE PROGRAM CONTINUES IN 2016

With grant funding made available by the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, and with unanimous support of the Regional Center Partnership, in September of 2015 the Regional Center Partnership approved continuing the Rain Barrel Rebate Program into 2016, the sixth year of availability to homeowners in the Regional Center communities of Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville.



The program encourages residents to purchase and install rain barrels by offering rebates up to \$200. Rebates are available in the amount of \$50 for rain barrels that hold 40 to 70 gallons and \$100 for those that hold more than 70 gallons.

Rain barrels provide homeowners with financial and ecological advantages by conserving water, easing stream erosion by reducing the volume of runoff entering to streams and rivers during storms, and reducing pollutants accumulated from impervious surfaces, particularly roofs. In established urban areas like the Regional Center, rainwater runoff from hard surfaces flows directly into streams, depositing these pollutants.

Since the inception of the program 48 rebates have been awarded including 10 in 2015. Rebates will continue to be awarded on a first come, first served basis, with annual funding limited. Detailed information can be found on the Regional Center Partnership's website at [www.regionalcenterpartnership.org](http://www.regionalcenterpartnership.org), by calling 908-730-0270 x223 or emailing [rainbarrel@raritanbasin.org](mailto:rainbarrel@raritanbasin.org).

## **\$194 MILLION ALLOCATED TO CLEAN UP SUPERFUND SITE**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Justice announced that Wyeth Holdings LLC, a subsidiary of the Pfizer Corporation, will perform nearly \$194 million worth of cleanup work at the American Cyanamid Superfund Site in Bridgewater Township. The site is at the eastern border of the Regional Center behind TD Bank Ballpark.

The cleanup work addresses six disposal areas where chemicals were manufactured for nearly 100 years. The initiative includes addressing contaminated soil, groundwater, six waste disposal areas at the site, and closure of two waste disposal areas. Future use of the property has yet to be determined.

The American Cyanamid Superfund Site has a history of industrial pollution dating back to 1915. For nearly a century, prior owners manufactured chemicals at the property where a number of impoundments were constructed and used for waste storage and disposal, contaminating soil and ground water. The site was placed on the federal Superfund list in 1983.

To view the EPA's web page for the site, please visit:  
[http://www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/american\\_cyanamid/](http://www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/american_cyanamid/)



### **RESOLUTION THANKS MAYOR LIPTAK FOR YEARS OF SERVICE**

Regional Center Partnership Chair Troy Fischer presented former Raritan Mayor Jo-Ann Liptak with a resolution acknowledging her contribution to the Regional Center and to the citizens of Raritan during her years on Borough Council and as Mayor.

The resolution outlined her contributions to the Regional Center and her years of cooperation with surrounding communities and the County. In addition, the resolution recognized her efforts as a member of the County Planning Board, Mental Health Board, and Cultural and Heritage Advisory Board.

Mayor Liptak opted not to seek re-election in 2015.



## SOMERVILLE TOWN CENTER EARNS COUNTY AWARD

In January, 2015 the Somerville Town Center Phase II garnered the 32nd Annual Land Development and Planning Awards in the Mixed Use category from the Somerset County Planning Board. The West Main Street project includes 62,000 sq. ft. of retail space and 135 rental units.

The award was based on: redevelopment of an old obsolete retail development; high density development in the Regional Center; within walking distance of the NJ Transit rail station; part of the Transit Village Community; creating a Main Street presence; and façade reflecting the historic character and design elements of Main Street.



## SERVICE EXPANDS FOR ONE-SEAT RIDE TO NYC



The NJ Transit one-seat passenger train ride to Manhattan expanded to nighttime service in January, 2015, from rail stations in Raritan, Somerville, and Bridgewater. Morning one-seat rides, initiated in 2014, proved successful. Prior to the start of the service, passengers to New York City had to change trains at Newark because the diesel engines on the Raritan Valley Line are not permitted in the tunnels under the Hudson River due to their fumes. NJ Transit has purchased dual-use locomotives that are powered by both diesel and electricity to make one-seat rides possible.

Freeholder Peter Palmer, Chairman of the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition, noted that the added service will make it easier for people to take the train to the city in the afternoon, have dinner, attend a show and return on a one-seat ride. There are now five one-seat trains going daily to Penn Station and five returning.

## ROUTE 22/CHIMNEY ROCK INTERCHANGE OPENS TO TRAFFIC



Traffic began utilizing the newly constructed Route 22 eastbound/westbound Express and Route 22 Eastbound Local lanes. The new section 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.”

## REGIONAL CENTER CHAIR TROY FISCHER HONORED BY NJBIZ

Regional Center Partnership Chair Troy Fischer, Senior General Manager of the Bridgewater Commons, was honored as one of three finalists for the *NJBIZ*



Corporate Citizen of the Year. The award honors business people for their “outstanding contributions to the New Jersey business community.”

In addition to serving as chair of the Regional Center, he served as Chairman of

the Board of the Somerset County Business Partnership “working to bring new and emerging businesses to the area, accelerate the reemployment of displaced workers, targeting resources and personnel in high-demand positions, and partnering with Somerville to redevelop the downtown area.”

## SOMERVILLE LANDFILL CLEAN UP EARNS GREEN LIGHT

In 2015, the Somerville Landfill cleanup, under active discussion since the early 1980’s, 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 issued permits for the project allowing the Borough to issue bid requests for the \$16 million “green seam” clean up project. Clean up began in 2016 and is expected



to continue well into the year. 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.

# MUNICIPAL UPDATES - 2015

## BRIDGEWATER



Chimney Rock Crossing  
Bridgewater

Whole Foods signed a lease with the proposed Chimney Rock Crossing shopping center at Route 22 and Chimney Rock Road. The project is located on the former quarry property at the new Chimney Rock Road interchange. The store will be approximately 50,000 square feet and is planned to open in late 2017. The total project is expected to include 108,000 square feet of retail and 22,000 square feet of restaurant space.

Seasons 52 opened at 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 with an open kitchen with a wood-burning grill and rotisserie, was approved for construction at the Commons.

A new Park & Ride facility was constructed at Route 22 east and Milltown Road to accommodate non-stop bus service to New York City.

## RARITAN

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

Phase Three of the Orlando Drive reconstruction project between Loomis Street and Old York Road served as the completion of a three year project that began at Route 206.



Somerset Street  
Raritan

Tim Horton's Cafe & Bake Shop, located on West End Avenue just off the Somerville Circle, was approved for construction in 2015 and has since opened for business.

## SOMERVILLE

The Downtown Somerville Alliance introduced a new website outlining products, cuisines, and services available in the central business district. The site may be accessed at [www.findsomerville.com](http://www.findsomerville.com).



Cobalt Apartments  
Somerville

In 2015 construction began on the Cobalt Apartments on East Veterans Memorial Drive. The development will feature 117 studio, one- and two-bedroom units.

Somerville Borough Council approved changes to the municipal parking system with the creation of a Parking Utility to monitor improvements. Improvements include installation of state-of-the-art parking meters designed to be more user friendly.

In addition, the Borough announced the metered parking rates would be revised with higher rates being charged to those areas closest to downtown.

The Borough of Somerville received the 2015 Best Overall Public Information Program Award at the Annual NJ League of Municipalities Conference in Atlantic City. The award recognizes the efforts of the Borough's use of media and communications to keep the public informed.

## 2015 REGIONAL CENTER OFFICERS & BOARD

**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\*  
James Driscoll, Site Manager, Workplace Solutions,  
Johnson & Johnson Company\*  
Jason Dameo, General Manager, Dameo Companies\*  
Victoria Allen, Executive Director-Marketing &  
Public Relations, RWJUH Somerset

### **Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders**

Freeholder Brian Levine\*  
(Patrick Scaglione, 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 Howard Norgalis  
Planner Scarlett Doyle  
Henry E. Reynolds, Jr., local private/institutional  
representative

### **Raritan Borough**

Mayor Jo-Ann Liptak\*  
Councilman Andrew Sibilgia  
Engineer Stanley Schrek  
Don Christensen, local private/institutional  
representative

### **Somerville Borough**

Mayor Brian Gallagher\*  
Councilman Ken Utter  
Planning Board Vice-Chair Lisa Yates  
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



### **THE REGIONAL CENTER**

BRIDGEWATER, RARITAN, SOMERVILLE • SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY  
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