



Redeveloping New Jersey, Planning for Prosperity



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A TO Z

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WELCOME

Dear Friends,

For nearly four decades, New Jersey Future has championed smart and equitable growth for the betterment of the Garden State. Our focus is on advocating for planning, redevelopment, and infrastructure investments that foster strong, healthy, and resilient communities. We are dedicated to protecting our natural resources, expanding transportation choices, and ensuring access to affordable and inclusive neighborhoods for all ages. Our core belief is in a thriving New Jersey, for every resident.

As we approach a crucial juncture in New Jersey's political landscape, we are pleased to present this framework and these recommendations as a resource to inform and inspire candidates for governor and the legislature. These recommendations offer practical and cost-effective solutions designed to boost New Jersey's economy, protect our environment, and foster more inclusive opportunities throughout our diverse communities.

We recognize the significant challenges ahead for our next leaders, including aging infrastructure, the increasing impacts of natural hazards, a housing crisis, and the high cost of living faced by many in New Jersey. While these issues are not new, they now require more than ever bold leadership, innovative approaches, and a strong dedication to creating a future that benefits all residents.

This document serves as a call to action. We encourage every candidate and voter to explore these ideas and envision the potential when we prioritize smart land use, comprehensive planning, and sustainable growth. The choices we make today will have a lasting impact on generations to come.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the experts, stakeholders, and board members who contributed their expertise to this important document. In the coming months, New Jersey Future will actively engage with candidates and communities to promote a robust dialogue around smart growth principles and practice. We are prepared to partner with the incoming administration and legislature to build a New Jersey where everyone can live, work, and flourish.

With gratitude,



Peter Kasabach
Executive Director
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Meishka L. Mitchell
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Rethink Housing

Building Great Homes and Neighborhoods

Everyone in New Jersey deserves an affordable place to live in a safe, healthy, vibrant community. Unfortunately, the reality is that New Jersey's growing housing crisis threatens our state and its residents. Too many people cannot find an affordable, stable, and healthy home in a neighborhood that meets their needs, and their numbers are growing. Smart-growth development and redevelopment can help address this crisis by supporting a range of housing types in existing communities to create great neighborhoods, where schools, grocery stores, and jobs are conveniently within reach and schools and parks are high-quality, safe, and inclusive. See NJF's ["Great Homes and Neighborhoods for All: Live Where You Love"](#) initiative.



WHAT IS SMART GROWTH?

Smart growth is development and redevelopment that serves the environment, the economy, and the community. It concentrates development into already-existing communities where infrastructure exists and natural hazards can be avoided. It addresses the inherent interconnections between environmental protection, social equity, public health, and economic sustainability.



ESTABLISH SMART GROWTH LOCAL PLANNING GUIDELINES.

Zoning was developed over one hundred years ago to ensure that dangerous land uses would be separated from where people lived. Beginning with the age of the automobile, zoning was appropriated to reinforce sprawl and segregation. As the automobile gained dominance,

we stopped creating the pedestrian-oriented community forms built on a street grid that fostered convenience, active lifestyles, and community connectedness. It's time to rethink our approach and do away with a zoning system that doesn't help us produce vibrant, connected communities.

The State Can:

- Develop and promote a concise set of smart growth planning principles and align the State's policy, investment, and regulatory structure behind these principles to ensure that communities can achieve better outcomes. The State Planning Commission could take on this role.
- Engage in a dedicated effort to replace our zoning structure with a modern system that will deliver desired outcomes, including mixed-income communities, good urban design, a productive mix of uses, and efficient transportation connections.
- Bring back the grid. Establish criteria in new laws, regulations, and funding programs that require or incentivize new development and redevelopment to contribute to an interconnected pedestrian-oriented street grid.

B

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING.

Many worthy redevelopment projects face local opposition, often not because of the projects themselves, but because the developer did not engage the community early in the process, listen to their concerns and ideas, or plan a project transparently that meets the community's needs in addition to their own. When done correctly, the community will oftentimes become an ally instead of an adversary, saving everyone time and money and producing better outcomes.

The State Can:

- Provide a community engagement roadmap for redevelopment, and incentives for towns and developers to use it early in the redevelopment process.
- Encourage and elevate the use of Community Benefits Agreements that memorialize goals, responsibilities, actions, and outcomes between the community and the developer.

C

DEVELOP MORE HOUSING IN EXISTING BUILT AREAS.

With New Jersey's limited supply of land, the best places to add new and necessary housing are within our existing communities, utilizing land that has been previously developed. There are a number of ways to do this by adding density in ways and places that improve the community while providing much-needed housing.

The State Can:

- Permit Accessory Dwelling Units in appropriate areas.
- Expand flexibility to allow duplexes and tri-plexes on single-family lots.
- Establish a limited preemption from local zoning regulations to allow well-planned, mixed-use conversions of underutilized commercial properties.
- Reduce government-mandated parking requirements, especially for developments near transit and in areas that have reduced demand for cars and parking.
- Encourage compact, walkable transit-oriented development through a Transit Village 2.0 program, which includes economic incentives, proactive land acquisition, planning assistance, modifications to zoning and parking requirements, and targeted funding from the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

D

CREATE MORE MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITIES.

Our housing market naturally segregates households by income, making it difficult for young people, people on fixed incomes, and lower-wage workers to live in healthy, amenity-rich communities of choice. The State's affordable housing laws make big strides toward addressing this imbalance, but more can be done to cost-effectively institutionalize the creation of mixed-income communities.

The State Can:

- ➔ Enact a statewide inclusionary zoning ordinance to ensure that all new housing includes a percentage of units for households with lower incomes. This approach will also bring down land costs to make this type of housing more feasible.
- ➔ Provide planning grants to municipalities that commit to inclusionary housing and smart growth planning principles to ensure that the expected developments will be community assets.
- ➔ Update and improve the required planning board training to ensure members are well-trained, and offer online training as an option on a monthly basis. Provide additional support for local land use planning through practical, up-to-date planning tools and guidance.
- ➔ Advance “moving to opportunity” programs that subsidize and support lower-income families to move to communities with higher opportunities.

E

PILOT NEW APPROACHES TO STABLE HOUSING.

While building more housing and increasing density will help address the supply side of the housing crisis, it will not be enough to provide stable homes for hundreds of thousands of people in New Jersey, especially those with low and moderate incomes.

The State Can:

- ➔ Create a shared-equity homeownership program that will both increase access to homeownership and maintain long-term affordability and stability for families.
- ➔ Provide incentives to extend the duration of existing affordable housing controls in inclusionary developments.
- ➔ Support the development of regional community land trusts that hold housing for the long term with the goal of ensuring integrated, safe, stable housing.
- ➔ Develop and implement safeguards to prevent institutional investors from taking ownership of large numbers of homes.



Expand Transportation Choice

Making it Easier, Cheaper, Safer, and Healthier to Get Around

Transportation and land use are inextricably linked. Transportation investments and policies significantly influence development patterns, which in turn shape travel behavior. The limited use of smart land-use strategies, at the state and local levels, increases the need to drive and limits transportation options for residents. Younger generations, older residents, and businesses are increasingly seeking to locate in cities and suburbs with dependable, affordable public transit and a variety of transportation options, including walking, biking, and other alternatives to the private automobile, commonly referred to as “active transportation.” To meet this demand, the State government needs to enable people to spend less time in their cars by investing in public transportation, promoting more compact and well-connected development that reduces car trips, and expanding active transportation opportunities that make us safer as we travel throughout the state.

F

PROVIDE ADEQUATE CAPITAL AND OPERATING FUNDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

New Jersey has an incredibly valuable asset: one of the most extensive public transportation networks in the United States. A robust mass transit system that provides diverse and equitable transportation options is the heart of a healthy and competitive economy. Public transportation is a vital public good that offers health, environmental, and social benefits beyond its primary function of transportation. As such, transit users should only be required to fund a small portion of the service.

The State Can:

- ➔ Ensure a sustainable source of funding for mass transit through the constitutional dedication and reauthorization of the new Corporate Transit Fee.
- ➔ Recalibrate transit service to increase the focus on non-work trips, in light of the rise of remote work.
- ➔ Create affordable, micro-transit services that utilize technology and shared, small vehicles, such as Via Jersey City and GoTrenton, to serve “transit deserts” in densely populated, underserved areas.

G

EXPAND INVESTMENTS IN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS.

Creating a transportation system that offers well-connected street networks and safe and convenient options for pedestrians and cyclists enables people to drive less, reducing costs, traffic congestion, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions while supporting healthy lifestyles.

The State Can:

- ➔ Prioritize Local Aid funding for active transportation projects, including complete and green streets, and projects that increase street network connectivity, which not only makes walking and biking easier but also shortens travel distances for trips that are still taken by car.
- ➔ Increase funding in the state budget for active transportation programs by restoring the Local Aid and Economic Development Grants to meet or exceed its previous annual appropriation amount of \$20 million and restoring the Local Transportation Projects Fund to meet or exceed its previous annual appropriation amount of \$67.5 million to better assist local governments in implementing projects that make it safer and easier for residents to get around.
- ➔ Access its full share of federal funds, especially those locally dedicated. Support municipalities and counties in securing federal funds by providing technical assistance with funding applications and project management, adding capacity to existing programs, such as NJDOT's Local Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Assistance Program, and ensuring there are adequate local matching funds.
- ➔ Promote the development of shared-use paths by funding trail-related activities under all NJDOT active transportation and safety programs.
- ➔ Establish an electric micromobility subsidy program to help lower-income households access affordable and clean transportation options, such as electric bikes and scooters.
- ➔ Update the state's transportation project prioritization criteria to elevate projects that improve safety and reduce emissions.
- ➔ Establish a connected, statewide trail network to make it easier for residents to travel without a car.

H

SET GOALS THAT FREE US FROM DRIVING.

Very few people enjoy spending hours behind the wheel of their lone-occupied two-ton car, and even fewer enjoy paying for its acquisition, maintenance, insurance, and storage. The [Parking Reform Network](#) has found that in the core city centers of urbanized areas with over 500,000 people, the median percentage of land dedicated solely to parking is 26%. In Jersey City, it is 25%, and in Newark, 28%. This is without looking at suburban areas, with their much higher rates of parking per capita. All of this is land that could be used for

houses, shops, trails, and parks. Less driving and fewer cars mean more freedom, more savings, and more land, yet we have not established goals to help get us there.

The State Can:

- ➔ Adopt statewide targets to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled that inform state funding decisions.
- ➔ Collect better vehicle miles traveled data through the Motor Vehicle Commission to facilitate a better understanding of the relationship between development patterns and travel behavior.
- ➔ Develop new transportation investment criteria that take into account whether we are increasing or decreasing vehicle miles traveled. Require all highway expansion projects that don't align with the goals of reducing car travel to either be adjusted or include mitigation measures such as investment into public transit infrastructure, transit-oriented development, and other transportation methods like bike lanes.

I

MAKE IT SAFER TO GET AROUND THE STATE.

No one should have to put their life in danger when they leave their home, school, or workplace to travel. Improving our transportation system also means making it safer.

The State Can:

- ➔ Fully implement the Target Zero Commission's recommended safety action plan, which has the goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries in New Jersey by 2040.
- ➔ Accelerate and prioritize bike safety and pedestrian infrastructure improvements in areas where pedestrians, bikes, and cars intersect most frequently.
- ➔ Reexamine the various factors — some regulatory, some merely industry standard practices — that affect how local streets are designed, and reorient the process toward designing streets to prioritize the movement of people over the movement and storage of vehicles.
- ➔ Promote more compact, mixed-use land-use patterns that bring destinations closer together, reducing the need to drive among them.

J

RE-ESTABLISH THE NJ DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (NJDOT) AS AN ACCESS AND LAND-USE AGENCY.

New Jersey is still living with a sprawl legacy that made it dependent on driving and built out a vast road network that is expensive to maintain. The investment in this expansive network of roads simultaneously catalyzed disinvestment in communities, the public commons, and well-designed, connected places. State transportation agencies need to reset their strategies and decision-making processes to better connect our communities and adapt to increasingly dangerous locations resulting from sea-level rise and more frequent and intense storms.

The State Can:

- ➔ Refocus state transportation agencies on serving people by improving their access to destinations, rather than moving cars and trucks around the state.
- ➔ Elevate transportation land-use planning staff and functions to play a more active and integral role in capital investment decision-making.
- ➔ Create a high-level NJDOT Office of Mobility and Access.
- ➔ Ensure NJDOT staff, including those in the engineering and construction areas, are familiar with the department's recently updated Complete Streets policy and fully integrate it into their planning, project design, and capital spending decisions.



Invest in Water Infrastructure

Strengthening the Foundation for Sustainable Growth

New Jersey's drinking water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure needs improvement. The age, increasing deterioration of our pipes, and the accelerating challenges of more intense rainfall have led to stunted economic development, growing inequity, and environmental, health, and safety concerns. New Jersey's water infrastructure requires more than \$30 billion in improvements over the next 20 years, and this cost estimate does not include expenses related to new federal PFAS requirements. Infrastructure investments are expensive, but they form the foundation of our economy and communities. Making smart, cost-effective investments will address multiple issues while using public funds efficiently and creating local jobs with living wages and a better quality of life for New Jersey residents.

K

PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR LIFE-SUSTAINING AGING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE.

Access to clean water is a fundamental right. Investment in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater management projects drives real benefits for nature and communities around key outcomes, including water quality, water affordability, flood resilience, public health, economic prosperity, workforce development, and community quality of life. The state law requiring the replacement of lead service lines (LSLs), the primary source of lead exposure from drinking water, was passed without any dedicated funding for LSL replacement. The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) estimates LSL replacement will cost roughly \$3 to \$9 billion. Additionally, NJDEP estimates the costs to address combined sewer flooding in streets and basements in NJ's older cities at \$3 billion¹.

The State Can:

- ➔ Create a dedicated state funding source for water infrastructure improvements, particularly for lead in drinking water and combined sewer overflows. Dedicated state funding will help keep local water rates affordable.
- ➔ Defend against any potential cuts to federal funding for New Jersey's Clean Water State Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.
- ➔ Advance policies and practices that promote access to water infrastructure funding and financing by water systems serving overburdened communities to help them affordably eliminate combined sewer overflows, replace lead service lines, and reduce local flooding.
- ➔ Continue providing technical assistance to water utilities through the New Jersey Water Bank.

¹ NJDEP Commissioner LaTourette's [testimony](#) at the Assembly Budget Committee Hearing on April 9, 2025.

L

DEVELOP WATER-FOCUSED FUNDRAISING AND RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE.

Upgrading the state's vast and antiquated water infrastructure is a technical and costly proposition, but a necessary one. The State and its municipalities need access to technical and funding assistance, expertise, and research on innovative and cost-effective technologies. As demonstrated in other states, environmentally focused finance and research capacity foster strong relationships between researchers, policymakers, and community members to move water improvement projects forward.

The State Can:

- Establish and provide seed funding for a water infrastructure finance and research center at a New Jersey higher education institution, attracting federal and philanthropic funding to promote cost-effective solutions for our water infrastructure needs.

M

PROVIDE WATER EXPENSE RELIEF TO LOWER-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

Repairing our water infrastructure will require significant investments. The costs will need to be covered by many sources, including ratepayers. But rising water bills disproportionately burden low-income households. New Jersey must ensure that no one loses access to clean water because they cannot afford their water bill.

The State Can:

- Establish a robust low-income water assistance program, potentially funded through the NJ Board of Public Utilities' Universal Service Fund or a Low Income Household Water Assistance Program.
- Support and promote programs that reduce water, sewer, and stormwater fees and other charges for low-income households.

N

ACCELERATE THE REGIONALIZATION, CONSOLIDATION, AND EFFICIENCY OF WATER SERVICES.

There are over 1,000 distinct water and sewer service providers in New Jersey, some government-owned and some investor-owned. As new water pollution hazards are uncovered and infrastructure costs rise, it is difficult for every small utility to serve its customers efficiently and effectively. In addition, municipalities and wastewater systems throughout New Jersey are not required to maintain their wastewater assets, meaning there are no legal ramifications outside of a water quality permit. The current accountability system is not keeping pace, which leads to underinvestment and subpar performance.

The State Can:

- Incentivize and support shared service agreements and consolidation studies. Pilot and support one or more proactive consolidation attempts.
- Provide guidance, technical assistance, and oversight as small water utilities serving less than 10,000 customers explore regional partnerships, shared services, consolidation, and the privatization of their public water utilities and infrastructure.
- Create a Water Quality Accountability Act for wastewater, requiring asset management of sewage infrastructure.



Plan Smarter

Saving Money and Using Our Limited Supply of Land Wisely

New Jersey is the most developed state in the nation. We have very little unspoken-for land. To best use our limited supply of land, we must focus our growth in centers through redevelopment, leaving our open spaces open. We must make it easier to redevelop, but also find ways to ensure the benefits of redevelopment accrue to all community members. The state government, through the leadership of the Governor and its agencies, plays a tremendous role in setting policies, making investments, and adopting regulations that support smart growth. To effectively develop and redevelop in New Jersey requires aligning various regulations, laws, subsidies, and policies that, at times, are contradictory. The State can allow chaos to continue to frustrate development and redevelopment efforts, or it can align with a growth strategy and coordinate its departments and resources behind that strategy.



USE THE STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN TO GUIDE GROWTH AND ALIGN INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS.

The NJ Office of Planning Advocacy coordinates statewide planning to protect the environment and guide future growth into compact, mixed-use development and redevelopment. The office is responsible for implementing the goals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan through coordination with New Jersey's state agencies and counties. In 2025, it is anticipated that a new State Development and Redevelopment Plan will be finalized—the first time in over 20 years. The State Development and Redevelopment Plan provides guidance for stakeholders—state agencies and municipal, county, and regional governments—to help coordinate responses across multiple sectors on important development and redevelopment land use issues. It allows a tremendous opportunity for the State to provide leadership and strategy to guide growth.

The State Can:

- ➔ Direct cabinet members to align state agency programs, policies, incentives, and investments with the policies in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and play an active mediator role when conflicts arise.
- ➔ Build the capacity within the Office of Planning Advocacy and county governments to support the implementation of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
- ➔ Provide planning grants to counties and their towns that seek to align their local land use policies more fully behind the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, including the siting of affordable housing units required under the Mount Laurel fourth-round process. Reward counties that provide regional plans and technical planning services to municipalities, independent of any political influence.
- ➔ Use the State Planning Infrastructure Needs Assessment process to develop strategic and geographic priorities for infrastructure investments.
- ➔ Align cabinet member department investments with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and play an active mediator role when conflicts arise.

P

REGIONALIZE AND CONSOLIDATE PUBLIC SERVICES.

Aside from potential cost savings, regionalizing and consolidating certain taxpayer-funded services, particularly schools, would ensure that both the costs and the benefits of key public services are spread more evenly and fairly. The existing competition for tax revenues among many small units of local government creates a fiscal incentive for local leaders to resist residential development (thereby exacerbating the housing shortage) while courting commercial and industrial development that may be more efficiently located elsewhere. Cost-sharing agreements among municipalities can reduce costs through economies of scale, efficient resource allocation, and the ability to maintain or expand services within existing budgets. State policy goals of increasing affordable housing, investing in hazard adaptation infrastructure, and accounting for sea level rise mean municipalities will need to look towards cost sharing, regionalization, and consolidation to reduce costs on their residents and rethink their local land use decisions.

The State Can:

- Regionalize K-12 school funding to eliminate the municipal anti-family housing development bias, achieve better community planning outcomes, realize savings from more efficient allocation of infrastructure and resources, and begin to address racial and economic segregation.
- Work with specific shore communities that are under the greatest threat of sea-level rise to explore initial shared services with neighboring municipalities and, ultimately, a path toward consolidation.
- Expand existing state incentives for municipalities and counties that consolidate and share services.

Q

RE-ALIGN AND STREAMLINE OUR REGULATORY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR LAND USE AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS TO ACHIEVE DESIRED OUTCOMES.

Our regulatory structure typically defines what is not allowed. Layers upon layers of different government prohibitions have made it very difficult to advance complex projects, let alone those that do what we want them to do. It is time to re-examine this structure to provide a reasonable and quick pathway toward the smart growth, public health, and climate-resilient outcomes we want to see, not just what we don't want to see. What is needed is an efficient regulatory, funding, and procurement decision-making process that is timely, inclusive, and helps achieve sustainable and equitable outcomes.

The State Can:

- Streamline the approval process for land use and infrastructure projects that advance state priorities through general, sector, and performance permitting and realigning review workflow, coordination, and priorities. Create a high-profile, diverse task force with a dedicated staff team to issue recommendations within the governor's first year. Include key legislators and advocates who will be needed to achieve implementation.
- Create a public dashboard to track progress on state project approvals.
- Sign legislation that streamlines local planning and zoning board decision-making, such as allowing certain local land use projects to be approved through an administrative review based on a clear set of requirements.
- Develop and pilot a multi-agency redevelopment review process with clear policy goals that require the developer to meet positive objectives, not just avoid harms. Use the pilot to target reform.
- Pilot a licensed stormwater professional program, modeled on the successful local site remediation professional program, to accelerate and improve the quality of stormwater planning and project implementation.



Adapt to Natural Hazards

Protecting People While Using Taxpayer Dollars Sensibly

Rising temperatures, more frequent and severe storms, and sea-level rise are affecting New Jersey's residents and businesses. As one of the most densely populated states in the U.S., New Jersey faces the urgent need to adapt and implement mitigation strategies to address these growing natural hazards. The next governor will have to determine where we grow, fortify, and retreat, and establish a source of funds for planning and implementation.

R

MAINTAIN A SCIENCE-BASED APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING NATURAL HAZARDS AND DEVELOPING ADAPTATION STRATEGIES.

Scientific data and projections help local governments, planners, and residents understand the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, risks from sea-level rise, and vulnerabilities to our coasts and inland waterways. Using a science-based approach allows for informed planning, decision-making, and investments at all levels of government.

The State Can:

- ➔ Determine which areas of the state will receive support for fortification, growth, and retreat based on future-looking hazard assessments.
- ➔ Develop and implement climate change adaptation goals, metrics, and targets to guide and coordinate public and private decision-making.
- ➔ Understand the gaps in science that may be created by shrinking the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and address them.

S

COORDINATE NATURAL HAZARD ADAPTATION POLICIES AND MAKE SMART INVESTMENTS ACROSS STATE DEPARTMENTS.

Coordinating resilience initiatives and future-proofing investments made by the State makes good policy sense and saves taxpayer money. Natural disasters not only damage our homes, infrastructure, and businesses, but they also damage the health of the community impacted, as well as the economy through job loss, lost income, reduced economic activity, and loss of workforce. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that every \$1 invested in resilience and preparedness saves \$13 in damage and cleanup costs and economic savings.

The State Can:

- Maintain a State Chief Resilience Officer who leads inter-agency coordination on climate change adaptation policies through the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience.
- Require state agencies to assess natural hazards as they prepare investment projects.

T

GENERATE AND REALLOCATE ADEQUATE FUNDING TO ADAPT TO NATURAL HAZARDS.

Preventing damage and loss of life is a much more cost-effective approach than responding after a disaster strikes. We have the knowledge and capability to understand hazard risks, plan adaptation strategies, and begin phasing in the execution of those strategies. Tackling climate change and its impacts at every level of government will take significant investment. From planting trees to reduce the urban heat island effects to fortifying public infrastructure to restoration projects that use natural features to protect our communities, adapting to natural hazards will need a long-term funding source.

The State Can:

- Establish a dedicated, long-term source of funding for climate adaptation measures, including addressing extreme heat.



ACCELERATE TRANSITIONS IN HIGH-HAZARD AREAS.

Continuing to invest taxpayer money in highly hazardous areas that will be lost or sustain damage during the next disaster is irresponsible. We understand current trends and have sound science-based projections that tell us what might happen and where, especially around flooding. It is important that we acknowledge this information and begin making decisions based on it. While we do this, it will also be critical to identify what these places will become, when they will need to transition, and where those activities will go.

The State Can:

- ➔ Support Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning to help prepare municipalities for climate change. See “[Guide to Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning](#).”
- ➔ Work with local municipalities to change land use regulations, making it easier to acquire high-hazard properties and alter their long-term use.
- ➔ Fund transition studies that help a community envision what the future will look like, how best to adapt, and a timeline for making key decisions. Pilot the implementation of at least one study.
- ➔ Explore local legal and financial barriers preventing forward-looking transition decision-making.
- ➔ Shift the financial burden of damage to municipalities that allow development in high-hazard areas, and that don’t adequately assess or plan to address their hazards.
- ➔ Explore a regional land use planning approach, including a coastal regulatory structure with broad oversight for adaptation activities.



INSTITUTE AND SUPPORT A REGULATORY STRUCTURE THAT ENCOURAGES GROWTH IN AREAS SAFE FROM FLOODING

Updating state land use rules to identify high-hazard areas, adding stormwater management practices in areas where they are lacking, and providing clear parameters on safe places for growth will better protect our state’s communities. Upgrading and retrofitting New Jersey’s existing stormwater infrastructure through systematic planning and investments can begin to address local flooding and provide a process for prioritization.

The State Can:

- ➔ Increase capacity at the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to facilitate an effective rollout of the Resilient Environments and Landscapes (REAL) rules, which modernize land use rules to address extreme weather, flooding, and sea-level rise.
- ➔ Enforce regulatory timelines under the new Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit, including the development of Watershed Improvement Plans to reduce or eliminate flooding. See “[Understanding the New MS4 Permit: A Primer for New Jersey Municipalities](#).”
- ➔ Continue to support stormwater utility feasibility studies and implementation through grants from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.
- ➔ Coordinate interagency approvals for regional resilience projects and simplify the regulatory process for nature-based stormwater management projects.



Elevate Health

Upgrading Communities to Improve Health Outcomes

Every zip code in New Jersey should be a place where individuals and communities can live their healthiest lives, and everyone can thrive. A healthy population is a healthy workforce, which is foundational to an equitable, resilient, and prosperous New Jersey. The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, and age have a direct impact on their health and well-being, also called social determinants of health. For example, the difference in life expectancy between the urban Trenton zip code 08608 (69 years) and the suburban Princeton zip code 08542 (89.7 years), ten miles away, is over 20 years.² As we encourage the redevelopment of our communities, how we (re)design and build the communities where people live, work, and play provides us with opportunities to create healthy neighborhoods.



FREE OUR CHILDREN FROM LEAD POISONING.

Human exposure to lead is unsafe at any amount and has been linked to neurological damage and slowed development in children. There are high costs to the public of deferring the elimination of lead. An analysis of lead exposure impacts on children born in 2019 in NJ showed that the cost to the state and municipalities would be \$383.8 million for just that birth cohort over their lifetimes. Lead poisoning is a threat that can be eliminated within a generation, especially in the communities most impacted by it.

The State Can:

- ➔ Ensure rental homes and housing built before 1978 are lead-free and follow the NJ Lead Paint Certificate law and support efforts to disclose lead-in-drinking water hazards to tenants.
- ➔ Spend down all American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds dedicated to the NJ Department of Community Affairs Lead Paint Remediation and Abatement program by the December 2026 deadline and secure sustained funding for the program thereafter.
- ➔ Dedicate state funding to lead service line replacement and support legislation and programs that require lead service line replacement at no cost to customers.
- ➔ Increase the availability of water filters for schools and childcare facilities.
- ➔ Provide oversight for quicker disbursement of the \$100 million in state bonds authorized for water infrastructure improvements at New Jersey schools.

² [New Jersey State Health Assessment](#), 2018 (New Jersey Department of Health)



BUILD A FUTURE WHERE ALL NEW JERSEYANS CAN AGE WELL.

Like all age groups, older New Jerseyans are essential contributors to the state's economy, infrastructure, and communities. As demographics rapidly change, it is important to include aging in policy and programming decisions so New Jersey can become an even better place to age well. The development of a Multisector Plan for Aging gives communities, particularly the state, a way to codify past age friendly successes and then expand on them by engaging more partners, breaking down administrative and operational silos, drawing upon a wider array of funding sources, and tracking the impact of a coordinated effort to improve well-being in later life. See the [Life Long Strong New Jersey](#) campaign and NJF's "Creating Great Places to Age" [blog](#) for more information.

The State Can:

- ➔ Coordinate state agencies to shape housing, transportation, and public spaces to serve older adults through a Multisector Plan for Aging.
- ➔ Reform zoning laws to allow for the development of more types of housing in existing communities for older adults looking to downsize.
- ➔ Provide practical planning tools for municipalities working to improve housing options for the 65+ population.



CAPITAL CITY LEGACY PROJECTS

Trenton is the capital of New Jersey, home to our three branches of government and an important gateway to our state. There are at least two longer-term projects that the next governor should commit to completing in the capital city.

- ✓ **BUILD CAPITAL PARK**, a critical improvement to the Statehouse complex that would provide a vital connection between the Capital area and the local community and beautify the Statehouse District.
- ✓ **RECONNECT TRENTON** to its riverfront by advancing the Route 29 project that will convert the freeway into a pedestrian-friendly boulevard that will open up new economic development opportunities and provide access to one of the city's great assets.



REGENERATE NATURAL SYSTEMS AND INTEGRATE OPEN SPACE IN OUR URBANIZED AREAS.

Access to nature supports our health and well-being. However, nearly a third of Americans do not have easy access to parks, and data shows striking disparities in park access for people in underserved communities. According to the Forest Tree Equity Score, lower-income American urban neighborhoods have on average 26% less tree coverage than their wealthier neighbors, and score higher on average Fahrenheit temperatures—up to a stunning 6 degrees warmer. See NJF's "[Access to Parks is an Environmental Justice Issue](#)" blog. Access to parks offers opportunities for health outcomes to be improved by providing spaces for exercise and recreational activities. Enhancing natural systems and open space in our cities can also curb heat island effects, manage stormwater to reduce flooding, and improve air quality.

The State Can:

- ➔ Set a goal that everyone in an urban area has access to a quality park within a 10-minute walk of their home. See Trust for Public Land's [10-Minute Walk](#) campaign.
- ➔ Increase support to urban areas to expand the tree canopy through the removal of dead trees, the planting of new trees, and the ongoing stewardship of the canopy by trained professionals.
- ➔ Dedicate a larger portion of state open space, park, and trail development funding to urbanized areas.

Z

ADDRESS CUMULATIVE POLLUTION IMPACTS IN COMMUNITIES WHERE THEY ARE MOST PREVALENT.

Over the decades, our industries have generated significant wealth but also left and continue to leave a legacy of pollutants that impact the quality of our air, water, land, and most importantly, our health. It is not surprising or a coincidence that many communities with compounded pollution issues are home to people with the lowest incomes and the least wealth. An environmental justice framework provides the state an opportunity to undo legacy harm, along with meaningful involvement of those most impacted by environmental pollution in decision-making spaces. Inclusion of New Jersey's diverse environmental justice movement stakeholders in decision-making is vital to ensuring equitable and healthy outcomes for New Jersey's more impacted communities. See the work of the [New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance](#) for additional information.

The State Can:

- Maintain its commitment to an Office of Environmental Justice that coordinates environmental justice considerations across state agencies.
- Maintain its commitment to an Environmental Justice Advisory Council that elevates and centers EJ leadership and experts.
- Support robust enforcement of NJ's Landmark EJ Law.
- As a first step, require mandatory emissions reduction from polluting sources in Overburdened Communities.



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