

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023



The future is still taking shape! 2023 provided a number of reminders of the perils, challenges, and opportunities available for us—as New Jerseyans, and as New Jersey Future—to realize the best possible future for everyone who calls our great state home. We believe that collaboration, coordination, and sustained advocacy can deliver clean and safe water and enhance our transportation network to get people where they need to go without reliance on an automobile. By properly planning and encouraging redevelopment, we can support and construct great places to live and work, and in the process increase our resilience in the face of the challenges of climate change.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE

Our water and transportation infrastructure continue to demand major investment and improvement to meet the needs of this century and deliver clean, safe, healthy water and transportation options.

Throughout 2023, New Jersey Future (NJF) continued its advocacy for urgent and sensible investment in our infrastructure systems to meet the needs of present and future generations. New Jersey Future serves as the “backbone staff” for two statewide collaboratives, Lead-Free NJ and Jersey Water Works (JWW). Jersey WaterCheck, a data dashboard created by JWW, released its fourth data update, including a new lead resources page, a one-stop shop on all lead service line resources for New Jersey. NJF also has a number of programs aimed at facilitating sensible water infrastructure investment, and chairs the **Clean Water, Healthy Families, Good Jobs campaign**, which secured over \$50 million for water infrastructure in the state budget for Fiscal Year 2024.

From the very start of 2023, it has been clear that New Jersey, and in particular the programs, collaboratives, and partnerships that NJF has supported for many years, are serving as a national precedent for remediating lead in our environment. Our staff traveled to the White House in January 2023 to attend and [participate in the “Get the Lead Out Partnership,”](#) where New Jersey was named one of the US Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) initial four lead service line replacement accelerators. As the year drew to a close, the [EPA adopted New Jersey’s framework in its updated Lead and Copper Rule](#), citing the City of Newark and our water advocates as national examples for leadership. This is a tremendous endorsement of our approach and dedication as a nonprofit, a collaborative, and as a state to tackle lead head on.



JWW and Lead-Free NJ held their first ever joint membership meeting, which brought together 130 leaders from various sectors, including community, government, non-profit, private, philanthropic, consulting, and academic groups. This collaborative approach fosters a multi-stakeholder dialogue,

crucial for driving impactful changes in water infrastructure. **Lead-Free NJ also selected the Puerto Rican Action Committee (PRAC) of Southern New Jersey as a new Community Hub** in South Jersey, signaling a commitment to addressing lead remediation for qualifying households through a bilingual outreach plan in 2024.



Our water advocates, primarily **Sewage-Free Streets and Rivers (SFSR), in collaboration with JWW** and local partner organizations, meticulously reviewed and submitted comments to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection on draft Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Permits across multiple regions, underscoring the critical importance of transparency and community engagement and emphasizing the need for expeditious implementation. To involve the community in the decision-making process, SFSR partnered with JWW to conduct two webinars, leveraging social media and newsletters to ensure widespread participation in the public comment process for the draft CSO permits. This inclusive approach aimed to foster a sense of shared responsibility and awareness among community members most impacted.

Recognizing the vital role of municipalities in addressing stormwater challenges, our **Mainstreaming Green Infrastructure program** took proactive measures by hosting five town-hall style [Stormwater Utility Information Forums](#) organized by the JWW Stormwater Utility subcommittee. These events attracted over 70 participants and encouraged municipalities to establish stormwater utilities, to promote a deeper understanding of the importance of managing stormwater effectively.

As much as we need infrastructure upgrades, we also need a quality workforce ready to manage our utilities. **In a groundbreaking initiative to address workforce development in the water industry**, JWW collaborated with Hudson



TRENTON MAKES THE WORLD TAKES

NJF’s offices are in Trenton so we take pride in making sure our efforts include the city we work in. NJF took a hands-on role in three vital efforts to advance smart growth and quality placemaking in our state capital. Along with advocacy partners, we successfully won [\\$3 million in funding for Capital Park redesign](#) to deliver a new urban park that will provide vibrant green space behind the Capitol building, and activated a thousand petition signers in support of this initiative. NJF conducted community engagement to **redevelop the vacant Front Street Garage** into a mixed-use building in Trenton’s core. Finally, we launched a local, county, and state stakeholder group through the [Smart Growth America Community Connector program](#) that is focused on converting Route 29 in Trenton into a boulevard and **reconnecting the city to its waterfront**. Together these initiatives represent critical forward progress that will lead to a brighter future for Trenton; as these efforts continue to take shape, they set the stage for a riverfront park complex and commercial activity to benefit the city and its residents.

County Community College, Veolia, New Jersey Water Association Apprenticeship Program, and New Jersey Utilities Association to establish the Water Workforce Utility Pilot Program. This program focuses on preparing enrolled students for jobs and apprenticeships in the water sector, ensuring a skilled workforce for the future; the pilot launched in Fall 2023, graduating 14 students. **In 2023, New Jersey Future was able to successfully facilitate the Emerging Water Leaders of Color Leadership Circle pilot program to support 11 leaders in the water sector industry.**

In 2023, New Jersey Future launched new efforts to ensure residents have safe, healthy ways to get around without having to drive everywhere and without emitting greenhouse gasses. We recruited over 80 partners to push for state funding so communities can plan for local trails and parks, a first step in applying for capital funding. We joined the Circuit Trail coalition and worked with partners to elevate federal funding opportunities. Our report made the case for an **e-bike incentive program**. We continue to advocate for **reducing our Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs)** at a state level and **promoting walkable town centers, complete streets, and multi-modal trails** in our advocacy, writing, and in a plenary session at the NJ Planning and Redevelopment Conference, which featured national, state, and local experts. With a growing cadre of partners, we called on our state leaders to establish a **dedicated funding source for NJ Transit** before it reaches a financial cliff as Covid relief funds expire.

COORDINATING STATE PLANNING, HOUSING, AND REDEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

This coming year brings with it the planned release and update of our State Plan. This long-awaited update has been years in the making, and our efforts to positively influence the State Plan were well underway in 2023, while we continued to promote affordable housing, smart growth, and redevelopment.

By properly managing our land use and balancing it with our need for walkable communities and attainable housing, NJF believes we can construct great places to live and position our communities to thrive. We've endeavored to prepare decision-makers to properly account for current and future needs as we construct a blueprint for building a bright future.

Much of our work in 2023 was to prime us for a big year in 2024. NJF began to **shape the State Plan update**, by contributing in-depth research and policy advice and promoting opportunities for public input and engagement. NJF will continue to be engaged in the rollout of the State Plan updates in 2024.

NJF also recognizes the central importance of equitable, sustainable, and attainable housing in providing affordable shelter to all New Jerseyans. As such, we **launched a series of convenings on housing in our state**, hosted at Princeton University, to bring diverse stakeholders together to identify solutions, while elevating research that indicates the lack of housing options contributes directly to segregation in our state. We'll continue to push for consensus and forward-thinking policy solutions to build more housing. Read more about NJF's vision and priorities in housing policy in our state in a feature published in the November 2023 edition of Municipalities Magazine, ["The Future of Housing in New Jersey."](#)

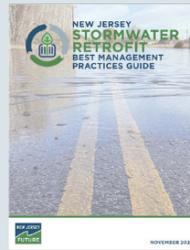
While housing and planning are central to great placemaking, NJF also acknowledges the importance of coordinating and properly siting warehouse development. NJF has supported the propagation of the State warehouse siting guidelines and recommended legislation to bring a regional focus to the issue. Relatedly, NJF promoted and **advanced amendments to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law** that will both address warehouse sprawl and close a loophole that allows open space development to be considered redevelopment.

RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS, AND MUNICIPAL RESOURCES

While we maintain a statewide perspective, we recognize that implementing our policies often requires supporting the municipalities and agencies charged with safeguarding their community, encouraging housing development, and planning for climate change. Below are a number of resources and technical assistance programs created by NJF.

FUNDING NAVIGATOR

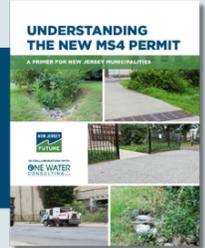
Launched as the first nonprofit technical assistance program in the state to assist water agencies and municipalities in accessing funding for their systems.



NJ STORMWATER RETROFIT BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES GUIDE
Provides municipalities, counties, nonprofit organizations, developers, and property owners the tools to identify opportunities to update existing and implement new stormwater best management practices.

MS4 PERMIT PRIMER

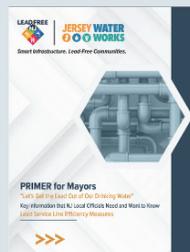
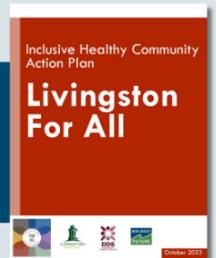
Helps municipalities with Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems understand the recent changes to the MS4 Permit and improve their municipal stormwater programs.



NJ WATER BANK EQUITY STUDY
Proposed changes to make more federal funding available to disadvantaged communities.

LIVINGSTON FOR ALL

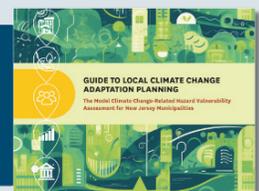
The Livingston Inclusive Healthy Community Action Plan signifies NJF's continual commitment to fostering inclusive environments for people of all ages and abilities.



2023 PRIMER FOR MAYORS
This primer for Mayors: Let's Get the Lead Out of Our Drinking Water: Lead Service Line Efficiency Measures, was one of the resources produced and shared widely to advance the removal of lead service lines

CLIMATE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

NJF and Sustainable Jersey released a first of its kind Guide to Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning.



TRANSPORTATION REPORTS

Reducing the Need to Drive Is a Win for Both Climate Change and Quality of Life and Rolling Along: Why New Jersey Should Join Other States and Offer an E-Bike Incentive Program provided research to support reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT).

PREPARING COMMUNITIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is already impacting all of our lives and communities. Since each household and municipality faces unique challenges in adapting to climate change, transparent disclosure of flood risk, advance planning, and forward-thinking regulations are key to ensuring resilience.

New Jersey took a major step forward in preparing households for the impacts of climate change when **Flood Disclosure was enacted into law** earlier this year. This law ensures renters and home buyers are aware of a property's flood history before signing their lease or purchasing a property. NJF worked with a diverse group of partners to ensure this bill became law, and that New Jersey joined other states in our nation to provide this critical information to households making major financial and life decisions.

NJF also worked with state and agency partners to develop resources for municipalities and developers to properly account for climate change. NJF provided comments and guidance to NJ Department of Environmental Protection on the **updated Inland Flood Rule**, and is promoting the new rule's adoption. NJF released a new comprehensive guide for towns to conduct quality climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessments and prepare their locality. The [Climate Change Hazard Vulnerability Assessment Guide](#) is now available for planners to implement in their communities; NJF is currently coordinating with partners to support initial pilot phase adopters of this assessment guide, and aims to steer technical assistance to the municipalities that will need it to conduct their climate change assessments.

EVENTS

In June NJF co-hosted our three-day [NJ Planning and Redevelopment Conference](#) with the American Planning Association NJ Chapter, which once again drew hundreds of attendees to our virtual sessions and in-person finale in New Brunswick. [Session blogs available on our website.](#)

2023 also granted us the opportunity to resume our in-person celebration of our **annual Smart Growth Awards**. This year we honored three individuals and seven projects throughout the state. We celebrated redevelopment of projects in Newark, Paterson, and Dover, and forward-thinking planning from Westfield and Somerset County. Our Cary Edwards Leadership Award winners were Kean University's Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research Executive Director Barbara George Johnson and JWW Co-chair Nicole Miller for their leadership, while we introduced a new award, the Redevelopment Trailblazer, which honored George Vallone for his visionary career. [All ten video profiles are available online for the public to view.](#)

Jersey Water Works' annual conference was held in person at The College of New Jersey, featuring community, industry, and government leaders. One major feature of this year's JWW Conference was the addition of a utility track, to provide training and insights to industry professionals in need of training credits and best practices. By bringing together the diverse collaborative of water professionals in NJ, the JWW Conference continues to serve as a critical convening space to share tactics and innovations in addressing our water infrastructure needs.

NJF IN THE NEWS

NJF continues to expand its reach through newsletters and social media!



7,000+ SUBSCRIBERS

NJF's newsletter currently delivers to over 7,000 subscribers, and NJF delivers its daily What We're Reading newsletter of curated media links to core supporters.



62 NEWS STORIES

NJF was mentioned in 62 news stories in 2023 by leveraging press releases, media contacts, and seizing the opportunity to provide insights to reporters covering thorny and timely topics.



18,600+ FOLLOWERS

By the end of 2023, NJF added +1,000 followers on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter to reach a combined total of over 18,600.



THANK YOU

NJF could not have made this progress without the funders, champions, and partners that support this work.

[See our list of supporters.](#)



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.