



New Jersey Future (NJF) achieved important advancements in 2019 across its four main focus areas: investing wisely in infrastructure, supporting good local redevelopment, incorporating climate risk into decision-making, and coordinating state development efforts. NJF's work in these areas is part of the organization's broader "Smart Growth is Economic Growth" campaign, which seeks to demonstrate that smart growth drives economic development, leading to enhanced state and local revenue, while simultaneously creating healthy and equitable communities. In 2019, NJF guided state policy and implemented innovative programs toward this end. NJF works every day to ensure our unique state is a great place to live for everyone, and in 2019 NJF continued to incorporate social justice, diversity, inclusion, and equity as core components of all of its work.

# NEW JERSEY FUTURE Year in Review 2019

## INVESTING WISELY IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Jersey Water Works' Lead in Drinking Water Task Force released its groundbreaking report *Lead in Drinking Water: A Permanent Solution for New Jersey* in October. The report outlines actions to virtually eliminate lead in New Jersey drinking water within 10 years, and is the first statewide plan to address lead in drinking water by a broad and diverse base of experts and stakeholders. Policy development work related to the report recommendations has already led to major commitment and action by the state. Governor Murphy joined with the task force in October to announce his Statewide Plan to Address Lead Exposure in New Jersey, which incorporates key recommendations from the task force report. NJF created a statewide lead service line (LSL) map using data the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) collected from community water systems.

New Jersey Future continued to facilitate the broader Jersey Water Works collaborative, which grew to over 500 members in 2019. Its Steering Committee created an equity work plan to ensure every New Jersey resident benefits from sustainable, cost-efficient water services. A new Data Advisory Committee formed to guide backbone staff in creation of a data dashboard to make water system performance accessible to consumers and utilities alike.

New Jersey Future was part of a collaborative effort to assist the New Jersey Department of Transportation in developing its complete and green streets model policy and guide, which provides guidance for all roadway jurisdictions to create complete and green streets according to best practices. The new model policy and guide is the result of two years of collaborative work and makes the connection between complete streets and health, economic development, equity, and green streets.

New Jersey Future provided testimony to the State Senate on ways the Water Quality Accountability Act must be strengthened to ensure better compliance with the goals of the act. NJF provided comments to NJDEP on its proposed stormwater management rule, praising the prioritization of green infrastructure as a key stormwater management strategy and offering suggestions to make the rule clearer and more effective.

Community groups, with support of the Sewage-Free Streets and Rivers (SFSR) campaign, hosted 13 public meetings in Jersey City, Perth Amboy, Bayonne, and Paterson, met with their mayors, and presented at council meetings. Local partners launched a series of programs and forums funded by capacity building grants from the campaign. The SFSR advisory committee has also engaged in an ongoing dialogue with NJDEP on how to make the CSO process more inclusive and submitted written recommendations on public engagement, climate resilience, and green infrastructure. NJDEP has committed to engaging community stakeholders before it develops the requirements for the next CSO permit cycle, which will likely take place in 2021.

Governor Murphy signed the Clean Stormwater and Flood Reduction Act, giving communities the option to establish stormwater utilities to fund projects to manage flooding and runoff from rainfall. NJF worked with the Flood Defense Coalition to get this important act passed and to encourage towns to consider creating stormwater utilities.

## SUPPORTING GOOD LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT

New Jersey Future began working with municipal and community leaders in Westwood, Teaneck, Ridgewood, Fair Lawn, Ridgefield Park, and Pompton Lakes to implement aging-friendly community design plans so that older adults can remain active, healthy, engaged, and continue to live in their communities.

The Highlands Council awarded a grant to Bloomingdale based on an economic planning proposal submitted by NJF on behalf of the borough. In partnership with JGSC Group, NJF began development of a sustainable economic redevelopment plan for Bloomingdale. Washington Borough also executed an agreement with NJF for economic redevelopment planning, and Highlands Council approval was verbalized contingent on the borough's successful petition to the Highlands Council for conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

## INCORPORATING CLIMATE RISK IN DECISION-MAKING

New Jersey Future executed an agreement to work with Medford to assist the town with its application to the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System (CRS) and began developing a CRS implementation tool that can be applied to other municipalities seeking entry into the CRS program.

New Jersey Future Executive Director Peter Kasabach was named co-chair of the new Coastal Resilience task force organized by the Waterfront Alliance. The Task Force aims to build consensus around needed resiliency adaptations, investments, and policies in New Jersey and New York. New Jersey Future worked with a diverse group of stakeholders to develop changes to the Municipal Land Use Law that would take into account the impacts of climate change and stormwater.

New Jersey Future staff led a working group of the Coastal Resilience Collaborative to identify and promote key municipal resilience practices and participated in a working group of the collaborative to highlight state resilience actions. Recommendations developed by the working groups were submitted as comments to inform the NJDEP Climate Change Resilience Strategy.

## COORDINATING STATE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

New Jersey Future provided testimony to the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities on the draft state Energy Master Plan, emphasizing the importance of reducing vehicle miles traveled to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the need to direct growth toward cities and town centers, and away from sprawl-inducing rural and suburban locations.



New Jersey Future testified before a Joint Meeting of Senate Economic Growth Committee and Assembly Commerce and Economic Development Committee to advocate that New Jersey's economic incentives be geographically targeted and spur both economic and community development.

New Jersey Future joined with 18 mayors and organizations concerned with how the state grows and develops in urging Governor Murphy to fill the open positions on the State Planning Commission, update the State Plan, and reconstitute the Office of State Planning. NJF advocated in support of the Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy Executive Order.

## JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

New Jersey Future has an active justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) board/staff committee that prioritizes board and staff education and engages in specific steps to move the organization along this path. New Jersey Future recognizes that a core component of sustainable development, smart growth, and conservation is equity and that we are at a time and place where equity needs to be elevated in our work and in New Jersey.

The 2019 JEDI work plan included internal, external, and programmatic goals. As part of this plan, NJF staff have participated in JEDI focused conferences, training, working groups, studies, and conversations. Staff continues to use lessons learned to engage with allied organizations, expand NJF's equity work, and to modify hiring practices and programmatic work.

## EVENTS AND AWARDS

New Jersey held its annual Redevelopment Forum, drawing a record 650 participants and featuring Governor Phil Murphy, who delivered opening remarks about his vision of a stronger future for New Jersey, and a keynote by esteemed author, attorney, and advocate for public policy initiatives that improve access and opportunity for low-income and communities of color, Angela Glover Blackwell. In her keynote, Blackwell emphasized the economic benefits of equity in development and redevelopment.

At the annual Smart Growth Awards, New Jersey Future honored seven exemplary smart growth projects across New Jersey before an audience of nearly 300. The 2019 winning projects included four adapted-reuse projects, a new youth center, a multi-municipal walking and cycling trail, and a master plan update that focuses on accommodating future growth and sustainability. As part of the Awards event, New Jersey Future presented The Cary Edwards Leadership Award to Wendy Kelman Neu, an entrepreneur who builds, operates, and invests in innovative environmental resilience and other public-benefiting ventures.

Jersey Water Works' fifth annual conference inspired and energized members to explore new ways to achieve "smart infrastructure, strong communities" and celebrated committee accomplishments and member commitments to action. A record number of 315 attendees explored equitable solutions for New Jersey's top water challenges in the year ahead and called for continued momentum and innovative funding to transform New Jersey's water infrastructure.

New Jersey Future's Green Infrastructure Municipal Toolkit was honored with an Excellence in Communications Award from the National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies. The national award recognizes outstanding communications that inform the public about flood awareness, pollution prevention, and environmental protection.

New Jersey Future Planning Manager David Kutner, who has led the organization's work on resiliency planning and directed its post-Sandy recovery work, is the 2019 recipient of the American Planning Association-New Jersey chapter's Budd Chavoosian Award. The distinguished award honors a professional planner for sustained contributions to the profession through distinguished practice, teaching, or writing.

New Jersey Future celebrated National Infrastructure Week by hosting three events focused on water infrastructure and by publishing several articles drawing attention to the specific problems related to water infrastructure in the state.

## RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

**Lead in Drinking Water: A Permanent Solution for New Jersey** outlines actions New Jersey can take to virtually eliminate lead in drinking water in 10 years.

**Green Infrastructure Municipal Toolkit**, which underwent an update this year, helps New Jersey municipalities combat the growing problem of nuisance flooding and polluted waterways with detailed information and a variety of tools that cities and towns can use to plan, implement, and sustain green infrastructure in public- and private-sector development projects.

**Age-Friendly community assessment reports** were developed for Somerdale and Teaneck which summarize an assessment of the way these towns are built and the extent to which the community's form enables older adults to remain active, healthy, engaged, and capable of continuing to live in their communities.

**Population trend analyses** were developed to assess where New Jersey's population is growing and shrinking as well as explanations for these changes.

## IN THE NEWS

New Jersey Future was mentioned in 122 news stories and published an op-ed and 17 press releases and media statements on topics including stormwater utility legislation, the state Energy Master Plan, and lead in drinking water. NJF staff appeared on NJTV, NJ101.5, and WNYC's Ask the Governor.

NJF continues to expand its reach through social media. By the end of 2019, NJF's followers on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn totaled approximately 14,880.

