



## YEAR IN REVIEW 2015

### LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT

As demand for walkable communities increases, local officials and leaders struggle with marshalling the resources and support necessary to transform their downtowns into more vibrant places. New Jersey Future is providing leadership and support to drive resources and technical assistance toward our cities and town centers.

#### **Catalyzing downtown redevelopment in Trenton.**

The culmination of over two years of work resulted in New Jersey Future and its partners forming and funding a new nonprofit economic-development entity called Greater Trenton. The new organization will move priority projects forward in the city's downtown; support and promote existing efforts to keep the area clean and welcoming; and coordinate downtown stakeholders around a strategic revitalization plan.

**Creating great places to age.** As our population ages and looks to remain active and socially connected, are our communities redeveloping in ways that accommodate this demand? New Jersey Future published the second of two reports and found that many aging-friendly communities are also among the state's least affordable, both for older households and for everybody else, pointing to a need to increase the housing supply across the board.

### URBAN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The state's population continues to grow and market demand is driving more people into our urban centers, but our urban water infrastructure is failing and out of compliance with federal standards. New Jersey Future is working with a wide collection of stakeholders to address this problem holistically and advance best practices.

**Constructing a bigger tent to tackle urban water challenges.** Building on last year's successful cross-sector convening to discuss how best to help New Jersey's cities address their water-infrastructure crisis, New Jersey Future spearheaded the formation of a collaborative organization now known as Jersey Water Works. In addition to helping the organization establish itself as an independent entity with its own leadership and governance, New Jersey Future led the development of the Jersey Water Works brand, provided programming and logistical support for its winter conference, and provides "backbone" administrative support.

#### **Fostering best practices at the local level.**

One of Jersey Water Works' initiatives involved securing resolutions and proclamations from city mayors, supporting the collaborative's goal of implementing best-practice solutions for upgrading water infrastructure. To date, two mayors have signed proclamations and two city councils have adopted resolutions. Jersey Water Works also created a model request for proposals for cities and utilities to use in seeking consultants to help with state-mandated planning. The Passaic Valley Sewerage Authority, the state's largest wastewater utility, has used this model.

#### **Green infrastructure for our cities and towns.**

The Jersey Water Works partners are working with the NJDEP staff to ensure combined sewer system permit-holders understand the opportunities and requirements to incorporate green infrastructure solutions into their plans, as well as the potential benefits and cost-savings. This year, New Jersey Future kicked off a two-year project aimed at making green infrastructure a standard practice in development. Working with developers and municipal officials, we will identify obstacles, opportunities and resources, as well as advance specific demonstration projects.

### RESILIENCY TO NATURAL DISASTERS

Three years after Hurricane Sandy struck, New Jersey towns are still recovering and trying to face the new realities of sea-level rise and climate change. At the same time, advocates continue to push the state and federal governments to incorporate these known hazards into planning and investment decision-making. New Jersey Future is playing a critical role at both the state and local levels in helping make New Jersey more resilient to climate risks.

#### **Pioneering work in six Sandy-affected towns.**

New Jersey Future finished its second year of on-the-ground work in the communities where it had embedded local recovery planning managers. The program has been extremely successful, securing approximately \$8 million in rebuilding and resiliency planning grants and creating a data-driven framework within which communities can address growing risks from rising seas. Our recently released report *In Deep* examines the program and makes recommendations to local, state and national decision-makers.

#### **Sparking civic conversations about climate risk.**

A series of public meetings in several of the towns where local recovery planning managers were embedded showed residents via data-based maps what parts of their communities are at risk from flooding due to future severe weather and sea-level rise, and what the personal and public financial implications are of this risk. This data formed the basis for unprecedented public discussions, led by residents themselves, about how best to mitigate climate risks.

#### **Evaluating the health impacts of flood-mitigation strategies.**

New Jersey Future worked with its partner Rutgers University and with the City of Hoboken and Little Egg Harbor Township to study the health benefits and risks of proposed flood mitigation strategies and to develop recommendations that can be acted upon by local decision makers. This work makes additional connections between our built environment and the health of our communities.

# NEW JERSEY FUTURE: YEAR IN REVIEW 2015

## AUTHORITATIVE RESEARCH

Independent, fact-based research helps inform and change perceptions about how we plan, grow and develop. Two of the research reports New Jersey Future released this year attracted the attention of national land-use policy media and authorities for their clear analysis of important land-use issues:

**Highlighting inequities around New Jersey transit assets.** New Jersey Future's report *Off Track?* analyzed household income distributions in the neighborhoods around New Jersey's transit stations, and found that not all station areas offer the benefits of transit access across all income levels. In addition, housing units in the vicinity of many suburban stations tend to be larger, single-family homes, rather than a smarter-growth, more equitable mixture of various housing types along with other uses.

**Examining the true costs of sprawl infrastructure.** New Jersey Future and national partner Smart Growth America joined forces to analyze the per-capita costs of maintaining roads in New Jersey. While each organization used a different methodology, both came to the same conclusions in a jointly-released report: The per-capita cost of road infrastructure is highest in the state's least-dense places, and the least-dense places could realize greater reductions in per-capita costs than their more urbanized counterparts with even modest increases in density.

## EVENTS

As it is every year, our annual **Redevelopment Forum** was a must-attend symposium for more than 500 professionals in architecture, planning, law and community revitalization, all focused on ways to redevelop New Jersey's already-built places to accommodate its future growth. Our **Smart Growth Awards** recognized seven outstanding plans and projects, and honored redevelopment law pioneer and former New Jersey Future trustee Anne Babineau. In October we hosted a **reception in honor of George Pruitt**, the longtime president of Thomas Edison State College and an innovator in using the institution to anchor revitalization of Trenton's downtown. And the half-day **New Jersey Urban Water Conference** in December promises to set the standard for sharing best practices and innovative solutions to the problem of aging water infrastructure in New Jersey's cities. We were grateful to be honored by the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, which presented us with its **Outstanding Community Partner Award** at its annual meeting in October.

## STATE POLICY

State-level land-use advocacy and policy interventions are necessary to encourage decision-makers to consider future-oriented implications of growth and development choices. New Jersey Future continues to be at the forefront of these debates, bringing the smart growth and planning perspective.

**Influencing the conversation.** Important issues that New Jersey Future weighed in this year include the merger of the Meadowlands Commission with the Sports and Exposition Authority; renewal of coastal Center designations; construction of new cross-Hudson rail tunnels; re-funding and creating priorities for the state's Transportation Trust Fund; expanding opportunities for transit-oriented development; supporting the Mount Laurel doctrine and fair housing; and public participation and risk acknowledgement in the national Rebuild By Design projects.

**Sharing our expertise.** We were quoted, interviewed or mentioned in news stories more than 100 times in 2015, on a full range of smart-growth topics including an assessment of the effectiveness of the state's Sandy recovery efforts, our leadership role in upgrading our cities' water infrastructure, downtown revitalization efforts in places like Trenton and Hackensack, the policy implications of our research reports, and the future of affordable-housing efforts in the state. In addition, several staff members were asked to speak at key state and national conferences.

## A NEW CHAPTER

This year, New Jersey Future purchased and renovated a vacant building in downtown Trenton and converted it into its new office space. The new building, at 16 W. Lafayette Street, across from the Wyndham Garden Hotel, expands the organization's ability to convene partners and stakeholders, improves accessibility to government decision-makers, industry leaders and a broader constituency and reduces per-square-foot office expenses while accommodating a growing staff.



New Jersey Future is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that brings together concerned citizens and leaders to promote responsible land-use policies. We employ original research, analysis and outreach efforts to build coalitions and drive change to revitalize cities and towns, protect natural lands and farms, provide more transportation choices beyond cars, expand access to safe and affordable neighborhoods and fuel a prosperous economy. More recently, we have expanded our work to include local engagement and implementation, most notably in Sandy-affected communities.

## CONTACT US!

16 W. Lafayette St. Trenton, NJ 08608  
p: 609-393-0008 f: 609-360-8478  
e: [njfuture@njfuture.org](mailto:njfuture@njfuture.org) NJFUTURE.org