



Background Report for Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan

July 2018



THE
REGIONAL
CENTER

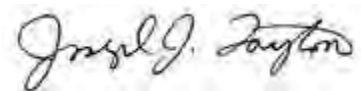
BRIDGEWATER ♦ RARITAN ♦ SOMERVILLE

A partnership for a better tomorrow

**Background Report for the
Somerset County Regional Center
Strategic Plan**

**PREPARED FOR THE REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP OF
SOMERSET COUNTY**

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Adopted by the Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County as part of the
Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan
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Bridgewater Township Planning Board

Raritan Borough Mayor and Council

Raritan Borough Planning Board

Somerville Borough Mayor and Council

Somerville Borough Planning Board

Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
KEY COMPONENTS OF THE BACKGROUND REPORT	4
THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BACKGROUND REPORT	6
Health and Wellness Theme	6
Resiliency Theme	7
Embracing the Raritan River Theme	8
Job Growth and Private Sector Investment Theme	8
Downtowns and Main Streets	9
Redevelopment Areas, Economic Development and Community Design	9
Train Station Areas.....	10
Neighborhoods and Housing.....	10
Circulation	10
Recreation, Open Space, Greenways and Natural Landscapes	10
Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources	11
ABOUT THE PLANNING PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION	12
VISION	16
OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS	20
Competitive Strengths	20
Obstacles	22
KEY ISSUES.....	24
Land Use.....	24
Development Activity.....	26
Residential Development	28
Nonresidential Development	29
Redevelopment	31
Community Design.....	34
Infrastructure	36
Housing	36
Circulation	38
<i>Roadways</i>	38
Bicycling	41
Walking	43
Public Transportation.....	45

Goods Movement	48
Environmental Resources	489
Recreational Opportunities.....	51
Community Facilities.....	54
Historic Resources.....	55
Cultural Resources	61
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.....	63
Health and Wellness.....	63
Resiliency.....	63
Downtowns and Main Streets.....	63
Redevelopment Areas, Economic Development, and Community Design.....	64
Train Station Areas.....	66
Neighborhoods and Housing.....	66
Circulation.....	67
Roadways.....	67
Bicycling	68
Walking	69
Public Transportation	70
Goods Movement	70
Transportation Planning	70
Recreation, Open Space, Greenways, and Natural Landscapes	71
Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources.....	71
LIST OF PRIORITY PROJECTS.....	72
LAND USE AND ZONING ALONG MUNICIPAL BORDERS	79
Other Joint Planning Initiatives.....	80
UPDATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN.....	82
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS.....	83
COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE OF THE REGIONAL CENTER.....	87
Appendix of Healthy Community Examples.....	90
 LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1 Regional Center Location Map	3
Figure 2 Regional Center Base Map.....	13

(continued)

Figure 3	Regional Center Land Use & Land Cover.....	24
Figure 4	Regional Center Redevelopment & Targeted Growth.....	33
Figure 5	Regional Center Transportation.....	45
Figure 6	Regional Center Open Space/Recreation.....	50

SUPPLEMENTAL MAPS

➤	Bridgewater Bicycle Route and Pedestrian Pathway Map.....	43
➤	Raritan River Greenway Bikeway-Raritan Connection	54
➤	Major Assets Surrounding the Regional Center.....	62

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Located at a major crossroads at the edge of the New York City/Northern New Jersey metropolitan area, the Somerset County Regional Center is a major focus of residential, business, and retail development within Central New Jersey and is home to most of Somerset County's major institutions. This document represents the latest step in a unique regional planning process that is resulting in many tangible benefits for the three communities that constitute the Regional Center: Somerville Borough, Raritan Borough, and part of Bridgewater Township identified herein as the "Bridgewater Core." The Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County, an organization consisting of representatives from all three municipalities, Somerset County government, and business and institutional leaders, has led this process, as well as many other initiatives.



Part of the Somerset County Regional Center



Visioning Session, September 2015

This document provides the detailed background information for the Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan and helps substantiate the basis for the next steps for the Region's future. The information in this document is based directly on a public process of working with stakeholders to determine the most important issues impacting the Regional Center and the programs and projects that will help achieve the Regional Center vision and goals. The recommendations and implementation strategies contained in this report reflect extensive work that was contributed by participants at the September, 2015 Regional Center Visioning Session and individual meetings with municipal subcommittees representing each of the three Regional Center towns. Some of the information in this document also reflects relevant information from the 2006 Regional Center Strategic Master Plan.

Since the 2006 Regional Center Strategic Master Plan was completed, significant changes have occurred that have impacted the Regional Center. Land use patterns have shifted; the Great Recession impacted individuals, families, and businesses; Superstorm Sandy brought devastation to many parts of New Jersey; and the Millennial Generation has created diverse needs for housing, transportation, and jobs; all factors that have demonstrated the need for greater resiliency at the local and regional levels. With an increasing number of Americans suffering from obesity, asthma, diabetes and heart disease, the importance of health and wellness considerations in urban planning is gaining prominence.

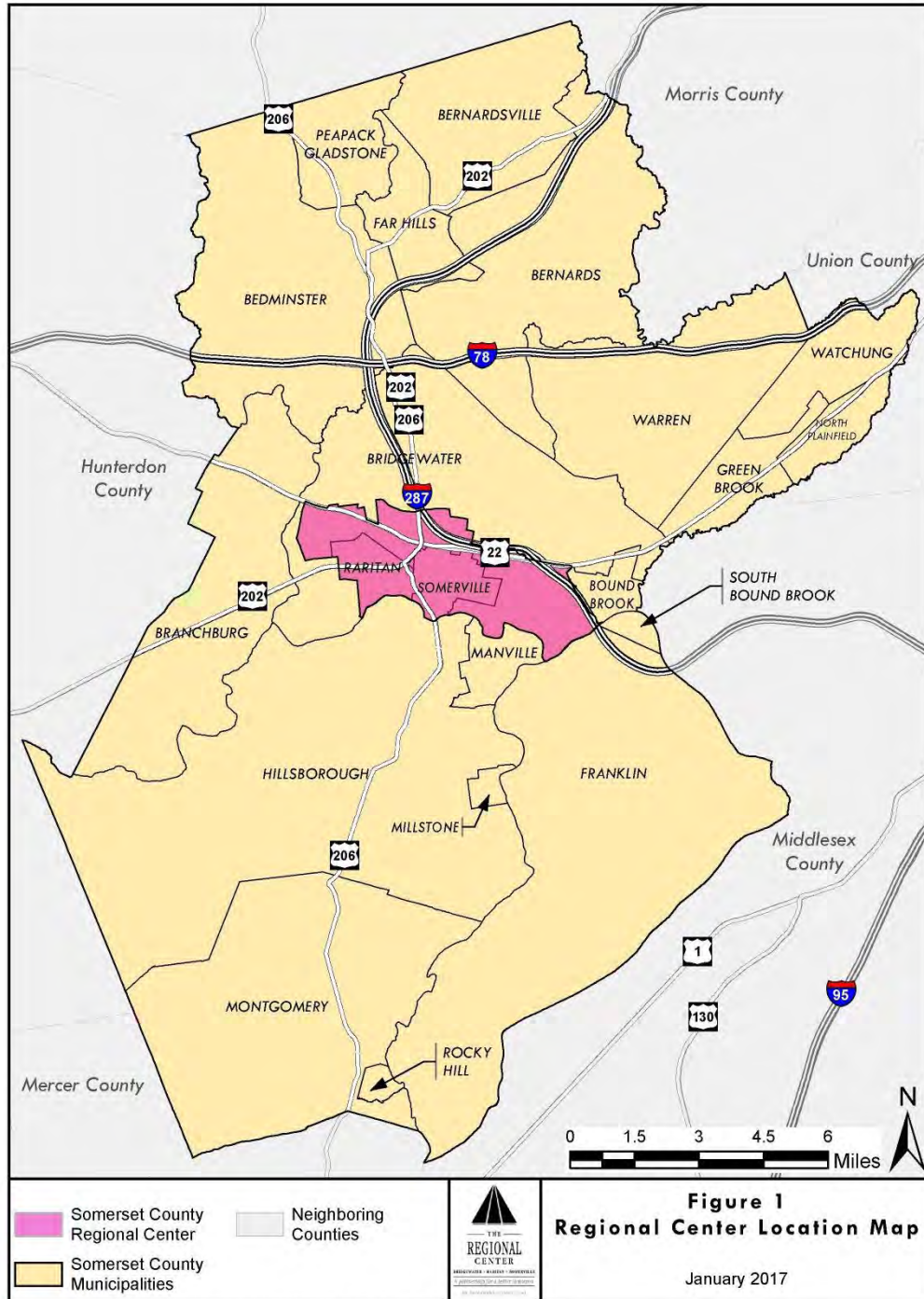
In light of all these changes, and in light of what has been accomplished in the Regional Center over the past ten-plus years and the emergence of new issues impacting the Regional Center, on September 24, 2015 Regional Center stakeholders convened a visioning session take all this into consideration and define the agenda and prioritization of resources for the next five years.

Two key guidance documents for the economic growth of Somerset County and the Regional Center were considered during the visioning session were the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County study.

The CEDS was completed in 2013 as the result of a partnership between the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and the Somerset County Business Partnership who was the lead agent of the CEDS report. The CEDS identifies and prioritizes economic development strategies that further job creation, private sector investment, and diversification of the Somerset County economy. The CEDS consists of 33 goals supported by nearly 200 discrete projects, programs, and activities many of which relate to the Somerset County Regional Center which represents the core of the county economy, including the County Seat, vibrant downtowns, the regional medical center, the regional mall, and the town centers with emerging development. More information about the CEDS can be found on the Somerset County Business Partnership's website at <http://www.scbp.org/economic-development/ceds>.

The Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County study, completed in 2015, is 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. These PGIAs are “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.” This study identifies recommendations for transportation improvements, infrastructure investments, and land use and zoning changes that were addressed at the Regional Center Visioning Workshop. More information about the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County may be found on the Somerset County Planning Division's website at <https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/master-plan/thriving-communities>

The results of the visioning session led to the creation of this document known as the Background Report which in itself became the foundation for the Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan. The Regional Center Strategic Plan sets forth the vision for the Regional Center for the next five years and the priority recommendations for allocating resources as they become available to achieve goals expressed in the vision.



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KEY COMPONENTS OF THE BACKGROUND REPORT

This Background Report includes 10 major components. First, **key recommendations** of the Background Report are presented. This section is prefaced with a discussion about health and wellness, resiliency, embracing the Raritan River, and job creation and private sector investment which are the four themes of the Background Report. The balance of this section focuses on specific implementation strategies oriented around seven major focus areas which are foundational to the Regional Center Strategic Plan. The seven focus areas include:

1. downtowns and main streets;
2. redevelopment areas, economic development, and community design;
3. train station areas;
4. neighborhoods and housing;
5. circulation;
6. recreation, open space, greenways, and natural landscapes; and
7. shared services, community facilities, and historic and cultural resources.

The second major component provides **important background information** about the planning and implementation process leading up to the Strategic Plan. Next is an expanded version of the **vision** for the Regional Center for the next five years. Major **opportunities and constraints** facing the Regional Center are then described.

The **key planning issues** for the Regional Center are then presented. The key planning issues are driven by the overriding health and wellness, resiliency, embracing the Raritan River, and job creation and private sector investment themes of the Strategic Plan. The key planning issues include:

- land use;
- development activity;
- community design;
- infrastructure;
- housing;
- circulation;
- environmental resources;
- recreational opportunities;
- community facilities;
- historic resources; and
- cultural resources.

Next, the **goals and objectives** are outlined for each of the aforementioned seven focus areas. An extensive list of **priority projects** for each of these seven focus areas is then provided. **Land use and zoning along municipal borders** is then briefly discussed consisting of a list of geographical areas that may need special attention to address potential or past land use issues along municipal borders; opportunities for joint planning at the municipal borders are also

presented. Lastly, the Background Report discusses **updating the Strategic Plan**, the Strategic Plan's **relationship to other planning initiatives**, and the Regional Center's **relationship to communities outside the Regional Center** is detailed.

It is important to note that, since 2006, each of the three Regional Center towns has adopted their own Natural and Cultural Resource Inventories as part of the Regional Center's Action Plan requirements to achieve Plan Endorsement in 2013 from the State Planning Commission.

THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BACKGROUND REPORT

Themes of the Background Report

Health and Wellness Theme

The Health and Wellness theme is extensive throughout the entire Background Report and embraces a variety of strategies towards fostering the health and well-being of all residents and employees in the Regional Center. These strategies include ways to promote an active lifestyle by providing opportunities for physical activity for residents of all ages. The Background Report contains a wide range of strategies and objectives to achieve health and wellness goals. Examples include using the built environment to increase human mobility by encouraging walking and biking, increasing pedestrian and bicyclist safety, increasing access to the Raritan River Greenway with enhanced pedestrian connections to downtown districts, and working with Healthier Somerset and RWJ/Barnabas Health to increase healthier lifestyles.

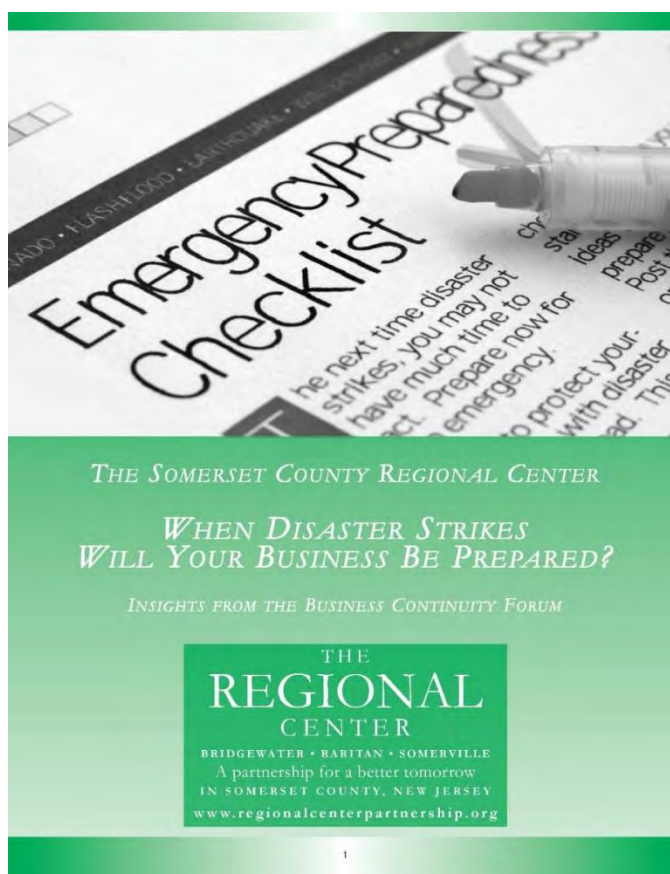
The origin of land use planning has its roots in public health planning. A century ago, planning and zoning initiatives arose in response to the need to protect urban residents from overcrowding, epidemics, and the negative impacts of industrialization. Early planners formulated zoning codes to buffer residential neighborhoods from polluting industries, and sanitary sewers were constructed to help prevent cholera epidemics. Once those strategies proved effective, the focus of planning turned to other quality of life issues and zoning increasingly became focused on the physical environment and was used primarily as a means to protect property values. Today, new trends are compelling planners to increasingly look at the relationship between public health and urban planning. An increasing number of Americans suffer from obesity, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions that can be influenced by the way we live.

According to Dr. Karen Lee, a health and built environment consultant, the U.S. obesity rate has more than doubled in children in the past 30 years. In 2012, one-third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese. Diabetes among adults in New Jersey has increased from less than 4.5% in 1994 to over 8% in 2009. By rethinking the ways communities are designed, planners can help residents lead more active and healthier lives. According to Dr. Lee, under Mayor Bloomberg's healthy living initiative in New York City, childhood obesity trends have been reversed, bicycle travel has increased 126%, and retail sales have increased around pedestrian plazas. Therefore, an overall theme for each of the focus areas in the Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan will be how to incorporate health and wellness and an active lifestyle in achieving the goals and objectives of the Regional Center Strategic Plan¹.

¹<http://www.regionalcenterpartnership.org/PDF-2016/Dr-Karen-Lee-Creating-an-Active-Healthy-Communities-Strategy-for-the-Regional-Center-2016.pdf>

Resiliency Theme

Superstorm Sandy brought into focus the importance of resiliency in response to natural disasters. The Regional Center is in a good position to demonstrate its resiliency which can help to attract businesses because of the Center’s ability to return quickly to normal operations after a natural disaster. The vast majority of the Regional Center is not in a flood prone area or other areas susceptible to natural disasters. Somerset County recently updated its Hazard Mitigation Plan and boasts a long list of ongoing actions and projects in the area of hazard mitigation. The County has a robust Public Information System to disseminate information prior to, during, and after hazard events including a reverse 911 system. The resiliency of the County is an asset that must be taken into consideration in advancing the goals and objectives of the Regional Center Strategic Plan.



Disaster/business continuity planning should be an integral part of every business to allow continued operation when impacted by natural or man-made hazards. It is critically important for a small business to have a business continuity plan. The primary lesson learned from Superstorm Sandy is that “Electricity is King.” With the understanding that small- and medium-sized businesses have great difficulty recovering from a major disaster, the Regional Center organized a program on July 22, 2013 to help prepare a practical, easily implementable strategic plan to deal with major disruptions in operations, transportation of goods and services, power sources, office equipment, business records, building space, and the ability to communicate.

Embracing the Raritan River Theme

A keystone of the Regional Center is the asset of the Raritan River which relates directly to the Regional Center’s health and wellness and economic development goals as well as to Regional Center resiliency efforts. Embracing the Raritan River includes increasing access to the Raritan River Greenway to expand opportunities for physical mobility and recreation. The River’s close proximity to the downtown areas provides a real opportunity to attract more people downtown as they are drawn to the Raritan River through promotional efforts to increase public awareness of the River and its recreational opportunities. Increasing pedestrian access between the River and the downtown areas further supports the local business community and enhancing the vibrancy of the Regional Center’s economy. The proximity of Duke Farms to the Raritan River Greenway further enhances opportunities for bicycle recreation, mobility, and tourism.



Raritan River as seen from Duke Island Park

Job Growth and Private Sector Investment Theme

The Job Growth and Private Sector Investment theme embraces the Background Report’s different but interrelated focus areas including Redevelopment Areas, Economic Development, and Community Design; Train Station Areas; Neighborhoods and Housing; Circulation; Recreation, Open Space and Greenways; and Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources which all relate to and impact the Regional Center’s economic vitality. Strategies that support economic development include marketing the Raritan River as a major tourism amenity with easy access from our downtown districts; addressing circulation issues to increase access to goods and services and the Regional Center’s many quality of life amenities; increasing housing opportunities including workforce housing which allows more

residents to live in the Regional Center who in turn can spend their money on local businesses; and creative placemaking strategies to help draw more people to our downtowns. Advancing the recommendations of the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Initiative and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy are critical to advance the economic development goals of the Regional Center.

Summary of recommendations for the seven focus areas

Downtowns and Main Streets

Continue to promote the revitalization of each downtown and Main Street area through planning initiatives, and special financing and business assistance mechanisms.



West Main Street, Somerville

Redevelopment Areas, Economic Development and Community Design

Ensure that redevelopment areas are redeveloped with the following key principles: Utilize the redevelopment process to encourage economic development and desirable reuse of former brownfield sites; ensure that redevelopment areas, whenever possible, are tied closely to the fabric of existing downtowns and Main Street areas; provide public access through each redevelopment area and connections to all greenways and open space; and ensure that redevelopment planning takes into account the community context of each site and provides connections to the surrounding neighborhood.

Economic leadership and development can be enhanced through implementation of an innovation district, such as Verizon’s Smart Communities program for example. Innovation districts are concentrations of economic activity built upon a community’s existing economic

strengths. Verizon's Smart Communities is an example of a corporate program that helps communities with initiatives such as intelligent traffic management, intelligent street lighting, and intelligent video surveillance.

Community design should take into consideration active design principals that encourage physical activity such as walking and bicycle usage in order to promote the health and wellness goals of the Regional Center Strategic Plan.

Train Station Areas

Promote increased ridership and reduced traffic congestion and parking impacts at train stations through the use of innovative redevelopment and transportation strategies. Installation of a bike depot should be pursued at Somerville Station to encourage increased commuting by bicycle and train.

Neighborhoods and Housing

Protect community character by adopting neighborhood plans that address circulation, connections, community facilities, land use, and parks and recreation. Adopt design standards for infill residential development where appropriate. Provide a greater range of housing choices and affordability in the Regional Center. Ensure that housing and access opportunities are available for seniors.

Circulation

Improve the walkability and bicycle-friendliness of the Regional Center through improved design. Reduce congestion on roadways by retrofitting highway corridors, improving access management, and improving traffic signal efficiencies. Reduce speeding through traffic calming measures. Provide an enhanced level of transit service. Provide for goods movement through roadway planning. Encourage a multi-modal system that incorporates all forms of motorized and non-motorized movement.

Recreation, Open Space, Greenways and Natural Landscapes

Acquire land for the Raritan River Greenway and develop the greenway for public access with strong connections to the Regional Center's neighborhoods, central areas, local greenways, conservation areas and open space. Improve environmental regulations, including storm water management techniques, and incorporate best management practices.



Peters Brook Greenway

Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources

Explore the possibilities for shared service agreements in parks and recreation and other areas such as public works, administration, and public safety. Develop regional community facilities and services to promote recreation and cultural activities. Encourage preservation and use of historical resources.

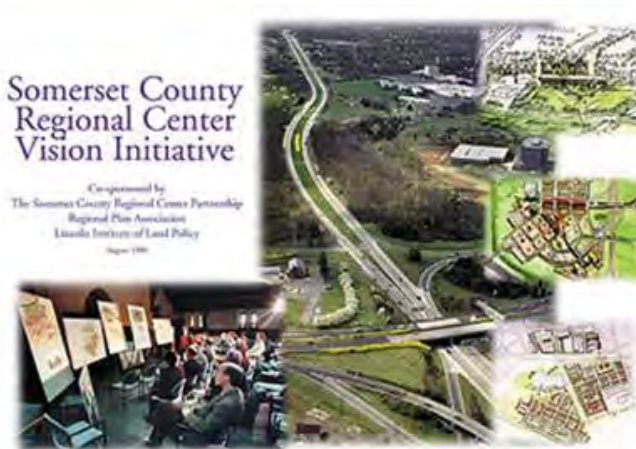


Bridgewater Municipal Complex

ABOUT THE PLANNING PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

In 1996, the Regional Center became the first multi-jurisdictional region to receive “center designation” from the New Jersey State Planning Commission. Since the designation in 1996, the boundaries of the Regional Center have been altered to respond to new local priorities regarding development and redevelopment. The current boundaries encompass 12.6 square miles including all of Raritan, all of Somerville and the “Bridgewater Core” area which includes the Bridgewater Commons, the Sixth Avenue Redevelopment Area, the Bridgewater municipal complex, Somerset Corporate Center, Finderne Avenue area, and Vanderhaven Farms development. A graphic depiction is provided in Figure 2, Regional Center Base Map.

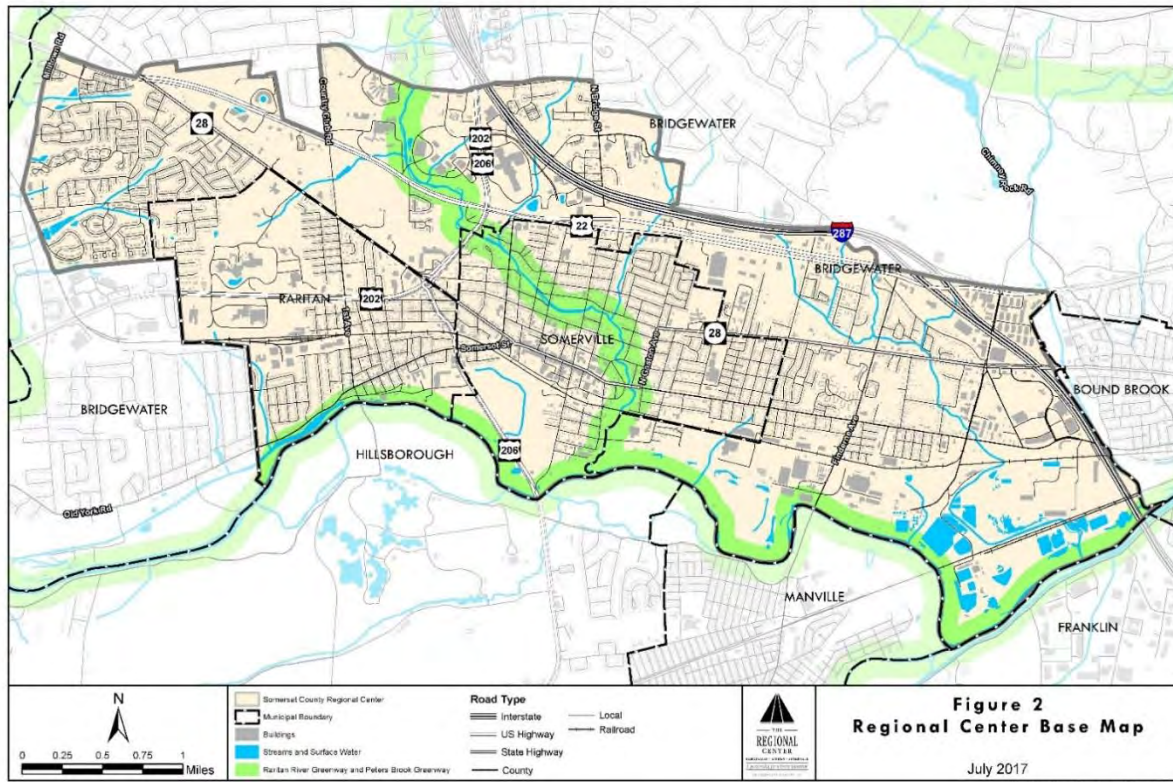
The foundation for the Strategic Plan was laid in 1999, when a five-day workshop was held to develop a unified vision for the Regional Center. That vision addressed design, transportation, and policy to create a consensus image of the Regional Center 20 years into the future.



Regional Center Vision Initiative, 1999

The strategic planning process has involved multiple stages. The initial phase consisted of an extensive and multifaceted public participation process over a six-month period. The process included a community questionnaire, public meetings/workshops, stakeholder interviews, and the Regional Center Partnership website.

A Strategic Master Plan Issues Report released in March, 2002 revisited the initial vision and recommended some modifications. The 12 major issues detailed in the 2002 Issues Report included: land use, circulation, parks, open space and recreation, community design, conservation, housing, redevelopment, economic development, quality of life/neighborhoods, community facilities, cultural resources, and policy.



The next phase in the strategic planning process included working with the Regional Center communities to develop the Regional Center Strategic Draft Plan in November, 2002. This plan addressed broader Regional Center issues and recommended implementation agendas for the Regional Center as a single entity. Seven major focus areas for future planning attention were proposed and included downtowns and main streets; redevelopment areas, economic development and community design; train station areas; neighborhoods and housing; circulation; recreation, open space, and natural systems; and shared services, community facilities, and historic and cultural resources.

In June, 2005, the Regional Center Partnership hosted a planning retreat to chart a New Action Agenda. Following the retreat, the decision was made to revisit the Regional Center Strategic Draft Plan. The purpose of the review was to update the plan, confirm priorities and add some new important sections including a detailed analysis of land uses and zoning along the municipal borders and recommendations about joint planning opportunities.

The updated Draft Regional Center Strategic Plan was released in November 2006 as a final plan. The Plan identified a number of implementation strategies for the Regional Center. For each implementation strategy, an agency, schedule and funding source were identified. The goal was that, by following through on the implementation strategies, those agencies, including the Regional Center Partnership, State, County, and municipal governments, would help bring the vision into fruition.

Since 2006, much has been accomplished including:

- Achieving Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission certifying that the Regional Center met the requirements to maintain “Regional Center” designation for the next ten years and giving further recognition to the Somerset County Regional Center as the state model for multi-jurisdictional cooperative regional planning;
- Completion of the Route 22 Short-term safety improvements;
- Construction of the Route 22 and Chimney Rock Road interchange;
- Implementing Route 28 corridor improvements;
- Expansion of the Raritan River Greenway;
- Construction of the Peters Brook Greenway Pedestrian Bridge over Routes 202-206 between Somerville and Bridgewater;
- Award-winning Sustainable Raritan River initiatives;
- Administration of the Regional Center Challenge Grant program which has supported such projects as the award-winning visioning and redevelopment plans for the Somerville Landfill, neighborhood sanitary sewer problem analysis studies, economic development plans, and design plans for Peters Brook Greenway and important sidewalk linkages.

There have also been major changes that have occurred over the past decade that have impacted the Regional Center including major shifts in land use patterns, new priorities created by the Millennial generation, the Great Recession of 2008, and natural catastrophes like Superstorm Sandy, all requiring a greater resiliency on local and regional levels.

2015 Visioning Session

In light of these changes and the need to help keep the Regional Center a competitive component of Somerset County, in 2015, the Regional Center Partnership knew that it was time to revisit and update the 2006 Regional Center Strategic Master Plan. In September, 2015 the Regional Center Partnership held a “Visioning Session” at the Somerset County Park Commission Headquarters with participants from the Partnership Board and key stakeholders. The purpose of the visioning workshop was to recognize major accomplishments, to highlight the major changes that have occurred, and to chart an action agenda of priorities and initiatives for the next five years. The specific objectives were to determine the current priorities and issues on which the Regional Center Partnership should focus its resources. Key considerations are the Regional Center communities’ relationship to the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County initiative.

The workshop was facilitated by Courtenay Mercer, New Jersey Director for Regional Plan Association (RPA), who delivered a presentation about RPA’s *Fragile Success* study that describes the vulnerability of the New York metropolitan region which includes Somerset County, and 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.

RPA's presentation was followed by Somerset County Planning Board's presentation about how the Regional Center can greatly benefit in terms of strategic planning through the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County initiative. Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County is a study that in Phase 1 compiled background data and detailed existing conditions reports that describe the characteristics of each of 24 Priority Growth Investment Areas (PGIAs) in Somerset County that were identified through the Somerset County Investment Framework, a criteria-based approach for identifying areas most suitable for growth and preservation in the County. As explained during the presentation, the goal of Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Phases 2 and 3 is to create a framework to support growth, redevelopment and sustainable communities in Somerset County, and advance the goals of the County's Investment Framework and the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan (CEDS) which is a blueprint created as a joint effort with the Somerset County Business Partnership for economic growth in Somerset County. (The Regional Center is the largest of the 24 PGIAs; other PGIAs in Somerset County near the Regional Center include the Chimney Rock Interchange Area; Sanofi Aventis; the Boroughs of Bound Brook and South Bound Brook; Manville Town Center; Hillsborough Town Center/Gateway; and Raritan Valley Community College/Easton Turnpike in Branchburg.)

Following the presentations, the participants in the Visioning Session broke into focus groups for the breakout session. The main topics for the breakout sessions were Transportation Linkages; Economic Competitiveness; and Recreation, Tourism and Health. The session outlined issues to be addressed in the next five years to 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 recreate.

Some of the key results of the workshop identified 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.

In 2016, the process began to revise and update the Regional Center plan.

VISION

Over the next five years, the Regional Center will be gradually transformed to repair natural and manmade connective systems, improve the community design aspects of the built environment to further health and wellness-related goals, sustain residential neighborhoods, and enhance community life.

The Regional Center's location alongside the Raritan River and amid numerous streams provides a unique opportunity to increase human contact with water. Enhancements within the Regional Center will continue to help protect and restore its riparian ecosystems and will simultaneously provide access to the water for people to recreate. Waterways connect communities as corridors, providing alternate means to help facilitate the movement of people. They will connect the Region to its past by improving access to and knowledge of historic sites. Their role as places of migration and interaction for plant and animal species will be restored.

The Regional Center contains a robust, multi-modal network of transportation options that will facilitate the movement of people and goods. Strategic roadway improvements such as the intersections of First Avenue and Route 202 and First Avenue and Johnson Drive in Raritan Borough will reduce traffic congestion, diminishing the amount of time that individuals must spend in their cars. The Regional Center is a thriving economic center where people of all ages and abilities choose to walk and bicycle to work, school, shopping areas, and parks. People walk and bicycle with confidence, safety and security on a green, continuous and convenient network of community pathways, on- and off-road, that are seamlessly connected with transit. A shared bicycle program will encourage increased bicycle usage. Redesigned streetscapes on both main streets and state highways will provide a pleasing aesthetic experience for travelers in cars and buses, on bicycles, and on foot.



Sgt. Andrew Lobosco Pedestrian Bridge, Somerville - Bridgewater

Appropriate space will be allotted in the Regional Center's circulation network to all modes of transportation. Complete streets will enable people to feel safe walking to commercial uses, schools, and their neighbor's homes. Bicycling along the Raritan River and Peter's Brook Greenway and along streets will be safe and common. New connections and pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists across and along Route U.S. 202 will provide access to employment and retail centers.

Mass transit connections to the Newark - New York area will be enhanced and rail connections to Philadelphia will be reinstated. Train stations will become mixed-used focal points becoming centers of activity and attracting additional ridership from all parts of the Regional Center.

Office parks and retail shopping areas will be connected to population centers by off-street walkways and bikeways. Mass transit will also serve office parks and retail shopping areas which will be designed to be walkable. Trucks will use appropriate roadways, and will be directed away from residential areas. Traffic calming measures and vehicular circulation will be designed to provide a safe pedestrian environment. Frequent mass transit service including a possible shuttle service or other para-transit services will allow for better access throughout the Regional Center. Access to office parks will be altered to improve their connections to other parts of the Regional Center.

The adaptive reuse of existing buildings and places will foster a heightened sense of community throughout the Regional Center. New infill development and redevelopment of vacant or underutilized sites will continue to strengthen downtown Somerville and Raritan, making them even more desirable places to live, work, and play. In Bridgewater, the Finderne Main Street area will continue to be revitalized and the Sanofi-Aventis campus will be redeveloped into a vibrant mixed use community.



Marriott Hotel, Bridgewater

The Regional Center will continue to offer high quality employment opportunities, hosting a large variety of major corporations, and a multitude of local and regional businesses. Major employment, office and business uses, and retail opportunities will concentrate in this area. Large scale business uses will continue to be concentrated along the major highway corridors (Routes 22, 202 and 206) and within the "Golden Triangle" area of Bridgewater which includes the Bridgewater Commons, Bridgewater Marriott Hotel, Bridgewater Crossings, Somerset Corporate Center, and AC Hotel Marriott and Lifetime Fitness center (under construction).

The downtowns of Raritan and Somerville will see new business growth, brownfield and grayfield redevelopment and economic revitalization appropriate to the historic characters of these areas and compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. The Regional Center's downtowns, Main Streets and train station areas will be vibrant places of commerce, entertainment, high-density housing, and work. Downtown Somerville and Raritan, and the Finderne CBD area, will be revitalized and enhanced by facade and streetscape improvements.

Residential neighborhoods throughout the Regional Center will be strengthened as the heart of the community. Workforce housing will become commonplace adding to the diversity of housing choices. New neighborhood plans will ensure that physical changes to the neighborhoods will be thoughtful and will respect the character of these communities. Streets and pathways, which constitute much of the public space in these neighborhoods, will be enhanced. New, safer connections for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians will ensure the harmonious coexistence of multiple users of the neighborhoods' public space.



Southside Neighborhood, Somerville

The Regional Center will become known for its promotion of health and wellness and sustainability. An active living style will be promoted and encouraged leading to a healthier population. Health and safety issues will be incorporated into comprehensive planning resulting in decreased stress and improved mental health for residents. Residents will be comfortable in their surroundings and become engaged in interpersonal networks contributing to the social capital of the Regional Center. Sustainability goals will be advanced by endorsing responsible environmental management and conservation and supporting local economies and community resources. Groups such as Healthier Somerset, Somerset County Partners for Sustainability, and the Green Leadership Hub will help lead the way in these initiatives.

The recommendations of the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County initiative will be advanced so that the Regional Center realizes its full potential as a Priority Growth Investment Area. This

potential will be enhanced by linkages to and coordination with important facilities which are complementary to the goals of the Regional Center but are located just outside of the Regional Center such as Duke Farms, Brook Theatre and Washington Valley Park. These initiatives will contribute to the vibrant connections/vibrant communities branding of the Regional Center. The message of the Regional Center as the dynamic, active and vibrant economic nucleus of Somerset and surrounding counties will be promoted on a regular basis. The resiliency of the Regional Center to respond to natural disasters, terroristic acts and economic downturns will also be promoted. Somerville's award-winning Severe Weather policy Statement and Sustainability Initiatives is an example of this.

The Regional Center will continue to be a place of innovative cooperation between its member municipalities. The municipal and county governments will continue to seek out and implement ways to share services and facilities, thereby achieving higher levels of service to residents at a lower cost than they could achieve on their own. A joint community center may be explored to provide recreational, artistic, and cultural opportunities within the Regional Center. Historic resources will also be preserved so that they can be appreciated and understood by future generations.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Competitive Strengths

- Overall, the Regional Center is highly successful as a retail destination. Downtown Somerville has been revitalized over the last two decades and has become renowned for its restaurants and shopping. The Bridgewater Commons Mall has retained its position as the preeminent shopping center in Central New Jersey. The Bridgewater Promenade is a very successful retail destination. Raritan Borough, however, continues to struggle to attract new businesses to the downtown area; yet Raritan has much potential given the close proximity of Raritan’s downtown to the Raritan River Greenway and Duke Farms, the Raritan Train Station, walkable neighborhoods, opportunities for in-fill development, and convenient access to major highways including Routes 202, 206 and 28.
- Continued housing growth and active redevelopment areas confirm the Regional Center’s desirability as a place to live and work. The Somerset Corporate Center with five Class A office buildings offering more than one million square feet of office space has recently attracted major new tenants despite the substantial surplus of Class A office space in New Jersey.
- Vacant and underutilized land, including many brownfields and grayfields sites, at strategic locations in Somerville and Raritan, and along highway corridors, gives the Regional Center a wealth of opportunities for future growth.
- The Regional Center has superior transportation connections to the New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia regions. Well-established highway and rail networks give residents and businesses options for making connections to the broader region.
- Three train stations give residents of the Regional Center easy access to New York and other destinations in Northern New Jersey and provide Regional Center employers with access to a broader work force than is available locally. Limited one seat ride service to New York City is now available without the need to change trains. The stations also provide key focal points for transit-oriented redevelopment that can help to reduce the Regional Center’s reliance on the automobile and provide alternative living options.
- The presence of the Raritan River gives the Regional Center an identifying landmark and ready access to unique natural environments. The river’s many tributaries provide opportunities for re-connecting Regional Center neighborhoods with greenways to enhance the quality of life.
- The Regional Center has a strong core of established neighborhoods. The sense of community in the neighborhoods forms a solid basis for future planning and helps to ensure the continued viability of these residential areas.



Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset

- Somerset Medical Center merging with Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital of New Brunswick strengthens the medical community in the Regional Center. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset is a nationally accredited 355-bed regional medical center with one of the highest percentages of board-certified doctors in New Jersey.
- As the seat of County Government and the County Superior Court System, Somerville hosts a number of legal firms that have expertise in every practice area.
- A satellite campus of Raritan Valley Community College is located within the Regional Center and includes a Small Business Development Center providing training courses and services to small businesses in all industries.
- Two out of the three municipal libraries (Bridgewater and Somerville) now belong to the Somerset County Library System.
- The region is a pharmaceutical hub for R & D, office and technical education.



Somerset County Court House

- The long history of cooperation among the Regional Center’s three constituent municipalities has given the Regional Center a legacy of mutual trust that provides a platform for even greater cooperation in the future. Governments in the Region have shown a willingness to work together that is unmatched in New Jersey, resulting in enhanced services at a lower cost for residents and businesses. Clearly, the Somerset County Regional Center remains a model in the state of New Jersey for multi-jurisdictional planning coordination to address common quality-of-life issues.

Obstacles

- Getting around the Regional Center is frustrating for drivers stuck in congestion and in many places can be nearly impossible for those without cars. Road congestion and traffic volumes have increased beyond the design capacity of the highways. The Center must find ways to provide more transportation options within the context of its well-established low-and-moderate-density overall development patterns.
- A number of commercial and industrial sites within the Regional Center constitute potential brownfield and grayfield sites. While offering opportunities for growth, these sites also require special attention if they are to be redeveloped in a manner that complements the surrounding area. Strategies are needed for reusing these sites in a way that enhances community life.

- The Regional Center’s train stations generate considerable automobile traffic from commuters, which can create congestion within neighborhoods surrounding the stations. Additional transportation options are needed to reduce automobile trips to the stations.
- Sprawling growth within the Regional Center has led to an increased reliance on the automobile and longer distances between home, work, and shopping. Compact models of development are needed to provide alternative approaches for short term growth and, in the long run, to retrofit existing areas of commercial sprawl.
- Brownfield sites limit access to the Raritan River waterfront. The Regional Center must identify strategies and funding sources for cleaning up these sites and reusing them in appropriate ways.
- As the Regional Center and surrounding areas continue to develop, pressure to increase the intensity of development will present challenges. It must be ensured that infill development, even when proposed at higher densities, is well designed and compatible with existing residential neighborhoods. To address issues such as this, for the past 20 years the Regional Center has successfully implemented a cooperative and coordinated planning approach to address regional issues, as demonstrated by the Regional Center Partnership (RCP) in which each town, the County and other agencies share information with each other at regular RCP meetings. The three Regional Center towns have also successfully implemented the Interlocal Policy Agreement for Planning Coordination in which each town requires a set of plans for projects of regional significance located near municipal borders to be shared with the adjoining municipality.

KEY ISSUES

Land Use

A variety of land uses exist in the Regional Center, as depicted in Figure 3 Regional Center Generalized Land Use Map. A significant portion of the Regional Center is comprised by residential uses. Much of this residential is located adjacent to key commercial areas including downtown Raritan and Somerville, the Bridgewater Commons Mall, and the Finderne Avenue commercial area. In addition, many residential areas are bisected by major roadways with commercial uses along their frontage such as Routes 22, 28, 202, and Somerset Street in Raritan.

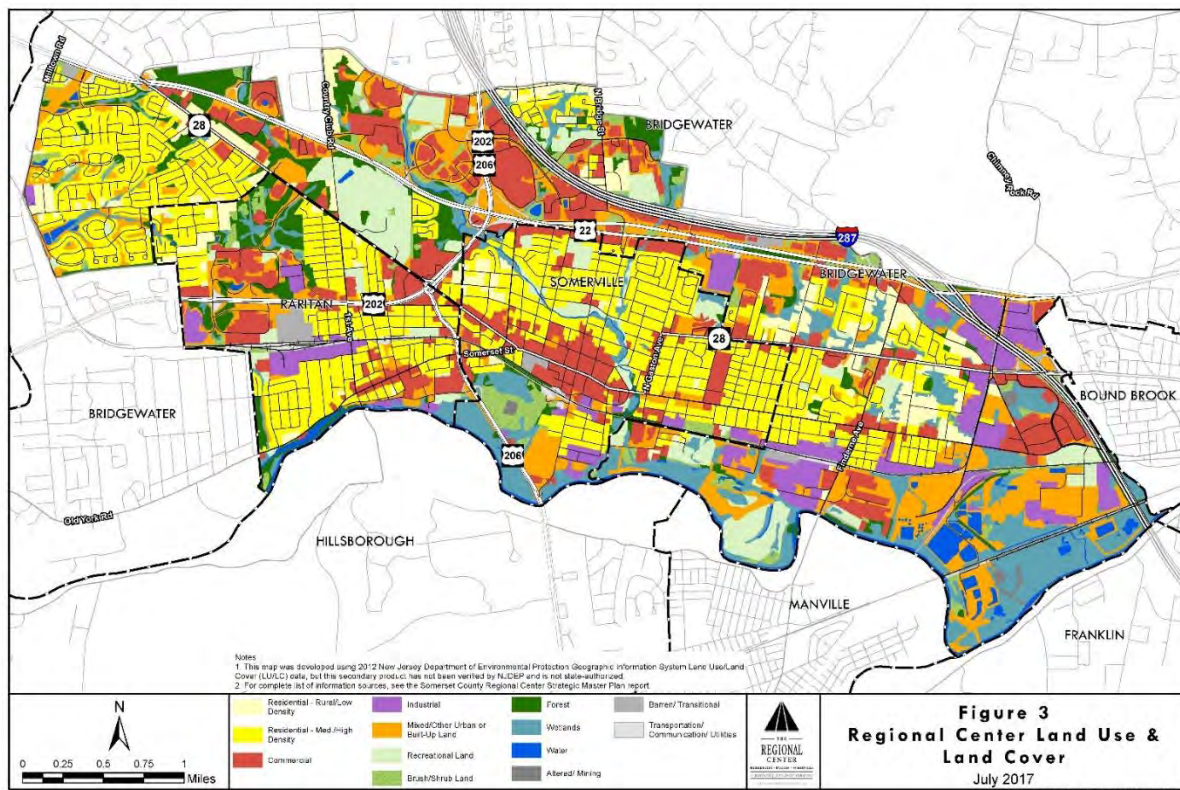


Figure 3 – Regional Center Generalized Land Use

Industrial uses dominate the southwest and southeast portion of the Regional Center and include key sites such as Johnson Drive, Henkel and Akzo Nobel et al at the former National Starch Campus, BRI Recycling, and Wyeth. A number of these sites are brownfield sites proposed for redevelopment.

Also located in the southeast portion of the Regional Center in Bridgewater are the Promenade Mall and the TD Bank Ball Park, which is an important recreational resource for the region. The Torpey Athletic Complex is another main recreational resource located adjacent to

the Raritan River. Other parks and open space areas are located throughout the Regional Center. Greenways, such as Peters Brook corridor, provide important connections between neighborhoods and key sites.

Institutional and government uses, like Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset, Bridgewater-Raritan High School, and Somerset County offices, are located throughout the Regional Center.



Main Street, Somerville

Bridgewater, Raritan and Somerville face very similar issues as a result of the existing common land use pattern. A key challenge in the past for all the communities was preserving the character of existing residential areas from nearby commercial and industrial uses. While this needs to be considered in future land use decisions, this is no longer a major issue largely through the implementation of a memorandum of understanding for inter-municipal planning coordination. Another shared challenge is integrating important government and institutional uses into existing neighborhoods. A common land use issue in the Regional Center continues to be traffic congestion and circulation issues. Access and mobility issues within and through the Regional Center remains a top planning priority by all three municipalities. More mobility options including enhanced bicycle and pedestrian opportunities are needed. Another common land use issue shared by the communities is enhancing access opportunities to the Raritan River and other important open space and natural areas. Hazard mitigation and resiliency planning are also of concern.



Raritan Power Canal Pedestrian Bridge

Land use patterns after the Great Recession have shifted with a greater attention toward urban centers (especially Somerville) with higher density housing and mixed uses. There is also a greater demand for walkable communities and bicycling. At the same time dramatic events like the Great Recession and Superstorm Sandy illustrate the need for greater resiliency at the local and regional levels.

This strategic plan recommends a number of opportunities for the communities to work together to resolve common land use issues. One key opportunity is undertaking joint neighborhood plans. These plans could recommend ways to enhance buffering between conflicting uses such as residential areas that are located adjacent to either commercial uses or industrial sites. Joint neighborhood plans could also provide recommendations on how to better integrate institutional uses within residential areas and enhance linkages to open space areas and recreational sites. The Regional Center communities should also work on joint studies that examine the major connectors between the towns and neighborhoods including major corridors and greenways.

Development Activity

The Regional Center has experienced a significant level of multi-family residential and commercial development activity during the last decade. This activity includes residential infill and office and commercial development. New developments in Bridgewater have been constructed or proposed on previously vacant and underutilized land in the Bridgewater Core, the West Gateway, and the East Gateway. In Somerville, downtown revitalization has resulted in increased mixed-use projects consisting of commercial and office activity. Recent development activity in Somerville has included multi-family residential uses. Raritan Borough has not experienced the same downtown revitalization as Somerville. The build-out of prime development sites is forcing developers to look at more challenging locations, both inside and outside the Regional Center.

Roadway improvements projects such as the Route 22/Chimney Rock Road grade-separated interchange are already having major economic impacts on the region as demonstrated by the emerging Chimney Rock Crossing commercial projects located along Route 22 West and Chimney Rock Road just north of the Route 22/Chimney Rock Road interchange. The new Chimney Rock Crossing East project consists of more than 130,000 square feet of new commercial space and Chimney Rock Crossing West consists of more than 84,000 square feet of new commercial space.

Another significant commercial project near the Regional Center is the proposed “Bridgewater Commercial Enterprise Development” representing more than 44,000 square feet of new commercial space along Route 202 North just west of Raritan Borough and opposite the Bridgewater Town Center commercial center. New retail has also been constructed in downtown Somerville as part of the Somerville Town Center redevelopment project and some smaller retail projects have been proposed in Raritan Borough along Route 202, Route 206 and the Somerville Circle.

The trend for once single-tenant users of sprawling office campuses like the former National Starch and Sanofi R&D campuses are now becoming multi-tenant. In some cases, Bridgewater amended its zoning to help address the high office use vacancy rates in Somerset County and northern New Jersey. As documented in Bridgewater Township’s Master Plan Amendment to the Land Use Element adopted December 16, 2016 (pp 10-11), the challenges for maintaining a robust office community is difficult since Somerset County and New Jersey lag behind in occupied office buildings (New Jersey vacancy rates for office use: 17%; Somerset County’s vacancy rates for office use: 23%). This has required amending the zoning to permit the type of expanded uses to meet the needs and desires of the corporate community. Bridgewater Township applied this strategy by amending the M-1 zoning to permit expanded uses at Somerset Corporate Center, one of the largest office complexes in Somerset County and the Regional Center, representing more than 1 million square feet of Class-A office space in five existing buildings. A sixth building was approved but was not constructed. The Township amended the zoning to permit –as described in the Bridgewater Township Master Plan Amendment to the Land Use Element –a regional corporate hotel and a “center for health and well-being,” citing the findings contained in the Rutgers, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy publication *Somerset County Development Opportunities, A Millennial Perspective*, which offers recommendations to further opportunities to improve the quality of life not only for residents but also corporate tenants in the Regional Center.

The former Sanofi R&D facility (now New Jersey Center of Excellence) located just outside of the Regional Center on Route 202-206 is permitting multiple tenants to utilize what for decades had been a single-tenant facility. The Township designated the former Sanofi campus a “non-condemnation” area in need of redevelopment pursuant to the NJ Local Redevelopment and Housing Law as part of the effort to repurpose and attract investment.

The trend in the Regional Center continues to indicate a strong market for transit-oriented development and in-fill redevelopment. Evidence of this includes Raritan Borough’s designation of the Third Street industrial and residential area as an area in need of redevelopment to foster a

TOD residential project located one block from the Raritan Train Station; and Somerville’s numerous TOD projects within Somerville’s designated redevelopment areas; e.g., Eastern Central Business District redevelopment area, West Main Street redevelopment area, and the “Station” part of the Landfill and Station redevelopment area.

In 2017, health service providers including Hunterdon Healthcare and Hunterdon Medical Center submitted three land use proposals to utilize existing vacant buildings previously used as a bank, restaurant or office use at different locations along Route 22 West in Bridgewater; the projects have since been completed are now open. In addition, plans for medical office space have been proposed along Route 22 East in Bridgewater between Adamsville Road and Finderne Avenue a part of a mixed-use project. Also, as previously noted, a holistic wellness facility and a regional corporate hotel with penthouse restaurant and a separate ground-level restaurant) have been approved for construction at Somerset Corporate Center.

Residential Development

Most of the Regional Center developed as a suburban bedroom community on the edge of the New York, Newark, and New Brunswick metropolitan areas, with much development occurring in the early to mid-20th century. In the 1990’s, substantial multifamily development



Suburban Residential Development, Bridgewater

occurred on remaining vacant lands in western Bridgewater (Vanderhaven Farms) and, more recently, in the center of Somerville. The residential areas of the Center are essentially built, with no large tracts of unconstrained land remaining for large-scale residential development. Raritan, Somerville, and, to a lesser extent, the Finderne section of Bridgewater, all have areas of relatively dense housing in compact grid forms. The rest of Bridgewater consists mainly of low-density residential development with a rural-suburban character as well as higher density multi-family housing also with suburban characteristics.

Since the 1980s, there has been an increased demand for housing in the area as a result of extensive office development in Bridgewater as well as the increase in County government facilities in Somerville. As most residential lands are currently built to capacity, development pressure on existing low-density developed sites is increasing. There are also increasing pressures and opportunities for new residential development as former brownfield sites are developed with higher density residential units in stand-alone or mixed-used projects. Increased demand is being given to areas in proximity of train stations especially since the introduction of limited one seat ride service to New York City.

The pressure for infill development presents opportunities to redesign communities so that they are more functional, but it also brings potential problems such as increased traffic and a loss of open space. The Regional Center is faced with the challenge of balancing the goals of providing more housing while preserving the area’s existing suburban character.

The Regional Center Partnership and its stakeholders have expressed a strong desire to promote neighborhood plans in established residential areas of Bridgewater, Somerville, and Raritan. These neighborhood plans would ensure that important issues such as community design, circulation, parks, recreation, community facilities, and connections to other parts of the Regional Center are addressed.

Nonresidential Development

The Regional Center is home to extensive commercial, office, industrial, and government development. Changes in nonresidential development patterns have occurred through the years. Retail development, for example, changed dramatically in the 1980s when the Bridgewater Commons Mall opened, and it changed again in the late 1990s when big-box superstores were constructed on former industrial and office sites in eastern Bridgewater (Bridgewater Promenade) and western Bridgewater (Bridgewater Town Center). These and newer projects such as Chimney Rock Crossing will continue to alter how area residents shop and have created shifts in traffic patterns which impact the area’s roadways.



Chimney Rock Crossing West under construction in April 2017

Government and hospital operations have also steadily expanded in Somerville, providing job growth. In Bridgewater and Raritan, meanwhile, large industrial properties remain vacant or underutilized. On some sites, new industrial uses have been found for old buildings. For other sites, such as the Pfizer/Wyeth site (American Cyanamid), substantial cleanup and large-scale redevelopment planning continues to be needed.



Bridgewater Promenade

Planning is needed to address the repositioning and re-use of vacant or underutilized buildings. Examples include how the former National Starch complex is now occupied by multiple tenants including Henkel and Akzo-Nobel. Another example is how Bridgewater Township has modified their local land use zoning ordinance to allow complementary uses at the Somerset Corporate Center (e.g., permit a regional wellness center and a regional corporate hotel); and to permit multiple tenants in the former Sanofi R&D facility (New Jersey Center of Excellence). In several cases former industrial and warehouse buildings have been reutilized for sports training. Examples include Zoned baseball/softball training, Hoop Heaven, and Absolute Fencing.



Example of reuse of a former industrial building at Middlebrook Crossroads Industrial Park, Bridgewater

Redevelopment

New development in all three towns is expected to be primarily accommodated via redevelopment and rehabilitation. This is due in part to larger economic trends and the fact that the Regional Center area is essentially built to capacity. The Regional Center has a large concentration of industrial and corporate office space. Redeveloping these areas is and will continue to be a key common planning challenge. As depicted in the following Figure 4 Regional Center Redevelopment, Economic Development, and Community Design Areas Map, each community has a number of key sites proposed for redevelopment.

Raritan began this process with the redevelopment of the Raritan Woolen Mills into River Park at Raritan. The Borough amended its zoning to permit development of high-density multi-family housing on this site, which includes a low-and-moderate income housing component. This key infill site is currently built and occupied.

Another redevelopment project in Raritan is the Stone Bridge at Raritan redevelopment project on Route 202 North and Tillman Street. The project is on the site of the former Federal Steel industrial site. Approved in 2012, Stone Bridge at Raritan has been fully built and consists of 363 non-age-restricted apartments, including 73 affordable units specially designed to accommodate veterans with physical disabilities.



The Lena (formerly known as River Park at Raritan)

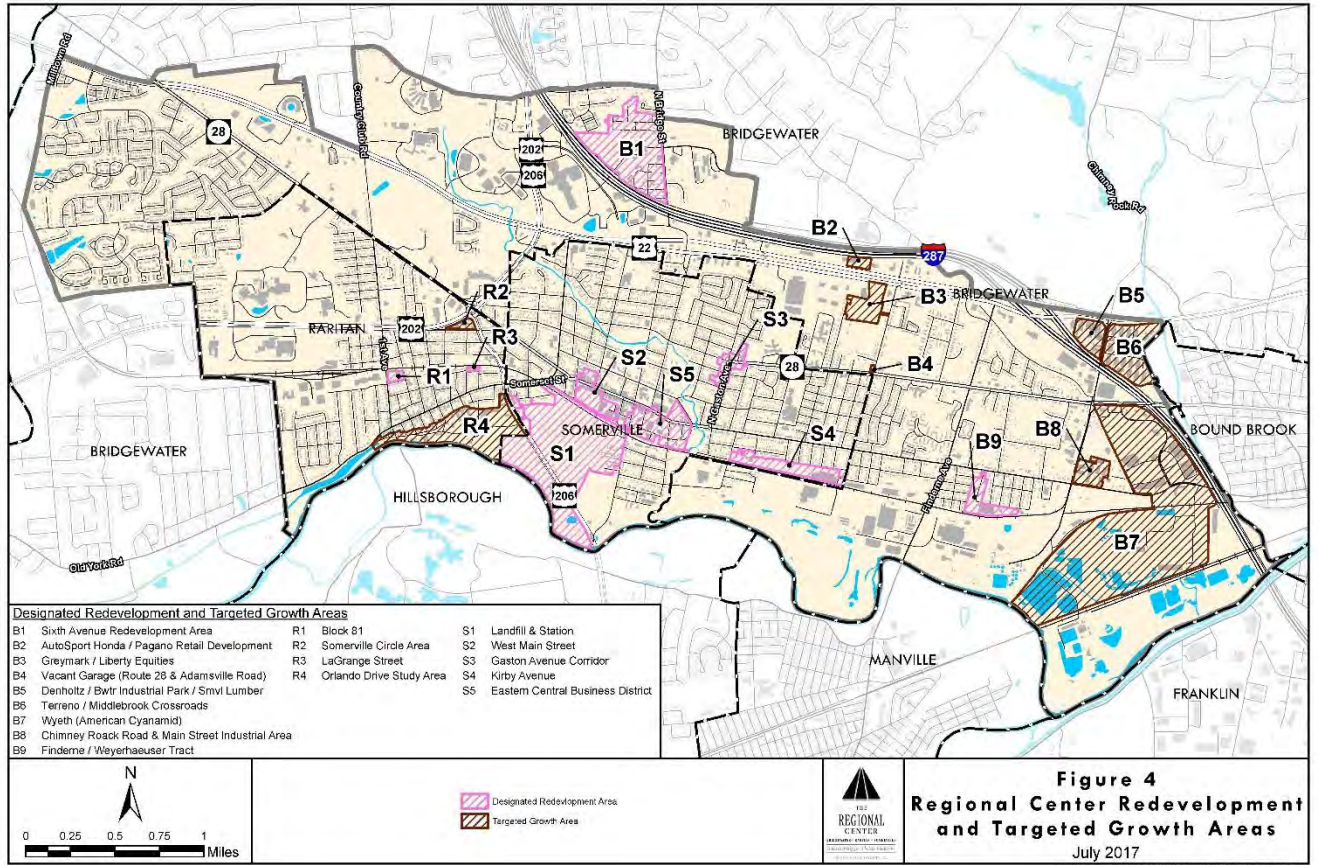
However, other older industrial sites remain in the Borough, particularly along Orlando Drive and Johnson Drive and are likely to be redeveloped in the future. The Raritan Train Station area including the area bounded by First and Second Avenues and Third Street and the railroad was recently designated as an area in need of redevelopment pursuant to the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law.



Stone Bridge at Raritan

Similarly, Somerville has been actively planning for redevelopment in a number of areas including: Eastern Central Business District featuring the recently constructed Cobalt Apartments; West Main Street redevelopment area which includes the new ShopRite, Somerville Town Center, and new residential projects near the north side of West Main Street; Kirby Avenue redevelopment area where 179 market-rate apartments are proposed on the former Litgo tract; North Gaston Avenue corridor; and, the largest of all, the Somerville Landfill and Station redevelopment area. While the Borough has particular goals specific to each redevelopment area, they are cognizant of the interrelationships between them and are taking steps to incorporate each redevelopment area into the larger planning framework for the municipality as a whole.

Bridgewater is also tackling the issue of deciding how to best reuse former industrial space. In Finderne, a redevelopment plan was adopted in June, 2015 for the former Weyerhaeuser Tract which includes 220 apartments, a community center, swimming pool, and pocket park. The Pfizer/Wyeth site is a prime example of large scale redevelopment potential. Although redevelopment of this site is not expected for several years, the Township is actively involved in the long-term plans for the redevelopment of this site. Outside of the Regional Center, the redevelopment of the Sanofi site as the New Jersey Center of Excellence is a well-documented redevelopment initiative that significantly contributes to the economic vitality of the region.



Cobalt Apartments in Somerville under construction in 2016



Somerville Town Center

These redevelopment opportunities all have the potential to become a showpiece for innovative redevelopment planning. Together they could transform the Regional Center. Overseeing the planning process for these sites is a major issue facing each Regional Center community.

Community Design

The objective of improving community design is one of the major issues facing the Regional Center in the coming decades. In its function, the Regional Center has changed dramatically since the 1970s. But these functional changes have, for the most part, not been reflected in the Regional Center’s approach to physical design. Most new development in the past 20+ years continued to occur in sprawling patterns of single-use “pods” for housing, office, or retail, with little mixing or attention to the interrelations between different elements. This development pattern has resulted in attractive and well-maintained low-density residential neighborhoods throughout the Regional Center, but it is less desirable when it is applied to denser residential developments or to nonresidential projects such as shopping centers and office parks. This current development pattern also serves to limit the potential for providing increased public transit opportunities throughout the Regional Center. In recent years, more mixed-use projects have been proposed and built largely in the form of infill redevelopment and TOD type projects.



Residential area, Bridgewater

The challenge for the Regional Center over the coming years is to retrofit existing suburban patterns where necessary while preserving the core central areas of downtown Somerville and Raritan as the primary “centers-within-the-Center.” The Route 22 Sustainable Corridor Long-Term Improvement project, the Somerville–Raritan Streetscape Connection, and proposed alterations to campus-style developments along major highway corridors are all efforts to incorporate design changes into the suburban setting of the Regional Center.

Regional Center stakeholders have repeatedly expressed a desire for mixed-use, compact development patterns that permit greater community interaction and reduce the area’s reliance on the automobile. Over the long run, opportunities to redevelop existing big-box retail sites, office complexes, and regional shopping centers will present themselves as these developments age. The Regional Center communities should be prepared to explore new guidelines as these changing circumstances present themselves.

In the Regional Center’s older urban areas, good design will ensure the viability of these areas for years to come. The primary issue currently facing downtown Somerville and Raritan is that of incorporating redevelopment projects within and on the fringes of downtown into the towns’ existing urban fabric, while at the same time complementing and enhancing the historic character and pedestrian environment of these areas. Important principles have been identified for redevelopment projects at the River Park at Raritan, Somerville Landfill, and Somerville Town Center sites. These principles should be considered for future projects and include:

- Building design guidelines that complement the existing structural/historic character of the community.
- Incorporating provisions for public open space as part of redevelopment projects.

- Connectivity to the existing street grid.
- Enhancing pedestrian connections.
- Public connections to the Raritan River and other greenways.
- Encourage strong links to mass transit opportunities where appropriate.

Similar design principles should be adopted for proposed train station area redevelopment and for the Pfizer/Wyeth site in Bridgewater. Finally, where not already provided, design standards should be developed for infill buildings constructed within the existing developed areas of downtown Somerville and Raritan.

Infrastructure

The Regional Center is generally well served by water and sewer infrastructure. The largest key issue is determining the capacity of these systems to handle additional growth from redevelopment in Somerville and Raritan. Typically, water and sewer systems in older urbanized areas have sufficient capacity for redevelopment because they were originally constructed to serve large industrial users with much higher demands than commercial and residential users typically have. In the past ten years all three Regional Center towns have undertaken studies and improvements to identify and address inflow and infiltration problems. Also the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority (SRVSA) is planning to construct a new pump station in Bridgewater to help address sanitary sewer overflows near Southside Avenue and the Peters Brook.

Housing

The Regional Center has a highly diverse housing stock consisting of single-family homes, condominiums, multifamily garden apartment complexes, and high-rise dwellings. This housing is available in a variety of settings including urban, suburban, and semi-rural locations. Specialized housing for seniors exists as well as low-and moderate-income housing. A major issue facing the Regional Center is ensuring that housing opportunities continue to be available and affordable for all of its current and future residents.



Moderate-Income Housing, Bridgewater

New housing opportunities in the Regional Center are being created predominantly through redevelopment and infill since most residential lands are currently built to capacity. There are opportunities for increased residential development as former brownfield sites are developed with higher density residential units in stand-alone or mixed-use projects.

One of the greatest opportunities for increasing the supply of affordable and workforce housing opportunities in the County lies in the oversupply of vacant, underutilized office, industrial and commercial space. Many of these underutilized sites are in prime locations, well served by transit, utilities and are in close proximity to community assets and are within the County's

Priority Growth Investment Areas. By including a residential component in the re-use and redevelopment of these sites, housing can become a catalyst for the economic revitalization of these sites and their surrounding areas; and for restoring existing degraded environmental assets. Redevelopment and re-use of these properties as a mechanism for accommodating residential and economic growth is also consistent with the principles of smart growth and community sustainability, and supports implementation of the County Investment Framework.

In order to advance implementation of the County Investment Framework, the County Planning Division undertook a three-phased county-wide planning initiative which began in 2013, and was funded through a Local Government Capacity Grant from Together North Jersey and Subregional Study Grants available through the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. The Phase I Study identifies potential transportation improvements, infrastructure investments, and land use and zoning changes that can advance implementation of the Somerset County Investment Framework's Priority Growth Investment Area goals and objectives. This Study identifies the high cost of living in Somerset County as a major challenge to employers and employees alike. The greatest employment growth is projected to occur in occupations offering relatively low wages. The long term strength of the County's economy will depend upon ensuring an adequate supply of quality housing (both rental and for-purchase), which is affordable to low-and moderate income workers. This study notes that "supporting the creation of workforce housing should be an economic priority in Somerset County. In addition to those who qualify for income-restricted housing, workforce housing should be attainable to those whose incomes are above the eligibility limits associated with the NJ Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) and other income-restricted affordable housing opportunities, but still struggle to afford housing close to their places of employment." It further states, "An adequate supply of workforce housing is necessary for expanding the local workforce, strengthening the county's economic competitiveness, and creating vibrant, prosperous communities." Strategies for accomplishing this goal include the use of zoning and redevelopment policies and strategies that support a mix of land uses and increased densities in places that are well-served by transportation infrastructure, transit service, and pedestrian and community amenities, and allowances for densities that support future investments in infrastructure, transit, and community assets. Improving multi-modal linkages between employment and housing nodes, and land use strategies such as the co-location of residential and employment opportunities, and community amenities that support increased walking and biking and reduce vehicle miles traveled, commute time and commuting costs are also recommended.

As part of the extensive Phase I Study, workforce housing opportunities were identified. The study included an analysis of underutilized commercial properties and their potential to support lower-cost attached housing types through residential and mixed-use redevelopment. 57 high priority candidate sites, 33 medium-priority candidate sites, and 79 low-priority candidate sites were identified through an analysis of vacant and underutilized commercial properties within the County's Priority Growth Investment Areas that are in close proximity to transportation and transit facilities, community resources, and employment centers. The results of this analysis suggest that significant redevelopment opportunities exist through which a substantial portion of the County's affordable and workforce housing needs can be addressed while simultaneously supporting economic growth.

A balance between the number of jobs and the number of housing units in a municipality or sub-region can also minimize work trips by automobile and can be achieved through mixed use development, which allows for increased efficiency in the use of public transportation infrastructure and transit services. The reduction in commuter traffic can help reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), tailpipe emissions, and time spent in traffic.



John Basilone Memorial Bridge

Circulation

Roadways

The system of roadways within the Regional Center is a significant part of the land use planning process, since it is the roadway network that provides people with their most basic way to travel. The Regional Center is at the heart of a hub of major roadways in New Jersey. Interstate 287 and US Routes 22 and 202-206 all pass through the Regional Center. The road network is completed by State Route 28 and an extensive traditional grid pattern of county and local roads. Figure 5 depicts the major roadways and public transportation routes.

Each of the various roads in the Regional Center is called upon to perform a different type of function in the overall transportation network. For planning purposes, roads are generally classified into three (3) major types: arterial, collector, or local. Each of these types defines a certain range of function.

Arterial Roads - These are vehicular rights-of-way whose primary function is to carry traffic in a continuous route across or through an area. Arterials are typically a principal part of the road network for through traffic flow, taking traffic from collector streets that serve neighborhoods and connecting to freeways and/or parkways. Arterial roads also may be broken down into principal and minor arterials. Principal arterials are those interstate and major highways that form an interconnected network of continuous routes serving regional corridors having the highest traffic volumes and the longest trip lengths. Minor arterials interconnect with and augment the principal arterial system.

Collector Roads - These are the roads that carry traffic between arterials and local streets and provide access to abutting properties. In the Regional Center, collectors may be subdivided into two functional road systems: primary (major) and secondary (minor). The primary or major collector road is classified due to its higher traffic volumes (both present and anticipated), and its importance in the overall circulation system. Essentially, this type of road carries more vehicular traffic than the typical collector, yet it is not an arterial road. The secondary or minor collector is the more typical collector type road connecting local streets with arterials or primary collectors and is herein referred to as a collector.

Local Streets – These are roads that primarily provide access to abutting properties, usually single-family homes. These roads typically have low traffic volumes and low speeds. The local road system contains the large majority of all roadway mileage in a state, but only a small percentage of total traffic.

The major routes in the Regional Center serve as major through routes in central New Jersey. Routes 22 and 202 serve as major east-west connections between Hunterdon, Somerset, and Union counties. Interstate 287 is a major north-south connection between Middlesex, Somerset, Morris, Passaic, and Bergen counties, while Route 206 provides connections between Atlantic, Burlington, Mercer, Somerset, Morris, and Sussex counties. Besides being regional through routes, the junction of these routes has a concentration of commercial activity and possesses regional draws such as the Bridgewater Commons Mall and office park development.

Being at the hub of these major routes has provided for rapid regional growth and some of the less desirable factors that accompany it. Road congestion and traffic volumes have increased beyond the design capacity of many of the highways. As these major through-routes have had increases in volume and congestion, so has there been a spillover effect on the local and county roadways within the Regional Center. Increased volumes and congestion on major routes has led to incidences of cut-through traffic on local roads. Local roadways are being used in ways that were not intended by the functional classification of the roadways. Reducing traffic congestion and traffic impacts is a major issue facing the Regional Center.

In addition, there are problem intersections which contribute to traffic congestion. Among them are Route 202/First Avenue and Johnson Drive/First Avenue in Raritan. The Somerset County Planning Board is requiring as a condition of approval that both LabCorp and Raritan Redevelopers Urban Renewal (the developer redeveloping the Third Street tract into apartments) are both to reconstruct the First Avenue intersection with Johnson Drive and Third Street to improve the turning radii of the intersection to make it easier for vehicles, school buses, etc. to negotiate the turning movement (especially trucks entering/existing Johnson Drive).

Access along the major roadways in the Regional Center is characterized as limited, partial, or full depending on the purpose of the roadway.

Limited access - Occurs on highways especially designed for through traffic. Abutting lot owners do not have direct access. Interstate highways, parkways, and freeways are considered limited access highways.

Partial access - Occurs on arterial and collector roadways. An arterial transportation route primarily serves through traffic and provides access as a secondary function. An arterial may have signalized intersections and access via driveways and turn lanes may be restricted through the use of raised medians or jersey barriers. Collector roads primarily serve intra-county trips and are characterized by moderate volume and speed. They provide for land access, traffic circulation, and access to arterial routes. Access to abutting properties may or may not be restricted.

Full access - Occurs on local roads whose purpose is to provide direct access to abutting land and roads of higher classification. Mobility is lower than for other classifications and through movements are discouraged, especially in urban areas. The State Highway Management Act was signed into law on February 23, 1989. Pursuant to this Act, the New Jersey Department of Transportation adopted the State Highway Access Management Code on March 25, 1992. The Municipal Land Use Law requires the contents of municipal ordinances governing subdivision and/or site plan approval to include provisions ensuring conformity with the State Highway Access Management Code regarding any state highway within the municipality and with any County Management Code regarding any county roadway within the municipality.



Arterial Road, North Bridge Street, Bridgewater

The State Highway Access Management Code consists of two components. The first is an access classification matrix and the second is a desired typical section for each segment of each state highway. Access levels to each classification and segment of road are established in the Code with the overriding purpose of controlling access to adjacent lands commensurate with the classification, speed, and design of the highway.

There are a number of major roadways in the Regional Center where access is an issue. Routes 202, 206, and 22 have many commercial uses on property abutting the roadway. Since these routes were mostly developed prior to NJDOT adopting its Highway Access Management Code, driveway connections are frequent. The many driveways and substandard acceleration and deceleration lanes create safety problems and diminish road capacity. Resolving these transportation issues is a major concern to all three communities in the Regional Center.



Route 22 looking east from the Grove Street overpass.

Low-cost strategies such as requiring (where feasible) vehicular cross-access between commercial businesses to provide motorists an alternative means to reach adjacent businesses without having to enter mainstream traffic on busy highways like Route 22 (especially along the eastbound side in Somerville) can improve access and reduce congestion. New development projects involving existing or proposed businesses are opportunities to work with developers to implement cross-access. There are also opportunities to pursue bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between office parks and adjacent residential neighborhoods, offering employees the opportunity to walk or bike to work which would help contribute to better health and wellness, contribute towards increase productivity and reduce the number of cars on the road.

Route 22 Short-term Safety Improvements have been completed, including installation of acceleration/deceleration lanes at the Grove Street entrance/exit and elimination of dangerous U-turns. Also, as a separate project, the Route 22/Chimney Rock Road grade-separated interchange was completed in 2015 to improve safety in the heavily traveled corridor with the added benefit of improving linkages to existing businesses.

Bicycling

Bicycling can be a major means of transportation for those who do not possess a license or motor vehicle. Bicycling can provide an attractive alternative to driving, especially considering the unpleasant and frustrating nature of congestion and traffic. It is healthy and relaxing. Providing bicycle facilities would forward the goals of multi-modal transportation and congestion reduction in the Regional Center. Adequate bicycling accommodations provide a transportation option that is both healthy and environmentally compatible. The needs of bicyclists can be addressed through a combination of bicycle compatible roadways including complete streets and designated bikeways. Bicycle compatible roadways are generally acceptable for experienced cyclists. If bicycling is to be encouraged, it is desirable to provide a network of designated bicycle facilities (bikeways). If dedicated bicycle facilities

are provided in a community, a broader range of people can make local trips without being forced to use a car. Some typical bicycle facilities are:

Bicycle Lanes – A bicycle lane is that portion of the roadway designated by bicycle pavement markings and signing for the exclusive or preferential use of bicycles. This is not to be confused with a shoulder, which is separated by a four-inch stripe with no bicycle lane markings. Most shoulders can be used by bicycles, provided that they are wide enough and maintained for safe bicycle use. Auto parking may also be allowed on a shoulder. A hybrid facility, i.e. a shoulder bike lane, has been developed and proposed for use on some NJDOT projects.

Bicycle Routes – Bicycle routes are roadways designated for bicycle use through the installation of directional and informational signage. Usually these are low volume roadways, with extra wide curb lanes, provided to give extra room for bicycle operation where there is insufficient space for a bicycle lane or shoulder bicycle lane. A signed connection is a bikeway upon which guide signing is placed to direct bicyclists to a destination or another bikeway. Signed connections are used on local, low-traffic streets and on and around major recreational cycling destinations.

Shared Use Paths – A shared use path is physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier. It may be located within a highway right-of-way or on an independent right-of-way. It is not a sidewalk but may be designed to permit shared use. Shared use paths are intended to provide adequate and convenient routes for bicycling, walking and other non-motorized uses. They may be implemented in corridors not well served by the street system.



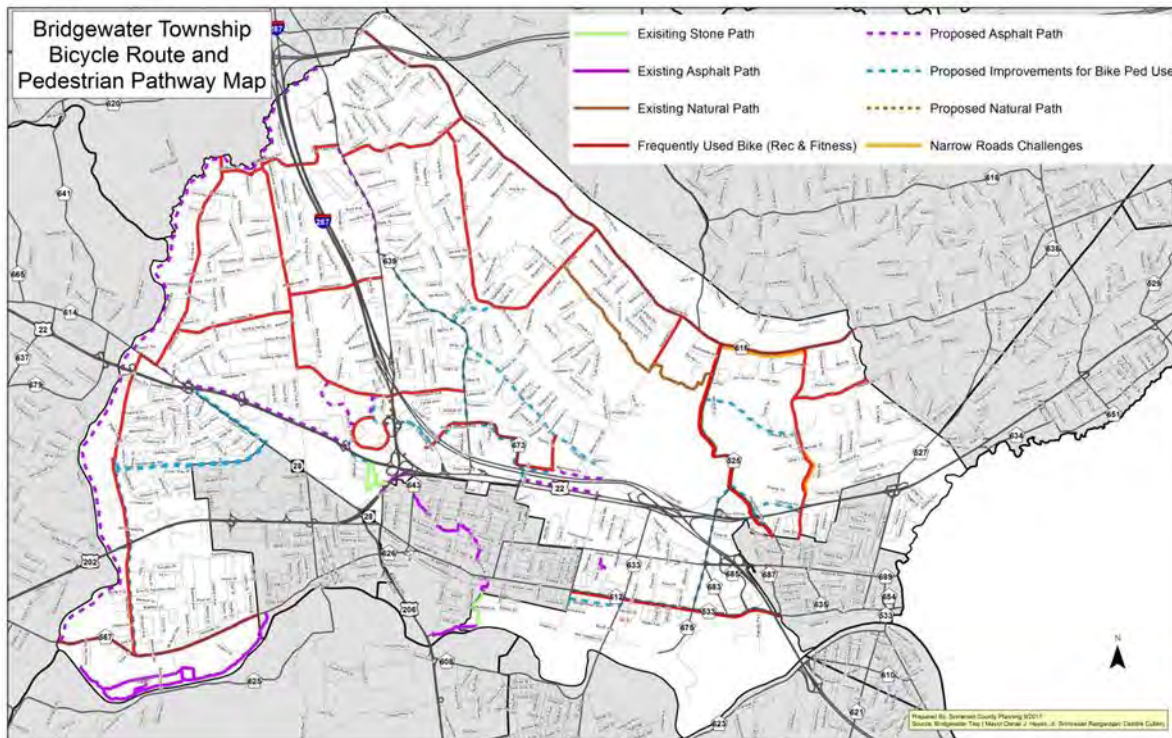
Biking near John F. Kennedy School in Raritan.

Currently, the Regional Center does not have a dedicated bicycle network. The Regional Center Bicycle, Pedestrian and Greenway System Connection Plan, completed in 2009, provided recommendations for a bikeway network which included a network of primary and secondary on-road bike routes as well as primary off-road bicycle routes. The off-road routes are along the Raritan River and Peter’s Brook Greenways.

Bridgewater Township is in the process of creating a map that can be downloaded onto smart phones showing bikers how to reach destination points with the Township Municipal Complex serving as the central starting point. Bridgewater has requested feedback from Raritan and Somerville to identify ideal bike routes that can be linked with Bridgewater. In 2017, Bridgewater also adopted by resolution a complete streets policy; now all three Regional Center municipalities have complete streets policies.

Walking

The pedestrian system in the Regional Center is largely defined by the roadway network and therefore consists primarily of the sidewalks and shoulders along the streets, and the crosswalks, curb ramps, medians, and signals provided at intersections. Principal pedestrian streets (where people walk most often) generally consist of the minor arterial and collector streets in the Regional Center.



Typical pedestrian trip distances are shorter than vehicle trip distances, and travel distance poses a greater limit on pedestrian travel compared to vehicle travel. Pedestrians tend to seek out the shortest, most direct routes. As a result, the pedestrian network in the Regional Center includes numerous shortcuts and passages, including parking lots, alleys and pedestrian paths. Walkways to off-street parking lots provide a critical portion of the pedestrian network, both to provide access to the parking lot and to allow cut-throughs between blocks.

Sidewalks are an improved facility intended to provide for pedestrian movement usually, but not always, located in the public right-of-way adjacent to a roadway. Sidewalks are typically constructed of concrete, but can be built with other materials, such as asphalt or brick pavers. Sidewalks are especially important in densely developed areas, such as town centers or residential developments. They are also important around schools, parks, municipal buildings, and senior citizen housing.

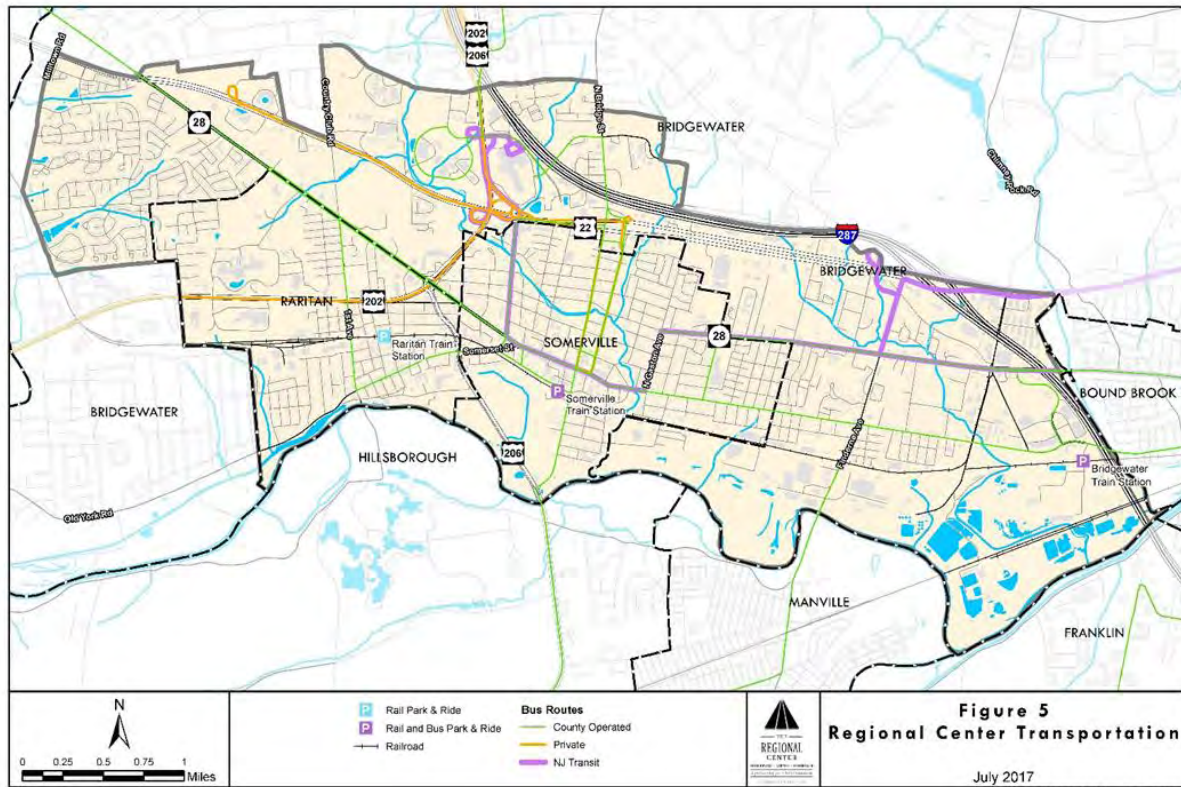
Elimination of vehicle trips by walking helps to enhance the quality of life, provides a healthy citizenry, and reduces the total amount of traffic on local streets. Improvement of the sidewalks and their landscaping will make walking more appealing and further the goal of making the Regional Center a truly pedestrian-friendly community.

The existing sidewalk network in the Regional Center is fairly complex and has many connections, but there are gaps in the system. The Regional Center Bicycle, Pedestrian and Greenways Systems Connection Plan completed in 2009 contained recommendations for expansion of the pedestrian network including new off-road pedestrian connections in several areas of the Regional Center. The Route 202 Corridor Assessment and Multi-Modal Mobility Plan also contained a number of recommendations for pedestrian access and safety including new traffic signals, new crosswalks, countdown pedestrian signal heads, pedestrian refuge areas, and new sidewalk segments.

As a result of the successful implementation of the pedestrian bridge which helps provide access from the south side of Route 22 to Bridgewater Commons, discussions began leading to the decision to construct a similar pedestrian bridge over Route 202/206, at the northern end of Peter’s Brook and connecting Somerville to Bridgewater at Clark’s Woods. This pedestrian overpass was completed in 2012. This overpass is part of the plan to connect the Raritan River Greenway and the south side of Somerville with Bridgewater Raritan High School. The long term plan is to create a connected walkway/bikeway (the Raritan River Greenway) from Branchburg Township and Hunterdon County in the west to Bound Brook and South Bound Brook in the east with a connector trail to Duke Farms in Hillsborough via the Nevius Street pedestrian bridge. The most recent segment of the Raritan River Greenway to be constructed is the one-mile-long connection between Route 206 in Somerville and Orlando Driver in Raritan.



Grove Street Sidewalks, Bridgewater



Public Transportation

The public transportation system in the Regional Center includes a network of bus routes and a commuter rail line. NJ Transit serves the Regional Center for both rail and bus. Most of the existing transportation routes that currently serve the Regional Center are designed to transport residents to and from job locations outside the Regional Center, primarily in the Newark-New York area.

NJ Transit operates two bus routes in the Regional Center. Route 114/117 begins at the Bridgewater Commons Mall, serves downtown Somerville, and then terminates at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Manhattan. The 114 route operates every half hour during peak periods and on Saturdays and hourly most other times. Route 117 operates four eastbound and four westbound trips between downtown Somerville and New York City on weekdays. Route 65/65 operates two westbound and one eastbound trip between the Bridgewater Commons Mall, downtown Somerville, and Newark.

Somerset County operates two separate CAT shuttles. Both shuttles provide service to Raritan Valley Community College. CAT-1R serves Franklin, Bound Brook, South Bound Brook, Bridgewater, Somerville and Branchburg, Monday through Friday only. CAT-2R shuttle serves Bridgewater, Somerville, Raritan, and Branchburg, Monday through Friday only.

CAT-1R has stops in downtown Somerville and at the Somerville Shopping Center in Bridgewater with two trips in the morning and two in the afternoon/evening. CAT-2R has stops in downtown Somerville and four stops in Raritan and two in Bridgewater including the Bridgewater Commons Mall. CAT-2R has between five and seven trips a day depending on the stops.



Raritan Train Station

Somerset County operates five different SCOOT bus routes. SCOOT-R1 and SCOOT-R2 provide transportation to and from Bound Brook, Bridgewater, Hillsborough, Manville, and Somerville. SCOOT 858, 859 and 860 run during peak morning and afternoon commuting times and provide transportation to and from Hillsborough, Manville, Somerville, Bridgewater and Bedminster. The buses operate Monday through Friday only. SCOOT-R1 has five total trips a day with stops in downtown Somerville and various locations in Bridgewater along East Main Street and Union Avenue and the Bridgewater Commons Mall. SCOOT R-2 has four total trips a day and follows the same route as SCOOT R-1. SCOOT 858, 859 and 860 is basically a morning and evening service that has eight or nine trips a day with stops in Somerville and Bridgewater.

The Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders sponsors a bus route on the Hunterdon County LINK Transportation System that provides weekday service from Flemington to Raritan Valley Community College and Bridgewater Commons Mall.

The Route 23 LINK bus serves Flemington Borough, Whitehouse, Branchburg ShopRite, Raritan Valley Community College, and Bridgewater Commons Mall. The only stop in the Regional Center is at the Mall.

Bridgewater has a park and ride on Route 22 East at Milltown Road.

A key objective shared by the communities is to increase transit ridership throughout the Regional Center. Increased transit usage will result in fewer cars on the roadways and will decrease traffic congestion and improve vehicular safety. This Strategic Plan includes a number of recommendations to enhance transit ridership. In addition, the plan recommends improvements at train stations to reduce traffic congestion and parking impacts.



Somerville Train Station



Raritan River Greenway Hibernia Bridge

Goods Movement

Moving freight, like raw materials and finished products, is an area of increasing importance to New Jersey. Businesses, jobs, and consumers all rely on it. The key is to devise regional goods movement strategies that will facilitate the flow of freight and minimize adverse impacts on local communities. A freight movement system includes the highway network, a rail freight network, maritime ports, air cargo facilities, and freight transfer facilities. These elements of the transportation system are connected through numerous intermodal facilities. An intermodal transportation facility is a transportation hub that connects different modes serving intrastate, interstate, or international movement of people and goods. Because of the critical role these facilities play, they are vital components to economic vitality and growth.

The goods movement industry is a major user of the transportation network in Somerset County. Because of the County’s extensive transportation network and proximity to markets, this industry is key to its economy. Trucks are the dominant mode of freight transportation in Somerset County. However, rail, air, and waterborne freight also play a vital role. Goods movement in Somerset County consists of two types: overhead and originating/terminating. Overhead freight only passes through the County, while originating/terminating traffic either begins or ends its trip within the County.



BRI Transfer Station, Bridgewater

The extensive highway system in Somerset County has been a factor in the amount of truck traffic to and through the area over the last ten years. Trucks have benefited from the technological advances made during the 1970’s and 1980’s with stronger suspensions, better tires, and light materials, allowing them to transport heavier loads more efficiently. It is necessary to plan for the continued growth of trucking in and through the area. Federal legislation enacted in 2015 requiring trucks used for long-distance transportation to be equipped with electronic logging devices (ELD) may have an impact on the number of

trucks on the road with the possibility of increasing the number of trucks on the road, according to some sources. The added truck volumes and the delays caused by congestion and an inadequate transportation network for extensive freight traffic are issues that need to be continually addressed.

The growing trend for more goods to be purchased on-line resulting in less demand for the traditional “bricks and mortar” will require delivery services such as UPS to put more delivery trucks on the road to fulfill orders with greater frequency. Though there are currently no major distribution facilities in the Regional Center itself (compared to Amazon’s fulfillment facilities in Carteret and Edison), the concentration of residents with disposable income in and near the Regional Center and the major highway corridors passing through the Regional Center will likely result in more delivery trucks on the region’s roads and highways.

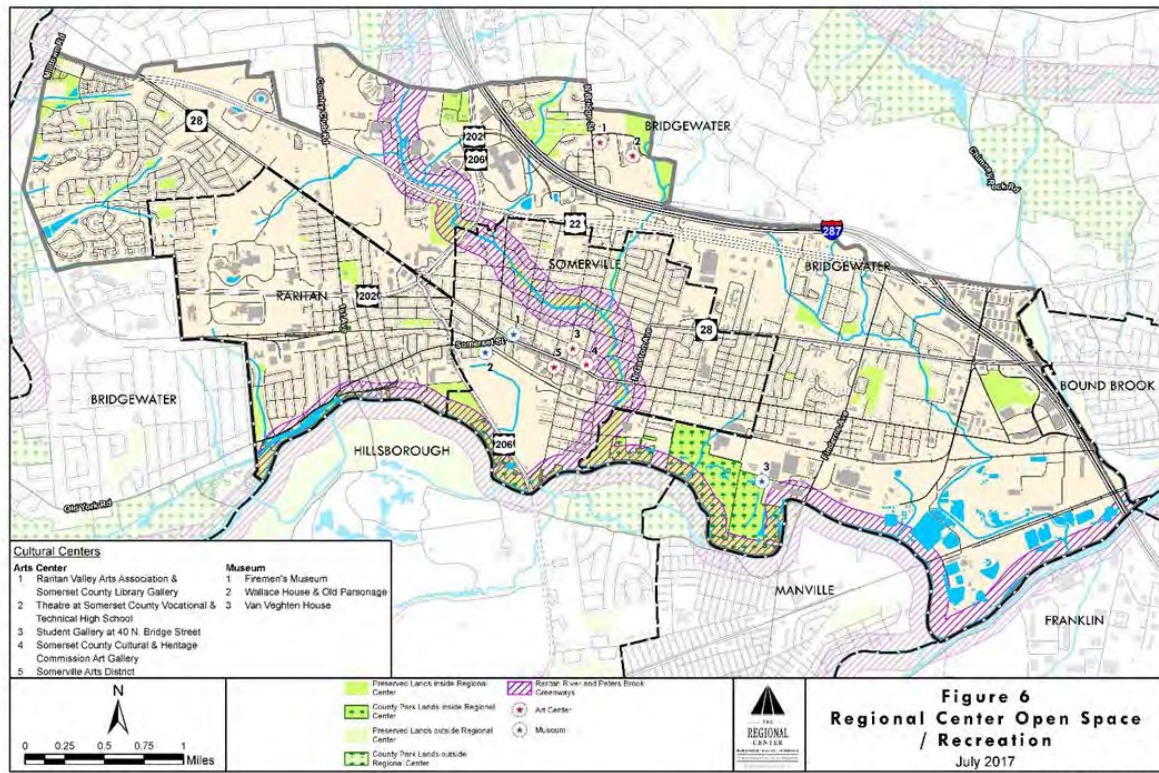
Environmental Resources

All three Regional Center municipalities have adopted their own respective Natural and Cultural Resource Inventories which were prepared as part of the Plan Endorsement process. The Regional Center Partnership has also been operating a rain barrel rebate program funded by a grant from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority since 2009 to better manage stormwater runoff in residential areas in Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville. The NJWSA has also co-hosted with Rutgers University a number of “build-a-barrel” and rain garden design workshops and undertaken at least one rain garden demonstration project in all three Regional Center towns.

The Regional Center has excellent natural resources as depicted in “Figure 6 Recreation, Open Space, Greenways, and Natural Landscapes”. The Raritan River runs adjacent to the Regional Center, and many brooks flow through the Center. Peters Brook has been made into a greenway linking neighborhoods within Somerville and part of Bridgewater and will form the basis for an expanded greenway system planned to link neighborhoods throughout the Regional Center. The acquisition of additional land for the Raritan River Greenway along the Raritan and its tributaries is a key issue for the Regional Center.



Raritan River Spillway



The communities all have environmental regulations in place to protect environmental resources. Improvements in regulations such as storm water management techniques should be encouraged. Enhanced storm water management techniques will improve water quality of the Raritan River and its tributaries and will minimize bank erosion. Recreational opportunities could also be enhanced by improved regulations.

While the Regional Center is rich in environmental resources, many resources unfortunately have too often been neglected. There are many brownfield sites that are in need of environmental cleanup. Two of the largest and most important of these is the Pfizer/Wyeth site in Bridgewater and the Somerville Landfill. Both sites are near the Raritan River. The Pfizer/Wyeth site, in particular, would be a key acquisition parcel for the Raritan River Greenway but will require extensive decontamination before it can be opened for public access.



Washington Valley County Park, located just north of the Regional Center in Bridgewater

Recreational Opportunities

Recreational opportunities within neighborhoods vary widely, with extensive opportunities available in Somerville and certain areas of Bridgewater. Additional opportunities for recreation need to be explored in other areas. There are opportunities for the Regional Center to extend the trail system to the greater region; e.g., to Duke Farms in Hillsborough, to Manville’s park system, and ultimately to Bound Brook and South Bound Brook to connect with the Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park (see Figure 6 Recreation, Open Space and Natural Systems).

Torpey Athletic Complex

The Frank “Nap” Torpey Athletic Complex, located off Loeser Avenue in the Finderne section of Bridgewater, is an athletic complex developed and operated by the Somerset County Park Commission. The complex is a result of the Somerset County Regional Center Committee’s “Vision Initiative” proposed in November, 1999. The facility includes one lighted baseball field and one lighted softball field with bleachers. The open area to the east features soccer fields available for local recreation departments and high schools. The centerpiece of the facility is a synthetic turf multipurpose athletic field with indoor support facilities including a 10,000 square foot building with attached bleachers. The seating capacity is 1,500 with bleachers on both sides of the turf field. The facility includes two team locker rooms; public restrooms; a concession area; and a climate-controlled press box overlooking the turf field. The complex also includes a multi-purpose wireless scoreboard on the turf field able to accommodate scoring for all field sports. Turf field lighting is satellite-controlled to eliminate wasted energy during time periods when the field is not in use.



Torpey Athletic Complex

Duke Island Park

Located on Old York Road in the Bradley Gardens section of Bridgewater Township, Duke Island Park is a 340.5-acre site of rich natural beauty and varied recreational experiences on the western edge of the Regional Center. Truly an "island" park, it is traversed by the historic Raritan Power Canal. The Somerset County Park Commission has developed Duke Island to provide a wide variety of active and passive recreational opportunities and special events for park visitors. The general use park offers hiking and biking trails and five picnic areas, three of which feature a pavilion. Each of the groves has at least 12 tables and eight grills. A playground is located adjacent to play and picnic areas, featuring barrier free equipment. A softball field is available for open play and by permit for leagues and tournaments. In the winter, supervised ice skating and general cross-country skiing is offered as weather permits. The Raritan River is stocked by the New Jersey Department of Fish, Game, and Wildlife, and offers prime fishing locations for beginner and expert anglers. Hikers, walkers, and birdwatchers may take advantage of the trails which follow along the river and pass through the extensive wooded areas. During the summer months, Duke Island is host to "Free Concerts in the Park" on Sunday evenings. The Visitors Center is located near the main parking area, and houses the Park Ranger office and the rest room facilities. Rangers are available for information on the park recreation activities, and brochures and maps on the Park Commission facilities and programs are available.



Picnic Pavilion at Duke Island Park

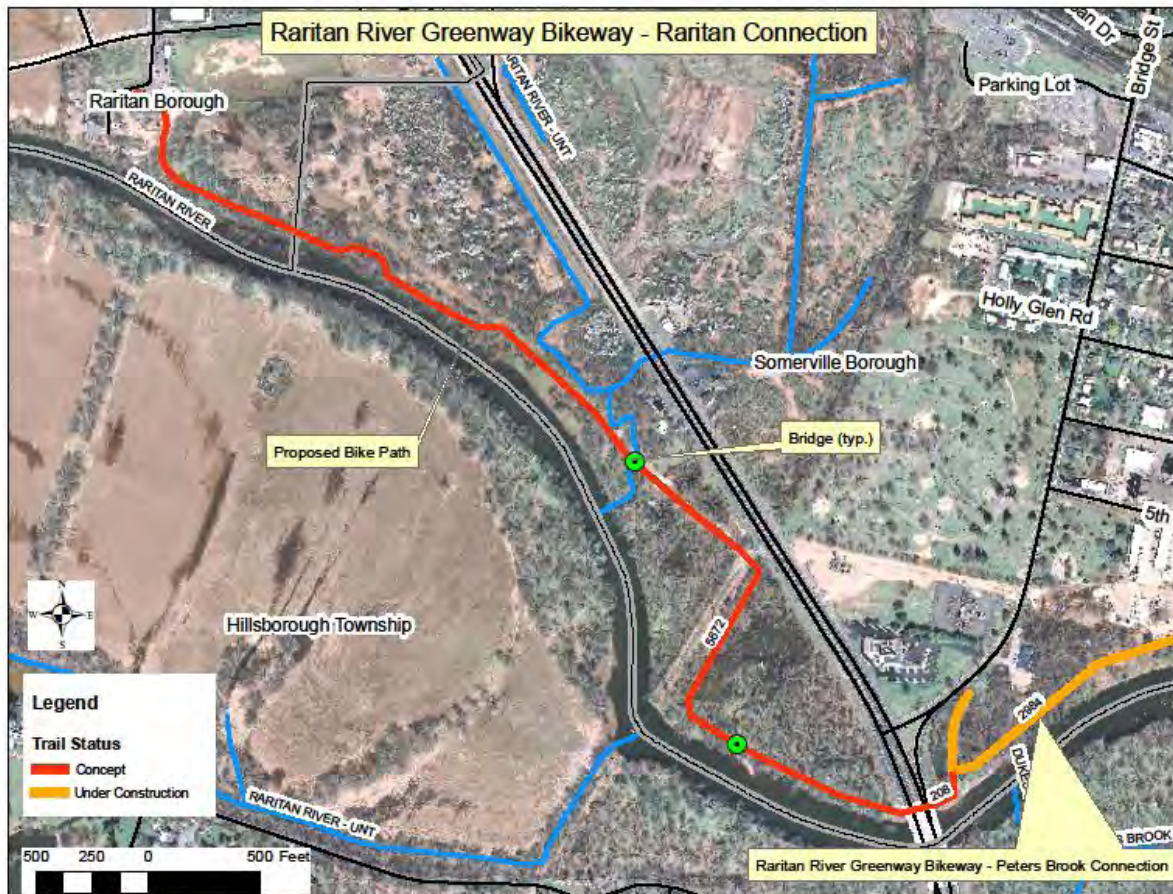
Green Knoll Golf and Tennis Center

Green Knoll Tennis Center is located at 587 Garretson Road, Bridgewater, on the border of the Regional Center. Green Knoll Golf Course is a regulation, 18-hole, 6,443 yard course offering a challenge to both the experienced golfer and the novice player. The facility also operates a 9-hole par three Pitch and Putt Course. A golf shop and snack bar are available. The Tennis Center features summer instructional clinics and a variety of youth and adult tournaments. Tennis instruction is offered for players of all abilities. Both facilities are operated by the Somerset County Park Commission.

Raritan River Greenway System

The Raritan River Greenway is a linear regional park that includes a multi-use paved trail with major connections along the course of the Raritan River. The trail will ultimately link Branchburg Township with the Delaware and Raritan Canal in South Bound Brook. It will eventually extend from the confluence of the North Branch and South Branch of the Raritan River easterly to the confluence of the Millstone River and the Raritan River; a distance of approximately 8.1 miles. The trail passes directly through Duke Island Park in Bridgewater and includes a trail link to the Peters Brook Greenway in Somerville. An integral component of the Peters Brook Greenway also provides a connection via a pedestrian overpass across Routes 202/206 into Bridgewater. In 2010, a Regional Center Challenge Grant funded the installation of a Par Course Fitness System along the Peters Brook Greenway. Interpretive signage and an overlook area with benches have been added to the Nevius Street bridge. By June, 2018, construction of the segment of the pathway linking Route 206 in Somerville and Orlando Drive

in Raritan was completed. Plans are also underway to connect the Greenway to Duke Farms with a paved bikeway path from the Nevius Street Bridge to the new Arboretum Gate at Duke Farms. The Somerset County Park Commission currently maintains approximately 850 acres of public open space along the Raritan River’s greenway network.



The paved pathway as shown in red and orange on the above map have both been completed.

Community Facilities

The Regional Center is served by a variety of community facilities, including major County facilities located within Somerville and the Bridgewater Core area. The Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset is a major institutional use serving the Regional Center area and beyond.



Two school districts serve the Regional Center, the Bridgewater-Raritan district and the Somerville district. Growth due to redevelopment in Somerville may increase the need for additional school facilities there, although total school enrollment has been consistent over the last six years. After experiencing rapid growth in enrollment in the early 2000's, the Bridgewater-Raritan District has seen a slight decline in enrollment each year for the last six years.

The Regional Center municipalities have long prided themselves on entering into shared-services agreements to reduce costs and provide higher levels of service. Many of the Regional Center's community facilities present opportunities to promote increased shared services. For example, three library systems operate in the Center. The Bridgewater and Somerville Libraries are part of the Somerset County Library system. The Bridgewater Library is the main library for the Somerset County Library System. Raritan operates its own library.

Historic Resources

The Regional Center has a rich historic legacy dating to pre-colonial times, when the area was occupied by Native-Americans including the Lenni-Lenape peoples. In the 17th and early 18th centuries, the first European settlements in the area were constructed near the banks of the Raritan River. Somerville and Raritan now contain numerous well-preserved homes dating to the 19th and early 20th centuries and all three municipalities in the Regional Center have significant sites associated with the American Revolution.

The Regional Center contains a total of 13 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places as well as 11 additional sites and four historic districts eligible for listing on the National Register. One of the eligible historic districts is the Somerville Historic District which includes much of downtown Somerville and the Borough’s older residential neighborhoods. It has received a State Historic Preservation Office opinion of eligibility for listing but has yet to be advanced to a listing on the National Register.

The following sites are listed on the National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places in the Regional Center.

Bridgewater

Van Horne House, Bridgewater

The present Van Horne House probably dates back to the late 18th century and was extensively remodeled in the middle decades of the 19th and 20th centuries. It was the site of several important revolutionary war events including the Battle of Bound Brook. It is open to the public and is owned by Somerset County who provided funds for its restoration. It is the headquarters of the Heritage Trail Association.



Historic Van Veghten House

Van Veghten House, Bridgewater

Built in the early 1700s, this brick house served as headquarters for Quartermaster General Nathaniel Green in the winter of 1778-1779 during the Middlebrook Cantonment (Second Middlebrook Encampment). The house contains a research library and now houses an exhibit on Native American artifacts and antique tools. It serves as the headquarters of the Somerset County Historical Society. It has recently been restored with funds from the County and is open to the public.



Historic General John Frelinghuysen House

Raritan

General John Frelinghuysen House (Raritan Public Library)

The main part of the Frelinghuysen house was originally constructed as a one-and-a-half story brick structure in 1750. The house was the homestead of the Frelinghuysen family, which has long been significant in New Jersey history. General John Frelinghuysen was an attorney who served as a Brigadier General during the War of 1812 and was later the Surrogate of Somerset County. It was General Frelinghuysen who added the second floor to the brick section in the early 19th century. The library contains an exhibit concerning World War II Medal of Honor recipient and Raritan native John Basilone. The structure was recently restored and rehabilitated with funds from the County and the state. A small community room addition is now underway.

Nevius Street Bridge

The Nevius Street Bridge is a three-hundred-foot-long, two-span, double-intersection Pratt through-truss bridge fabricated by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company in Canton, Ohio. Constructed in 1888, it is remarkably complete, and is one of the least altered metal-truss highway bridges in the county. A paved pathway is planned to extend from the Nevius Street Bridge to the new Arboretum Gate at Duke Farms.



Historic Nevius Street Bridge

Relief Hose Company Number 2

This High Victorian Gothic-style firehouse was completed in 1894. In addition to serving as the headquarters and engine house for the fire company, the building has served as a municipal court, council chambers, clerk’s office, meeting house, town library, and the first headquarters of the Raritan First Aid Squad. The Borough has received County and state funds for restoration which is ongoing. Additional improvements will be made to the site in the hopes of making it into a historical museum of Raritan, where all of the Borough’s artifacts will be housed. It is open to the public

Raritan Train Station, Raritan

Constructed by the Central New Jersey Railroad in the early 1890s, this station is a fine example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style with Gothic elements. It is owned by New Jersey Transit.

Somerville

Daniel Robert House (Somerville Borough Hall)

Constructed in 1888 in the Gothic Revival style, the Daniel Robert House, now the Somerville Borough Hall, was designed by architects Lambert and Bunnell of Bridgeport, Connecticut. The interior hallway and the stained glass windows were restored with funds from Somerset County. Additional restoration work is ongoing.

Somerville Fire Museum

Constructed in 1888, the Somerville Fire Museum was originally the home of the West End Hose Company and is only one of four original firehouses in Somerville. The Somerville Fire Museum has received state and county funding to undertake exterior and interior restoration which has been completed. It is open to the public.

J. Harper Smith House

Constructed in 1880, this three-story High Victorian Eclectic house was the home of James Harper Smith, the long-time superintendent of the Raritan Mills. It was considered one of the finest mansions of its day and is the most distinctive and lavishly decorated house in Somerville. The house is in private ownership and has been beautifully restored.

Somerset Court House Green

Constructed in 1909, the Somerset County Court House is a fine example of Beaux-Arts Classicism. It was designed by the firm of Gordon, Tracy and Swartwout. The adjacent First Reformed Church is a free interpretation of an English Gothic church. Constructed in 1897, it was designed by William Appleton Potter, renowned for his architecture on the Princeton University campus. The church is now used by the County as the jurors’ waiting room. The Lord Memorial Fountain, erected in 1910, was designed by John Russell Pope who also designed the Jefferson Memorial in Washington D.C. All are owned and maintained by Somerset County.

St. John’s Episcopal Church Complex

St. John’s Episcopal Church was constructed in 1895 in the Early English Gothic Style. The church and adjacent rectory were designed by renowned architect Horace Trumbauer. The church has received funding from the state for exterior restoration.

Wallace House/Old Dutch Parsonage State Historic Site

The Wallace House is an eight-room, Dutch framed, Georgian dwelling constructed in 1776 by John Wallace, a Philadelphia fabric merchant. It was General Washington's headquarters from December 1778 to June 1779, when the Continental Army was stationed at Middlebrook (now part of Bound Brook). It has been a house museum for more than 100 years and has been faithfully restored to its 18th century appearance.

The Old Dutch Parsonage is a Georgian-style structure which was built in 1751 for the Reverend John Frelinghuysen with funds from three Dutch Reformed churches in the Raritan Valley. The Reverend Jacob Hardenbergh began theological classes here, which were the beginning of Queens College, later Rutgers University. It is currently undergoing restoration.



Historic Old Dutch Parsonage

Federal Heritage Efforts

Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area

In July, 2006, the federal government formally declared portions of 14 counties in New Jersey (including all of Somerset County) as part of the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area.

Federal legislation specifies its role:

- to assist communities, organizations, and citizens in preserving New Jersey's historic identity;
- to foster close working relationships among all levels of government, the private sector, and communities;
- to provide for the preservation and interpretation of resources for the educational and inspirational benefit of future generations; and
- to strengthen Morristown National Historical Park as an asset to the state.

The Regional Center and its municipalities should cooperate and coordinate heritage tourism/promotion and educational efforts with the Crossroads of the American Revolutionary War Association.

Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R)

In 1781, more than 5,300 French soldiers, commanded by General Comte de Rochambeau, and more than 2,700 American troops commanded by General Washington, marched from Rhode Island to Yorktown, Virginia. These allied forces defeated the British army, commanded by General Cornwallis, at Yorktown in the decisive battle of the American Revolution. The W3R Route was designated a National Historic Trail which was approved by Congress and signed by President Obama in 2009. Part of the route in the Regional Center has been marked. It is hoped that the entire route in New Jersey will be marked and interpreted. The Regional Center and its municipalities should cooperate with the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route in New Jersey organization to mark and interpret the route.

Recommendation

This strategic plan recommends the communities continue to preserve important historic resources and increase public awareness and understanding these resources. The communities should cooperate with federal, state, county, and non-profit organizations to preserve and promote these historic sites.

Raritan has a Historic & Cultural Advisory Committee, Somerville has a Historic Advisory Committee, and Bridgewater has just formed a non-profit organization called Friends of Bridgewater History.

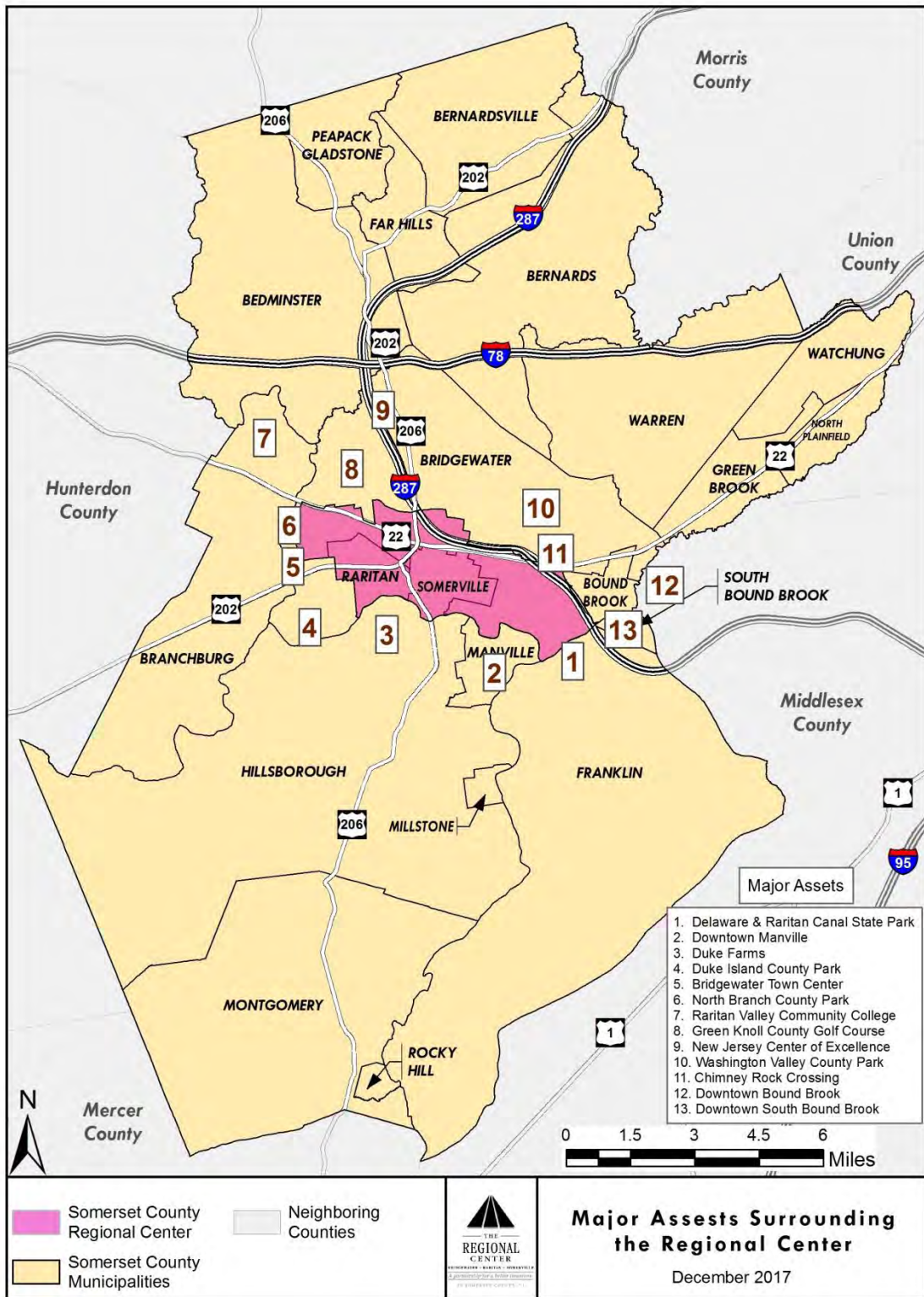
Cultural Resources

The Regional Center currently lacks a major performing arts facility or other center for cultural presentations. The Somerset County Library and County Vocational School in Bridgewater offer limited performance and cultural presentation space. The Children's Museum of Somerset County is located at the PeopleCare Center at the corner of Finderne Avenue and Union Avenue (NJ Route 28) in Bridgewater. Incorporated in 1996, The Children's Museum remains an active cultural resource in the Regional Center providing educational exhibits and programs as part of the goal of improving the quality of life for children and their families. In 2017, Somerset County Park Commission completed the enhancement of the Sgt. John Basilone Memorial Park in Raritan based on a final design plan that incorporates comments provided by Raritan Borough. The park is now open.



County Vocational School and Technical Institute, Bridgewater

A dedicated regional community center, which has been proposed by the Regional Center Partnership, could help make the Regional Center more of an entertainment and cultural destination, providing a central location for performance and cultural events, as well as meeting space for various Regional Center social and service organizations.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

There are a number of goals and objectives in the Background Report which have been listed here by topic beginning first with health and wellness and resiliency and then in relation to the seven focus areas. This list reflects the major issues currently facing the Regional Center and forms the basis for the List of Priority Projects.

Health and Wellness

- Foster the health and well-being of all residents and employees of the Regional Center.
- Promote an active lifestyle by providing opportunities for physical activity for residents of all ages.
- Support efforts to increase access to healthy foods for all residents of the Regional Center (e.g., access to local farmers markets) and that encourage healthy eating habits.
- Promote pedestrian friendly and crime-free neighborhoods that contribute to the security and mental health of residents, and encourage engagement and growth of social capital.
- Promote a “green living” program throughout the Regional Center.
- Develop Healthy Community public engagement workshops with programs for youth, adults, and seniors.
- Create a Healthy Community brochure or website that identifies programs and locations; e.g., farmers’ markets, community gardens, bike paths, athletic facilities, etc.
- Support design strategies to reduce our carbon footprint.

Green Living Programs invite the community to participate in various seminars with guest speakers to learn about healthier living options. Seminar topics can include exercise techniques, healthy food preparation, gardening and transitioning a home or business to more energy efficient options.

Resiliency

- Provide regular updates of County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Encourage and support business continuity plans
- Prepare contingency plan for first responders during major incidents or disasters
- Prepare disaster recovery plan

Downtowns and Main Streets

- Focus future growth and development into downtown Raritan and Somerville by redeveloping underutilized sites and continuing the active revitalization of the downtowns, while maintaining the historic character, mix of uses, activities, pedestrian character, and events that make these downtown areas unique. It is this unique character that provides their special commercial niche, separating them from the more common suburban strip-commercial areas.
- Further existing redevelopment opportunities such as the Somerville Landfill, Somerville Commons, and Davenport Street, while identifying additional redevelopment sites on brownfields or grayfields within the downtown areas.
- Promote economic development within downtowns and Main Street commercial areas through the use of innovative financing mechanisms and business development programs.
- Make downtowns vibrant, walkable and attractive. Enhance pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.

Background Report to Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan

- Support the redevelopment and revitalization of neighborhood Main Street commercial districts such as downtown Finderne in cooperation with the local community.
- Promote mixed uses and high density residential uses in downtown areas.
- Create public plazas and other public spaces for diverse uses such as community events and farmers' markets.
- Create opportunities for outdoor seating at downtown restaurants through wider sidewalks, curb bump-outs, parklets and pop-up seating.
- Create an entity to focus on enhancement of economic vitality in downtown Raritan.

Parklets are extensions of the sidewalk into the roadway, providing more space for pedestrian activity. Parklets are typically located on existing street parking spaces.



Division Street in Downtown Somerville

Redevelopment Areas, Economic Development, and Community Design

- Encourage redevelopment in focus areas that will return underutilized land to productive use, improve the quality of life, enhance community character, create new employment opportunities, and strengthen the municipal tax base.
- In redevelopment areas, incorporate publicly accessible parks and open space and create diverse public spaces that provide pleasant places for neighbors to meet and recreate.
- For redevelopment areas near the proposed Raritan River Greenway, ensure that public access is provided from the existing community to the Greenway.
- Improve the quality of development in the Regional Center by using healthy community design principles.
- Promote new development that is accessible, attractive and safe to pedestrian and bicyclists.
- Utilize active design principles to create convenient and safe opportunities for physical activity for residents of all ages and income levels.
- Ensure that new development includes appropriate landscaping, street furniture, sidewalks, and access to mass transit.
- Establish gateways and coordinated design focal points in the Regional Center.
- Promote coordinated and uniform design standards emphasizing green design principles.

Background Report to Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan

- In large scale redevelopment areas, design well-connected streets with sidewalks keeping block sizes relatively small.
- Facilitate development through a coordinated, predictable and streamlined approval process.
- Support efforts to increase State incentives for economic development and investment in the Regional Center.
- Address quality of life issues such as affordable workforce housing and transportation to improve the business climate.
- Pursue commercial development to attract tax ratables and reduce the residential tax burden.
- Create facilities and programs for attracting high tech businesses and service firms, as well as research and development activities, capitalizing on the technological and pharmaceutical clusters in the Regional Center.
- Foster diverse business opportunities that strengthen the Regional Center economic base.
- Upgrade and enhance existing infrastructure to sustain and promote economic development.
- Survey infrastructure conditions and explore establishment of an infrastructure bank in cooperation with the County.



Somerville Commons redevelopment project under construction, May 2017



Ethicon Offices, Bridgewater

Train Station Areas

- Reduce traffic congestion in train station areas while maintaining or increasing ridership levels.
- Reduce the impacts from train station parking on surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Promote mixed-use redevelopment in train station areas to increase ridership, create and revitalize “central place” areas surrounding train stations, and promote pedestrian and bicycle access to stations.
- Take advantage of innovative programs to spur improvements within all of the Regional Center’s train station areas.
- Encourage connections with pedestrian and bicycle facilities and other forms of public transit.

Neighborhoods and Housing

- Protect the community character and quality of life within existing Regional Center neighborhoods.
- Consider appropriate design standards for neighborhoods to ensure that infill development is compatible with the existing character of developed residential areas within the Regional Center.
- Continue and enhance protections for historic neighborhoods, landmarks and historic properties throughout the Regional Center.
- Promote healthy community design principles to encourage active living.
- Use traffic calming measures where appropriate to enhance pedestrian safety.
- Preserve neighborhoods by promoting compatible infill development.
- Connect neighborhoods to downtowns and other destinations through safe and attractive streets.

- Provide a greater range of housing choices and affordability in the Regional Center and promote socially equitable communities.
- Increase the range of senior citizen housing in the Regional Center.
- Promote additional housing in downtown areas.
- Maintain and strengthen residential neighborhoods.
- Provide access to healthy, affordable food options for all residents.
- Ensure access to affordable health care services and quality medical facilities for all residents.

Circulation

Roadways

- Reduce congestion.
- Improve intersection efficiencies through enhanced traffic signal timing, improved striping, and clear directions to users.
- Create a policy on what level of service is acceptable based on location and function of road.
- Work with state and federal partners to ensure free movements along urban principal arterials.
- Identify sites for neighborhood traffic calming.
- Implement Transportation Demand Management techniques.
- Prepare a 5-year road improvement plan.
- Coordinate road improvements between the member municipalities of the Regional Center and Somerset County.
- Encourage access management principles on all roads.
- Consolidate commercial driveways along high volume corridors.
- Eliminate four-lane no shoulder and no left hand turn lane cross sections throughout the Regional Center.
- Ensure that all road projects meet the context of the adjoining land uses.
- Reduce collisions and accidents for all transportation modes.
- Share crash data among all levels of government and encourage all data is collected consistently.
- Keep speeds at the appropriate level based on context and functional class.
- Implement physical measures to slow cars on local streets.
- Educate the public on traffic calming measures.
- Promote a consistent enforcement program.
- Work with local police to identify problem areas.

Transportation Demand Management (“TDM”) is a general term for strategies that increase transportation system efficiency, giving priority to more efficient modes during congested conditions. (Source: Victoria Transport Policy Institute www.vtpi.org)



Driver Feedback Sign



Controlled Access, Regional Center

Bicycling

- Encourage bicycling throughout the Regional Center.
- Adopt the NJ State bicycle guidelines as the guidelines for the Regional Center.
- Make roads bicycle compatible wherever possible.
- Encourage/install bicycle facilities (e.g., racks, lockers) at appropriate destination points.
- Establish a regional bicycle depot possibly near mass transit, similar to the Bay Street Bike Depot in Montclair, NJ <http://njbwc.org/bikedepot/>
- Support implementation of a bike sharing program
- Develop and implement a bicycle facility network for the Regional Center.
- Develop a system for capturing all bicycle crashes, not just those involving a motor vehicle.
- Complete the nine linkage improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians identified in the June 2009 Pedestrian, Bicycle and Greenways Systems Connection Plan.
- Extend a bike path to Duke Farms.



Peters Brook Greenway Pedestrian Bridge

Walking

- Encourage walking throughout the Regional Center through use of active living design principles.
- Compile an inventory of all existing sidewalks and connections (off-road).
- Develop an implementation plan to correct deficiencies in pedestrian accessibility.
- Ensure that all routes to schools are pedestrian friendly and have enhanced crosswalks and signs.
- Create off-road shared use paths along the Raritan River Greenway.
- Adopt the NJ State pedestrian guidelines as the guidelines for the Regional Center.
- Make areas within 1/4 mile of a transit stop pedestrian friendly.
- Make sidewalks and road interfaces ADA compatible.
- Extend the Raritan River Greenway to Duke Farms, Bound Brook, and the D&R Canal State Park.



Pedestrian Walkway, Bridgewater

Public Transportation

- Ensure mass transit services are sustained and improved upon and implement new mass transit options.
- Make mass transit service more frequent, especially for reverse commuters.
- Provide real time information for bus and rail riders to make service more user friendly.
- Increase mass transit service by extending existing bus routes and providing new routes (rail or bus) in the Eastern Gateway and the Regional Center Core.
- Improve access to mass transit by making all neighborhoods within 1/2 mile of train stations and 1/4 mile of bus stops pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
- Provide bus shelters, crosswalks, bicycle parking, route maps, route schedules, proper lighting, and other important amenities for public transit users at all bus stops.



Public Transit, Bridgewater

Goods Movements

- Accommodate freight movements to and through the Regional Center.
- Locate warehouse facilities along existing rail infrastructure.
- Improve all public at-grade rail crossings.
- Identify all truck routes in the Regional Center to avoid schools and other high pedestrian areas.

Transportation Planning

- Encourage coordination between land use and circulation system planning to maximize land use efficiency, increase opportunities for transit, reduce vehicular trips, and minimize conflicts with pedestrians and non-motorized vehicular movements.
- Talk to all interested parties during all phases of a road project (problem statement, concept/planning phase, scoping, preliminary and final design, and construction).
- Ensure that all modes of transportation are considered for every transportation project.

Recreation, Open Space, Greenways, and Natural Landscapes

- Coordinate park and recreational opportunities among all communities within the Regional Center and with Somerset County as a whole.
- Enhance access to and improve recognition of Duke Farms and Washington Valley Park as regional recreational resources.
- Continue the creation of park and recreation facilities to provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities to all members of the community.
- Encourage the use of innovative strategies, policies, and funding mechanisms to maintain existing parks, recreation, and open space.
- Leverage the Regional Center’s innovative regional planning efforts to gain access to additional funding sources for parks and recreation.
- Incorporate publicly accessible parks and open space into major redevelopment projects such as the Somerville Landfill and Pfizer/Wyeth sites.
- Utilize open space and greenways to create pedestrian/bicycle community connections throughout Regional Center neighborhoods.
- Encourage use of “green” technology in physical improvements such as storm water management techniques.

Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources

- Continue to pursue shared service agreements among the Regional Center municipalities and between the municipalities and other governmental bodies such as Somerset County and area school districts.
- Expand opportunities for cultural activities within the Regional Center and study the potential for creation of a regional community center to promote recreational and cultural opportunities for those who live, work and play in the region.
- Monitor school facilities in Raritan, Somerville, and redeveloping areas of Bridgewater to ensure that sufficient capacity is available for the residential components of mixed-use redevelopment.
- Monitor the capacity of infrastructure systems in Somerville and Raritan to ensure that services can be provided adequately to major redevelopment at sites such as the Somerville Landfill, and the Johnson Drive sites.
- Expand and capitalize on historic resources in the Regional Center.
- Promote cultural and heritage tourism activities such as the State Crossroads of the Revolution Campaign.
- Make historic preservation an integral part of regional planning and the local land development review process.

LIST OF PRIORITY PROJECTS

High Priority –Short term (1-3 years)

Health and Wellness

- Expand access to healthy foods by supporting farmers markets.
- Implement public outreach to educate the community about healthy living and determine community needs to implement healthier options. Outreach will target stakeholder groups such as seniors and economically-challenged.
- Promote locally-grown organic foods.
- Create a health and wellness “vision” and health and wellness plan for the Regional Center that articulates the numerous benefits of implementing health and wellness strategies.
- Create a Healthy Community Brochure.
- Encourage active design principles in new development to promote physical activity and support healthy lifestyles.

Resiliency

- Prepare contingency plans for first responders during major incidents or disasters.

CEDS and Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County

- Support recommendations from the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Regional Center as a Priority Growth Investment Area (PGIA).

Downtowns and Main Streets

- Create opportunities for outdoor seating at downtown restaurants through wider sidewalks, curb bump-outs, parklets, and pop-up seating.
- Encourage creative placemaking and tourism-related efforts.
- Create an entity to focus on economic vitality in downtown Raritan.

Redevelopment Areas, Economic Development, and Community Design

- Improve the quality of development in the Regional Center by using healthy community design principles.
- Establish guidelines to promote high quality community design in the built environment.
- Compile a list of active design principles to guide creation of opportunities for physical activity for residents of all ages and income levels.
- Promote coordinated and uniform design standards emphasizing green design.

Train Station Areas

- Reduce traffic congestion in train station areas while maintaining or increasing ridership levels.

Background Report to Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan

- Reduce the impacts from train station parking on surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods and Housing

- Support the creation of workforce housing.
- Promote healthy community design principles to encourage active living.

Circulation

Roadways

- Encourage access management principles on all roads.
- Route 202/Ortho Drive - adjust signal timing.

Bicycling

- Support Somerset County’s Walk, Bike, Hike Somerset County Study
- Education program - educate bicyclists on “rules of the road,” especially bike/pedestrian path sharing.

Walking

- Education program – educate pedestrians’ responsibility regarding crossing streets; implement campaigns like “put it down”.
- Encourage walking throughout the Regional Center through use of active living design principles.
- Ensure that all routes to schools are pedestrian friendly and have enhanced crosswalks and signs.
- Adopt the NJ State pedestrian guidelines as the guidelines for the Regional Center.

Public Transportation

- Provide real time information for bus and rail riders to make service more user friendly.
- Communicate the importance of a new TransHudson Tunnel to the Regional Center communities.

Goods Movement

- Identify all truck routes in Regional Center to avoid schools and other high pedestrian areas.

Recreation, Open Space, Greenways, and Natural Landscapes

- Utilize open space and greenways to create pedestrian/bicycle community connections throughout Regional Center neighborhoods.

Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources

- Continue to pursue shared service agreements among the Regional Center municipalities and between the municipalities and other governmental bodies such as Somerset County and area school districts.
- Make historic preservation an integral part of regional planning and the local land development review process.

High Priority –Long term (3-5 or 5+ years)

Circulation

Roadways

- Improve the intersection of Route 202/First Avenue in Raritan.
- Reconstruct the intersection of First Avenue and Johnson Drive in Raritan.

Bicycling

- Make roads bicycle compatible wherever possible.
- Establish a regional bicycle “depot” similar to the Bay Street Bike Depot in Montclair. <http://njbwc.org/bikedepot/>
- Complete the nine linkage improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians identified in the June 2009 Pedestrian, Bicycle and Greenways Systems Connection Plan.
- Raritan: Route 202/First Ave intersection crossing – support implementation of bike/pedestrian safety improvements.
- Integrate suitable inter-municipal bike route connections with Bridgewater bike route map and smart phone “app” w/ Bridgewater Municipal Building as “hub”.

Walking

- Complete the nine linkage improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians identified in the June, 2009 Pedestrian, Bicycle and Greenways Systems Connection Plan.

Public Transportation

- Support implementation of Last Mile connections to nearby employment centers.

Recreation, Open Space, Greenways, and Natural Landscapes

- Develop a list of “green” technology techniques to be used in physical improvements such as storm water management techniques.

Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources

- Raritan Borough –implement a wayfinding system using public art between the train station, downtown and riverfront.
- Coordinate liability insurance for major events/public programs; e.g. farmers’ markets.

Medium and Low Priority

Health and Wellness

- Expand fitness opportunities for all ages.
- Support efforts to reduce residents' exposure to pollutants in the air and water.

Resiliency

- Regular updates of Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Encourage and support business continuity plans.
- Prepare disaster recovery plan

Downtowns and Main Streets

- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.
- Promote mixed uses and high density residential uses.
- Link public health agenda to public health spaces (Farmers Markets, public health information).
- Utilize Somerset County Cultural and Heritage resources to support creative placemaking and tourism-related efforts.
- Amend downtown zoning to allow educational facilities.
- Consider form-based zoning to help developers to envision desirable projects within prescribed design and bulk parameters to create projects that can be supported by the community.

Redevelopment Areas, Economic Development, and Community Design

- Include publicly accessible parks and open space and create diverse public spaces that provide pleasant places for neighbors to meet and recreate.
- Ensure that public access is provided from the existing community to the Raritan River Greenway.
- Promote new development that is accessible, attractive, and safe to pedestrian and bicyclists.
- Ensure that new development includes appropriate landscaping, street furniture, sidewalks, and access to mass transit.
- Establish and design gateways and coordinated focal points in the Regional Center.
- Pursue commercial development to attract tax ratables and reduce the residential tax burden.
- Upgrade and enhance existing infrastructure to sustain and promote economic development.
- Survey infrastructure conditions and explore establishment of an infrastructure bank in cooperation with the County.
- Create programs for attracting high tech businesses and service firms, as well as research and development activities, capitalizing on the technological and pharmaceutical clusters in the Regional Center.

Train Station Areas

- Promote mixed-use redevelopment in train station areas.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian access to train stations.

Neighborhoods and Housing

- Support housing in mixed-uses and within walkable distance to mass transit, nearby services, downtowns, park/recreational facilities.
- Protect the community character and quality of life within existing Regional Center neighborhoods.
- Establish design standards for neighborhoods to ensure that infill development is compatible with the existing character of developed residential areas within the Regional Center.
- Use traffic calming measures where appropriate to enhance pedestrian safety.
- Preserve neighborhoods by promoting compatible infill development.
- Connect neighborhoods to downtowns and other destinations through safe and attractive streets.
- Provide a greater range of housing choices and affordability in the Regional Center and promote socially equitable communities.
- Increase the range of senior citizen housing in the Regional Center.

Circulation

Roadways

- Improve intersection efficiencies through enhanced traffic signal timing, improved striping, and clear directions to users.
- Identify sites for neighborhood traffic calming.
- Separate local and regional traffic along Route 22 according to the “Boulevard” concept.
- Implement Transportation Demand Management techniques.
- Prepare a 5-year road improvement plan.
- Coordinate road improvements between the member municipalities of the Regional Center and Somerset County.
- Work with local police to identify problem areas.
- Davenport Street Tunnel
- Implement the Route 22 Sustainable Corridor long term improvements.
- Consolidate commercial driveways along high volume corridors.
- Eliminate four-lane, no shoulder, and no left hand turn lane cross sections throughout the Regional Center.

Bicycling

- Encourage/install bicycle facilities (e.g., racks, lockers) at appropriate destination points.
- Extend a bike path to Duke Farms.

Background Report to Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan

- Investigate implementing a bike sharing program possibly as a pilot project.
- Links (bike paths) to major Route 202 employment and commercial destinations.
- Southside Avenue: Improve Bridgewater segment to enhance access to Arthur Chambers Park/Peters Brook Greenway.

Walking

- Compile an inventory of all existing sidewalks and connections (off - road).
- Develop an implementation plan to correct pedestrian access deficiencies.
- Create off-road shared use paths along the Raritan River Greenway.
- Make areas within 1/4 mile of a transit stop pedestrian friendly.
- Make sidewalks and road interfaces ADA compatible.
- Extend the Raritan River Greenway to Bound Brook and the D&R Canal State Park.

Public Transportation

- Make mass transit service more frequent, especially for reverse commuters.
- Increase mass transit service by extending existing bus routes and providing new routes (rail or bus) in the Eastern Gateway and the Regional Center Core.
- Provide bus shelters, crosswalks, bicycle parking, route maps, route schedules, proper lighting and other important amenities for public transit users at all bus stops.
- Raritan Train Station enhancement; linkage to downtown/Raritan River.
- Incentivize train station usage by Martinsville residents (make commuter parking competitive).
- Make access to Train Stations from remote residential locations easier; e.g., Park and Ride
- Activate Milltown Road Train Station.
- Reactivate West Trenton line to link Regional Center to points south (Philadelphia).
- Routes 202-206 Corridor Study regarding possible shuttle service serving Bridgewater/Bedminster.

Goods Movement

- Ensure infrastructure is in place to accommodate freight movements to and through the Regional Center.
- Locate warehouse facilities along existing rail infrastructure.
- Improve all at-grade rail crossings.

Recreation, Open Space, Greenways, and Natural Landscapes

- Enhance access to and improve recognition of Duke Farms and Washington Valley Park as regional recreational resources.
- Continue the creation of park and recreation facilities to provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities to all members of the community.
- Encourage the use of innovative strategies, policies, and funding mechanisms to maintain existing parks, recreation, and open space.

- Leverage the Regional Center’s innovative regional planning efforts to gain access to additional funding sources for parks and recreation.
- Incorporate publicly accessible parks and open space into major redevelopment projects such as the Somerville Landfill and Pfizer/Wyeth site.

Shared Services, Community Facilities, and Historic and Cultural Resources

- Expand opportunities for cultural activities within the Regional Center and study the potential for creation of a regional community center to promote recreational and cultural opportunities for those who live, work and play in the area.
- Support historic tourism opportunities by marketing the large number of Regional Center historic resources
- Resident artists - coordinate with Duke Farms.
- Study conversion of Anderson Street firehouse into a museum.

LAND USE AND ZONING ALONG MUNICIPAL BORDERS

The 2006 Regional Center Strategic Master Plan identifies the following areas along municipal borders between the three Regional Center municipalities which can be considered for possible future attention to address potential or past land use issues; e.g., lands zoned for M-1 in close proximity to lands zoned residential. The 2006 Plan discusses issues, joint planning opportunities at key locations within the Regional Center and along municipal borders that focus on how to strengthen the connections between the communities and/or resolve existing or potential land use conflicts. The following is a list of the areas along municipal borders identified in the 2006 Strategic Plan:

Land uses and zoning along the Bridgewater/Raritan border:

- North of Raritan River and South of railroad tracks
- North of Route 202 and South of Vroom Drive/Normandie Lane
- North and South of Vanderveer Road
- North and South of Route 28

Land uses and zoning along the Bridgewater/Somerville border:

- East of Route 202 and North of Route 28
- Route 202/206 and Route 22 Intersection
- North and South of Route 22
- Route 22: East of North Bridge Street to east of North Gaston Ave
- West and East of Van Buren Road
- West and East of Adamsville Road
- North and South of railroad tracks

Zoning along the Raritan/Somerville border:

- West and East of Cornell Blvd
- West and East of Route 206

The 2006 plan also identified opportunities for joint planning at the municipal borders and noted these areas for possible future attention:

Neighborhood Plans

- Bridgewater and Raritan- Vanderveer Road area
- Bridgewater and Somerville –Adamsville Road area

Commercial /Industrial Area Initiatives

- Bridgewater and Raritan –South of Old York Road
- Bridgewater -Central Avenue

Mixed Use Area Studies

- Bridgewater and Raritan –Charlotte Drive area
- Edgewater Terrace, Bridgewater / Alpine Way, Raritan
- Northwood Avenue, Bridgewater / Cornell Boulevard, Somerville
- Van Buren Road, Bridgewater and Somerville
- Southside Avenue area, Bridgewater and Somerville
- Cornell Boulevard, Raritan and Somerville

Redevelopment Area Studies

- Johnson Drive, Raritan
- Orlando Drive, Raritan in connection with Somerville Landfill, Somerville

Connection Studies:

- Route 202 (improve access/safety)
- Route 28 (enhance linkages between key sites in Raritan/Bridgewater)

Other Joint Planning Initiatives:

New Jersey Water Supply Authority Concept Plan, Bridgewater and Somerville (Oak Terrace Area)

In 2006, under contract with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) undertook a study to create an approach for identifying undeveloped and underutilized non-residential sites near critical water resources (such as drinking water) to determine whether such sites were more appropriate for economic development, open space preservation, or a combination of both. In doing so, the study sought to develop a model that protects water resources while improving local economies.

The Somerset County Regional Center was chosen to test the methodology and criteria due to its existing land use patterns, highly organized regional partnerships, availability of current GIS data, proximity to a significant freshwater intake (Elizabethtown Water Company, now New Jersey American Water), and its location between the Raritan North and South Branch confluence and the Raritan-Millstone confluence. The Oak Terrace Concept Plan area, located southeast of the Route 202/206 and Route 22 cloverleaf interchange, was one of two high priority sites for which conceptual site plans were developed to test the practical application of the methodology and criteria. This site was identified as a key link in the Region's greenway plans. The Oak Terrace site lies within both Bridgewater Township and Somerville Borough, is partially developed, and is adjacent to Peter's Brook and Mac's Brook.

Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program

Since 2011, the Regional Center Partnership has partnered with the NJWSA to administer the Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program which encourages residents to install rain barrels that collect and store rainwater from rooftops. Rainwater stored in rain barrels can be used to

Background Report to Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan

water gardens, the lawn, wash the car, etc. Capturing rainwater this way also helps keep rainwater from becoming stormwater runoff that picks up and carries pollutants into streams like the Peters Brook which drain into the Raritan River which is an important source of drinking water for the entire region. The program also helps conserve water usage and complements flood control efforts.



Ceramic rain barrel –one of many types of rain barrels.

UPDATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The recommendations suggested by the Strategic Plan and this Background Report are intended to be periodically monitored over time to ensure they are still relevant. The Regional Center Partnership should develop additional recommendations as it matures and as the planning process continues to move forward. The following schedule is suggested for periodic review of the recommendations and other elements of the implementation plan set forth in this document.

5 Years:

Review goals and objectives. How much progress has been made toward reaching them? What changes are needed to make additional progress? In what ways is the Regional Center doing better? In what ways does it need to improve? Should any goals or objectives be added? Have any become less important over time?

10 years:

Review any long-term goals and objectives. What is the Region's progress toward reaching these objectives? Are new goals and objectives on the horizon? Should the Region begin the process of preparing another guiding document to keep moving forward?

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

Somerset County Investment Framework

The Somerset County Investment Framework is a criteria-based approach for identifying areas most suitable for growth, limited growth and preservation as described in the Draft Final State Strategic Plan. The County Investment Framework Map was developed in close coordination with our municipalities, the State Office for Planning Advocacy, the Somerset County Business Partnership, Somerset County Park Commission, and many other stakeholder groups and professional planners statewide. A series of GIS-based Infrastructure, Community and Environmental Asset Maps were used as screening criteria for verifying and substantiating areas in the county best suited for growth, limited growth and preservation. The Somerset County Investment Framework in many respects is similar to the goals and objectives of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan which also uses a criteria-based and collaborative approach for identifying areas in the state most suitable for growth, limited growth and preservation.

The Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County initiative is a study that in Phase 1 compiled background data and detailed existing conditions reports that describe the characteristics of each of 24 Priority Growth Investment Areas (PGIAs) in Somerset County that were identified through the Somerset County Investment Framework. Phase 1 studied 7 of the 24 PGIA's from which key findings were identified in relation to nine (9) focus areas:

- Socio-economic Analysis
- Improvement to Land Value Analysis
- Labor and Industry Analysis
- Business Inventory and Industry Cluster Analysis
- Real Estate Supply and Demand Analysis
- Transportation and Utility Infrastructure Analysis
- Baseline Conditions: Land Use
- Assessment of Land Use Policies & Workforce Housing
- Build-out Analysis

The goals of Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Phases 2 and 3 are to create a framework to support growth, redevelopment, and sustainable communities in Somerset County, and advance the goals of the County's Investment Framework and the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan (CEDS) which is a blueprint created as a joint effort with the Somerset County Business Partnership for economic growth in Somerset County. Phases 2 and 3 analyzed the remaining 17 PGIA's and other targeted growth areas in Somerset County which has provided them with detailed market-driven land use scenarios that identify the supportive infrastructure and land use policy recommendations needed to achieve implementation.

The Regional Center is the largest of the 24 PGIAs; other PGIAs in Somerset County near the Regional Center include the Chimney Rock Interchange Area; Sanofi Aventis (New Jersey Center of Excellence) in Bridgewater; the Boroughs of Bound Brook and South Bound Brook; Manville Town Center; Hillsborough Town Center/Gateway; and Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC)/Easton Turnpike in Branchburg.

As articulated during the September 2015 Regional Center Visioning Initiative, the projects and initiatives identified in this Background Report that are aligned with the recommendations in the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Phase 3 study of the Regional Center and the Somerset County CEDS should be given priority attention to maximize the ability to help leverage funding and/or technical support from the State and Federal sources to achieve the goals of the Regional Center and in relation to Somerset County.

State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The Regional Center Strategic Plan was prepared as an initiative intended to implement the policies of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan in Somerset County. The Somerset Regional Center, consisting of the Borough of Raritan, the Borough of Somerville, and a portion of Bridgewater Township, was the first multi-jurisdictional Regional Center to be designated in the New Jersey by the State Planning Commission. Since that initial designation in 1996, the State Development and Redevelopment Plan was adopted, and the process which led to the preparation of this document launched.

The Regional Center is located inside State Planning Area 1, known as the Metropolitan Planning Area, which consists of existing developed areas with substantial amounts of existing infrastructure. This designation classifies the Regional Center as a location that is to be made a high priority for redevelopment, as per state policy.

Goals

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan includes eight statewide goals:

- Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns
- Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems
- Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of New Jersey
- Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution
- Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost
- Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value
- Ensure Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementing Statewide

These goals are intended to fulfill the vision of the State Planning Act in which development and economic growth are encouraged in suitable locations with existing infrastructure, sprawl is reduced, and areas of environmental quality are preserved. This Regional Center Strategic Plan strives to implement the overall goals of the State Plan. It sets forth policies which further the revitalization of downtowns and Main Streets in the Regional Center and identifies a core

area in which to focus further growth and development. This Strategic Plan also recommends policies which protect and conserve the Regional Center’s environmental resources, as well as preserve and enhance historic, cultural, open space and recreational resources. Further, the Plan also includes recommendations to share public facilities and services and for the communities to work together on sound and integrated planning initiatives.



Regional Center Partnership receives Plan Endorsement Resolution, 2013

Policies

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan also includes 19 Policies which provide detailed recommendations on the process and tools to be used to implement the goals. This Regional Center Strategic Plan initiative advances many of these policies in tangible ways.

The Regional Center Strategic Plan fulfills the goals of Statewide Policy #2, Comprehensive Planning, in being fully integrated with the Master Plan Updates for the three municipalities that make up the Regional Center – the Borough of Raritan, the Borough of Somerville, and the Township of Bridgewater. The Plan also creates a single coherent vision for the entire Regional Center.

Additional Statewide Policies which are tangibly advanced by the Regional Center Strategic Plan include:

#3: Public Investment Priorities: The Regional Center Strategic Plan recommends that public resources be used to upgrade infrastructure to maintain and enhance the values and quality of life of existing developed neighborhoods within a designated Center.

#6: Urban Revitalization: The Regional Center Strategic Plan promotes a number of policies related to urban revitalization including local economic development, adaptive reuse of commercial and industrial properties, transportation improvements, and revitalization for sustainability.

#7: Housing: The Regional Center Strategic Plan recommends providing greater opportunities for workforce housing in the Regional Center including housing in downtown Raritan and Somerville within walking distance of employment, shopping, and transit facilities.

#8: Transportation: The Regional Center Strategic Plan recommends transportation investments that improve access to the regional transit system; fostering bicycle and pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, downtowns, major employment centers, schools, and cultural attractions through the adoption and implementation of complete streets policies; and pursuing transit village initiatives which will direct new growth to areas near the existing train station.

#11: Water Resources: The Regional Center Strategic Plan seeks to protect the Raritan River and its tributaries through the designation of greenways along stream corridors, implement riparian corridor initiatives, and discourage new development activity in flood plain areas.

#12: Open Lands and Natural Systems: The Regional Center Strategic Plan recommends providing connecting corridors along the Raritan River Greenway throughout the Region which will protect environmentally sensitive areas and provide expanded habitat for a variety of species.

#14: Waster Management, Recycling, and Brownfields: The Regional Center Strategic Plan promotes the cleanup and reuse of a number of existing brownfield sites located within the Regional Center, including the Pfizer/Wyeth site in Bridgewater and Somerville Landfill site in Somerville.

#19: Design: The Regional Center Strategic Plan proposes planning initiatives in established neighborhoods in the Regional Center which will identify community design improvements to maintain and enhance the quality of life of these areas. It also proposes community design principles for redevelopment projects that seek to complement the existing structural/historic character of the community, incorporate provisions for public open space, enhance connections to the existing street grid system and greenways, and encourage strong links to mass transit opportunities.

COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE OF THE REGIONAL CENTER

The Regional Center borders four municipalities – Hillsborough Township, Manville Borough, Franklin Township, and Bound Brook Borough. The Regional Center is also located in close proximity to Branchburg Township.

Hillsborough Township

All of Raritan and Somerville, and a small portion of Bridgewater, borders Hillsborough Township on the south. The Raritan River separates all three Regional Center communities from Hillsborough. While this border is relatively lengthy, direct impacts from development on either side of the border are limited because there are only two river crossings in the area—County Route 625 (River Road and Lyman Street) in Raritan and Route 206 in Somerville. Duke Farms forms one of the most sought-after amenities in the region, having surpassed 2.5 million visitors since opening its doors to the public in 2012. An important bicycle link is being planned between the Nevius Street Bridge and Duke Farms parallel to River Road (County Route 625) which will enhance Raritan Borough’s efforts to link the Raritan Train Station with downtown Raritan and the waterfront. Long-term plans envision linking Duke Farms with the Sourland Mountain Preserve which would ultimately connect the Raritan River Greenway with the Sourland Mountains.

The lands in Hillsborough which border the Regional Center are zoned Agriculture. A Master Plan Reexamination report dated 1999 recommends that agricultural uses be preserved in this area of the Township. This area of Hillsborough functions as the environs for the Regional Center. The area on both sides of the river is also subject to serious environmental constraints, i.e. floodplains. This Regional Center Strategic Plan recommends the establishment of a greenway along the Raritan River within Raritan, Somerville and Bridgewater, which will provide an additional buffer between the undeveloped areas of Hillsborough Township and the existing land uses in the Regional Center.

Borough of Manville

Bridgewater borders the Borough of Manville in the south east part of the Regional Center. Manville is a historic town which experienced extensive redevelopment since the floods caused by Hurricane Floyd in 1999. The Raritan River and its floodplains separate the Bridgewater portion of the Regional Center from an established residential district and the former Johns Manville industrial area, which has been redeveloped into the very successful Manville Marketplace. Intermunicipal impacts are limited here by the necessity of preserving a wide floodplain. However, redevelopment both in Manville and in Bridgewater will generate increased traffic on Finderne Avenue, which links the two communities across the Raritan River. Signage and design treatments should be applied to this boundary to inform travelers that they are entering Bridgewater and the Regional Center. There is also the opportunity to link emerging parkland in the Lost Valley section of Manville as part of the Raritan River Greenway system.

It should be noted that Manville has been designated a Town Center by the State Planning Commission. Manville has also been identified as a Priority Growth Investment Area within the Somerset County Investment Framework.

Franklin Township

The Raritan River separates Bridgewater from Franklin Township on the southeast corner of the Regional Center. This area of the Regional Center in Bridgewater will remain with limited development as it is subject to severe environmental constraints and is separated from the rest of the Regional Center by a rail corridor. The Raritan River Greenway proposed for this area of Bridgewater in this Strategic Plan will enhance the environmental values of the river throughout the Region. Land uses including major employment centers and industrial parks in northern Franklin Township and Middlesex County also impact traffic patterns along I-287 which impacts the flow of traffic along this major corridor in Bridgewater and the Regional Center.

Boroughs of Bound Brook and South Bound Brook

Bound Brook borders the FINDERNE section of Bridgewater on the most eastern section of the Regional Center. Like Manville, Bound Brook is a historic community which was severely impacted by flooding associated with Hurricane Floyd and has proposed extensive redevelopment since completion of the Green Brook Flood Control improvements. The Middle Brook and Route 287 provide a sharp edge separating Bound Brook from the Regional Center. Bound Brook and South Bound Brook were designated a joint Town Center by the State Planning Commission. Bound Brook and South Bound Brook also form one of the 24 Priority Growth Investment Areas in Somerset County. The extension of the Raritan River Greenway from Bridgewater into Bound Brook will also help link the Raritan River Greenway with the Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park in South Bound Brook and Franklin Township; this in turn will help connect the Regional Center and Somerset County with the East Coast Greenway.

Most of Bound Brook's border with Bridgewater consists of well-established residential developments to the east of the Middle Brook and well established industrial and commercial uses just west of the Middle Brook. Bound Brook's redevelopment Vision Plan proposes a greenway park along the Middle Brook, which complements the Regional Center vision of a Raritan River Greenway along the river and its tributaries. As part of the redevelopment efforts, the Middlebrook Shopping Center was constructed in Bound Brook near the Bridgewater border on Route 28; the Queen's Gate apartment complex on Tea Street was also completed in 2015. Increased traffic from these projects and other redevelopment projects in Bound Brook's Central Business District will continue to impact the FINDERNE section of Bridgewater in the Regional Center. At the same time, redevelopment in FINDERNE and other parts of the Regional Center will continue to impact Bound Brook.

Branchburg Township

While the Regional Center does not border Branchburg Township, the Regional Center's close proximity with the township merits consideration of potential influences that may affect aspects of the Regional Center. Raritan Valley Community College is located in the North

Background Report to Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan

Branch section of Branchburg on Easton Turnpike and includes an important performing arts theater where a number of cultural events are held including the annual Teen Arts Festival. Another important cultural arts center in this part of Branchburg is the New Jersey Printmaking Center who is also involved with Arts on Division in Somerville.

Land uses along and near the Route 22 corridor in Branchburg relates to and can influence traffic patterns on Route 22 in the Regional Center, including trucks servicing major employers in Branchburg off Readington and County Line Roads and commuters heading east from Branchburg and points west of Somerset County. The Raritan Valley Line also connects the Regional Center with points west including North Branch station; the very limited parking that is available at the North Branch station puts additional pressure on parking availability at the Raritan and Somerville train stations. The ultimate goal of the Raritan River Greenway is to be extended west from Bridgewater to Branchburg such as along the North Branch of the Raritan River which approximately parallels the Regional Center's northwestern border.

Appendix of Healthy Community Examples

Pop-Up Seating & Café Guidelines, Town of Westport, CT

<http://www.westportct.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=2865>

Vita Health & Wellness District, Stamford, CT

http://vitastamford.com/wp-content/themes/vita/media/VITA_2013_REPORT.pdf

Healthy Plan Making Report, Prepared by American Planning Association

<https://www.iowapha.org/Resources/Documents/APA%20Healthy%20Plan%20Making%20Report.pdf>

Long-lasting benefits of pop-up parks

<https://ceosforcities.org/the-lasting-benefits-of-pop-up-parks/>