

NEW JERSEY FUTURE Year in Review 2022



While the world is still recovering from the abrupt halt of every aspect of our lives due to the pandemic, 2022 provided encouraging development in the return to normalcy. Relief and economic recovery packages have led to an unprecedented allocation of federal stimulus funds to New Jersey. At New Jersey Future (NJF), we believe that this is a prime opportunity to directly address the issues of our time with the proper funding commitments to make real, meaningful, and lasting reforms. NJF continues to focus its policy, advocacy, and collaborative efforts on investment in our water infrastructure, state-wide coordination of development, cogent response to climate change risks, and local redevelopment to improve the thousands of places throughout the Garden State where millions of New Jerseyans live, work, and play.

INVESTING WISELY IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The age of our water infrastructure is showing at every turn. While the needs are great, federal and state funding allocations in 2022 are bringing us closer to the goal of clean, safe, healthy water for all.

New Jersey Future continues to lead and collaborate with leaders in the water sector to address persistent issues that threaten the health and safety of our communities. This year, NJF launched and staffed the Clean Water, Healthy Families, Good Jobs Campaign, which succeeded in securing \$300 million of American Rescue Plan funds for water infrastructure. NJF and our partners also secured a new funding program at the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to pay for stormwater utility feasibility studies for interested municipalities. Finally, the NJDEP released the first in a series of draft permits addressing the first five years of Long Term Control Plans targeting combined sewer overflows (CSO). New Jersey Future's Sewage-Free Streets and Rivers (SFSR) Campaign and the Jersey Water Works CSO Committee are taking the lead in reviewing these permits and engaging the community to weigh in with local knowledge. This permit and public engagement process will shape subsequent editions as we grapple with eliminating CSOs from our state.

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, highlighting rates, compliance, drinking water sources, and more. In 2022, Jersey WaterCheck added 10 additional metrics to the dashboard. The Environmental Policy Innovation Center recognized our contributions in this area by awarding its Water Data Prize in the Equity Category for both Jersey WaterCheck and the New Jersey Water Risk and Equity Map, a collaborative effort by NJF, JWW, and Rutgers University.

In only its second year of existence, Lead-Free NJ continued to grow and deepen ties with its three community hubs in Newark, Paterson, and Trenton. Lead-Free NJ's work to advocate with communities for significant investments in lead remediation in the state budget won the collaborative the annual Advocacy and Organizing Award from the Housing and Community Development Network of NJ. In 2023, Lead-Free NJ seeks to open a fourth hub in South Jersey and continue to support community leaders in advocating locally on behalf of their communities to ensure that New Jersey's children are free from lead poisoning.

NJF, serving as backbone staff and as a member of the Sewage-Free Streets and Rivers (SFSR) Campaign, assisted and presented at the SFSR Community Leaders Fellowship program. The six session, bi-weekly, virtual program for emerging community leaders increased the participants' understanding of water policy, advocacy, equity, organizing, and communications while expanding their networks. SFSR Advisory Board and partners successfully advocated for \$248 million of NJ's American Rescue Plan allocation in the 2023 state budget to be used to address combined sewer overflows.



Lead-Free NJ Program Manager Heather Sorge accepting the Advocacy and Organizing Award from Housing and Community Development Network of NJ.

COORDINATING STATE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

To properly prepare for our changing environment and promote equity, sustainability, and prosperity in our communities, we must direct state investments and resources behind coordinating our needs on a statewide level to avoid local conflicts and issues.

NJF believes that land use is at the heart of New Jersey's ability to construct and realize great placemaking, and to anticipate and avoid conflicts. NJF endeavored this year to make headway in halting the sprawl of warehouse development—addressing its impact on environmental justice communities—and reducing vehicle miles traveled by automobiles.

Throughout the year, warehouse development has continued at a breakneck pace. Many towns in New Jersey are facing the difficult choice of whether to accept warehouse development in their community, typically due to the scale of these developments, at the cost of open space. These pressures are particularly acute in New Jersey, which is perhaps the oldest transportation hub in the nation. NJF has elevated the issue, and in particular has worked with the Office of Planning Advocacy to create guidance for the siting of warehouses. NJF now supports mechanisms for that guidance to be institutionalized and serve as a tool for municipal decision-makers.

Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is a critical component to lessening our greenhouse gas emissions. As such, NJF has worked to increase the awareness of this concept among state policymakers and agencies, and supports increased investment in pedestrian and biking infrastructure and public transportation to reduce our car dependency, and in turn, our carbon footprint.

PREPARING COMMUNITIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Our communities and households need to be well informed and prepared for our changing climate. The burdens of climate change will not be shouldered equitably, which is why it is imperative to ensure advance planning, education, and transparency.

While we cannot be completely certain of what the future holds, or when the storm may come that changes everything (again), we do know sea-level rise, increased precipitation, and inland flooding are all major threats to communities across our state. For these reasons, NJF championed important rule changes in the NJ Protecting Against Climate Change (NJPACT) rules and helped ensure these rules progressed.

In a major legislative effort for 2022, NJF developed and advocated for, along with partners in the Rise to Resilience coalition, a new flood disclosure bill that mandates disclosure of past flooding events and information about projected flooding to homebuyers and renters. This bill, which will boost transparency and save homebuyers and renters money, passed in the Senate in late December 2022, and now awaits its Assembly vote, which is expected in early 2023.



New Jersey Future's Kim Irby and Peter Kasabach testifying at the August 2022 joint Assembly and Senate Environment Committee hearing.

SUPPORTING GOOD LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT

Our state's cities and towns benefit from assistance, guidance, and support from NJF while determining their strategies and next steps in building an equitable and inclusive future.

While NJF is recognized as a statewide authority in planning and redevelopment, the implementation of our advocacy work is often carried out on the local level. We aim to spur and support municipalities in making their community sustainable, liveable, and accessible for community members of all ages.

NJF built upon its research and collaboration with municipalities to finalize and incorporate a new set of Sustainable Jersey actions around fostering age-friendly places. It is now possible for municipalities to be recognized for their efforts in providing age-friendly access to housing, amenities, public spaces, and transportation. NJF plans to lean further into this work of supporting municipalities, and looks to publish municipal resilience planning guidance in 2023, relevant to the NJ Highlands Council, NJDEP, and every town in New Jersey.



NJF Community Planning Manager Tanya Rohrbach with Sustainable Jersey at the 2022 Sustainability Summit.

JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

NJF's commitment to centering justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in our work did not waver in 2022. The organization continued to actively facilitate its approach to policies and partnerships, and train staff and board to meet its JEDI objectives. By centering equity and asking the appropriate questions as to who is being served by our organization ensures that all of our efforts are conducted in the spirit of elevating those voices that are typically the least heard.

The future of our great state is one that welcomes everyone to participate in the opportunity to form a happy and prosperous life in New Jersey.

EVENTS

NJF and APA New Jersey cohosted a three-day, virtual and in-person New Jersey Planning and Redevelopment Conference, which generated 900 registrants and included over 150 speakers at its 36 sessions.

2022 also marked the 20th anniversary of NJF's Smart Growth Awards, honoring six exceptional projects and plans, and two visionary Cary Edwards Leadership Award winners. Project winners stretched from every corner of the state from South Orange to Wildwood, while we recognized Chris Daggett and Yvette Jordan for their extraordinary leadership and exemplary commitment to fostering a resilient and healthy New Jersey for all.

JWW's annual conference was held in person at The War Memorial in Trenton and featured more than 35 community and government leaders, including The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation President and CEO Tanuja Dehne, Sewage-Free Streets and River Community Leadership Program Fellow Monica Shaw, and NJDEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette. Attendees discussed innovative strategies and tactics to build upon increasing momentum behind funding our water infrastructure improvements and addressing a myriad of issues ranging from lead service line replacement to workforce development in the water sector.



Jersey Water Works backbone staff with NJDEP, including Commissioner Shawn LaTourette, at the Jersey Water Works Conference.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

NJF produced 33 blog posts on an assortment of topics ranging from warehousing sprawl to water infrastructure investments. NJF's blog is a reliable source of information where staff examine chronic or developing issues in the state, with an eye towards statewide policy solutions. The blog posts were featured in our newsletter, as well as on our website and social media accounts.

NJF published two reports examining the demographic makeup—primarily examining race and age—in New Jersey communities. *Promoting and Maintaining Racial Integration: Lessons from Selected New Jersey Towns* (Nov. 2022) examines what towns can do, and have done to foster stable racial integration since 2000. *Young People are Leaving New Jersey: Exploring Potential Explanatory Variables* (May 2022), which was prepared by students in a Princeton University class with guidance from NJF, looks at housing supply, types of supply, median home value, and median rent prices to determine key trends that potentially affect this population's migration tendencies.

JWW and their committees published two imperative reports and launched a new resource for municipal decision-makers in 2022. In February, the Combined Sewer Overflow Committee published *Planning for Our Future: Effects of Climate Change on CSOs* which examined climate change's impact on planning for CSO communities as they prepare long-term control plans. The Green Infrastructure Committee published *Open Space, Flood Protection, and Pollutant Trapping: Unlocking the Potential of the Green Acres and Blue Acres Programs to Support Green Infrastructure* (March 2022) to showcase four successful Green Acres and Blue Acres projects that incorporate green infrastructure for flood mitigation, water quality improvements, and improved public health. Finally, the Lead in Drinking Water Task Force began its regular publication of a "Primer for Mayors" to provide key information on how lead pipes can be replaced quickly, cost-effectively, and with community support in our pursuit of total lead service line replacement by 2031.

IN THE NEWS

NJF is an important voice in the NJ media, and earned more media mentions in 2022 than the prior two years combined. NJF was mentioned in 89 news stories by leveraging press releases, media contacts, and seizing the opportunity to provide insights to reporters covering thorny and timely topics.

NJF continues to expand its reach through newsletters and social media. NJF's newsletter currently delivers to over 6,500 subscribers, and NJF delivers its daily *What We're Reading* newsletter of curated media links to core supporters. By the end of 2022, NJF added over 1,000 followers on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter to reach a combined total of 17,700.



The New Jersey Future team celebrating the 20th anniversary Smart Growth Awards.



NJF staff gathering to reconnect and plan how we can create an even better future for New Jersey in the coming year.



NJFUTURE.ORG

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.