

A white line-art icon on a green background. It features a bar chart with four bars of increasing height, topped with a circle containing a dollar sign (\$).

ECONOMIC VITALITY





ECONOMIC VITALITY

Economic Vitality requires the county to identify, provide, and advance opportunities that enhance community prosperity. This prosperity includes the gainful employment and financial stability of its residents; the ability of the county to foster, attract and, retain businesses; and, the resultant generation of sound financial conditions in the local economy. A range of external factors, including the general economic climate, availability of transportation, education and a skilled workforce, and land use affect these elements. Alignment of these elements is critical for the county to create an environment that retains and fosters its existing businesses and residents in a way that is also attractive to those currently outside Bergen County.

In 1970, Bergen County's population peaked at 897,148 residents before losing 70,000 of its residents over the following twenty years to 825,380 residents in 1990. The 2000 Census showed that Bergen County's population had started to increase (884,118 residents), and by 2010, Bergen County's population had climbed back and surpassed its previous 1970 peak, with 905,116 people residing within its borders. Population data from the 2020 Census shows that Bergen County's population has continued to increase, with a population of 955,732 residents. Census data indicates that the majority of this population is housed in single-family detached, owner-occupied units. Bergen County's residential population exceeds the state average for educational attainment and income. Despite pockets of Hispanic- and Asian American communities, however, ethnic and racial diversity in Bergen County falls short of the state average.

This Element evaluates the existing geography of business in the county, with the major clusters located in the southern and eastern sectors, with easy access to major highways and the New York City market. Industrial and warehousing uses are clustered in the Meadowlands area. The northern sectors of the county are far less saturated with business uses, although the **Mahwah** and **Montvale** vicinities have office parks and other professional services that attract a measurable workforce. In addition, this Element reviews the different services which help Bergen County create a strong, prepared, and attractive business culture, including business support, workforce development, and tourism.

By reviewing the demographic characteristics and business profile of the county, this Element identifies the assets and challenges within the county. This information can provide useful insights into the locational decisions of businesses, and potentially identify pockets of business that might lend themselves to untapped opportunity for future growth and expansion.

This element establishes economic goals and objectives for the county, to effectuate the vision for continued growth that will carry the county into the coming decades as a place where people and businesses choose to invest.



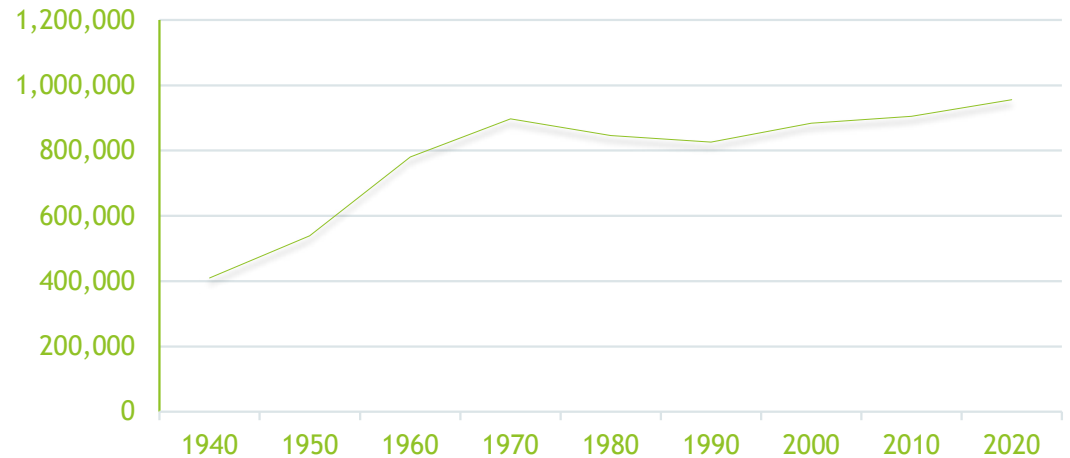
Source: Bergen County Division of Economic Development

EXISTING CONDITIONS

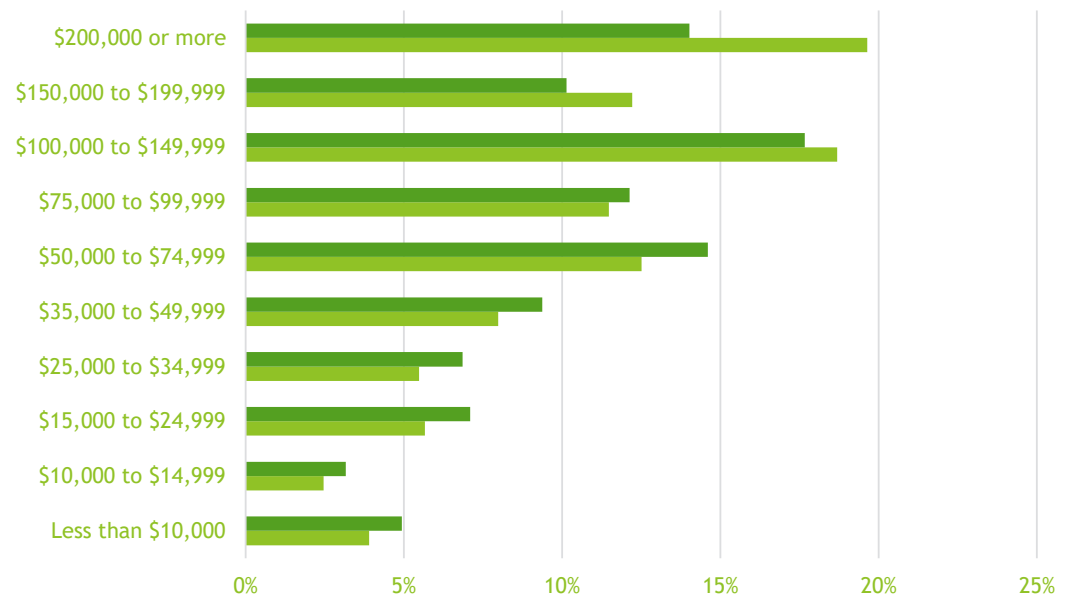
DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

As of the 2020 Census, Bergen County had a population of 955,732 people, the most populous county in the state. Since 2000, Bergen County's population has continued to grow. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority's (NJTPA) population forecast for the year 2050, estimates that Bergen County's population will exceed 1 million residents.¹ Since 2010 the racial mix of the county has remained relatively consistent; Bergen County is primarily white (71.6 percent per the 2015-2019 ACS, down from 71.9 percent in 2010), with an increasingly emerging Asian American community (16.3 percent). As described in the Master Plan Overview, Bergen County has six (6) geographic sectors: Northwest Bergen, Northern Valley, Pascack Valley, Central Bergen, Southeast Bergen, and Southwest Bergen. Of these six sectors, Central Bergen has the largest population, at 305,366 residents, or 32 percent of the county population, per the 2020 Census. Concurrent with the population growth, median household income grew from \$81,708 in 2010 to \$101,144 in 2019 (an increase of \$19,436). Over 74 percent of county households earn over \$50,000, and 31.9 percent earn over \$150,000. The 2015-2019 ACS estimates that the employed population in the County is 480,028, and the NJTPA projects employment to increase to 483,298 by 2050.

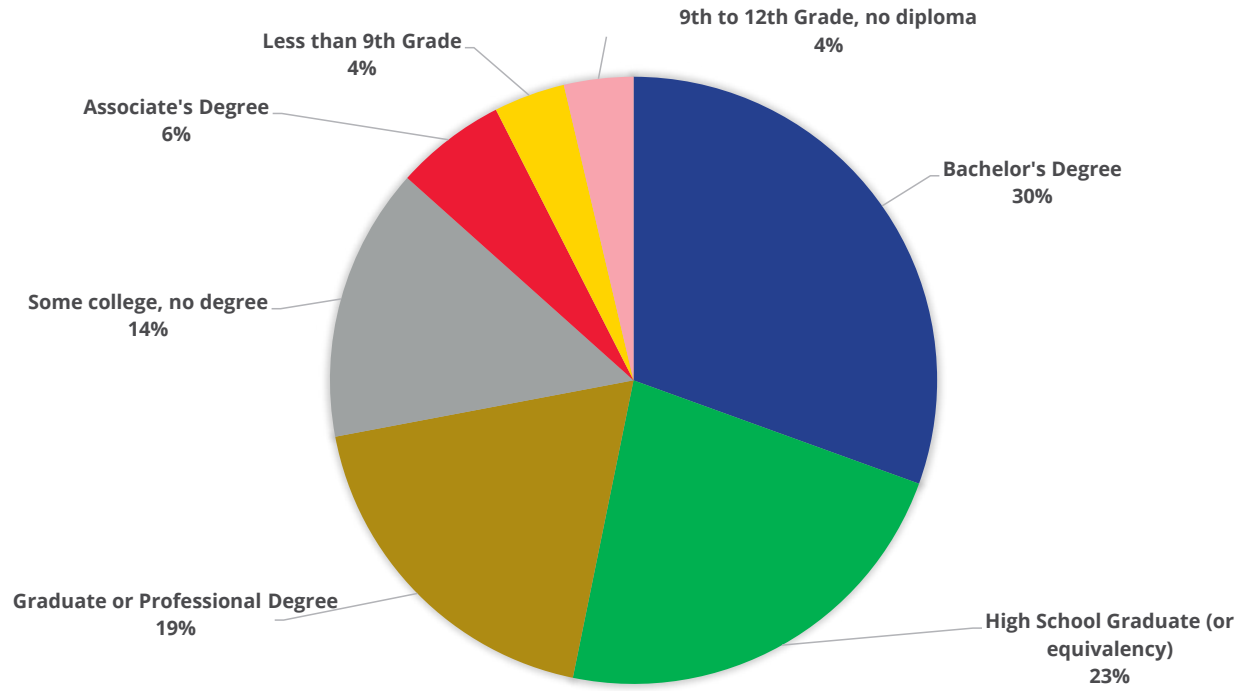
Population Growth



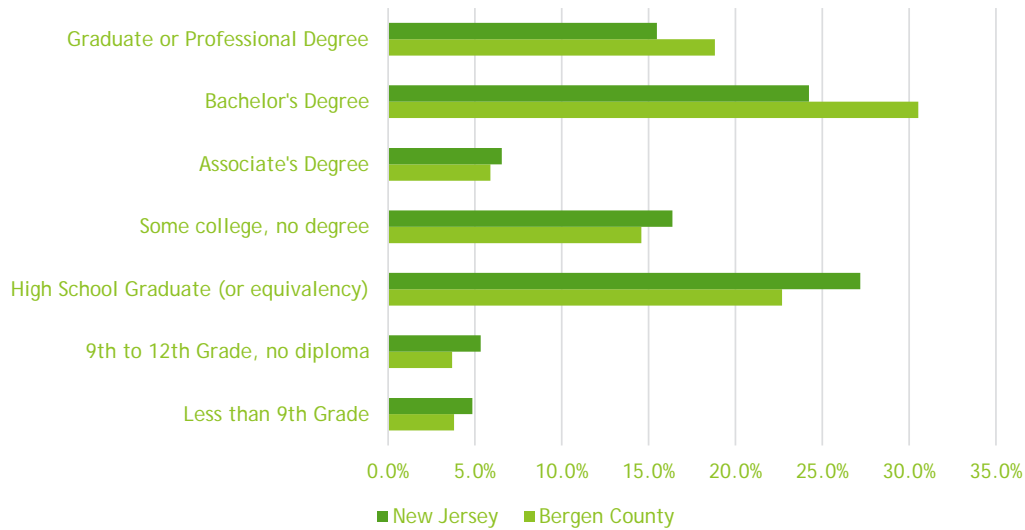
Household Income



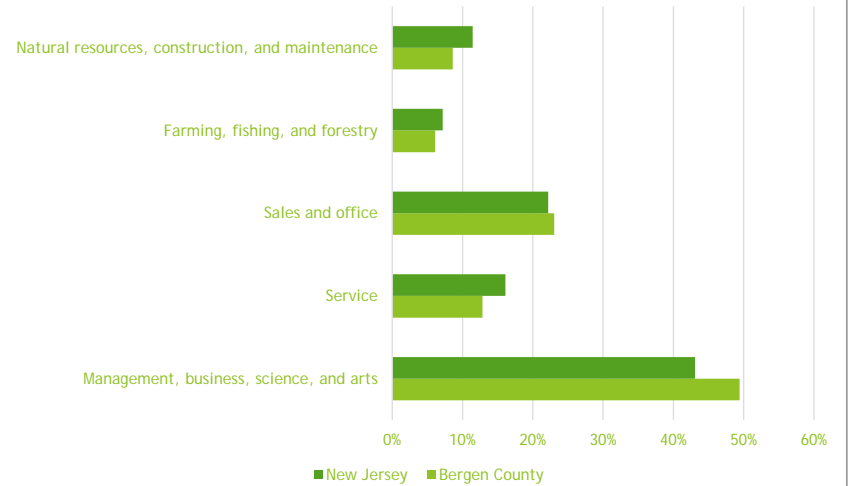
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OLDER



Educational Attainment for Population 25 years and Older



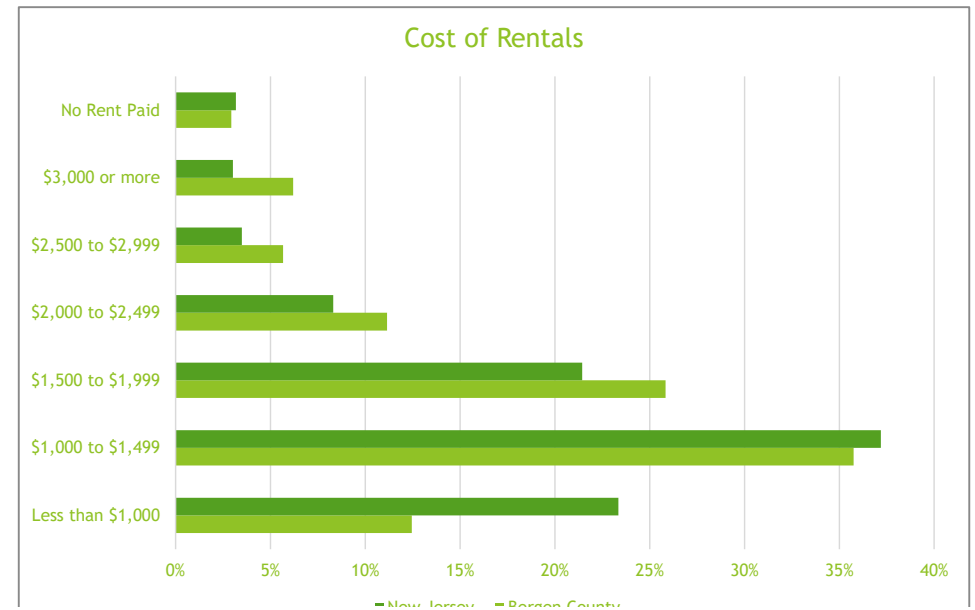
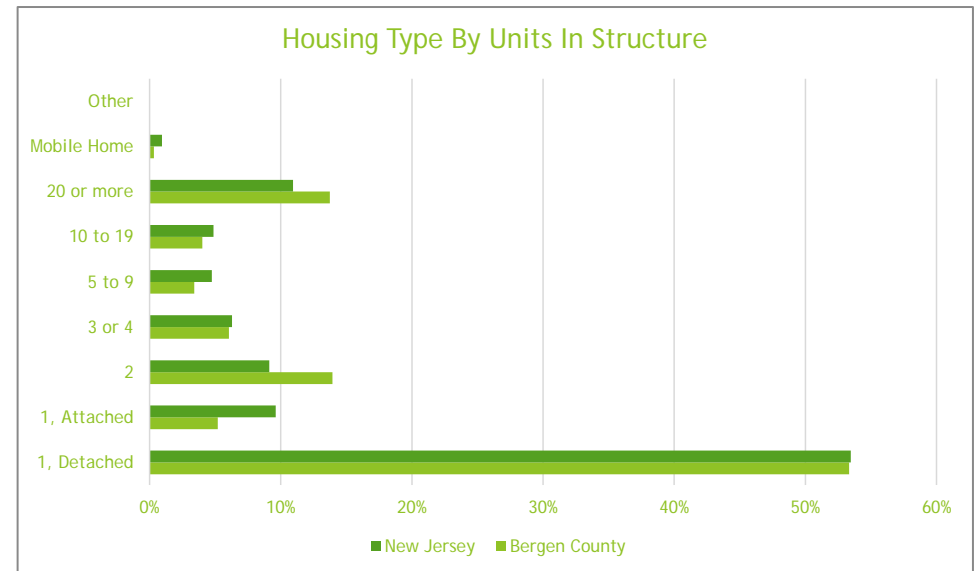
EMPLOYED CIVILIAN POPULATION BY OCCUPATION



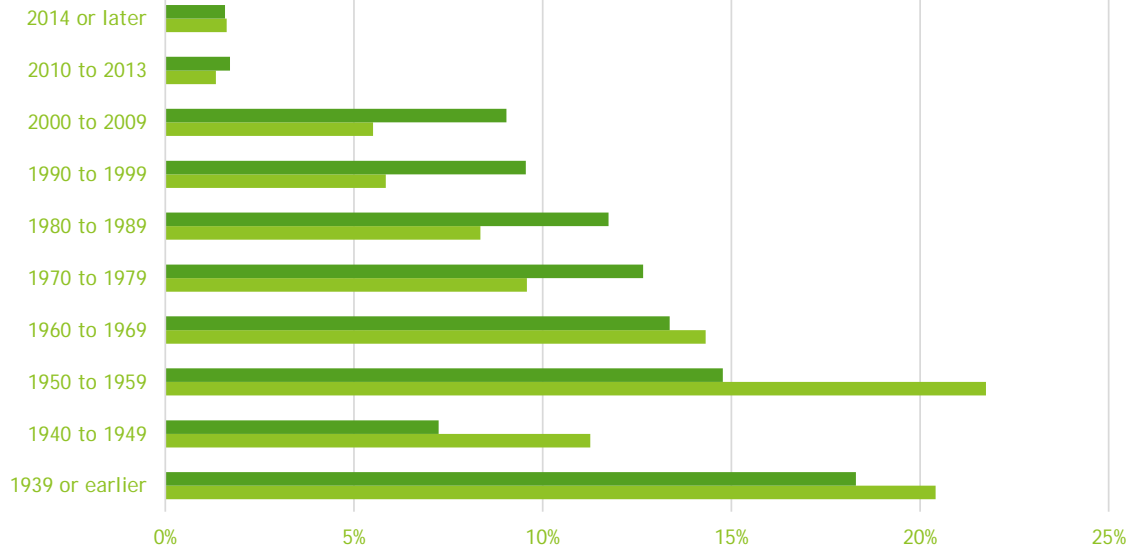
HOUSING

Bergen County serves as an important housing market within the region, providing a mix of communities and housing types. There are 357,828 housing units in Bergen County, 64.8 percent of which are owner-occupied. Single-family detached homes account for 53.3 percent of all housing units, most of which was built between 1950 and 1959. Vacancies make up 5.0 percent of the total housing stock.² Housing construction dipped during the recession period of December 2007-June 2009 but has since rebounded. To illustrate this point, 2,274 building permits issued for new housing units between 2008-2010, while 2,366 were issued in 2018 and 3,249 were issued in 2019. In 2020, the total number of building permits issued for new construction was only 1,609 in Bergen County; however, this is likely the result of pandemic-related business shutdowns in the first half of the year which restricted municipal and business operations. While building permit data is not yet available for all of 2021, data from January through October indicate that 1,987 housing units were authorized by building permits.³ It is also worth noting that this period also coincides with a shift in the dynamics for new housing construction in Bergen County. Between 2004 and 2009, just over half of residential building permits were issued to single- and two-family units (5,868 out of 10,928 total units), while multifamily (4,719 units) and mixed use (341 units) comprised the remainder. From 2010 to 2020, however, single and two family comprised 33.5 percent of new housing units (7,076 out of 21,093 total units), while multifamily (13,343 units) comprised 63.3 percent. The number of mixed-use housing units nearly doubled during this period at 674 units, compared to 341 units during the 2004-2009 period.

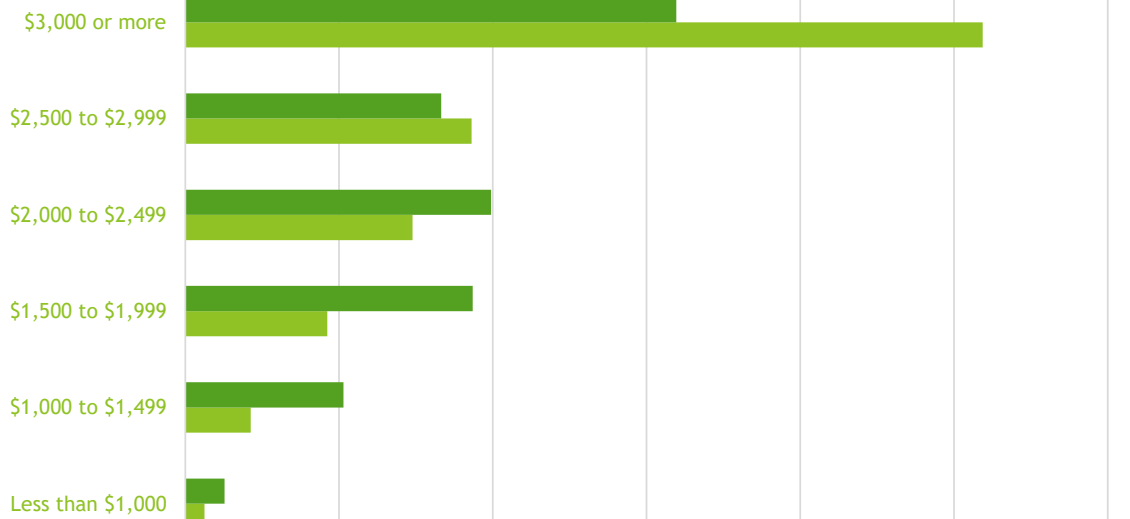
The median home value in Bergen County, \$469,500, is the highest in the state. The median mortgage costs \$3,061/month, and average monthly rent is \$1,506. However, Bergen County residents pay less for housing as a percentage of their income than those in neighboring Passaic or Hudson County. (Only 28.8 percent of Bergen County residents pay 35 percent or more of their household income on their mortgage. This number is 32.6 percent in Hudson County and 33.8 percent in Passaic County.)⁴



Age of Housing Stock



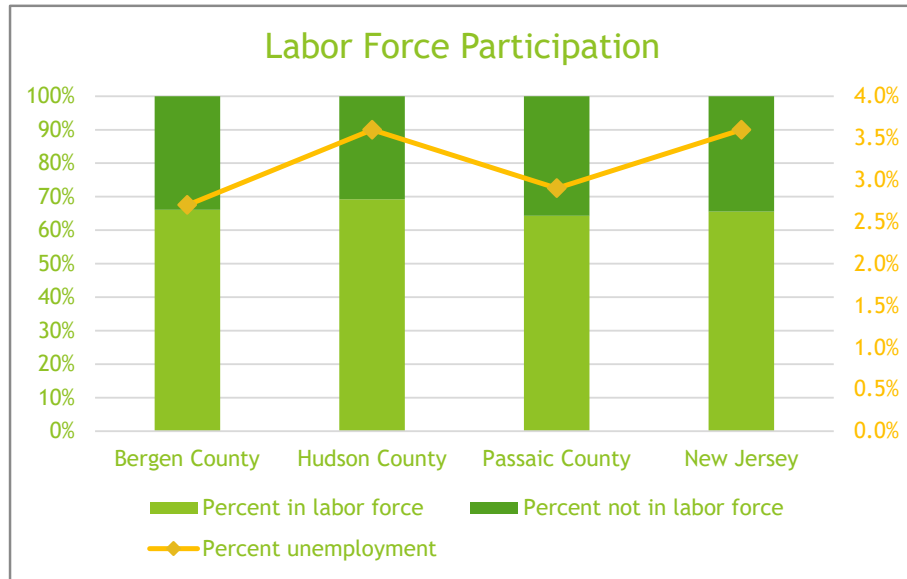
Cost of Mortgage



Source: Bergen County Division of Planning

BUSINESS

Bergen County has a labor force participation rate⁵ of 66.1 percent, which is similar to that of neighboring Hudson and Passaic Counties, as well as the state as a whole. Unemployed residents represent 2.7 percent of the workforce in Bergen County, which is lower than that of Passaic County (2.9 percent), Hudson County (3.6 percent) and the state as a whole (3.6 percent).



Recent estimates for 2021 suggest that the greatest number of businesses by industry sector in Bergen County are in: retail trade (5,342 estimated businesses), followed by other services (except public administration) (4,736 businesses), professional, scientific and tech services (4,194 businesses), followed by health care and social assistance (4,042 businesses), and accommodation and food services (2,991 businesses).⁶ It should be noted that the term “other services” is a classification of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to include establishments providing services not otherwise identified in the system, such as advocacy, pet care, equipment and machinery repair, religious activities, and grantmaking.

Concentrations of business establishments vary by geographic region within the County, however. The greatest number of establishments by industry sector in Central Bergen include retail trade (1,915 businesses), healthcare and social assistance (1,546), and other services (1,532). The Northern Valley contains far fewer establishments, the largest in the “Other Services” sector (740 businesses), followed by health and social assistance (723), and retail trade (696). In Northwest Bergen, the largest number of establishments are in retail trade (873), other services (803), and professional, scientific and tech services (785). The Pascack Valley contains the lowest number of establishments in the county, with the largest concentrations in retail trade (359), other services (356), and health care and social assistance (320). In Southeast Bergen, the largest number of establishments are in retail trade (644), other services (637), and professional, scientific and tech services (490). In Southwest Bergen, the largest number of establishments are in retail trade (855), other services (668), and professional, scientific and tech services (487).



Commercial Office Building in Montvale. Source: Colliers Engineering & Design

JOBS BY GEOGRAPHIC SECTOR

The largest employment sector in Bergen County is retail trade, with an estimated 79,110 employees in 2021. This is followed by health care and social assistance with over 65,000 jobs. Professional, scientific and tech services makes up the third largest sector, at 55,790 jobs. This is followed by educational services, at 39,098 employees, followed by manufacturing at 38,477 employees. Evaluating employment data at the geographic sector and municipal levels reveals certain concentrations of different industries.

As shown on the map of jobs per municipality, a strong concentration of jobs exists in **Paramus** and **Hackensack**, with more moderate numbers of jobs in **Teaneck**, **Englewood**, and **Fort Lee**. These municipalities all have easy access to New York City via the George Washington Bridge, with the major corridors of Routes I-80, NJ-4, NJ-17, and the Garden State Parkway passing through and connecting these towns.

Several notable retail projects in Bergen County have recently opened or are expected to soon open for business, including:

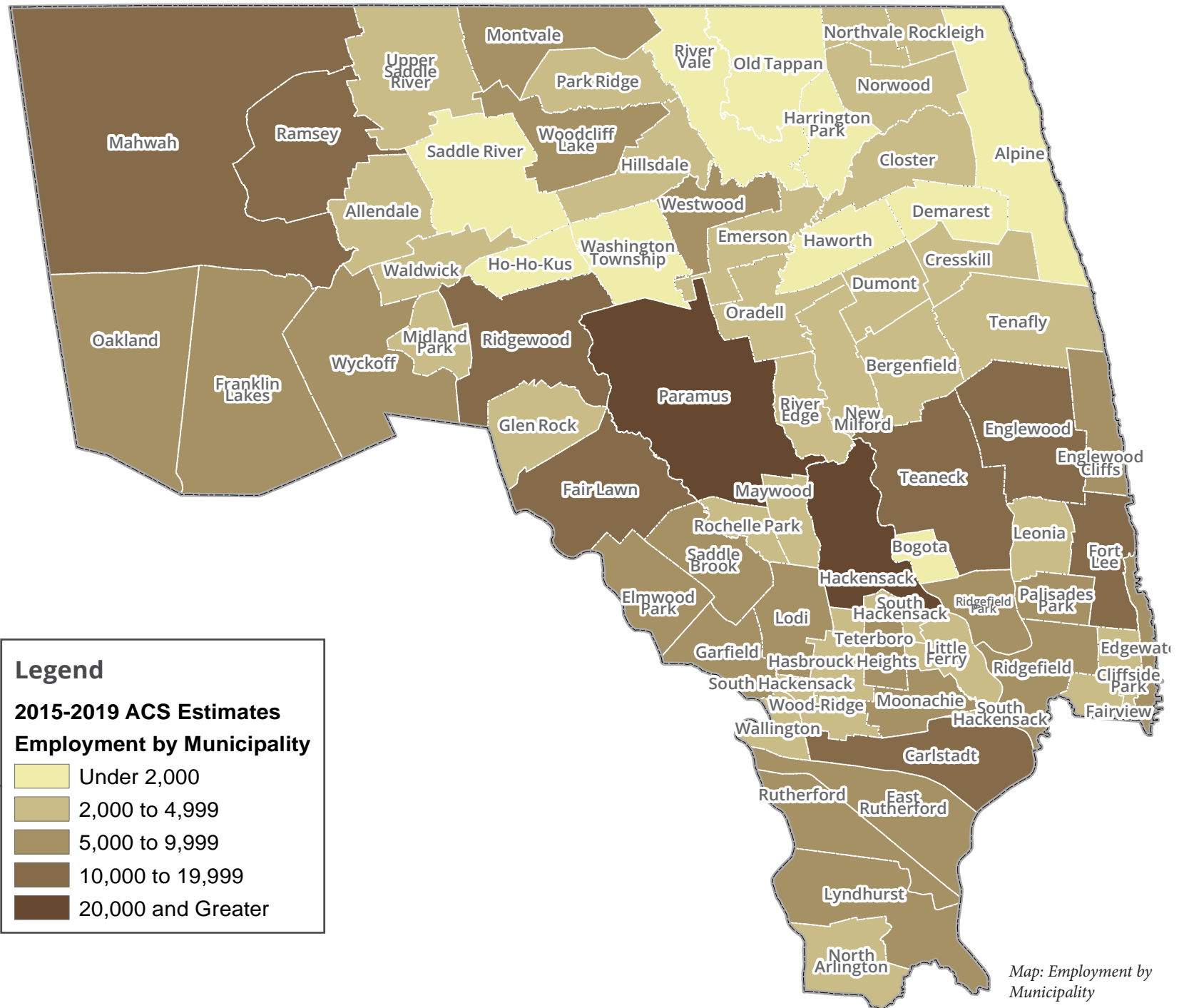
- American Dream (**East Rutherford**) – 3.2 million square feet (55 percent entertainment; 45 percent retail) and an anticipated 16,000 jobs
- Teterboro Landing (**Teterboro**) – 316,000 square feet of retail and 156,000 square feet of industrial/flex space
- The Shoppes at DePiero Farm (**Montvale**)
 - Section 1. 231,000 square feet lifestyle center which features Bergen County's first Wegmans supermarket.
 - Section 2. 66,000 square feet. There are multiple freestanding village style buildings comprising of restaurants, dry goods, fashion and personal service retail.

- Former Sears Property (**Maywood**) - Proposed 379,749 square foot warehouse/distribution center and office use at the site of a former Sears distribution center.
- Hackensack Central Business District- **Hackensack** has attracted more than \$500 million in private investment in less than 10 years. Today there are more than 750 new residential units under construction, with another 750 units that will start construction in 2019, and more than 2,000 additional units planned for in the next 5 to 7 years. The City recently opened a state-of-the-art Performing Arts Center and an award-winning downtown park. The conversion of Main Street to two-way traffic is underway and will include new streetscape and much needed and long overdue infrastructure improvements – all paid for by the revenues generated by redevelopment.

The jobs created by this influx of retail provide significant opportunity for direct employment, not to mention the secondary impacts for those industries that complement retail.

Top 5 Employment Sectors by Geographic Sector by NAICS Industry Sector (2021)														
Rank	Central Bergen		Northern Valley		Northwest Bergen		Pascack Valley		Southeast Bergen		Southwest Bergen		County Wide	
	Sector	Employees	Sector	Employees	Sector	Employees	Sector	Employees	Sector	Employees	Sector	Employees	Sector	Employees
1	Health Care and Social Assistance	31,499	Health Care and Social Assistance	11,203	Retail Trade	13,870	Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	5,867	Retail Trade	16,131	Retail Trade	9,944	Retail Trade	79,110
2	Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	27,827	Educational Services	8,009	Health Care and Social Assistance	12,436	Retail Trade	5,222	Accommodation & Food Services	3,979	Manufacturing	9,886	Health Care and Social Assistance	65,582
3	Retail Trade	26,159	Retail Trade	7,784	Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	9,598	Health Care and Social Assistance	4,219	Educational Services	3,548	Wholesale Trade	6,756	Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	55,790
4	Educational Services	13,432	Manufacturing	6,025	Educational Services	7,382	Educational Services	3,503	Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	3,294	Accommodation & Food Services	6,324	Educational Services	39,098
5	Accommodation and Food Services	11,185	Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	4,207	Manufacturing	7,192	Accommodation & Food Services	2,949	Manufacturing	3,039	Other Services (Except Public Administration)	5,504	Manufacturing	38,477
Total Employees in Sector		178,711		65,021		86,860		38,322		51,027		70,540		490,481

source: ESRI



Central Bergen in general offers the greatest number of jobs, with the two largest concentrations found in **Hackensack** and **Paramus**. Nearly half of the health care and social assistance jobs in the county (31,499 of the 65,582 jobs), professional, scientific & tech service jobs (27,827 of the 55,790 jobs), and nearly a third of the retail trade jobs (26,159 of the 79,110) are found in Central Bergen. **Hackensack** has an estimated 38,274 jobs, with the county's largest number of health services jobs and a substantial amount of retail, professional services and public administration employment. **Paramus**, with 38,837 jobs, is characterized by its large concentration of retail malls and associated employment in the retail and accommodations sectors.

Industrial jobs are located primarily in Southwest Bergen. This sector contains one third of the transportation and warehousing jobs in the county (3,757 out of 11,291 jobs), over a quarter of the manufacturing jobs (9,883 out of 38,477), and over a quarter of the wholesale trade jobs (6,756 out of 26,572). Southwest Bergen also contains 20.9 percent (2,145 of 10,248) of those employed in the Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industry.

In Southeast Bergen, jobs are concentrated in **Fort Lee**, with a estimated 13,841 jobs, **Edgewater** (6,017), and **Palisades Park** (5,196). The largest number of employees by sector in this area are in the retail trade, containing 20.4 percent of retail jobs in the county, followed by accommodation and food services, educational services, and professional, scientific and tech services. It should be noted that the real estate, rental & leasing industry in Southeast Bergen contains 18 percent of the total jobs in the county in that industry.

Pascack Valley contains the lowest concentration of jobs in the county, which is also reflected in the Generalized Land Use Map in the Land Use and Housing Element, indicating that this geographic sector is largely residential. **Montvale** and **Woodcliff Lake** contain the highest concentrations of jobs in the area, based on ACS estimates. The largest employment sector is professional, scientific and tech services, which employs approximately 5,867 people, followed by retail trade (5,222 jobs), and health care and social assistance (4,219). The management of companies and enterprises industry, while only employing 244 people in the Pascack Valley, represents 32 percent of the jobs in this industry in Bergen County. Similarly, the utilities industry employs approximately 107 people in Pascack Valley, representing 26.8 percent of jobs in that industry in the county.

The Northern Valley sector along the Hudson River at the northeastern portion of the county has a greater number of jobs than the **Pascack Valley**, however,

they are largely concentrated in **Englewood** (15,346 employees), followed by **Englewood Cliffs** (9,995); many of the other municipalities in this area are largely residential in character. The health care and social assistance industry employs 11,203 people or 17.1 percent of the industry total for Bergen County. Other larger employment sectors in the Northern Valley include educational services (8,009 jobs), and retail trade (7,784 jobs). It should also be noted that the 102 people employed in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industry in the Northern Valley represents 26.6 percent of the industry total in Bergen County, followed by educational services (20.5 percent of the industry total for Bergen County).

In Northwest Bergen, the two largest job sectors include retail trade and health care/social assistance, providing 13,870 and 12,436 jobs, respectively. **Mahwah**, **Ramsey** and **Ridgewood** contain some of the highest concentrations of jobs, based on ACS estimates, with approximately half the number of jobs found in the Northwest Bergen sector.

NOTABLE EMPLOYERS IN BERGEN COUNTY

- Ascena Retail Group, Inc., Mahwah
- Becton Dickinson & Co., Franklin Lakes
- Benjamin Moore & Co., Montvale
- Bergen Community College, Paramus
- BMW of North America, Woodcliff Lake
- Burns & Roe Enterprises, Inc., Oradell
- Christian Health Care Center, Wyckoff
- CNBC, Englewood Cliffs
- Cognizant Technology Solutions Corp., Teaneck
- County of Bergen, Hackensack
- Creston Electronics, Inc., Rockleigh
- Englewood Hospital & Medical Center, Englewood
- Fairleigh Dickinson University, Teaneck
- Hackensack University Medical Center, Hackensack
- Holy Name Medical Center, Teaneck
- Howmedica Osteonics Corp./Stryker, Mahwah
- Konica Minolta, Ramsey
- KPMG LLP, Montvale
- Kulite Semiconductor Products, Inc., Leonia
- LG, Englewood Cliffs
- Movado Retail Group, Paramus
- Myron Corp., Maywood
- New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority, East Rutherford
- New Bridge Medical Center, Paramus
- Parexel International, Hackensack
- Samsung Electronics Co., Ridgefield Park
- Sharp Electronics, Montvale
- Veolia North America, Hackensack
- Unilever Best Foods, Englewood Cliffs
- Valley Health Systems, Inc., Paramus

Source: Bergen County Division of Economic Development

Business Ownership (2017)

Classification	Number of Firms	Number of Employees	Sales, value of shipments, or revenue of employer firms (\$1,000)
Minority Owned Businesses	6,091	32,730	10,623,582
Black Owned Businesses	243	1,771	205,975
Hispanic Owned Businesses	1,312	9,265	1,430,028
Asian Owned Businesses	4,594	26,515	8,959,127
Veteran Owned Businesses	1,007	8,874	2,280,799
Woman Owned Businesses	4,815	37,316	12,569,979

Source: Annual Business Survey: Business Characteristics of Respondent Employer Firms by Sector, Sex, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status for the U.S., States, Metro Areas, Counties, and Places: 2017 (AB1700CSCB01)

MINORITY BUSINESSES

From 1972-2012, the US Census Bureau undertook a Survey of Business Owners every five years, which provided comprehensive information on selected economic and demographic characteristics for businesses and business owners. Minority-owned businesses are those majority owned by a racial/ethnic minority or a woman. Data from the 2012 SBO showed growth in the number minority-owned businesses in Bergen County, including Hispanic-owned businesses, Asian-owned businesses and woman-owned businesses. While the number of black-owned businesses decreased from 2007 to 2012, the total revenue by these businesses increased. Asian and woman-owned businesses also both experienced growth in total revenue. In 2017, the US Census Bureau replaced the SBO with the Annual Business Survey (ABS); given the adjustments to the methodology, the findings of the 2017 survey were not compared to the previous surveys. That said, the 2017 survey identified 6,091 minority owned businesses in Bergen County employed 32,730 people. The 4,815 woman-owned businesses in Bergen County employed 37,316 people. Asian-owned businesses in Bergen County (4,594) employed 26,515 people.¹⁰

EXISTING PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

The following section evaluates existing projects and programs, categorized by Business Support, Workforce Development, and Tourism; however, significant cross-pollination exists between these categories. Many existing programs impact multiple facets of economic development and tie into other Master Plan Elements. For example, improved transit choices benefit employers (and employees) looking for improved accessibility, while also offering opportunities for other benefits, such as tourism. Moreover, improved transit options may appeal to those uninterested in, or unable to support, a car-dependent lifestyle.

BERGEN FOR BUSINESS

Developed by the Bergen County Division of Economic Development, Bergen for Businesses is a web-based tool which functions as a “welcome mat” to businesses looking to locate in Bergen County, with an easily searchable database of statistics on the county and municipal levels, providing users with up-to-date financial, real estate, and demographic data that can then be compared to other communities.





Shops at Riverside.

Source: Bergen County Division of Economic Development

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Financing

Several financing opportunities available to businesses in Bergen County come from state agencies. The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) offers grants, loans, and tax incentives for businesses; the New Jersey Women's Micro-Business Credit Program helps entrepreneurial women fund their businesses; the US Small Business Administration offers loans.¹¹ The Bergen County Division of Economic Development can assist interested individuals and businesses in navigating these programs.

Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs)

A PILOT program can lower monthly carrying costs for new development. In New Jersey, access to a PILOT program is limited to designated redevelopment areas (offering up to 30-year tax exemptions), designated rehabilitation areas (up to 5-year tax exemptions or abatements), or in legislatively designated Urban Enterprise Zones (either 5- or 30-year exemptions).

Brownfields Redevelopment Task Force

The Brownfields Redevelopment Task Force is a state board established in 1998 to assist in the Brownfields Redevelopment process. Developable land is becoming increasingly scarce in New Jersey in general and Bergen County in particular. Bergen County developers, property owners, and municipalities seeking to redevelop brownfields sites can pursue the services of the Task Force to assist with the permitting process.

Bergen for Business

The Bergen County Division of Economic Development has created a Bergen for Businesses website which functions as a "welcome mat" to

businesses looking to locate in Bergen County, with an easily searchable database of statistics on each municipality as well as countywide, providing users with up-to-date financial, real estate, and demographic data.

Bergen Community College's Bergen for Business program also works to assist local companies and small businesses with customizable training programs, apprenticeship opportunities, student experiential learning opportunities, and consulting.

Discover Bergen County

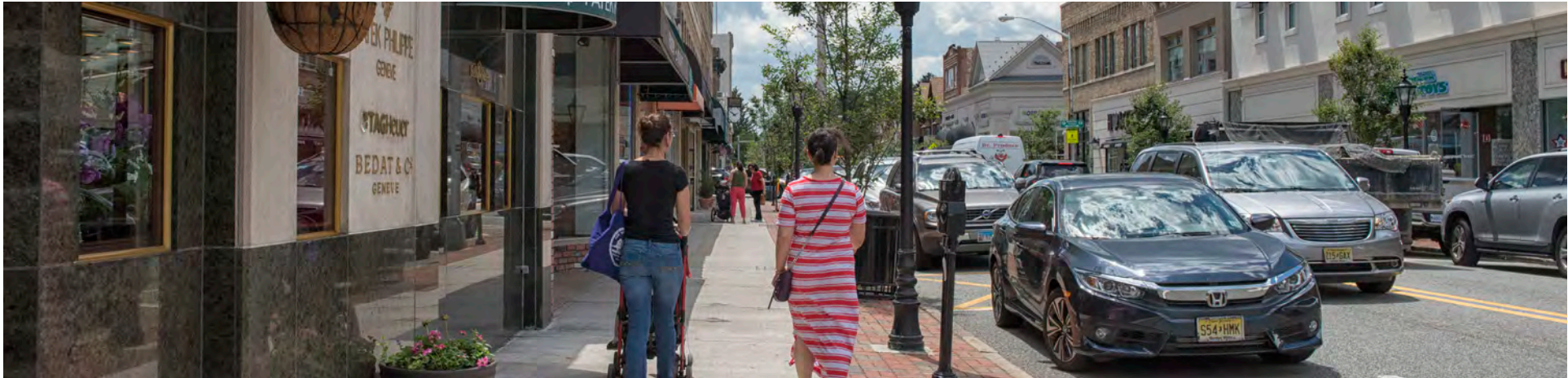
Biannually, Bergen County promotes itself through "Discover Bergen County" in the New York Daily News. This feature section of the newspaper helps spread the word to its readership throughout the greater metropolitan area about the opportunities in the county.

Small Business Development Centers

America's Small Business Development Centers, is a partnership with the US Small Business Administration. One of the 12 regional offices servicing New Jersey is located within Ramapo College. The stated mission of the New Jersey Small Business Development Centers' network is "... committed to guiding established small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs to create and expand their business enterprises which will, in turn, result in sustainable growth, job creation and statewide economic development and prosperity." The organization provides business counseling and training courses.

Northeast New Jersey SCORE

SCORE is a non-profit national organization that assists emerging and existing small businesses with business counseling and workshops. The northeast New Jersey chapter serves Bergen and Passaic counties.



Downtown Westwood. Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County

Opportunity Zones

The Opportunity Zones program was enacted as part of the 2017 federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and is designed to drive long-term capital investments into low-income rural and urban communities. The program provides opportunities for private investors to support investments in distressed communities through participation in Opportunity Funds under rules released by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.¹² Bergen County contains 12 designated Opportunity Zone tracts, located in **Cliffside Park, Englewood, Fairview, Garfield, Hackensack, Lodi, South Hackensack, and Teterboro.**

Building Bergen

A new forum, known as Building Bergen, has been established in coordination with Bergen Community College (BCC) and private development professionals to provide Land Use and Real Estate Professionals with seminars and networking opportunities throughout the year.

Business Accelerators and Incubators

The Bergen Community College Regional Accelerator at the Meadowlands Campus, called FUSE, seeks emerging businesses that

will bring new jobs to the region. The incubator setting offers business support services, business guidance, and networking opportunities to reduce the time that it takes for an early stage business to become self-supporting. Bergen County is also interested in the potential of locating an Innovation Zone within the county. Innovation Zones are geographic areas where research institutions, academic communities and high-tech industries can co-locate to collaborate. In this type of incubation setting some of the best and brightest minds in their fields can come together to hatch new and innovative products and/or methods for advancement of partnering industries. The City of Hackensack is evaluating the designation of an area as an Innovation Zone. With Hackensack University Medical Center and several universities in close proximity, a bio-life science technology park is being considered.

Hudson Bergen Light Rail (HBLR) Extension

As described in the Transportation and Mobility Element of this Master Plan, the existing HBLR line runs from Bayonne, through Jersey City and Hoboken, north to North Bergen. The Northern Branch Corridor, extending service into Bergen County, is now in the final pre-construction phase.

This new line traverses a densely settled suburban environment, last served by passenger rail in the 1950s and 1960s when the Northern Branch and West Shore Lines ceased service. The extension is planned to operate on West Side Avenue in North Bergen, and then on existing railroad right-of-way between 91st Street in North Bergen and the northern border of **Englewood**, with new station stops in **North Bergen, Ridgfield, Palisades Park, Leonia**, and three locations in **Englewood**. The completion of this HBLR extension is likely to benefit nearby businesses, especially those proximate to stations, improving accessibility to shoppers, employees, and visitors alike. For reference, as of 2008 (the most recent year for reporting), 83.8 percent of HBLR riders reported using the service to get to work.¹³

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Bergen County Job Fair

The county holds an annual Job Fair, drawing over 1,000 job-seekers and over 100 businesses.¹⁴

Workforce Training and Support

New Jersey provides workforce training and support to new, unemployed, or already-employed New Jersey workers. Workforce training grants, available through the New Jersey Business Action Center and New Jersey Career Connections, are among the most reliable in terms of annual funding and have been available since the early 1990s. Offsetting the cost of training workers not only benefits the current employer but allows the employee to increase their personal marketability, increases confidence, and creates transferable skill sets.

Workforce Development Board

The Bergen County Workforce Development Board (Bergen WDB) seeks to connect Bergen County residents to jobs and ensure that employers have the skilled workers they need to grow, compete, and prosper. The WDB is a local, business-led Board of Directors composed of private and public-sector leaders from business, education, labor, community and faith-based organizations, and government.¹⁵

The WDB oversees the Bergen One-Stop Career Center, where state and local agency partners are tasked with delivering a universally accessible, integrated system of labor market information and education/training programs—free of charge, and acts as a liaison between the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) and local businesses, connecting them to education and training providers and other vital services, such as incentives and training grants, tax credits, on-the-job training for workers, and other business-related services.





Fort Lee. Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County

TOURISM

NJ Transit

In 2009, NJ Transit extended rail service to the Meadowlands Sports Complex. Known as the Meadowlands Rail Line, NJ Transit provides rail service before, during, and after major events at the Complex, most notably the 2014 Super Bowl. The line connects directly to the Frank R. Lautenberg Rail Station at Secaucus Junction and provides visitors with an alternative way to reach the Complex, while reducing the amount of vehicle traffic in and around the area. At present, train service operates approximately every 10-20 minutes and can accommodate 10,000 customers.

New Jersey Tourism Bureau

The New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism is responsible for promoting events, attractions, and places. Each year, the state commissions a study of the economic impacts from tourism. The most recent evaluation of economic impacts from tourism in New Jersey indicates, direct sales from tourism (including lodging, food and beverage, retail, recreation, transportation, and second homes) has continued to increase in Bergen County, with related spending in 2017 of \$2.9 billion dollars. In addition, direct tourism employment in Bergen County has continued to increase over the five (5) year period from 2012 (23,938 jobs) to 2017 (25,217),¹⁶ and it is likely that this number will continue to increase. In September 2018, the New Jersey Hall of Fame, announced that after 13 years without a permanent location, it will move into a 16,000 square foot facility at American Dream Meadowlands.

THE GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF E-COMMERCE

E-commerce is defined by *Business News Daily* as “the purchase and sale of goods and/or services via electronic channels such as the internet” and there are four e-commerce categories as with traditional commerce sales: B2B – Business to Business, B2C – Business to Consumer, C2B – Consumer to Business, and C2C – Consumer to Consumer.¹⁷ USB Wealth Management – Global projects that e-commerce revenues in the US, currently at approximately 20 percent of overall sales, will rise to 25 percent by 2025.¹⁸

Increases in e-commerce are shaped by dynamic technology advances that enhance the shopping and delivery of goods for all consumers. Instead of trips by shoppers to a brick-and-mortar store to purchase an item and return home, e-commerce uses technology, retail buildings/warehouses and transportation routes to sell and deliver goods and services. E-commerce has created a high demand for distributions sites (fulfillment and mini-fulfillment centers) located closer to homes for faster delivery. These shifts in transportation have increased delivery vehicle trips and the use of curb space on local streets.

In the “Primed for Deliveries” article in *Planning*, author Lisa Nisenson notes that reduced demands for parking have “led Walmart to create an infill strategy that creates destinations from otherwise empty parking spaces” to add spaces for dining, events, and store pickup. The “Walmart Reimagined” strategy takes valuable underutilized real estate and repurposes the use to meet the new e-commerce demands.¹⁹ Communities are adapting to e-commerce while also establishing expectations on outcomes.

In February 2021, the Boston-area Metropolitan Area Planning Council released its transportation and mobility report “Hidden and in Plain Sight: Impacts of E-Commerce in Massachusetts” to help communities manage the e-commerce impacts on land use and transportation. The report presents the following five policy strategies to enable jurisdictions to adequately plan for e-commerce and achieve “goals related to transportation, equity, economic growth, and sustainability”:²⁰

- “Advance regional coordination among municipalities.” – Develop regional playbooks about zoning, building codes, proposal review, mitigation, tax incentives, and monitoring to promote consistency.
- “Increase transparency in the growing e-commerce industry.” – Incorporate data from e-commerce companies on the location of warehouse and distribution centers, employment, and transportation logistics and delivery to address community impacts.
- “Establish incentives for efficient deliveries.” – Incentivize more efficient deliveries to reduce trips and harmful emissions.
- “Implement curb management strategies.” – Establish curbside management polices to reduce congestion, address safety risks, and conflicts by designating delivery and loading zones, pricing mechanisms to encourage efficient use of zones, and enforcing policies.
- “Track innovations in e-commerce.” – Monitor new technologies such as package lockers, cargo bikes, air and ground drones, and autonomous vehicles to mitigate potential hazards and promote convenience.²⁰

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: Maximize job creation and investment by facilitating economic development

What is it?

Job creation and investment involves: retaining jobs and key industries that are currently in place, fostering expansion of these existing jobs and industries, attracting new businesses and industry to locate in Bergen County, and creation of new opportunities for industries that do not yet have a foothold in Bergen County through entrepreneurship, incubation, and other means. This goal recognizes the need to encourage and expedite economic development and redevelopment projects to ensure economic growth within Bergen County.

What will it do?

Technology and innovation are disrupting traditional industry and retail models. Regions have become highly competitive in their courtship of these potential businesses, and the county's demonstration of its ability to retain and foster businesses, while remaining flexible to changing demands, will not only benefit existing residents and businesses, but also create positive ripple-effects on new businesses considering Bergen County.

Why should the county pursue it?

As an example, the much-publicized announcement by Amazon in 2017 requesting interested communities to submit proposals for a second corporate headquarters, which identified certain desirable characteristics of an ideal location: a metropolitan area with more than one million people, a stable and business-friendly environment; urban or suburban locations with the potential to attract and retain strong technical talent; and, communities that think big and creatively when considering locations and real estate options. In addition, the announcement identified certain tangible items, such as on-site access to mass transit, proximity to major highways and arterial roads, proximity to international airports, creative options to foster connectivity between buildings and facilities (including bike lanes, light rail, bus, and sidewalks), commitments to sustainability, access to recreational opportunities, excellent institutions of higher education, a government structure eager to work with the company, as well as a highly educated labor force. While these were the stated preferences of one company, these characteristics highlight many foundational principles of sound economic development: well-planned development and economic growth are vital to maintaining a diverse and healthy tax base. Having goods, services, and job opportunities available is essential to maintaining and improving Bergen County's living standards.

What will it do?

Economic growth is critical to the strength and quality of life of Bergen County. Land use patterns, such as mixed-use development and transit-oriented planning can link neighborhood and economic activity centers, attract business and investment, and increase land value, tax revenue, and retail spending.



Shops at Riverside.

Source: Bergen County Division of Economic Development

Objective 1.1: Prioritize job creation and retention

Continue efforts to assist existing and future employers in navigating financial programs, providing workforce training opportunities, and maintaining clear lines of communication with its municipalities.

Objective 1.2: Facilitate entrepreneurial and business incubation

Start-up businesses provide a valuable source of new employment that often need assistance to find the right location as they grow and expand. To help them both start and stay in Bergen County, identify potential co-working or incubator spaces where start-ups, “makers,” and freelancers can work, collaborate, and grow their ideas prior to investing in real estate for their business. Between 2013 and 2018, co-working spaces grew by 200 percent, and now occupy over 27 million square feet of office space in the United States. Considering how the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many businesses to adopt remote or hybrid work environments, it is likely that the demand for co-working spaces will continue to grow, even once the pandemic subsides.

The Bergen Community College Regional Accelerator at the Meadowlands (or FUSE), provides early stage businesses the support services, guidance and networking opportunities that are critical to changing an idea, product, technology or service into a successful business. The Accelerator provides resources and support to early stage companies who are seeking to become self-sustaining, while continuing to pursue participation in this start-up economy.²¹

Provide support to **Hackensack** as they seek Innovation Zone designation. Coordination between municipal, county, and state agencies is important in this process, as the municipal designation will have regional benefits.²²

Objective 1.3: Promote new development in strategic locations

Many industries, including food service businesses, high-tech development offices, and other specialized niches often benefit and see an operations cost savings from clustering. To promote these industry clusters, the county and its municipalities may benefit from studying zoning districts and existing land use patterns to see where such clusters have organically arisen, and where towns may wish to strategically revise their zoning to accommodate these uses. Examples of strategic location factors include:

- Access to freight rail and highways
- Access to navigable waterways
- Availability of land less suitable for other land uses (brownfield sites, closed landfills, etc.)
- Access to supply chain/logistics and ancillary businesses.

Objective 1.4: Forecast future trends and conditions

Oftentimes events—be they national or local—will have secondary effects on the economy. Investing in forecasting tools would give the county a way to address these changes and take proactive measures, as well as the ability to make informed decisions on a community-wide basis. This, as well as other data tools (surveys, etc.) can engage businesses and promote confidence.

Objective 1.5: Revitalize downtown areas and make transit a priority

Bergen County can strengthen its already solid reputation as a premier location for a high quality of life by promoting the redevelopment and revitalization of its downtown areas. Doing so attracts both businesses and residents, and where proximate to transit, also facilitates the use of transit for commuting purposes. While Bergen County is primarily characterized by automobile-oriented suburban development patterns, unique main streets and downtowns still exist and should be prioritized as both community assets and destinations for visitors. Moreover, market demand from the emerging Millennial cohort, as well as Baby Boomers interested in downsizing, indicate an interest exists in downtown settings that provide convenient access to living and working spaces along with reduced car-dependency and nearby amenities such as shopping and dining. Revitalization of these downtown areas will ensure Bergen County remains competitive in attracting residents, visitors, and businesses.

Objective 1.6: Eliminate unnecessary obstacles to economic development

While project approvals and permitting are primarily a municipal (or other-agency) responsibility, developers and the region benefit from a streamlined process which affords significant cost savings to the developer and increases the likelihood the project will move forward. It is recommended that the county support municipalities and developers in the application process to create shovel-ready projects that enhance the tax base and create jobs. The county has taken steps to improve this process through the recent adoption of its Site Plan and Subdivision regulations, which create additional flexibility for developers, including fee reductions when sustainable development practices are utilized.



Shops at Riverside.

Source: Bergen County Division of Economic Development



Former Nabisco Plant in Fair Lawn. Source: Colliers Engineering & Design

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 2: Encourage redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized sites

What is it?

Redevelopment and revitalization of already-developed areas means an opportunity to invest in and maximize site utilization, or refocus development to promote healthier economic activity. Redevelopment also provides an opportunity to make better and more efficient use of existing infrastructure and investments.

What will it do?

This goal seeks to provide greater incentives, expedite permitting, and look to brownfield sites as a unique opportunity to leverage various scales of investment and redevelopment opportunity.

Why should the county pursue it?

Sometimes sites become underutilized because of abandonment, a change in the character of the area, market changes, or site conditions such as contamination. Re-envisioning what a healthy and active site could look like allows infill development to regenerate an area. New Jersey's Local Redevelopment and Housing Law provides municipalities with the tools necessary to qualify sites or areas as "in need" of redevelopment or rehabilitation. Qualifying as such, and the subsequent adoption of a Redevelopment Plan, affords municipalities more control over site design, improvements, and uses than may otherwise be regulated by typical zoning, and enables each municipality to really craft a vision that addresses their specific needs and wishes for a given area.





Mixed-use redevelopment in Park Ridge. Source: Google StreetView

Objective 2.1: Incentivize redevelopment

Identify opportunities to encourage mixed use development, particularly in areas with convenient transit access as a way to link neighborhood and economic activity centers.

Objective 2.2: Work with property owners and developers to overcome obstacles

Permitting at the state or regional levels (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) & New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA)) as well as the cost of environmental cleanup triggered by the Industrial Site Recovery Act (ISRA) may be obstacles for investment, particularly for contaminated sites. To the extent possible, develop strategies for outreach to property owners of underutilized properties to identify and overcome obstacles to investment. This should include connecting these property owners with programs to overcome these obstacles.

Objective 2.3: Redevelop brownfields and other high-priority sites

Proactively fund infrastructure, including the redevelopment of brownfield sites and areas around Transit Oriented Development (TOD), as well as aid municipalities with Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Areas in strategic locations. Investment in these areas can spur positive fiscal benefits to the host and nearby municipalities while limiting adverse impacts on traffic congestion, municipal, or educational costs on any one municipality.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 3: Improve transportation opportunities and commuting options

What is it?

Transportation is the circulatory lifeblood of the county economy, connecting activities and providing access to jobs, education, goods, and services. Transportation enables raw materials and finished goods to move in and out of the warehouses, industrial centers, and retail outlets of Bergen County.

What will it do?

Investing in multimodal transportation solutions will help alleviate obstacles to mobility and accessibility.

Why should the county pursue it?

Transportation enables people and goods to flow throughout our economy. Improved transportation will ensure the economic viability of Bergen County, and help promote mobility and accessibility, while reducing congestion and other obstacles for people and goods to reach their destinations.





Ramsey-Route 17 NJ Transit Station. Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County

Objective 3.1: Eliminate transportation barriers to economic activity

As discussed in the Transportation and Mobility Element, the county can facilitate economic development by providing a wider range of mobility choices for employees of all economic levels. The county is currently contemplating a “Complete Streets” policy for future planning and funding of County roads which, upon implementation, should facilitate a higher rate of pedestrian, bike, and multi-modal transit use.

Objective 3.2: Increase access to transportation centers

The anticipated extension of the Hudson Bergen Light Rail (HBLR) line into Bergen County creates numerous business and development opportunities, including improved transit access to attract employees and customers. Advocating on behalf of businesses in support of this extension, and working to promote the areas around future stations to both new and existing businesses who may benefit from increased access to their neighborhoods will help to enhance economic development and transit ridership.

As mentioned previously, NJ Transit’s extension of rail service to the Meadowlands Sports Complex in 2009 to service major events at the Complex can accommodate 10,000 customers. This not only frees up capacity on the surrounding roads, but also provides a convenient alternative way to access the site, including those traveling from New York City, Penn Station and Newark Liberty International Airport. Exploring the expansion of this service beyond major events, especially with the recent opening of the American Dream entertainment and shopping complex, to provide an additional avenue for potential customers to access the venue throughout the year, will be beneficial to the business community.

Objective 3.3: Use technology to increase engagement

In the same way that improved transit service offers an attractive alternative to driving to sports, shopping and entertainment venues, such a strategy, primarily achieved with additional bus routes, paratransit services and associated roadway improvements, as well as strategic partnerships with ride-sharing and ride hailing services, can link larger employment centers such as office and industrial parks to residential areas and existing transportation hubs.



Job Fair. Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 4: Develop more skilled and efficient workforce

What is it?

An accessible workforce and labor shed is the supply side of an economic development equation.

Workforce (supply) + Company need (demand) = Economic Growth

Development of a skilled and efficient workforce requires an examination of the needs of local businesses and industries, both in-place and emerging; attracting new workers to the county; and, investment in training, education, placement, and support for the county's businesses and employees.

What will it do?

Pursuit of this goal will ensure the availability of a skilled and educated workforce to support the needs of existing and future industries within Bergen County. This will provide businesses with the security of a continued flow of a qualified and capable workforce locally.

Why should the county pursue it?

Federal and state government have established workforce development initiatives and goals under the Workforce Investment Act. With this program in place, the Bergen County Division of Economic Development can maintain a supportive role, working along with the Bergen County Workforce Development Board, to enhance economic development opportunities and create a strong, able workforce.

Objective 4.1: Ensure that county workforce/labor shed meets the needs of current and potential employers.

Regular communication between the County’s Division of Economic Development and the Workforce Development Board with appropriate company representatives responsible for hiring decisions and long-term workforce planning will ensure that Bergen County’s workforce meets the needs of current and potential employers. Regular business outreach can identify skill gaps and allow economic and workforce development staff to assemble the proper resources.

Objective 4.2: Integrate new workforce members into the economy.

Continue to support efforts like job fairs, to attract new talent, as well as opportunities for networking, such as the Building Bergen forum.

From a land use perspective, this also means ensuring that different development types exist to attract different ages, abilities, incomes and interests. While individual municipalities have significant control over their land use regulations, the county can serve an important role by highlighting and promoting these different settings (i.e. small towns, low-density suburbs, high-density mixed-use urban centers) to a wider audience.

Objective 4.3: Partner with existing educational institutions to merge curriculum with workforce training needs

Various county departments and agencies provide services related to education, such as Bergen Community College, Bergen County Academies, Bergen County Technical High School, Bergen County Vocational/Technical High School, and the Bergen County Law and Public Safety Institute. Optimize the effectiveness of the Workforce Development Board by coordinating and matching curriculum and programs within and between existing county educational institutions.

The American Dream entertainment and retail project, for example, will require a pipeline of workers prepared for potential employment. Colleges and training centers should tailor programs designed to meet the needs of such projects (including hospitality, retail, and back-office operations), to attract businesses with a workforce ready to hit the ground running, including a surplus of employees available during peak events.



*Bergen Community College.
Source: Bergen County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs*



The Shops at Riverside.
Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 5: Market and promote Bergen County

What is it?

Marketing and promoting Bergen County involves positioning the county in a strategic manner that retains existing, and appeals to new businesses, visitors, and residents.

What will it do?

This goal seeks to sustain and attract new activity to Bergen County.

Why should the county pursue it?

The county's natural, cultural and historic amenities, transportation assets including rail and water freight options, and proximity to major markets provide numerous attractive assets for businesses and future residents.

Objective 5.1: Promote the county as a place to do business

Through the Bergen County Division of Economic Development, the county can disseminate its economic development offerings and promote the benefits of locating in Bergen County. A positive message to the marketplace of the county's commitment to economic development can roll out the welcome mat to businesses of all sizes interested in calling Bergen County home.

Objective 5.2: Maximize exposure in major search engines and on social media

The internet has become the preeminent source for information. Developers and site selectors rely on the internet to find information on a company's behalf; therefore, increased visibility requires utilization of search engine optimization (SEO) and social media marketing.

Objective 5.3: Provide convenient access to information

Offering an easily accessible central clearinghouse of relevant data can provide existing and potential businesses and developers with a useful resource. This includes the continued support for existing initiatives, such as the Bergen County Division of Economic Development's Bergen for Business, as well as considering additional opportunities to collect and share data. State law already requires municipalities to share their municipal long-term land use plans, redevelopment plans, development ordinances and maps with the county; instead of developers searching through the websites of 70 different municipalities (or visiting 70 different municipal buildings to do the same) to understand local conditions, regulations, and ambitions as part of their due diligence process, the county has taken steps to provide central access to some of this data through their website, including tax maps, zoning ordinances and municipal master plans. Through discussions with developers and businesses on the effectiveness of this existing service, the county could consider additional ways to provide central and convenient access to this data.

Objective 5.4: Position and promote the county as a desirable tourism and heritage destination

The county's strong position to promote its cultural heritage resources as a tourist attraction is another important economic development tool. Retail tourism, historic and heritage tourism, recreational tourism, and other niche tourism sectors are all available in Bergen County.

Numerous locations within the county can serve as information centers to advertise these opportunities. This should include high-traffic areas, especially those that will attract outside visitors, such as the recently-completed American Dream, whose developers anticipate that the site will attract 40 million visitors annually.²³ These information centers may take different forms based on local needs and interests and might include: a concierge service to book tickets for events or tours; digital kiosks to provide people with information on destinations and events; and even handheld print media, such as a brochure, can ensure the promotion of Bergen County's great resources. Key in this effort is to get the travel, lodging and dining industries to coordinate their marketing efforts with the entertainment and cultural venues and local historic groups, into tourist packages so that events, concerts, historic house tours, and festivals become two- and three-day affairs involving one or more overnight stays. The county can play a role to bring these groups together and assist them in planning a tourism marketing campaign adapted to each season. NJ Transit has worked with towns along the Jersey Shore to establish special transit fares, coupled with beach passes, to encourage the use of the North Jersey Coast Line to access the beach during the summer season. A similar program could work for NJ Transit's Pascack Valley and Bergen lines, by offering a variety of historic and cultural destinations in downtowns with train stations and that feature local restaurants, inns and hotels. Other opportunities exist for bus and waterway tours that enable stops at cultural and historic sites, with destinations such as Ramapo County Reservation serving as possible anchor attractions, for an "ecotourism" stop with its own historic sites of interest.

New Jersey's Heritage Tourism Master Plan, adopted in 2010, shows that despite prior efforts to emphasize the importance of heritage tourism, the opportunities of capitalizing on this asset remain relatively untouched as compared to our neighboring states. Bergen County ranked as one of New Jersey's counties with a high density of potential cultural and heritage tourism sites, which suggests that an aggressive heritage tourism strategy for Bergen County could provide numerous economic benefits.





Shops in Demarest.

Source: Colliers Engineering & Design

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 6: Develop a formal program of business advocacy

What is it?

Business advocacy efforts can very simply improve the quality of development processes, but also improve levels of trust, partnership and cooperation between public and private sectors. Advocacy includes communications with elected officials, planning and zoning boards, working with code officials, testifying before boards and committees, and assisting with municipal marketing materials.

What will it do?

Analyzing the existing county, municipal, and chamber of commerce resources and regulations will provide insight into their strengths, weaknesses, or obstacles. With that knowledge, the county can advocate for desired economic policy changes.

Why should the county pursue it?

Bergen County is home to the largest population and number of municipalities of all New Jersey's 21 counties, making it critical to represent our businesses and provide public policy input.



Bergen Town Center. Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County.

Objective 6.1: Promote a regulatory framework that encourages business development and expansion

The Bergen County Division of Economic Development, Workforce Development Board (WDB) and Improvement Authority (BCIA) should work together with other key players to develop a strategic plan for identifying and minimizing obstacles to business development—including property taxes and cost of living—to ensure the economic competitiveness, viability, and strength of Bergen County.

Objective 6.2: Shape economic policy at the state level

Increasing the county's presence in statewide economic policy will raise the awareness of state legislators on economic regulatory reform that will benefit local businesses. A unified voice on economic development issues from the county's 70 municipalities, would help elevate its position in the market as the location of choice. It should also be noted that one of the goals of the Sustainability Element of this master plan is to embrace sustainable economic development, through objectives that include aligning future growth and economic development with state planning initiatives.



Objective 6.3: Forge alliances between the County and its municipalities with chambers of commerce and other business associations

Work with municipalities to evaluate the local opportunities and challenges for attracting businesses within and between towns, and to evaluate potential shared services to offset the costs of improvements, including: transit (e.g., What roads can support traffic? Is bicycling a viable option? Would shuttle services provide a benefit?); infrastructure; emergency services; and technology (e.g., Is the necessary technology, such as fiber optics, in place?). A countywide Cost and Revenue Sharing Task Force, inclusive of the school districts, may be an approach worth exploring to generate and advance specific recommendations for sharing services and facilities on an intra-municipal and inter-municipal basis.



Source: Donna Brennan