

NEW JERSEY FUTURE Year in Review 2021



After an unprecedented 2020, 2021 posed new and ongoing challenges across New Jersey. From public health crises to extreme weather events, the Garden State's path to a just recovery has remained obstructed by formidable obstacles. Nonetheless, throughout the past year New Jersey Future (NJF) continued to demonstrate its dedication to its four key focuses as a leading land use organization—infrastructure, coordinated state-wide development, climate risk, and local redevelopment, with a commitment to advancing policies and practices that support strong, healthy, and resilient communities for everyone; an equitable and fair recovery; and a better future for all New Jerseyans.

INVESTING WISELY IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Make smart, cost-effective investments in water and transportation infrastructure to increase New Jersey's competitiveness and support healthy, equitable communities.

In addition to a host of challenges, 2021 also brought new hope for communities across the country demanding urgent, efficient, and equitable infrastructure investments. Through its array of clean water programs and campaigns—including Mainstreaming Green Infrastructure, the Stormwater Utility Resource Center, and the Sewage-Free Streets and Rivers campaign—NJF helped New Jersey communities become more resilient to flooding from dangerous storms like Tropical Storm Ida.

We developed and released an enhanced model ordinance that provides guidance for municipalities aiming to incorporate green infrastructure and minimize stormwater pollution from new development. NJF also delivered presentations to officials interested in establishing stormwater utilities in more than 25 localities, several of which are engaging in—or seeking a consultant for—a formal feasibility study. Finally, we successfully advocated for changes to combined sewer overflow Long Term Control Plans that will ensure community participation and save residents hundreds of millions of dollars.

NJF serves as the “backbone staff” for two state-wide collaboratives, Lead-Free NJ and Jersey Water Works (JWW). In 2021, JWW created Jersey WaterCheck, a user-friendly dashboard with data on over 500 drinking water and wastewater systems, including rates, compliance, drinking water sources, and more. To ensure our children are free from lead poisoning, Lead-Free NJ launched with community leaders from Paterson, Trenton, and Newark working hand in hand with statewide policy advocates.

In terms of key legislation, NJF played an important role in passing the Water Quality Accountability Act, which requires drinking water systems to make proactive capital investments. Thanks in large part to JWW's Lead in Drinking Water Task Force, New Jersey now has the nation's most aggressive law to ensure the replacement of lead pipes within 10 years.



COORDINATING STATE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

Provide leadership to direct state investments and incentives to ensure a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable state and to support communities' efforts to create great places to live, work, and play.

Throughout 2021, NJF advanced complex strategies while organizing and facilitating convenings among diverse stakeholders. The policy responses we have proposed, as well as the coalitions we have helped solidify, have contributed to NJF's reputation as an unbiased, solutions-oriented leader.

In order to comprehensively reduce emissions and mitigate climate impacts in New Jersey, we launched a statewide working group focused on reducing vehicle miles traveled as an important and necessary complement to electrifying the transportation sector. NJF successfully advocated for the incorporation of vehicle miles traveled reductions and active transportation into the Energy Foundation's statewide strategy, which is supported by dozens of active advocacy organizations.

NJF researched and elevated the issue of warehouse sprawl as a priority that must be confronted through state and regional planning and local engagement. Alongside our partner, Clean Water Action, we conducted a survey to assess priorities and interest in the broader subject of warehousing and hosted a convening in December. As the severity of warehouse sprawl increases, our understanding of the broader issues of freight movement and warehousing impacts on communities continues to evolve. We have learned a great deal about systemic racism in this arena from our partners in the environmental justice community who have been engaged with these issues for over a decade.

INCORPORATING CLIMATE RISK IN DECISION-MAKING

Prepare our communities for the consequences of climate change and sea level rise through long-term planning and education about the growing risk and inequitable impacts of flooding.

This past year has proven—yet again—that New Jersey remains largely ill-equipped to confront the worsening impacts of climate change. Among other extreme weather events, Tropical Storm Ida wreaked havoc across the state and underscored the importance of bolstering our resilience in anticipation of future storms and flooding.

To that end, NJF led the effort to successfully amend the Municipal Land Use Law to require towns to assess their climate change vulnerabilities and incorporate resilience strategies into their master planning processes.

Furthermore, we worked directly with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to influence and shape the Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy, which serves as the roadmap for how the State will approach and address climate change adaptation.



SUPPORTING GOOD LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT

Empower cities and towns to take the bold and difficult steps needed to support equitable growth and meet future demographic, economic, and environmental challenges.

While NJF acts as a statewide authority in smart planning and redevelopment, we also recognize that change can be effected from the ground up—in the local neighborhoods and communities New Jerseyans call “home.”

In 2021, NJF continued its NJ-specific age-friendly research and worked directly with communities facilitating local initiatives across the state. To date, we have collaborated with the Borough of Fair Lawn, the Borough of Pompton Lakes, the Borough of Somerdale, the Borough of Teaneck, the Borough of Westwood, the Village of Ridgely Park, and the Village of Ridgewood by conducting age-friendly land use assessments, action plans, and implementation plans.

Additionally, we began an age-friendly assessment and planning project with Livingston Township and completed a local place-based economic development plan and strategy for the Borough of Bloomingdale.

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

NJF has an active justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) board/staff committee that prioritizes board and staff education and engages in specific steps to achieve the organization’s JEDI objectives. We recognize that a core component of sustainable development, smart growth, and conservation is equity and that equity needs to be not only elevated—but centered—in our work and in New Jersey.

To continue growing together as an organization, we hired a consultant to assess NJF’s JEDI progress and identify strategies to better integrate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the organization’s practices, communications, and internal operations. The consultant has conducted both board and staff trainings.

In partnership with the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA New Jersey), NJF organized and held two highly impactful plenary sessions at the 2021 New Jersey Planning and Redevelopment Conference focused on advancing equity in land use. The sessions, “Geography of Equity and Inclusion: The Big Picture” and “Municipal Approach to Racial and Economic Inclusion,” both featured nationally and locally renowned experts, practitioners, and elected officials striving to incorporate equity and inclusion into planning and redevelopment decision-making.

JWW developed a Water Risk and Equity Map, which identifies environmental justice “hot spots” in terms of various water risk factors, such as flooding and lead-contaminated water.

EVENTS

NJF and APA New Jersey co-hosted a two-day, virtual New Jersey Planning and Redevelopment Conference, which generated more than 900 registrants and included over 150 speakers and 36 sessions.

Alongside our partners, we held the first Age-Friendly New Jersey Leadership Summit, which convened local and statewide advocates across a wide spectrum of age-friendly issue areas and included an announcement of a new age-friendly commission from New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy.

JWW’s annual conference was held virtually and featured more than 25 community and government leaders, including Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy Executive Director Colette Pichon Battle and NJDEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette. Attendees discussed innovative strategies and tactics to best capitalize on this historic moment for water infrastructure in the U.S.



Founded in 1987, New Jersey Future is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes sensible and equitable growth, redevelopment, and infrastructure investments to foster healthy, strong, resilient communities; protect natural lands and waterways; increase transportation choices beyond cars; provide access to safe, affordable, and aging-friendly neighborhoods; and fuel a strong economy for everyone. New Jersey Future does this through original research, innovative policy development, coalition-building, advocacy, and hands-on strategic assistance. Embracing differences and advancing fairness is central to New Jersey Future’s mission and operations. New Jersey Future is firmly committed to pursuing greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion through its programs, internal operations, and external communications.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Throughout 2021, NJF produced more than 45 blog posts on an assortment of policy and planning topics, including demographic trends; stormwater management strategies; the cultivation of inclusive, age-friendly communities; and the intersection of land use and environmental justice issues. The blog posts were featured in our newsletter, as well as on our website and social media accounts.

NJF published its *Creating Great Places to Age for Every Person in Every Neighborhood* report, which highlights the extent to which households of color and lower-income households are excluded from decision-making and engagement efforts across the state.

JWW’s Lead in Drinking Water Task Force published the *Lead in Drinking Water in Child Care Facilities: Ensuring the Future for New Jersey’s Children* report, which identifies 10 priority recommendations to protect young children from lead in drinking water in the state’s regulated child care facilities. The report aims to achieve the overarching goal that within 10 years, no children in regulated child care facilities in New Jersey will be at risk of lead exposure from drinking water as a result of a coordinated program of water testing, remediation, funding, communications, and regulations.

JWW also issued a report entitled *Understanding Affordability Problems for Drinking Water and Sewer Utilities*, which examines the affordability stresses experienced by the customers of hundreds of drinking water and wastewater systems.

IN THE NEWS

Reporters across the state continued to turn to NJF as a trusted source of expert analysis and commentary. NJF was mentioned in 66 news stories in 2021. By issuing 14 media statements and 4 press releases on crucial legislation and cutting-edge research findings, NJF remained at the forefront of breaking news.

NJF continues to expand its reach through social media. At the end of 2021, NJF’s followers on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter totaled approximately 16,600.

Meanwhile, NJF amplified its reach via emails—including our newsletter—by gaining over 1,000 new subscribers in 2021.



The NJF team plans for the organization’s future at the Social Profit Center in Hamilton.



Local business owner Brian Moore greets NJF staff during their tour of downtown Trenton.



NJF staff visit Jersey City elected officials to discuss the city’s redevelopment and transportation initiatives.