

Creating Places to Age

A Municipal Guide to Best Land-Use Practices

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The demands of an aging population will require New Jersey municipalities to re-examine how they manage the built environment.

Does your community have the necessary policies, plans and infrastructure in place to meet these needs?

The percent of the population aged 55 or older has grown appreciably since 1990. More than 2.3 million New Jersey residents – 26.6 percent of the state’s population – were at least 55 years old in 2012, with more than half of that total over the age of 65 and nearly 200,000 aged 85 or older. If this growing segment of the population opts to remain independent longer, rather than moving in with younger relatives or into institutional living quarters, this phenomenon will only become more pronounced as the Baby Boomers go on to swell the ranks of older Americans.

Given this trend, towns must start thinking about how to adapt and accommodate the needs and preferences of this large cohort of adults. Successful places to age will need to be safe, affordable and comfortable, offer living arrangements that suit the needs of older people, provide access to transportation and mobility, enable economic opportunity and allow seniors to be financially secure. Communities that can meet these needs will be in a better position to support and retain this demographic than communities that fail to act. Fortunately municipalities have the ability to shape community design and character through their local zoning, subdivision and land development regulations. If this is done thoughtfully it can create rather than limit options for development to meet the demands of an increasingly older populace.



Above Photo: Downtown Madison Borough in Morris County, New Jersey

About this Checklist

The checklist offered here is intended to provide elected officials and engaged residents with a tool to review local land-use regulations and policies and gauge how accommodating they are to older adults. Also offered are on-the-ground examples of places in New Jersey where these elements currently exist.

It is important to note that while land-use considerations are a critical component to planning for a growing number of older residents, there are other important forms of support, including property tax relief, home healthcare services, recreation and “Meals on Wheels” programs, and paratransit, that can improve the lives of older adults. These programs are often at the discretion of federal and state agencies and funding, even though local government can play an important role in administering them. This checklist does not cover these important resources and instead focuses on land use, which is directly under the control of municipal government.

The checklist is divided into the following sections:



Housing

The sizes and types of housing options available in your community.



Community

Development that fosters compact, safe and walkable places for all residents.



Transportation

Mobility options that allow people to remain independent longer.

Above Photos (From Left to Right): Residential community in Robbinsville Township, Downtown Lambertville (Credit: NJTPA), and Hoboken Terminal (Credit: NJTPA)

Housing

Providing housing options beyond the detached single-family residence helps to accommodate the different preferences, budgets and access needs of all residents, including older adults. Locating future residential development within proximity to existing neighborhoods preferably mixed use development goes one step further by offering the additional benefit of pedestrian access to a variety of destinations. Land use policy that welcomes housing alternatives benefit older adults in terms of manageability, affordability, accessibility and safety:

Manageability: *Empty-nesters who no longer see the need for a five-bedroom house on 10 acres of land may prefer something more manageable, such as a condo or townhome.*

Affordability: *Larger houses and properties generally have higher maintenance costs and property taxes than smaller houses. Smaller properties create affordable and accessible alternatives to multiple-acre housing lots, while reducing infrastructure and service costs for the municipality.*

Accessibility: *Smaller houses and apartments offer affordable and accessible alternatives, allowing individuals to remain in their communities following retirement. Housing located near existing development allows individuals to remain socially connected to their community without needing a car.*

Safety: *Older residents may feel safe knowing that neighbors live close enough that they can easily “check in” on one another.*

Aging-Friendly Communities Encourage:

■ Alternatives to Detached Single-Family Housing

Local zoning regulates the housing types that are allowed in the community. Multi-family housing, including townhomes, condominiums, duplexes and apartments, can be produced and maintained more inexpensively on a per-unit basis, making them less costly to buy or rent than a larger home. Communities whose zoning ordinances are inclusionary and provide reasonable alternatives to detached single-family housing will be better able to meet the physical and financial needs of an aging population.

Robbinsville Town Center (Mercer County)

In response to development pressure that threatened to dilute Robbinsville Township’s community character with generic sprawl, the township adopted a plan and related land-use ordinances to direct growth into a town center, located between an existing residential community and commercial district. Today the Robbinsville Town Center offers a wide variety of housing options, from detached single-family units on smaller lots to townhomes, duplexes, apartments and lofts. By encouraging the compact development of almost 1,300 housing units, the township gained a walkable town center and the necessary foot traffic to attract new businesses.



Above Photo: Robbinsville Town Center



Above Photo:
Hammonton's Form-Based Code



Above Photo:
Downtown Hammonton

■ Reduced Building Setbacks

Municipal zoning ordinances often dictate the minimum distance from property lines at which construction can take place. Larger minimum setbacks may mean expansive green lawns and privacy to some, but present challenges for others. Daily activities can become difficult or even hazardous for older adults when larger setbacks mean a longer walk to collect mail, additional snow to shovel along the driveway and more area to landscape and maintain. Development that is permitted closer to the street also strengthens opportunities for neighborhood interaction between residents rather than isolating them far from streets and walkways. Zoning ordinances that permit reduced setback requirements will help developers meet these needs of an aging population.

Town of Hammonton (Atlantic County) and the City of Woodbury (Gloucester County)

The Town of Hammonton recently revised its zoning ordinances to include a form-based code (FBC), which focuses on regulating design rather than specific uses, and encourages smaller setbacks as development density increases. In Hammonton's rural districts, the residential setback is as far as 60 feet from the front of the property. Properties closer to the village center have smaller setbacks: 30 feet in the Residential-1 district down to as low as 5 to 15 feet in the town's Downtown districts. Another FBC approach was taken by the City of Woodbury, where the planned village residential district includes setback maximums in addition to the more often-found setback minimums.

■ Smaller Residential Lot Sizes

Zoning codes generally prescribe minimum residential property sizes. Larger lots, an acre or more in size, discourage pedestrian activity and require more time, money and energy for landscaping and upkeep. A zoning code that permits a variety of housing densities, up to at least 10 units per acre, will accommodate more effectively a variety of different needs, abilities and lifestyles. As an added benefit, higher residential density can help create the critical mass of customers required to support viable commercial centers and other services for older residents.

Plainsboro Township (Middlesex County)

The newly developed Plainsboro Village Center provides a contemporary example of a compact residential community with a mix of residential property sizes that are within close proximity to retail and professional offices. Residential properties range in size from 2,000 square feet for a townhouse to 6,600 square feet for a single-family detached home. The Village Center has 11 single-family homes, 12 townhomes, and eight rental apartments, with 224 additional housing units just outside the village center that are tailored primarily towards older adults.

■ Affordable Housing

In some communities the cost of smaller housing units can still be prohibitive to older adults. Municipalities that encourage affordable housing as a fixed percentage of new development, or through development fees, can help provide opportunities for low- and moderate-income adults.

Lawrence Township (Mercer County)

Few New Jersey municipalities have ordinances that require affordable housing as a percentage of new development; however, some municipalities have put into place measures that help foster a viable affordable housing program. Lawrence Township has developed nearly a thousand affordable units as part of its Mount Laurel obligations; many of these developments have been a part of a larger mixed-income inclusionary residential project. The township also levies fees for residential and nonresidential development that can be used for housing assistance, as well as for affordable housing development or rehabilitation.

Madison Borough (Morris County)

The 12-unit Barbara W. Valk Firehouse Apartments development in Madison Borough is example of housing developed strictly for very-low income older adults that also fits into the geographic context of an aging-friendly community: a compact, traditional "Main Street" development with sidewalks, interconnected streets, and crosswalks, all a three-minute walk to New Jersey Transit's Morristown Line.

■ Universal Design

A house constructed for a young and mobile family will not always meet the changing needs of its occupants as they age. Narrow hallways (or very wide hallways), staircases, and other design features may render the house virtually inaccessible to residents or guests with limited mobility. Housing that incorporates elements of Universal Design offers expanded access to residents of all abilities. Universal Design addresses all aspects of construction and interior design, and includes elements such as “no-step” entrances, levered door handles, restroom grab bars, accessible power outlets and telephone jacks, as well as color contrasting floors. Municipalities, working within the construction parameters set by the state, can work with residents, builders and other permit applicants on how to build or retrofit housing for an aging population.

Atlantic City’s Demonstration Home (Atlantic County)

While technically not a municipal action, in 2002 New Jersey’s Casino Reinvestment Redevelopment Authority, in conjunction with AARP and the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University, funded the creation of a Universal Design Demonstration Home in Atlantic City as a way to showcase elements of Universal Design. During its tenure as a demonstration home during the summer of 2002, it included accessible parking and walkways, a no-step entrance, lighting around the doorway to see visitors, a first floor bedroom and bathroom, levered door handles, adequate turning space in all rooms, bathroom grab bars, levered faucet handles, adjustable closet rods, hand crank or automated windows (as an alternative to double hung windows), as well as remote controlled lighting.

■ Accessory Apartments

While state law permits a “senior citizen” (defined by the Municipal Land Use Law as someone 62 or older, or a surviving spouse aged 55 or older) to rent part of his or her single-family house to one person, municipal ordinances regulate the installation, use and occupation of so-called “granny flats” or “in-law suites” (attached or detached one-bedroom accessory apartments). These units can be located inside the house or be detached, such as inside a retrofitted garage or barn. Permitting accessory apartments creates an opportunity for an interested property owner to create a rental unit that can generate revenue to help him or her maintain the primary dwelling and remain in the community. Some individuals may opt to move into the apartment and rent out the primary residence instead, or may move into an accessory apartment hosted by another family member or unrelated individual. Ideally, zoning ordinances that permit to the installation and rental of an attached or detached one-bedroom accessory apartment, or permit the homeowner to move into the apartment and rent out the house, will help to provide affordable and accessible options for older residents.

West Amwell Township (Hunterdon County)

Accessory apartments are permitted in municipalities throughout New Jersey, but how they accommodate tenants varies. Several New Jersey municipalities, including West Amwell Township, permit the development of detached and attached accessory apartments for low- and moderate-income individuals as a way to meet their municipal affordable-housing obligations. In West Amwell, 14 accessory apartment units have been completed as of 2011.

Presently, accessory apartment ordinances in New Jersey tend to fall short of the ideal. Municipalities that have accessory apartment ordinances as part of their mandated affordable-housing obligation tend to sunset once the number of apartments built meets the obligation, other ordinances establish a cap on the number of units permitted in the municipality (also usually tied to an affordable-housing obligation) and because they are tied to an affordable housing obligation, they can only be rented to individuals under guidelines set by the New Jersey Council On Affordable Housing (COAH). In these instances, it is not clear if residents have the ability to permit market-rate accessory apartments in addition to affordable units. Local ordinances also do not always specify whether or not the homeowner can choose to occupy the accessory apartment and rent the house.

Community

Older adults are showing a growing interest in living where there is easy access to restaurants, shopping and entertainment. While municipalities do not always have the ability to attract these amenities directly, they can foster a more welcoming business climate, particularly in those areas served by transit, by developing the necessary housing density and pedestrian activity required to sustain their commercial districts. Larger commercial lot-size requirements spread people and businesses apart and discourage traditional “Main Streets.” Without the foot traffic necessary to sustain these types of small-scale, pedestrian-oriented businesses, big-box, auto-oriented retail development may fill the void and restrict access for those who do not drive. Compact development affords the opportunity for older adults to live within close proximity to commercial centers, reducing the need for an automobile to accomplish everyday tasks, while also permitting residents to remain socially connected to their community. Commercial districts that include a variety of businesses and housing options help reduce the need for multiple automobile trips, and offer a safe area for older adults to stay active and remain socially connected.



Above Photo: Downtown Frenchtown Borough (Credit: NJTPA)

Aging-Friendly Communities Encourage:

■ Proximity to Existing Development

Zoning ordinances dictate the location and type of development in the community, often separating residential neighborhoods from commercial districts. The extent of this separation may necessitate the use of a car to accomplish trips to the doctor, post office, dry cleaner, hair salon, grocery store and places of worship. Increased automobile use results in greater traffic congestion and isolates older adults unable to drive. Revising zoning to encourage new residential development near existing commercial development reduces the need for multiple trips, and encourages walking and pedestrian activity.

Woodstown Borough and Pilesgrove Township (Salem County)

Woodstown Borough and Pilesgrove Township in Salem County developed 91 units of affordable housing in a way that connects an existing walkable neighborhood in Woodstown with a commercial district in Pilesgrove. In addition, all ground-floor housing units were developed to be wheelchair-accessible and fully handicap-adaptable, and pedestrian elements such as sidewalks, benches, and streetlights were included throughout the development.

■ Traditional “Main Street” Development

Municipal zoning codes often separate businesses, residences and amenities by type. For example, a zoning regulation might prohibit the placement of a café (retail or food/beverage) near a library (civic), despite the potential connection between the two uses. In other cases, restrictive zoning might limit the ability for apartments to be developed above retail or commercial development. A zoning code that specifies an excessive number of different districts for different land uses may inadvertently force residents to make more trips, while a flexible zoning code that encourages mixed development in a compact town center (including supermarkets, doctors’ offices, gyms, places of worship, important civic buildings like libraries and community centers and apartments above offices and retail) will appeal to older adults who want or need to minimize the amount of time spent driving.

Cranford Township (Union County)

Cranford and Harrison have embraced traditional development patterns that are characterized by compact design and fewer restrictions on the use of the property, thus giving people the option to walk to multiple destinations from home. Cranford developed its compact town center around its train station during the 19th century. Since transportation options were more limited than they are today, development near passenger rail was key to the town’s prosperity—by default, housing and businesses needed to be located within walking distance of the train. As a result, the town did not develop strict regulations on where to site residential and commercial uses. In the last 30 years, Cranford has again realized the value of this style of development. Private investment has focused on improving the area around the train station, redeveloping buildings to reintroduce ground-floor retail with residential and offices located on the floors above. This development has attracted many empty-nesters and baby-boomers interested in downsizing from a larger home and into an area with access to transportation and plenty of amenities.

Town of Harrison (Hudson County)

Harrison Commons, a recent redevelopment and brownfield remediation project in the Town of Harrison, has begun the process of reintroducing these elements on a site once dominated by metal and chemical manufacturing. To date 275 residential rental units have been developed, along with 15,000 square feet of ground-floor retail. In addition, its close proximity to the Harrison PATH station provides easy access to Newark, Hoboken, Jersey City and New York City.



Above Photos: New additions to Cranford’s town center.



Above Photo: Newton (Credit: NJTPA)

▣ Alternatives to Conventional Land Subdivision

Municipal regulations describe how land may be subdivided for development. Conventional land subdivisions divide a property into equal-sized lots, based upon the minimum lot size required by zoning. These requirements can spread lots far apart and require residents to drive to reach most of their destinations. Alternatives to conventional subdivisions exist in New Jersey and can encourage compact and walkable development while minimizing sprawl. Municipalities have the authority to modify their subdivision regulations to permit compact development, through lot size averaging, cluster development, noncontiguous cluster development and transfer of development rights (TDR).

Chesterfield Township (Burlington County)

In response to development pressure in the largely agricultural Chesterfield Township, the municipality has been one of the few places in New Jersey outside of the Pinelands to implement and utilize successfully a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. Through TDR, Chesterfield designated an area within the town as a compact village center to which 1,200 residential units of potential new development would be directed. Since the beginning of the program in 1997 through to 2009, Chesterfield has approved over 800 housing units for development. This program, with the assistance of the New Jersey Farmland Preservation Program, preserved 7,000 acres of farmland from potential sprawl development.

Anecdotal evidence suggests this area has been popular with empty-nesters, with one resident noting that 10 to 20 percent of people on her block fall into this demographic. The draw for the area includes the small lots, which require less maintenance than larger properties, and allow residents to interact with one another more easily. In addition to empty-nesters moving in to the area, Chesterfield has also attracted the grown children of these adults, who desire not only the same attractive elements of a close knit community but also wish to be near family. Since much of the area was developed recently as a result of the TDR program, the new houses may not require the same level of maintenance as older housing stock. In addition, paths and sidewalks throughout the community provide residents with safe options that allow them to leave their cars at home, while access to New Jersey Transit's RiverLINE light rail system is located less than five miles away.

▣ Commercial Lot Sizes

Similar to residential areas, in commercial districts, larger lots discourage people from walking and isolate adults unable to drive. One way to measure a community's "walkability" is to quantify the number of amenities and services located within a quarter-mile of a central point of origin. Web-based tools such as Walk Score® provide anyone the ability to conduct a basic assessment of how walkable his or her community is in relation to everyday amenities. Zoning codes that permit smaller lots allow more development within this radius, fostering compact town centers and incentivizing pedestrian activity.

Town of Newton (Sussex County)

The Town of Newton revised its zoning ordinance in 2010 to utilize a form-based code for its downtown area, which places greater emphasis on site layout and development than specific uses. As a result, Newton's ordinance prescribes compact development through the use of smaller commercial lot sizes and development setback maximums as opposed to minimums. This promotes ease of access for pedestrians to commercial spaces without having to cross wide expanses of parking lot or sidewalk and allows businesses to locate closer together.

■ Accessible Public Facilities and Recreation

Municipal park developments range from “passive” (such as walking paths, fishing areas or picnic facilities) to “active” (such as skating rinks and playing fields). Older adults will have different preferences in recreational activities than younger residents. Recreation and wellness programs can accommodate an aging population by ensuring that the developed park infrastructure is geared to all age groups and abilities. While rigorous hiking in a wilderness setting might appeal to some, others will seek out a safe, lighted walking area with access to public restrooms and benches.

Town of Secaucus (Hudson County)

The Town of Secaucus offers examples of the different recreational opportunities that a municipality can provide its residents. Secaucus’s park system includes passive and active recreational elements, many of which include ADA-compliant equipment, that allow it to accommodate a wider range of interests and abilities.

■ New Development Located Out of Harm’s Way

One intent of zoning is to protect residents and businesses from incompatible and potentially unsafe uses. Development near water bodies or other natural features offer scenic views, but can also put people into dangerous situations during extreme weather events. Zoning districts that limit high-density development in places that are vulnerable to extreme hazards, such as flood-prone areas, helps protect at-risk populations.

Pequannock Township (Morris County)

Located along the Pompton and Pequannock rivers, Pequannock Township has faced repeated flood events, resulting in extensive damage to nearby properties. As a way to reduce the costs associated with repairs and emergency response, the township has worked with state, county and conservation groups to purchase 22 of the most flood-prone lots in the area. These lots, once cleared, become a recreational asset for residents and help to absorb floodwater without threatening people or property. By preserving these lots through purchases from willing sellers, the township is now able to direct development towards areas less likely to experience damaging floods.



Above Photo:
Pedestrian walkway in Monmouth County (Credit: NJTPA)



Above Photo:
Flooded Property in Pequannock Township

Transportation

Well-designed transportation networks should weave a community together. Interconnected transportation networks give people options; getting from Point A to Point B does not then necessitate highway driving and allows people to opt for secondary roads, sidewalks or mass transit. The compact and walkable development patterns in these networks also create the opportunity for “unplanned encounters” with neighbors and strangers, the kinds of personal interactions that are important for creating and maintaining social cohesion. For older residents who are no longer interacting with coworkers or immediate family members on a daily basis, these types of interactions are an important safeguard against social isolation. In these well-designed transportation networks, residents who do not own a car or who for whatever reason choose not to drive will be able to maintain their mobility and social interaction.

By contrast, low-density development serves to discourage pedestrian activity and increase traffic congestion when more trips are required for everyday errands. In auto-dependent areas, older adults may feel pressured to keep driving, and their children may feel obliged to comply. Those adults who do give up their keys are then more likely to suffer from social isolation, unless senior-directed programmatic options are in place. Mobility and independence are important not only to older adults, and as a result, communities that offer many transportation options – either directly through public transit access, or indirectly through connected street and sidewalk networks – will benefit all residents.

Aging-Friendly Communities Encourage:

■ Interconnected Streets

Local ordinances regulate street networks for new development with provisions that either permit or prohibit through traffic. Generally speaking, more connections offer more options to both vehicles and pedestrians than street patterns that terminate in culs-de-sacs or empty into a single arterial road. Older drivers may feel safer driving on “quieter” roads rather than being forced to enter a main thoroughfare or interstate, and gridded streets provide pedestrians with multiple ways to reach a destination. Ordinances that permit integrating new development into the existing street network will help to establish these connections.

City of Paterson (Passaic County), City of Lambertville (Hunterdon County), Borough of Rutherford (Bergen County)

Paterson, Lambertville and Rutherford offer three different examples of municipalities with highly interconnected street networks. These networks provide numerous options for navigation by pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. The graphics to the right, from top to bottom show Paterson, Rutherford, and Lambertville’s street networks (not drawn to scale).



■ Complete-Streets Policies and Programs

Streets are typically designed and maintained with motorized traffic in mind, sometimes to the detriment of users who want or need to walk, bicycle or take transit. On the other hand, a “complete street” would include these other users. In New Jersey, municipalities have the option to participate in a Complete Streets program, which requires future transportation improvement projects to consider all users, in addition to automobiles. By adopting a Complete-Streets policy, municipalities can offer a strategic framework to open the streets to all users, regardless of mobility and mode of transport.

Montclair Township (Essex County)

Montclair has the distinction of being the first New Jersey municipality to adopt a Complete-Streets policy in 2009. As a result, subsequent street projects on township roads in Montclair have incorporated Complete-Streets elements in areas where pedestrian traffic exists or makes sense. Following Montclair, Essex County adopted its own Complete-Streets policy, ensuring that county roads slated for future transportation projects undergo the same re-examination for non-motorized traffic. Montclair’s South Park Street project, completed in 2012, retrofitted a 72-foot-wide street in the downtown to include street trees, widened sidewalks, a center median, bicycle lanes and on-street parallel parking.



Above Photo:
Lambertville adopted a Complete-Streets Policy in 2012 (Credit: NJTPA)

■ Sidewalks

One element of a Complete Street is the sidewalk, which offers a safe way to travel along busy streets. Lack of sidewalks where pedestrian traffic exists can lead to unwanted property trespassing, or worse, accidents between vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists. However, sidewalk inclusion alone does not guarantee that people will leave their cars and walk. Sidewalks that fail to connect centers of pedestrian activity, that “feel” unsafe, that fail to meet accessibility guidelines or that lack amenities such as benches, public restrooms or shade will not be used. Amending development codes to require sidewalks and encourage related amenities as part of new development or redevelopment will help to establish these pedestrian transit networks over time.

Collingswood Borough (Camden County)

Collingswood has many attributes that makes it an aging-friendly place – compact development, a mix of housing and property sizes, a traditional “Main Street,” access to transit and even a budding bike-share program. Collingswood also cares about sidewalks, requiring them in areas where public safety is a concern, including areas of high pedestrian traffic and near school bus stops. Collingswood also gives property owners the option to build sidewalks with a traditional brick design instead of concrete, and it requires that any repair or reconstruction of a sidewalk adjacent to a brick sidewalk also use brick. As a result, Collingswood’s downtown has been beautified as property owners have gradually shifted to installing brick sidewalks.

■ Crosswalks

Crosswalks direct pedestrians to cross where it is safe and also serve as an indication to motorists to pay extra attention to people on foot. Crosswalks should accommodate people who require additional time to cross the street by adding safe spaces in the street median, as well as extended time for timed crosswalks.

City of New Brunswick (Middlesex County)

In New Brunswick adjacent to the train station, motion sensors activate flashing lights to notify drivers of a pedestrian in the crosswalk, and to indicate when it is safe for traffic to resume. Unlike other crosswalks, which allocate a set time to allow for pedestrians to cross, these crosswalks can help individuals who may need extra time, preventing them from being “stranded” in the middle of the road.



Above Photos (From left to right): Crosswalk in New Brunswick when empty, speed notification as cars pass and when notifying motorists of a pedestrian's intent to cross.

■ Accessible and Safe Parking Lot Designs

Large parking lots can present challenges to older adults. Pavement amplifies the heat during the summer and can create slippery conditions in the winter. Pedestrian movement is not always considered in an area generally seen as being reserved for cars. Parking lots that include shade trees, benches and safe walkways are safer, more attractive and easier to navigate than those without. Just as municipalities establish parking-lot standards for capacity to reflect peak usage, municipalities should also include parking lot design elements that mitigate the effects of extreme weather.

Somerdale Borough (Camden County)

The redevelopment of the distressed Lions Head Plaza in Somerdale into the Cooper Towne Center demonstrates that even an automobile-centric mall development can incorporate elements of pedestrian design. In the middle of an otherwise expansive parking lot, developers added a pedestrian promenade. Unlike many big-box shopping centers that discourage pedestrian traffic with limited or non-existent sidewalks and crosswalks, thus encouraging people to drive to each store in the development, the Cooper Towne Center has a network of clearly-marked pedestrian walkways that give people the option to walk from store to store, and allows parallel parking along the sidewalks in front of the stores, offering a safety barrier between pedestrians and car traffic.

■ Mass Transit Options

Access to bus stops or rail stations allows older residents to reach their destinations without a car. While this is not necessarily a land-use topic, the availability of public transportation can help older adults accomplish daily tasks. Without grants and other subsidies, paratransit can be costly when ridership is low and users are dispersed by low-density development. Compact future development or redevelopment can help to create a viable market for public transportation. Similarly, locating new development in close proximity to existing public transportation gives residents the option to forgo more easily the use of an automobile.

City of Linden (Union County)

Linden's rail station is located in the center of town, offering residents convenient access to New Jersey Transit's Northeast Corridor and North Jersey Coast lines. The recent state designation of Linden as a Transit Village acknowledges the redevelopment efforts around its rail station, which are also helping to revitalize the downtown with retail, restaurants, housing and professional offices. Linden's zoning code reinforces compact development around its train station by permitting mixed-use developments (ground floor commercial or retail with residential options above) to take place on lots under an acre in size.



Above Photos:
New Jersey Transit bus, light rail and the regional rail lines offer riders connections to New York City, Philadelphia and throughout New Jersey.

Land Use Checklist for Optimal Places to Age

Housing

- ☐ Alternatives Beyond the Single Family Home
- ☐ Reduced Building Setbacks
- ☐ Smaller Residential Lot Sizes
- ☐ Inclusionary Housing Ordinances in Place
- ☐ Universal Design Principles Understood by Local Building Community
- ☐ Accessory Apartments Welcomed in Local Ordinances

Community

- ☐ New Development Takes Place Within Proximity to Existing Development
- ☐ Traditional “Main Street” Development Encouraged
- ☐ Alternatives to Conventional Land Subdivision Exist
- ☐ Commercial Lot Sizes and Setbacks Account for Pedestrian Use
- ☐ Public Facilities and Recreation Target All Age Groups
- ☐ New Development Located Out of Harm’s Way

Transportation

- ☐ Interconnected Streets Provide Options Beyond the Highway
- ☐ Complete Streets Policy Adopted and Followed
- ☐ Sidewalks Connect Destinations for Pedestrians
- ☐ Crosswalks Provide Safe Passage for Pedestrians
- ☐ Accessible and Safe Parking Lot Designs Encouraged
- ☐ Mass Transit Connections Reduce Need for Automobile Usage

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About

New Jersey Future

Founded in 1987, New Jersey Future is an independent not-for-profit organization, working for better development and quality growth in the Garden State. New Jersey Future focuses

on promoting smart growth and advancing implementation of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan by conducting research and analysis on key issues, building consensus for broad solutions, hosting events to educate and inform, and implementing plans on the local level to build stronger, more resilient communities.



About the Author

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Nick focuses on policy and planning initiatives ranging from research to on-the-ground implementation. Prior to joining New Jersey Future he served as the community and natural resource planner for Pike County, Pennsylvania where he provided planning

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