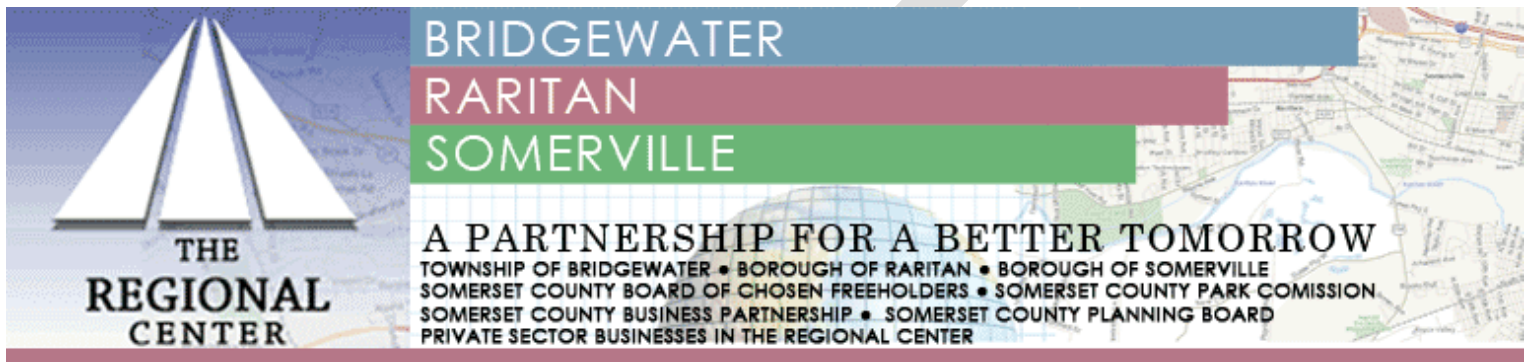


# Plan Endorsement Draft Report for Somerset Regional Center Partnership

(Bridgewater Township, Raritan Borough, Somerville Borough)



New Jersey Department of State  
Office for Planning Advocacy  
Draft report 8/21/13

This document is a draft recommendation report prepared by the Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA) as staff to the State Planning Commission (SPC) subject to change based on the continued input of our partner agencies, the Somerset Regional Partnership or the Bridgewater Township, Raritan Borough, Somerville Borough and members of the public. OPA reserves the right to edit this document and the accompanying PIA prior to the presentation of the recommendation at the Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) and again before the State Planning Commission (SPC). Should edits be made up to that point or during either meeting, an updated document will be posted on the OPA website ([www.njsmartgrowth.com](http://www.njsmartgrowth.com)), with edits highlighted accordingly. Notification of such posting will be sent via e-mail to the list of interested parties maintained by OPA. Interested parties may register with OPA to receive notifications of SPC meetings, hearings or other matters regarding petitions for Plan Endorsement by providing contact information, including name, organization, address and e-mail address to [osgmail@sos.state.nj.us](mailto:osgmail@sos.state.nj.us).

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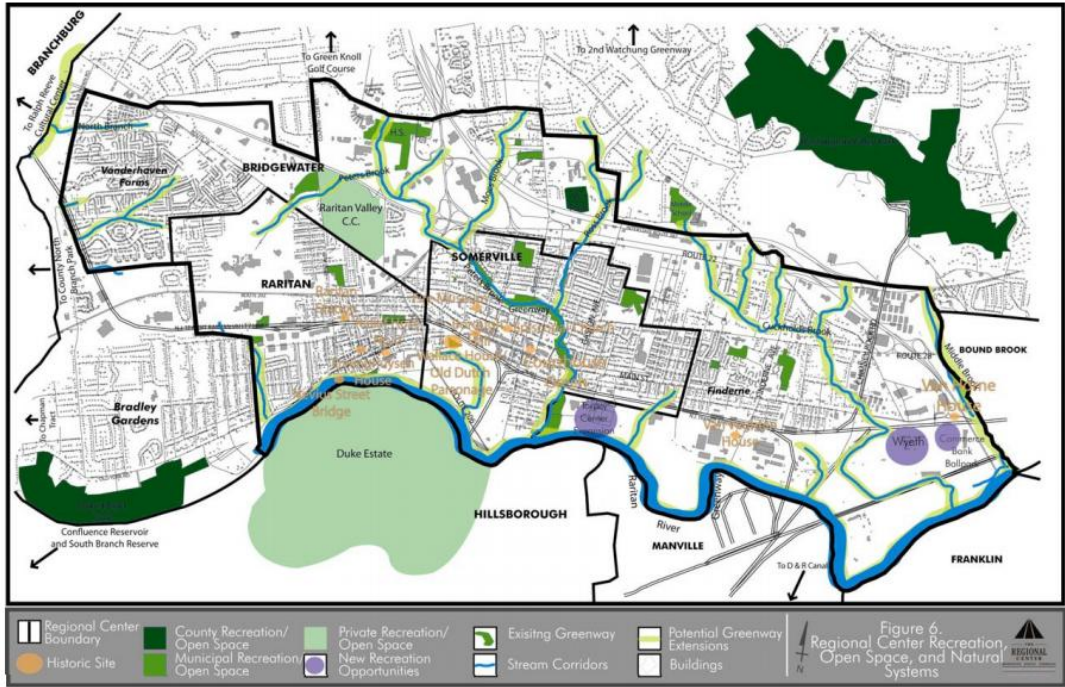
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With the assistance from the County, the Regional Center Pedestrian, Bicycle and Greenway Systems Plan was developed in 2008 to preserve land and make them accessible for the residents of the Regional Center as well as the entire County. The effort has helped to improve the environment, water quality, stormwater management, flood protection and the habitat living in the Regional Center. ....32

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The planning vision of the Somerset County Regional Center Partnership and its member municipalities of Bridgewater Township, Raritan Borough and Somerville Borough are consistent with the State Plan as defined in the State Planning Rules. Therefore, staff recommends Plan Endorsement for the Regional Center and it member communities, including the designation of the Somerset County Regional Center. ....35

This recommendation recognizes the efforts made by the Regional Center Partnership, member communities and Somerset County, which have demonstrated commitment and leadership towards working toward the vision of the 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan as well as the 2012 Draft State Strategic Plan and through the fulfillment of the Action Plan phase. We look forward to working with them to further their planning efforts and realization of their current plans and efforts.35

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## INTRODUCTION

The Somerset County Regional Center (Raritan Borough, Somerville Borough and part of Bridgewater Township) was endorsed by the State Planning Commission May 29, 1996 as the first inter-municipal Regional Center. Located at major crossroads within Central Jersey where state highways, inter-state highways and rail service converge in Central Jersey. The Somerset County Regional Center (Regional Center) is not only home to the County seat in Somerville, but also many of the world's major pharmaceutical businesses. Since it was first designated a center in 1996, the area has continued to grow with a cooperative spirit of smart growth.

## BACKGROUND

The Somerset County Freeholders and County Planning Board have played a pivotal role in the planning and coordination of the Regional Center. The Somerset County Planning Board submitted the original application seeking center designation. At the time of the original designation of the 14.2 square mile, Regional Center, the State Planning Commission (SPC) stipulated that an entity should be established to ensure the successful implementation of the goals and objectives of the Regional Center. Consequently, the Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County (the Partnership) was created in 1998. Today, the public-private, 501 3-C body typically meets on a bi-monthly basis to coordinate the planning framework that is needed to improve the identity and functionality of the Regional Center, the quality of life for residents, and support a positive business environment. Members are made up of all the mayors, planning boards and staff from the three municipalities, the County Freeholders and Planning Board and public representatives are appointed by the three mayors and at large representatives are appointed by the entire Partnership.

The County has continued its supportive efforts by providing grants and staff for the Regional Center, the Partnership and the municipalities of the Regional Center. Over the years, approximately \$500,000 in planning money and \$59,000,000 in construction funds have been allocated. The Regional Center Partnership annual Challenge Grant program has awarded more than \$800,000 to help each community advance local projects that address regional issues. This year's Challenge Grant program was devoted to assisting each municipality in their efforts to complete Plan Endorsement.

All three municipalities received visioning waivers based on the continual public participation in their many planning endeavors. Since the regional center was created in 1996, the County and municipalities have continued to plan together, conduct visioning and implementing the Plan Implementation Agreement that was agreed to at that time.

In 2012 the SPC adopted a resolution that created a new interim center boundary of approximately 12.6 square miles that removed 1.6 square miles from Bridgewater from the Regional Center. The area is not where the municipality wanted to encourage growth.

## CHRONOLOGY

Event(s)	Date	Notes
Originally Designated by the SPC	May 1996	
Somerset Regional Center Partnership, Inc. formed	1998	Member Organizations: Bridgewater Township Borough of Raritan Borough of Somerville Somerset County Freeholders Somerset County Planning Board Somerset County Business Partner. Somerset County Parks Commission Public
Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Master Plan	November 2006	
Pre-Petition Meeting Held	2007	Somerset County and 3 municipalities
Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee (PEAC)	2008	
Master Plan Reexamination	2011 - Bridgewater 2009 - Raritan 2011 - Somerville	
Municipal Self Assessment	2008 - Bridgewater, 2009 - Raritan, Somerville	
Opportunities and Constraints analysis	2009	
Waiver from further visioning	March 2011	
SPC designates interim Regional Center	2012	Modified the original boundary
Somerset County - Water Quality Management Plan	2012 - Submitted To DEP 2013 - Adopted by DEP	1 <sup>st</sup> Phase

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following illustrates some examples of how they continually seek the communities' input to guide their future.

All three are exploring economic development opportunities and have sought the public's input. One of the most significant public outreach endeavors occurred in Somerville as they developed the Somerville Station Area and Landfill Visioning Plan. The Transit Oriented Development plan was produced by the Regional Plan Association (RPA). When Somerville Mayor Brian Gallagher is asked about his plan for the landfill and the train station, he corrects the questioner and lets them know that it is not "his" plan, but rather it is the public's plan that was developed through many public visioning sessions. A Smart Future Grant helped in part to pay for the RPA study.

In Somerville there are three other significant redevelopment projects throughout the borough that have been developed with the public's input:

- West Main Street Redevelopment Area
- East Central Business District Redevelopment Area
- Kirby Ave Redevelopment Area

Even though these projects are located in Somerville, when built, they will impact all of the municipalities in the Regional Center and beyond. Similarly the projects envisioned in Bridgewater and Raritan will also impact Somerville.

Bridgewater has sought the public's input to create the following Elements that have been included in their most recent Master Plan Reexamination Report:

- Recreation Element
- Economic Element
- Circulation Element

Raritan Borough also is focused on economic development and continues to explore how best to refurbish Orlando Drive as the gateway into the borough. Prior to adopting the new Orlando Drive Corridor land use ordinance in 2012, they sought the public's views and ideas on how the corridor should be improved. Today, the land use ordinance seeks to encourage a mixed-use development in a Riverfront Commercial District that will include hospitality, restaurant, artisan workshops, galleries, outdoor recreation and open space uses. The potential success of this development is enhanced by its proximity to more than 2,700 acres of the Duke Farm in Hillsborough.

After the Draft State Strategic Plan was submitted to the SPC, the Somerset County Planning Board in consultation with the municipalities and public in the County used the criteria framework to develop the Somerset County Priority Growth and Priority Preservation Areas. At the center of the County, the Regional Center was cited as one of the County's Priority Growth Areas.

In May 2013 on behalf of the County Freeholders, the Somerset County Business Partnership completed the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS report was paid for in great part by the United States Economic Development Administration and based on 18 months of planning, idea sharing, collaboration, deliberation, task coordination, visioning, research, best practice



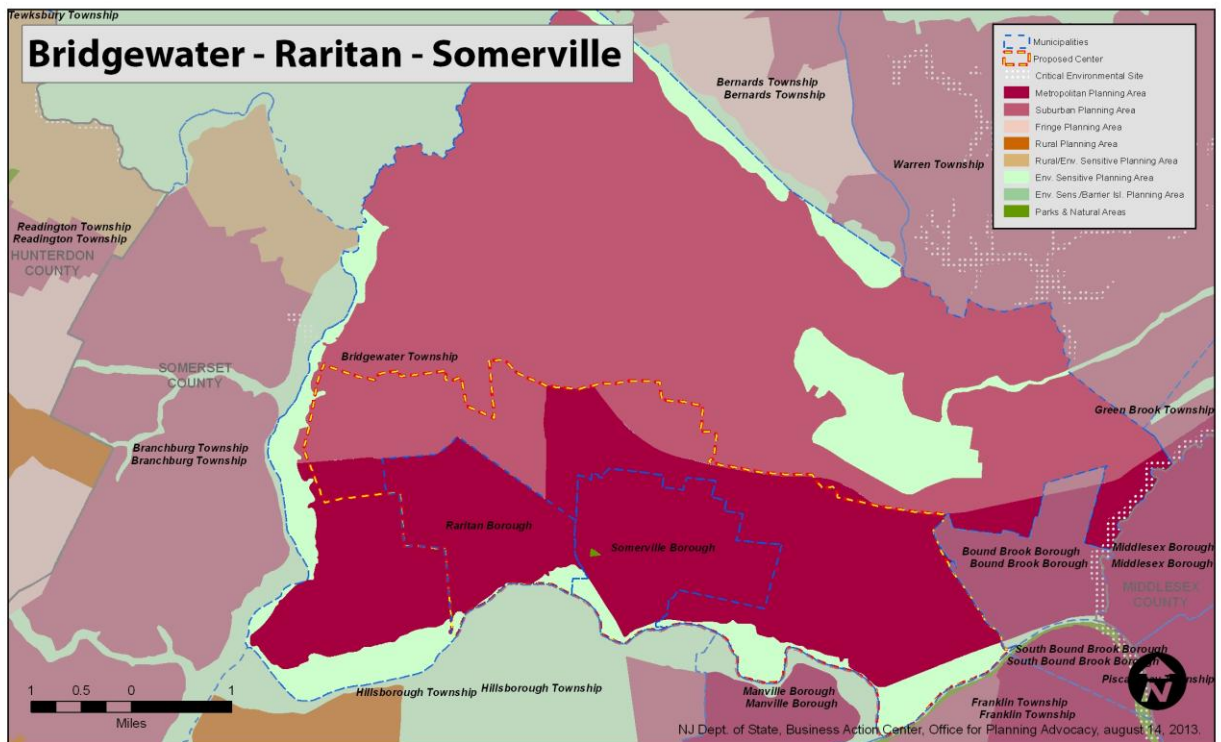
analysis, and prioritization that teamed dozens of public- and private-sector leaders and stakeholders from across Somerset County. Since the report was developed with the public's involvement, the economic development priorities are poised to be embraced regionally and set priorities to direct public resources where the greatest positive economic impact can be realized and leveraged by further private investment. Several of the Regional Center projects are highlighted in the report for their potential economic benefits.

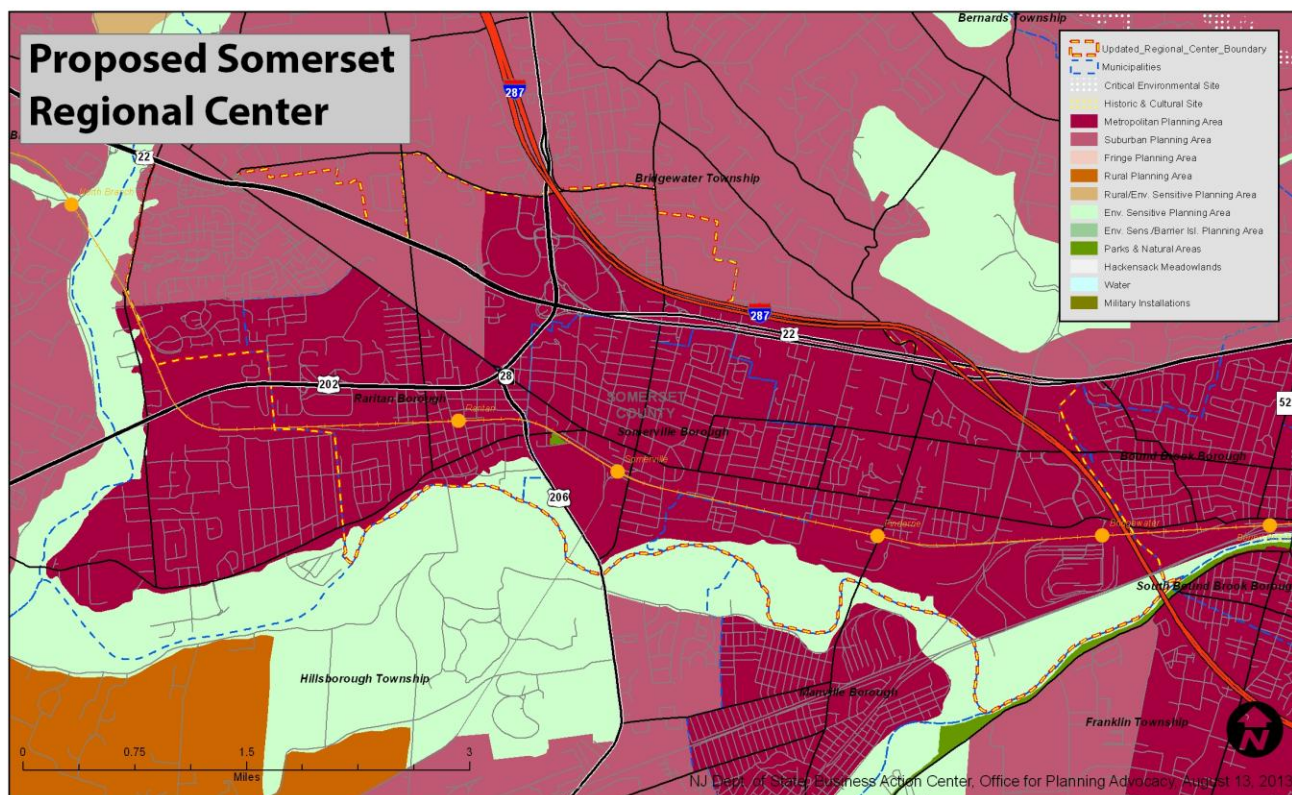
With the County's assistance the three communities have also focused community visioning on transportation issues in the Regional Center. For example, the Route 22 Sustainable Corridor Plan is a result of a "Planning Charette" also conducted by the RPA in 1999 along with several forums seeking public input. The plan outlines a concept plan for short and long-term transportation improvements through Somerset County along Route 22. The resulting Suburban Boulevard Plan concept is intended to relieve current and projected traffic congestion, improve vehicular and pedestrian safety, and integrate access to mass transit in one of the fastest growing regions in New Jersey. While construction and implementation of the short-term solutions are underway, progress toward implementation of the Suburban Boulevard Plan continues with coordinated discussions between the NJ DOT and Somerset County.

Most recently the County working with Hunterdon County as part of a Together North Jersey Demonstration examined the Route 202 corridor which includes the Regional Center under a North Jersey Local Demonstration Project. The County and municipalities of the Regional Center continue to engage the public in their continuing efforts to identify appropriate ways to live and grow.

## LOCATION & REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Somerset Regional Center is comprised of all of Raritan Borough, Somerville Borough and a portion of Bridgewater Township in Somerset County. The center is located in central Somerset County along the State's major transportation corridors including US Route 22, Interstate 287, US Route 202 and US Route 206 and is the economic and governmental focal point of the area (see map). The Regional Center received Regional Center designation from the New Jersey State Planning Commission in 1996 and was the first multi-jurisdictional center. The 14.2 square mile regional center was established as a collaborative effort to address common concerns through coordinated planning.





The Regional Center expired and was reinstated by the Permit Extension Act (Act). The Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (PA) portion of the Regional Center along the Raritan River was not reinstated by the Act.

In 2012 the SPC adopted a revised interim center boundary for the Regional Center that eliminated 1.6 square miles from the original boundary. While a portion of the Center was removed in Bridgewater where they did not want to encourage more development, the portion along the Raritan River was added. The Regional Center Partnership acknowledges that some areas that are environmentally constrained include the floodway and floodplain. They also acknowledge that the inclusion of these areas is not in any way meant to encourage land disturbances or development in environmentally constrained areas. Permits will not be granted by the State of New Jersey for projects that do not comply with local, county, state or federal rules that address these environmental constraints, particularly the Flood Hazard Area Control Act, N.J.S.A. 58:16A-50 et seq. and its implementing rules at N.J.A.C. 7:13. et seq. The Flood Area Control Act and its implementing rules are specifically mentioned because certain land disturbances in the Floodway and Floodplain are prohibited.

## DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE SOMERSET REGIONAL CENTER'S FUTURE

	Somerset Regional Center	Somerset County
Land area (sq mi)	12.6	304.8
Population	41,210*	323,444
Households	15,000*	108,984
Average Household Size	n/a	2.71
Housing Units	16,000*	123,127
Home Ownership Rate	n/a	79.3%
Vacancy Rate	n/a	4.4%
Median Household Income	n/a	\$98,842
Per Capita Income	n/a	\$48,090
Poverty Rate	n/a	3.7%
Unemployment Rate (NJDOL 2013 May)	n/a	6.9%
Sources: US Census Bureau, NJDOL; Data from Decennial Census and ACS unless otherwise noted		
* Approximate amount		

	<b>Bridgewater Township</b>	<b>Raritan Borough</b>
Land area (sq mi)	<b>32.55</b>	<b>2.02</b>
Population	<b>44,460</b>	<b>6,880</b>
Households	<b>16,111</b>	<b>2,606</b>
Average Household Size	<b>2.72</b>	<b>2.63</b>
Housing Units	<b>16,657</b>	<b>2,847</b>
Home Ownership Rate	<b>85.1%</b>	<b>59.3%</b>
Vacancy Rate	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>
Median Household Income	<b>\$113,910</b>	<b>\$73,377</b>
Per Capita Income	<b>\$47,860</b>	<b>\$35,883</b>
Poverty Rate	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>7.8%</b>
Unemployment Rate (NJDOl 2011 ann. Avg.)	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Sources: US Census Bureau, NJDOl; Data from Decennial Census and ACS unless otherwise noted		

Raritan and Somerville are small in size, approximately two square miles in comparison to Bridgewater which is over 32 square miles. The portion of Bridgewater that is part of the Regional Center is about eight square miles.

Since the Bridgewater portions of the Regional Center are not coterminous with Census Tracts, the population figures shown for the regional center are estimates. It has been determined that approximately 50% of the population of Bridgewater resides within the Regional Center along with 70% of the daytime of employees.

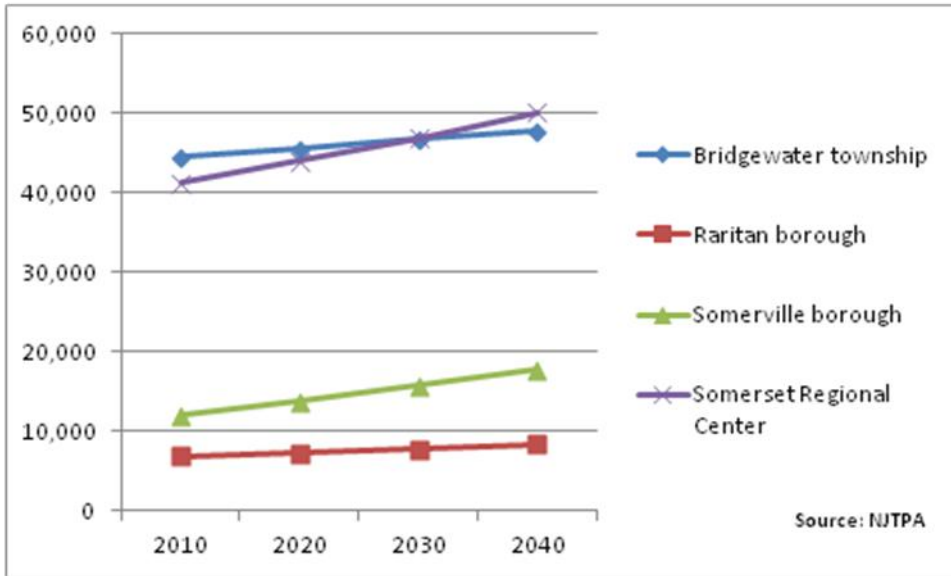
Bridgewater's Median Household Income of \$113,910 is closer to that of Somerset County's \$98,842, while Raritan and Somerville are more in line with State of New Jersey's Median Household Income in the \$70,000's.

## Projections

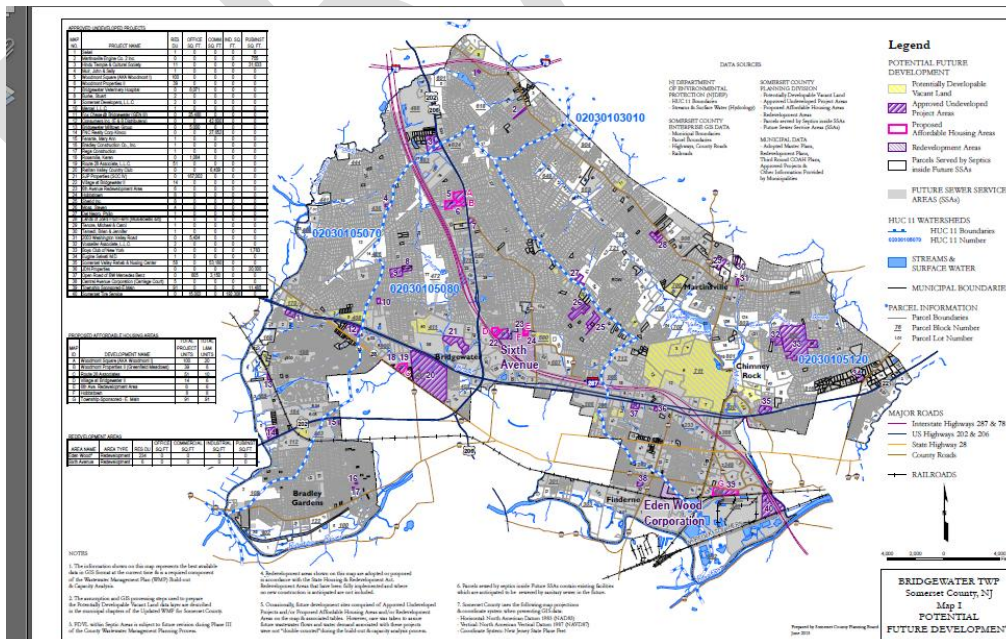
After the 2010 Census was completed, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) issued population, housing, and employment projections. As reported by NJTPA in their Plan 2040, the number of residents in all three municipalities is expected to grow by approximately 10,000 people. Somerville with the most number of redevelopment projects is expected to see the most growth over the next 30 years. While this is a long range view of the expected growth, it could occur sooner depending on the economy and demand for the units. For example the visioning for the Somerville Landfill proposed 1,200 new dwelling units which will have a dramatic effect on the population numbers. The three other significant projects in Somerville could generate close to 700 additional dwelling units.

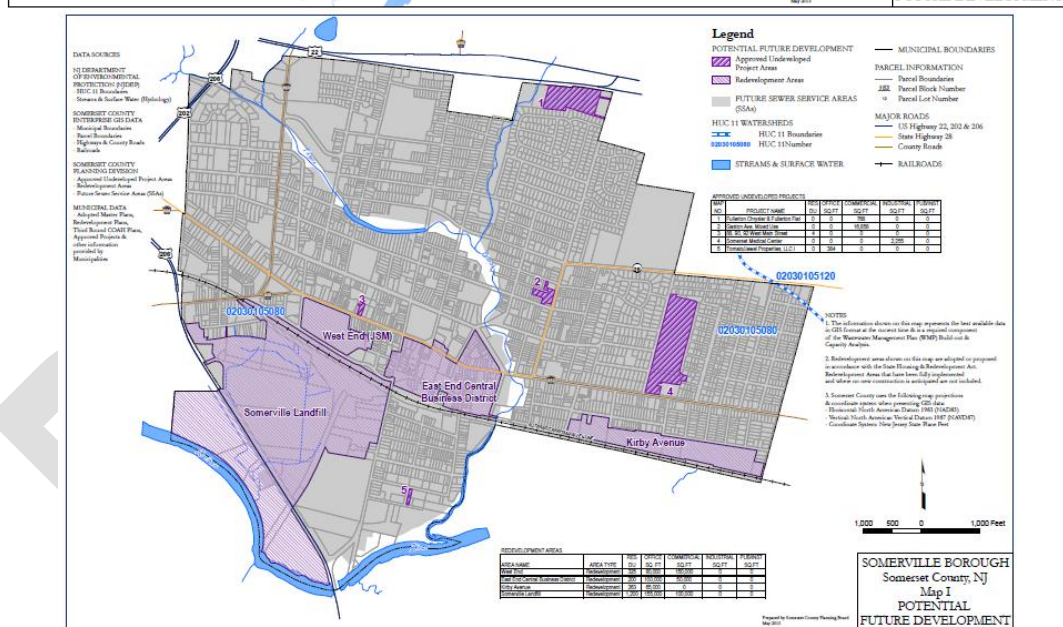


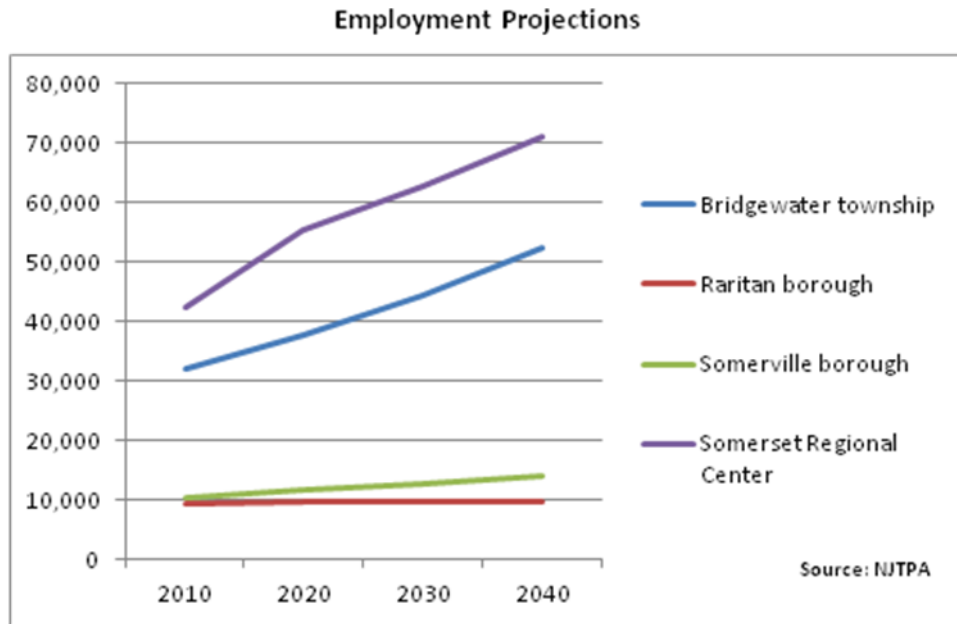
## Population Projections



Both Raritan and Bridgewater are expected to grow as illustrated on the following maps that were prepared for the their respective chapters of the County's Waste Water Quality Management Plan with more than 450 dwelling units in Raritan and 500 dwelling units in Bridgewater. It is estimated that the Regional Center's population will grow from 41,210 to 50,115 over the next 30 years.







Although Somerville is the County seat and home to the County Administration, Human Services and Court buildings, employment in Bridgewater with millions of square feet of office and retail space is the highest (over 32,000 daytime employees) of any municipality in the County. Despite the decision last summer by Sanofi Aventis to vacate more than 1.2 million square feet of research and lab space in Bridgewater within the Regional Center, employment is still expected to rise to more than 50,000 employees according to the NJTPA within the next 40 years. Bridgewater rezoned the single use property to allow for multiple users. Although the Plan 2040 study was produced before Sanofi Aventis' announcement, within the last few months Ashland Chemical leased 200,000 square feet of laboratory and office space and will relocate at least 300 employees from Wayne, NJ in Passaic County to the site. Amneal Pharmaceuticals will also lease 150,000 square feet of space to the Sanofi Aventis site. In April, the property was purchased by a joint partnership of Advance Realty and Cross Harbor Capital Partners who are seeking to redevelop the property with a mix of uses including office, retail and residential.

Somerville's downtown redevelopment is moving forward now that the new, 75,000 square foot ShopRite supermarket opened last year. New Jersey Transit is in negotiations with a redeveloper who responded to a request for qualifications to construct the mixed-use portion of the former landfill site adjacent to the Somerville Train Station. Raritan continues to develop its economic plan which will also supports employment growth.

There is no question that as the economy continues to improve, the Regional Center and its communities are poised to take advantage of its location, sound infrastructure and understanding that to succeed as a community, they need to adapt to the changing economy to support their citizens and businesses.



## **WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

The entire Regional Center is located within the sewer service area associated with the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority's regional domestic treatment plant located at 50 Polhemus Lane in Bridgewater, NJ. This treatment plant, which has a permitted flow of 24.3 MGD and discharges to the Raritan River and to the Cuckles Brook during severe wet weather conditions, provides sanitary sewer service to all residents and businesses within the Regional Center and several other municipalities. The NJDEP adopted the new "Future Wastewater Services Area Map" for Somerset County that illustrates the sewer service area boundaries which have been updated to exclude undeveloped environmentally sensitive areas and preserved open space pursuant to the NJ Water Quality Management Planning Rules (N.J.A.C. 7:15). The portion of the updated FWSA Map that applies to the Regional Center represents an amendment to the Upper Raritan and Northeast Water Quality Management Plans, which was adopted by NJDEP on January 25, 2013. It also comprises Phase I of the Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) for Somerset County.

Work on Phase II of the Wastewater Management Plan is currently underway. The Regional Center municipalities will be required to endorse their respective municipal WMP chapters. The draft County WMP recognizes SRVSA's anti-degradation analysis currently being undertaken through an approved NJDEP work plan, and anticipates a potential plant expansion to 28 MGD permitted flow to accommodate future growth within the Regional Center and other municipalities within the SRVSA service area. In addition, an ACO among the NJDEP, Somerville Borough and SRVSA is being finalized that addresses improvements that will strengthen the resiliency of the regional wastewater system and protect the health and safety of the public and environment during severe wet weather/storm events.

The municipalities continue to work with the NJDEP and County by adopting the environmental protection ordinances required pursuant to the WQMP Rules.

### **Stormwater Management**

Each of the three municipalities has provided their stormwater management plan.

All proposed new development will be required to submit a stormwater management plan to ensure that there will be no adverse runoff or other negative stormwater impacts.

New development associated with the Somerville Borough Landfill Redevelopment Project/Transit Oriented Development (TOD) will be addressed through a green infrastructure restoration initiative involving the wetlands and stream corridor found on-site. This "green seam" addresses the goal of designing the corridor in a way that knits together the two parts of the redevelopment area in a way that creates new open space and a pedestrian friendly amenity. Stormwater management for the new development within the Somerset TOD will be addressed through the green seam. Need to expand this.

### **Water Supply**

Water in the Regional Center is supplied by the New Jersey American Water Company.

The Regional Center Partnership encourages residents to purchase and install rain barrels to conserve water for household use, ease stream erosion by reducing the amount of water going to streams and rivers during heavy storms, and reducing the pollutants accumulated from the impervious surfaces. Through a grant from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority and administered by the County, rebates from \$50 to \$200 are available to residents within the Peters Brook Watershed.

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# TRANSPORTATION

## Circulation

### Roadways

The system of roadways within the Regional Center provides people with their most basic way to get around and as a result is an important part of the land use planning process. The Regional Center is at the hub of major roadways in New Jersey with Interstate 287 and US Routes 22/202-206 all passing through the Regional Center. The road network is completed by State Route 28 and an extensive traditional grid pattern of county and local roads. For a graphic depiction of these roadways please see Figure 5 Regional Center Transportation Facilities Map.

The various roads in the Regional Center are called upon to perform a different type of function in the overall transportation network. The arterial roads 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, expressways, 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.

In the Regional Center, there are collector roads that are also subdivided into two functional road systems: primary (major) and secondary (minor). The primary or major road is so 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.

Finally there are local streets 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. Route 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 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.

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 usually have a right to reasonable, but not 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 roadway 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.

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.

To address the great demands on the roadways in the Regional Center, the use of alternative modes of transportation are also encouraged. They include:

### **Bikeways**

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.

### **Peters Brook Greenway**

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 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). Dedicated bicycle facilities are provided in a community so 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. Recently a hybrid facility, i.e. a shoulder bike lane, has been developed and has been 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.

### **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. Raritan adopted a Complete Streets Policy as recommended by NJ DOT in 2011. <http://njbikeped.org/index.php/complete-streets-2/raritan-complete-streets-policy/>

Typical pedestrian 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. It is recommended that a sidewalk inventory and community pedestrian demand and needs survey be performed to determine pedestrian facility use and improvement needs.

### **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 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.

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. 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.

## 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.

For a graphic depiction of the bus route coverage and location of train stations please see Figure 5 Regional Center Transportation Facilities Map.

The Regional Center is served by NJ Transit's Raritan Valley line, which operates between High Bridge and New York City. There are stations in downtown Raritan and Somerville, Finderne and Bridgewater. The Finderne station in Bridgewater, which currently has poor pedestrian and no automobile access has been proposed for decommissioning by NJ Transit. The Bridgewater station, located next to the Commerce Bank Ball Park and Bridgewater Promenade, has convenient access to I-287. Raritan is the westernmost station for most trains during the week and for all trains on weekends. Service operates every 20 minutes during peak periods and hourly during other times.

NJ Transit operates three bus routes in the Regional Center. Route 114 begins at the Bridgewater Commons Mall, serves downtown Somerville, and then terminates at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Manhattan. The route operates every half hour during peak periods and on Saturdays and hourly most other times. Route 117 operates three eastbound and four westbound trips between downtown Somerville and New York City on weekdays. Route 65/65 operates two eastbound and one westbound trip between the Bridgewater Commons Mall, downtown Somerville, and Newark. It should be noted that Raritan currently has no bus service.

NJ Transit, under the name Wheels, operates the 884 Route between Somerville and Clinton providing 15 weekday trips from Somerville and fourteen trips to Somerville. The route begins at the Somerville train station and runs up Bridge Street to the Bridgewater Commons Mall. The Somerset County Office of Transportation runs SCOOT buses that serve Hillsborough, Manville, Somerville, Bridgewater, Montgomery, Rocky Hill, and Bedminster. The service provides twelve daily round trips that serve downtown Somerville and several areas in Bridgewater along its route. Finally there is limited bus service on Susquehanna Trailways that links Somerville with the Lehigh Valley to the west and the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City.

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.

The County continues to support the transportation planning and implementation of those plans to keep the Regional Center move safely. The County and Regional Center Partnership also support the need for a tunnel to go under the train tracks at Davenport Street to provide better access to the Somerville Train Station.

## **SCHOOLS, UTILITIES & OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Bridgewater and Raritan and Bridgewater regional school district serves more than 9,000 students in eleven (11) schools. The Somerville School District serves more than 2,400 students in three (3) schools. Neighboring Branchburg sends more 700 high school students to the Somerville High School through a sending/receiving relationship between the two school districts.

Even with the anticipated overall population growth in the three communities none of them anticipate the need for new school facilities in foreseeable future.

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## STATE PLAN GOALS REVIEW

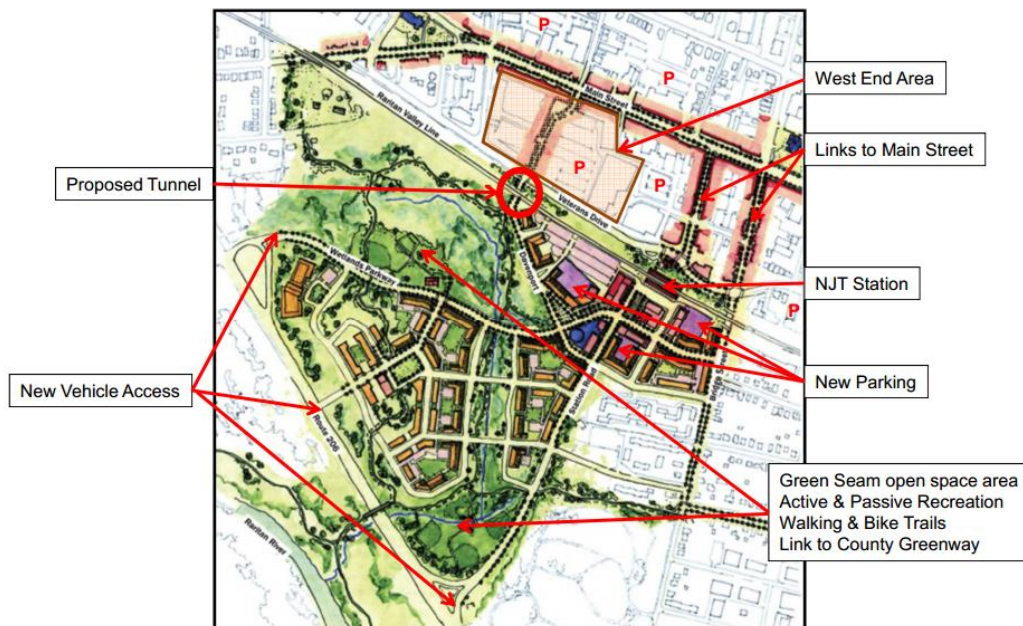
### GOAL 1: REVITALIZE THE STATE'S CITIES AND TOWNS

Generally, this policy applies only to select areas in the state with very dense development, significant infrastructure, high populations and a heavy transit system presence. While none of the municipalities of the Regional Center would be described as a city, the Regional Center is the center of commercial and residential growth and activity in Somerset County. For that reason, each municipality supported by the County has undertaken plans to develop and redevelop portions of their communities.

#### Somerville Redevelopment Projects

- West Main Street - TOD Mixed use retail/residential above
  - 223+ new residential units (walk to Station) (under construction)
  - 165,000 sq. ft. retail including 70,000 sq. ft. ShopRite (already built)
- East Central Business District - Rehabilitation and "infill"
  - redevelopment with Retail/Commercial/Residential
- Kirby Avenue - Redevelop consistent with existing neighborhood
- Station & Landfill - TOD Mixed use retail/commercial/residential above/public use & spaces (NJ Transit RFIQ and awaiting announcement of winning respondent)
  - The Hub/Heights -RD Plan allows up to 1,200 new residential units (walk to Station)
  - The Green Seam - 40+ acres of active and passive recreation
  - Gateway Area - Signature entrance area fronting Route 206
  -

#### Landfill Redevelopment Area Linkages



Bridgewater anticipates the construction of more than 215,000 square feet of office space, 130,000 of commercial space and 192,000 square feet of industrial space.

Raritan will see the construction of more than 7,400 square feet of office space and 139,000 square feet of industrial space.

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## GOAL 2: CONSERVE THE STATE’S NATURAL RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS

All three municipalities are working with the County to complete the work of the County WQMP.

Multiple environmental protection ordinances have been adopted by all of the municipalities in the Regional Center.

The Regional Center Partnership encourages residents to purchase and install rain barrels to conserve water for household use, ease stream erosion by reducing the amount of water going to streams and rivers during heavy storms, and reducing the pollutants accumulated from the impervious surfaces. Through a grant from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority and administered by the County, rebates from \$50 to \$200 are available to residents within the Peters Brook Watershed.

The Regional Center Partnership and Somerset County In Somerville NJ DEP through Green Acres awarded \$306,400 for the acquisition of properties in the “Green Seam” project area in Somerville, which will provide trail linkage to its downtown area and NJ Transit rail station, rehabilitate a tributary of the Raritan River and open up 40 acres of open space for recreation.

Bridgewater adopted their Natural Resource Inventory in 2008 while Raritan and Somerville have committed to completing theirs as part of their Plan Implementation Agreement (PIA).

Each community has provided a sustainability statement. Raritan produced a detailed Sustainable Community Plan in 2011.

All three communities are engaged with the Sustainable Jersey program. Somerville and Raritan are Registered while Bridgewater was Certified by Sustainable Jersey in 2010.

### **GOAL 3: PROMOTE BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF NEW JERSEY**

Bridgewater adopted an Economic Development Element to the Master Plan in 2010.

Areas they are focused on include:

- Finderne Neighborhood
- Chimney Rock
- Former American Cyanamid site

Somerville has designated Four Areas in Need of Redevelopment, including the

- West Main Street - TOD Mixed use retail/residential above
- East Central Business District - Rehabilitation and “infill”
- Kirby Avenue - Redevelop consistent with existing neighborhood
- Station & Landfill

Raritan is examining revitalization opportunities in the Borough including:

- Orlando Drive
- Somerville Circle
- CBD

It is anticipated that together, close to one million square feet of commercial space will be constructed or redeveloped within the Regional Center as well as open space, and new residential housing will be constructed over the next 30 years.

## GOAL 4: PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT, PREVENT AND CLEAN UP POLLUTION

In 2009 DEP named Somerville a Brownfield Development Area with 15 sites covering more than 400 acres. The most significant site is the former landfill that is on its way being remediated.

In 1983 the USEPA designated the 435 acre former American Cyanamid as a Superfund site. A portion of the site, about 140 acres was redeveloped for retail use and for the Somerset Patriot Baseball Stadium. In 2012 a sitewide remedial action plan was approved. The current owner of the property, Pfizer, Inc. will spend more than \$200 million to address the outstanding issues on the property.

Raritan is active in the restore Raritan River initiative and is working toward bringing people back to using the Raritan River. Their 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Raritan River Fest will be held in September.

With the County's assistance greenways have been developed along the Raritan River and Peters Brook.

## **GOAL 5: PROVIDE ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES AT A REASONABLE COST**

The County has encouraged several shared service opportunities for municipalities to utilize. Somerville's library is now part of the County library system. Raritan and Bridgewater share the high school. Public meetings in Somerville are often held in a public meeting space in the police station building, since borough hall is an older, historic building that is not easily accessible. The SCOOT, the County bus system and the complete streets program provide alternatives to automobile use which help to minimize traffic and wear and tear on public roads. The efforts underway by the County along Route 22 will help to address the accident rate throughout the Regional Center.

## **GOAL 6: PROVIDE ADEQUATE HOUSING AT A REASONABLE COST**

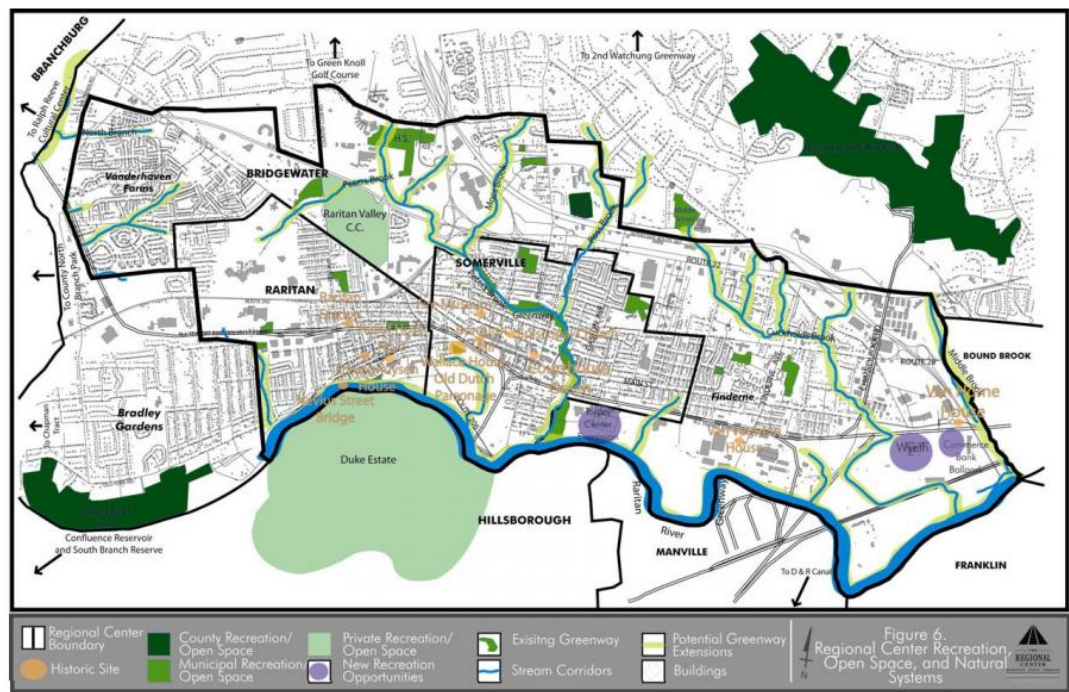
As of 2011 Somerville had prior round affordable housing quota of 153 units and 73 rehabilitation units and projected growth share of 121 units.

As part of Raritan's planned residential construction 96 low and moderate housing units will be built.

As part of Bridgewater's planned residential construction 149 low and moderate housing units will be built.

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GOAL 7: PRESERVE AND ENHANCE AREAS WITH HISTORIC, CULTURAL, SCENIC, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL VALUE



	Municipal	In Regional Center
Bridgewater	3,380	441
Raritan	77	77
Somerville	92	92
Total Regional Center		610

With the assistance from the County, the Regional Center Pedestrian, Bicycle and Greenway Systems Plan was developed in 2008 to preserve land and make them accessible for the residents of the Regional Center as well as the entire County. The effort has helped to improve the environment, water quality, stormwater management, flood protection and the habitat living in the Regional Center.

Raritan’s vision for Orlando Drive is for it to be a gateway into the borough and for development to occur utilizing its proximity to the Duke Farm, located across from the historic, circa 1886 Nevius Street Bridge that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



These other properties are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Vosseller's-Castner's-Allen's Tavern	Bridgewater Township
Van Horne House	Bridgewater Township
Gen. John Frelinghuysen House	Raritan Borough
Raritan Bridge	Raritan Borough
Raritan Station	Raritan Borough
South Branch Historic District	Raritan Borough
Relief Home Company No. 2 Engine House	Raritan Borough
Daniel Robert House	Somerville
Delaware and Raritan Canal	Somerville
Old Dutch Parsonage	Somerville
Somerset Courthouse Green	Somerville
St. John's Church Complex	Somerville
Van Veghten House	Somerville
Wallace House	Somerville
West End Hose Company Number 3	Somerville
J. Harper Smith Mansion	Somerville

Somerville is in the process of creating an Historic District.

## GOAL 8: ENSURE SOUND, INTEGRATED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION STATEWIDE

By working together through the Regional Center Partnership, all of the municipalities are addressing Goal 8: Ensure Sound, Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide. Their separate Master Plans address the Regional Center as a priority where growth and development are encouraged.

The County and municipalities have designated the Regional Center as a Priority Growth Area based on the Draft State Strategic Plan.

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

The planning vision of the Somerset County Regional Center Partnership and its member municipalities of Bridgewater Township, Raritan Borough and Somerville Borough are consistent with the State Plan as defined in the State Planning Rules. Therefore, staff recommends Plan Endorsement for the Regional Center and its member communities, including the designation of the Somerset County Regional Center.

This recommendation recognizes the efforts made by the Regional Center Partnership, member communities and Somerset County, which have demonstrated commitment and leadership towards working toward the vision of the 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan as well as the 2012 Draft State Strategic Plan and through the fulfillment of the Action Plan phase. We look forward to working with them to further their planning efforts and realization of their current plans and efforts.

## **PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION AGENDA**

See the attached PIAs and Technical Guidance Document