



YEAR IN REVIEW

2025



WHERE SMART GROWTH MEETS SHARED OPPORTUNITY

Year in Review 2025

A YEAR OF PROGRESS, PARTNERSHIP, AND PURPOSE

We take deep pride in what we accomplished together throughout 2025—and with gratitude for the dedicated partners, funders, policymakers, advocates, and community voices who make this work possible. This year was marked by tremendous forward momentum for smart, equitable growth in New Jersey. It was also a year defined by candor, collaboration, and a shared recognition that the challenges before us require both bold thinking and steady, persistent action.

Across every corner of our work—policy, advocacy, research, storytelling, and community engagement—New Jersey Future stepped confidently into its role as a trusted leader shaping a more just, resilient, and prosperous future for all New Jerseyans.





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A Message from Our Executive Director and Board of Trustees Chair

As we reflect on the year, we do so with appreciation for what has been achieved, humility in the face of ongoing challenges, and bold ambition for what lies ahead. This past year, New Jersey Future advanced policies and projects that are shaping communities across the state—from helping strengthen the implementation of New Jersey's Stormwater Management rules and advancing green infrastructure solutions at the local level, to launching our ***Redeveloping New Jersey, Planning for Prosperity*** roadmap, hosting our inaugural **New Jersey Future Day at the State House**, and celebrating visionary community projects at our **Smart Growth Awards**. Each accomplishment reflects our commitment to turning smart policy into real, lasting impact for New Jersey residents.

Yet, we know the road ahead will not be without obstacles. Nonprofits face continual financial challenges, and translating policy into tangible, local and state action remains complex. These challenges, however, only sharpen our determination and reaffirm why our work, grounded in resilience, equity, and strategic focus, is more important than ever.

This Year-In-Review offers a glimpse of what we achieved, what we learned, and where we are headed. In 2026, we will continue to turn our roadmap into action, support municipalities in adopting best practices, strengthen partnerships, and ensure New Jersey Future has the capacity to deliver lasting impact and influence. But we cannot do it alone. We rely on you—our board, our staff, partners, funders, advocates, and community champions—to stand with us as we build a smarter, more equitable New Jersey.

Let's continue to work together, because together, we can create a future that works for everyone—one neighborhood, one community, one policy at a time.

With gratitude,



Peter Kasabach
Executive Director
New Jersey Future



Meishka L. Mitchell
Board of Trustees Chair
New Jersey Future

Policy & Advocacy: Moving Ideas into Impact

“REDEVELOPING NEW JERSEY: PLANNING FOR PROSPERITY” — OUR NEW POLICY ROADMAP

This past June, New Jersey Future launched Redeveloping New Jersey: Planning for Prosperity, a comprehensive policy roadmap designed to guide redevelopment, housing production, infrastructure investment, and equitable community revitalization for the decade ahead. This roadmap is already serving as a strategic touchstone for decision-makers across the state. It marks a significant milestone in our commitment to advancing smart growth principles that strengthen neighborhoods, protect natural lands, and expand access to opportunity.



LANDMARK VICTORIES: LEAD DISCLOSURE AND TARGET ZERO BECOME LAW

This year brought two major wins for public health and transportation safety—victories that New Jersey Future directly helped secure.



The **Lead Disclosure Bill**, now signed into law, ensures that families receive clear, upfront information about potential lead hazards when renting a home. Our research, advocacy, and coalition engagement played a pivotal role in shaping and advancing this bill.



The **Target Zero Commission Bill**, now law, marks a major milestone in New Jersey’s commitment to reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries. New Jersey Future played a key role in advancing this legislation, drawing on our long-standing expertise in safe, accessible transportation to provide testimony, data, and policy guidance throughout the process.

This year, the state released the Target Zero Safety Action Plan, outlining the collaborative work and shared dedication of partners who helped make this legislation possible. We invite you to explore the plan. These victories represent what is possible when evidence-based policy meets persistent, values-driven advocacy.



GREAT HOMES AND NEIGHBORHOODS FOR ALL: A NEW LENS ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Last fall, we launched **Great Homes and Neighborhoods for All (GHNA)**—a statewide pro-housing initiative dedicated to helping New Jersey communities create a wider range of housing choices in well-planned neighborhoods. We bring together research, community stories, technical expertise, and local partners to explore practical approaches that strengthen neighborhoods—from redeveloping empty buildings to adding small, thoughtful homes that fit local character. Our work focuses on keeping communities stable, connected, and welcoming for people of all ages and backgrounds. A statewide poll underscored the urgent need for progress, revealing that nearly 90% of New Jersey voters agree legislators should take action on housing.

GHNA is helping policymakers and communities grapple with the realities residents face while identifying solutions that strengthen both people and place. This year, we released significant reports that advance this work. We invite you to explore our publications on housing (top row) and aging (bottom row) to learn more about the insights shaping policy and solutions across the state:

02/10/2025

[A Snapshot of Housing Supply, Affordability, and Land Use in New Jersey](#)

11/19/2025

[Averting Residential Displacement: Assessing Indicators of Risk to Enable Early Intervention](#)

02/18/2025

[Weathering the Storms: Creating Aging-Friendly Communities Amid Climate Change](#)

05/05/2025

[A Snapshot of Aging and Homes in New Jersey](#)

AGING POPULATION: PLANNING FOR A CHANGING NEW JERSEY

This year, New Jersey Future advanced the statewide conversation on inclusive, age-friendly communities with the release of a major report examining the implications of New Jersey's rapidly aging population. The analysis highlights the urgent need for planning, design, and infrastructure that allow residents of all ages to live safely, independently, and with dignity.

Building on this work, we also published ***Weathering the Storms: Creating Aging-Friendly Communities Amid Climate Change***, which explores how climate-related risks uniquely affect older adults and identifies strategies communities can use to prepare, adapt, and support aging residents. Check out our aging reports on the bottom right.

SAFE WATER FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

NJF and our partners at **Lead-Free NJ** played a key role in analyzing and communicating the need for state funding through the Securing Our Children's Future Bond Act program, addressing lead in schools. Run by the New Jersey Department of Education, this program has \$94 million available to help school districts remove lead in drinking water. Our work ensured policymakers, communities, and media outlets had clear, accessible information about the importance—and urgency—of keeping students, staff, and families safe.

RECONNECTING TRENTON'S RIVERFRONT & CAPITAL PARK FUNDING

From our **Reconnecting Trenton's Riverfront** project to ongoing advocacy for the construction of Capital Park, New Jersey Future remained steadfast in elevating innovative redevelopment and placemaking efforts in the state's capital city. These efforts continue to model what thoughtful, community-centered planning can achieve.

Our long-term effort with Reconnecting Trenton's Riverfront continues to elevate resident voices and support community-centered planning in the capital city. Our engagement and research efforts are laying the groundwork for transformative redevelopment and public space improvements.

With our partners, we secured full funding for the development of **Capital Park**, immediately adjacent to the State House. We will now work with the new administration to get the park designed and built, creating a signature public asset that enhances quality of life in Trenton and the region.



Events & Engagement: Expanding Our Reach

A NEW TRADITION: NEW JERSEY FUTURE DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE

In 2025, we proudly launched the inaugural **New Jersey Future Day at the State House**. This first-of-its-kind event brought our research, policy priorities, and strategic recommendations directly to legislators and policymakers—strengthening relationships and deepening understanding of the issues shaping our state's future.



SHARING KNOWLEDGE WITH IMPACTFUL WEBINARS

The NJF **Funding Navigator** program hosted three educational webinars on debt, shared services, collaboration, climate resilience, and State Revolving Funds (SRF) financing, reaching over 120 participants with Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center and other partners, expanding the reach of our specialized knowledge.

The NJF **Mainstreaming Green Infrastructure** program released an [enhanced model municipal stormwater management plan](#) with the Watershed Institute to provide municipalities with updated guidance suited for today's climate threats. NJF hosted a webinar with partners to show over 150 registrants how the new resource can help communities maintain compliance, incorporate green infrastructure projects, and prepare for climate change impacts.



STATEWIDE PRESENCE

New Jersey Future and partners hosted **Walk, Bike, Ride NJ**, a gubernatorial forum where all candidates were invited to discuss their plans for safe active transportation infrastructure and reliable public transit access for people of all ages and abilities in New Jersey.

And for the first time in many years, New Jersey Future tabled at the **New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference**, further expanding our reach with local leaders statewide.

CONFERENCES AND CELEBRATIONS

We continued two major annual traditions thanks to our community participants and generous sponsors.

- **NJ Planning & Redevelopment Conference** — partnering with the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association, convening hundreds of leaders across sectors to exchange ideas, share solutions, and elevate emerging challenges.
- **Smart Growth Awards** — honoring exemplary projects from Madison, West Orange, Hoboken, Princeton, Trenton, and Camden that embody thoughtful planning, community vision, and innovation.

“Being one of the presenters at this year’s Smart Growth Awards was a truly rewarding experience. The event was a celebration of innovation, progress, and community, showcasing the dedication behind New Jersey Future’s work and the honorees who were recognized. It was also a testament to the organization’s inspired leadership who has transformed the organization into one that positively touches the lives of our state’s citizens.” - Gil Medina, executive vice president, CBRE



After a year of continuous work and collaboration, in December, **Jersey Water Works** convened its most ambitious and impactful annual conference to date under the theme “Our Commitment to Future Generations,” bringing together a growing and diverse community of water professionals, policymakers, advocates, and partners dedicated to strengthening New Jersey’s water infrastructure for the long term. This year’s conference marked a new high point, featuring the largest number of sessions and speakers, expanded corporate and philanthropic sponsorship, and increased attendance over the previous year—a clear reflection of the urgency and momentum surrounding water infrastructure issues statewide.

The robust agenda fostered meaningful dialogue on critical issues including affordability, governance, stormwater management, PFAS challenges, and emerging contaminants, while reinforcing the value of cross-sector collaboration. This progress would not be possible without the steadfast support of Jersey Water Works’ longstanding supporters and funders. Their continued investment enables the network to grow, innovate, and deliver impact at scale, and for that we are grateful.

“Our commitment to future generations is more than a theme—it is a collective responsibility shaping the future of water infrastructure in New Jersey.” - Paula Figueroa-Vega, director, Jersey Water Works Collaborative and Organizational Development

“Being honored with New Jersey Future’s Leadership Award was deeply humbling. I believe every opportunity we’re given is a chance to help a community thrive, especially for those who are too often overlooked. New Jersey Future’s work reflects that same commitment—ensuring that every neighborhood has the potential to grow, flourish, and create pathways for all of us to succeed.” - Adenah Bayoh, founder, Adenah Bayoh & Companies



RISING PROFILE OF OUR WORK

This year brought new visibility as well. Here's a snapshot of our #MediaMatters highlight:



Policy Manager **Deandrah Cameron** made her first appearance on WABC's *Here and Now with Sandra Bookman*, discussing lead service line replacement and community engagement, and rebuilding trust.



We were featured in the New Jersey League of Municipalities magazine thanks to our colleague **Jessika Sherman**, whose article "Debt Is Not a Bad Word" provided clarity—and courage—around public infrastructure financing.



We continued to have our staff expertise featured in various op-eds on timely New Jersey matters and launched our first LinkedIn newsletter, *What We're Reading NJ*, that breaks down complex issues in an approachable way. It's quickly gained over one thousand subscribers (and growing!).



Being featured in *Rolling Stone* is usually reserved for chart-toppers, but this time, the spotlight was on climate truth and our very own Executive Director, **Pete Kasabach**. Pete delivered a no-nonsense take on coastal flooding, warning that without serious investment and equitable planning, only the wealthiest residents may be able to ride out the future of life at the Shore.

Together, these highlights, along with staff presentations to thousands of people across the state and nationally, helped bring New Jersey Future's expertise to broader audiences than ever before.



Everything Old is New Again

This year ushered in a wave of renewal for New Jersey Future as we reimagined how we present our work and engage with the people who power it. In December, we debuted our reengineered website—sleek, accessible, and designed for deeper connection. We also introduced our updated mission statement, offering a sharper, more inspiring articulation of our purpose. To advance our advocacy work, we rolled out UJoin, a strategic platform that strengthens our ability to mobilize action and highlight key policy priorities.

As municipalities seek more guidance in today's rapidly changing landscape, we expanded our municipal advisory services to deliver even more targeted, on-the-ground expertise. Together, these innovations represent a renewed promise to meet our diverse audiences with clarity, authenticity, and excitement for what comes next.

STATE PLAN ADOPTION

The adoption of New Jersey's updated State Development and Redevelopment Plan marks a pivotal moment for the state's future—and the first comprehensive update to the Plan since 2001. For New Jersey Future, which has called for a clear, actionable State Plan since our founding in 1987, this milestone reflects years

of sustained advocacy and progress toward a more sustainable and resilient New Jersey. We commend the State Planning Commission and the Office of Planning Advocacy for advancing this important work.

Looking ahead, the Plan creates a real opportunity for the new administration to lead with purpose. With thoughtful implementation, it can help align state policies and investments, guide smarter land-use decisions, and support communities across New Jersey—now and into the future. More than a planning document, the State Plan serves as a practical guide for a state that is prepared, connected, and positioned to thrive.



Facing Challenges with Transparency and Resolve

While 2025 brought meaningful advancements, it was also a year marked by complexity. Like many nonprofits across the country, we experienced the effects of a nationwide funding squeeze—a convergence of funder fatigue, shifting priorities, and increased need for critical philanthropic resources.

This environment required us to think more strategically, operate more efficiently, and lean more heavily on partnership and creativity.

We also navigated political shifts at the local and state levels, each bringing evolving priorities that required agility, patience, and persistence. These realities didn't deter our work—they sharpened it.



Amid state fiscal constraints and the winding down of the Murphy administration, we convened a panel of state agency commissioners to discuss the federal impacts on New Jersey, what their agencies are doing about them, and what they will mean for the next Governor.

A major roadblock we began tackling is that it's still too hard to redevelop in New Jersey. That's why we brought a group of leaders together for a dinner and frank discussion about steps that need to be taken to foster solutions during a new state administration.

Through it all, our team reaffirmed why advocacy, research, and coalition-building remain essential, especially when conditions are challenging.



Looking Ahead: a Bold Vision for 2026

COMMITMENTS INCLUDE:

Grounded in the foundation built this year, New Jersey Future is entering 2026 with clarity and ambition. Key goals for the year ahead include:

1

Advancing the “Planning for Prosperity” Policy Roadmap—Turning recommendations into action by working closely with legislators, state agencies, municipalities, and community partners.

2

Expanding the Great Homes Neighborhoods for All Initiative—Deepening research, building local campaign capacity, and improving the public's understanding around housing affordability and land use reforms.

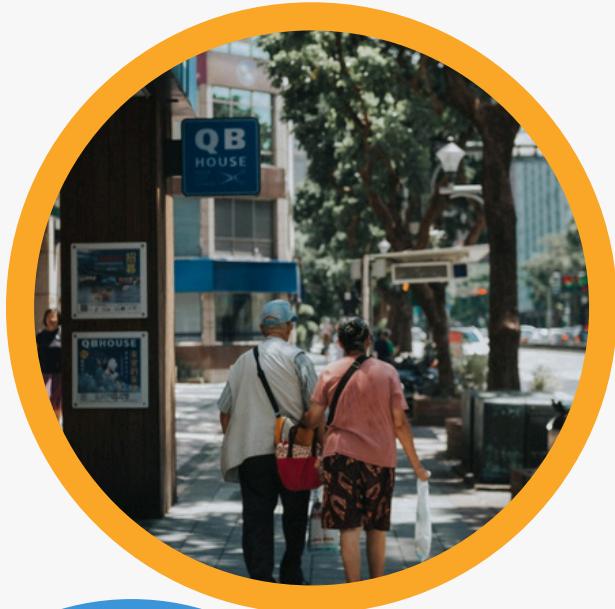
3

Strengthening Local Engagement and Coalition Partnerships—Expanding relationships with municipalities, funders, advocacy coalitions, and community organizations to advance equitable, community-centered growth.

4

Advancing Clean, Affordable Water Infrastructure—Championing investments that deliver sewage-free streets and rivers while protecting water affordability, ensuring every community has access to safe, reliable, and affordable water services.

2026 will require resilience, creativity, and determination—but we are ready.



"New Jersey Future's leadership in smart, equitable redevelopment continues to shape the future of communities across our state. I'm proud to partner with them, and even more proud to have been recognized with a Smart Growth Award this year for our work on Clinton Lofts in Trenton.

As we continue revitalizing Trenton and bringing new life to its neighborhoods, I am grateful to have New Jersey Future alongside us in this work." - Roland Pott broker of record, Pott Real Estate



Join us in Strengthening New Jersey's Future

The work ahead is big, urgent, and necessary. And we cannot do it alone.

If you believe in a New Jersey where every community is safe, healthy, and thriving; where development and redevelopment are equitable, infrastructure is resilient, and opportunities are accessible to all, we invite you to stand with us.

Please consider **donating** to New Jersey Future, **subscribing** to our monthly newsletter, and **visiting** our website to learn more.

Together, we can build the future our state deserves.

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New Jersey Future is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to build sustainable, thriving communities across New Jersey. We advance smart, equitable growth that prioritizes redevelopment, strategic infrastructure, inclusive and affordable neighborhoods, protected natural lands, and transportation choices beyond cars. Through research, policy, advocacy, coalition-building, and hands-on support, we turn ideas into real-world solutions.

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