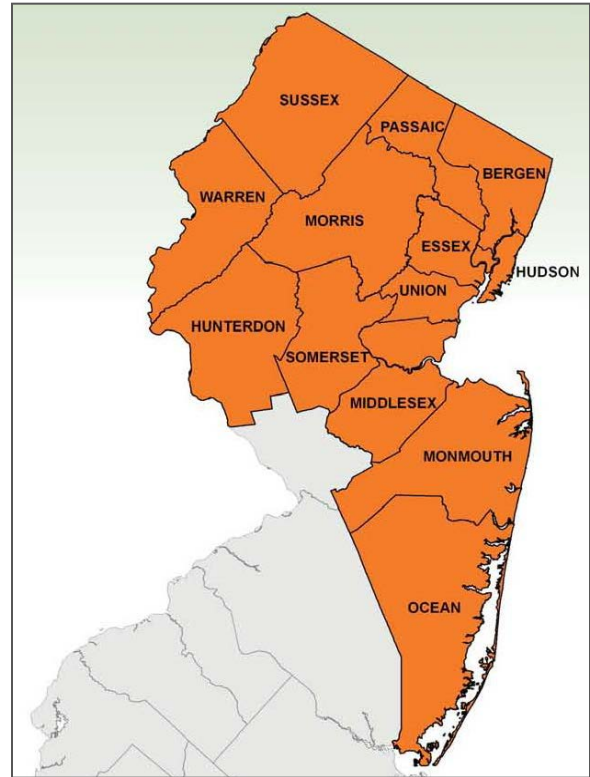


## BACKGROUND.

In November 2011, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded **TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY** (aka, North Jersey Sustainable Communities Consortium) a **\$5 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant**. The grant is matched with an additional \$5 million in leveraged funds from project partners. Grant funds will be used to: 1) develop a Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD) for the 13-county planning region; 2) implement 15 local demonstration projects; and 3: provide technical assistance and offer education opportunities that build the capacity of jurisdictions, organizations and the public to advance sustainability projects and initiatives.

The plan will be both “place-based” and “issue-based” and will use sustainability, transit system connectivity and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) as the central framework for integrating plans, regulations, investments, and incentive programs at all levels of government to improve economic and environmental conditions, while promoting regional equity and resource efficiency.

The outcome of plan implementation will be a more sustainable future for the region that invests in existing communities where housing, jobs, educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities are made more easily accessible.



**Figure 1: Planning Region**

## CHALLENGES FACING THE REGION.

The region faces many significant challenges that require coordinated solutions and a regional approach:

- The economic competitiveness of the State and region has been eroding for more than a decade.
- There is a mismatch between job locations and the location of affordable housing in the region.
- New Jersey’s cost structure is making it less competitive in the global economy.
- Pressure on State and local budgets raise the prospect of tax increases and service cuts.
- The region’s urban centers are underperforming.
- Until very recently, growth in the region has been outward. This has placed an increasing burden on the public sector to expand and maintain infrastructure.
- Housing in the region remains unaffordable to many, especially renters.
- Combined housing and transportation costs are very high.
- In many parts of the region, water quality and air quality are impaired.
- Historic patterns of segregation and income disparity persist in the region.
- Recent extreme weather events highlight the need to incorporate resiliency and mitigation in long range planning.

## PLANNING PROCESS AND GOALS.

TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY will engage officials at multiple levels of government, businesses, non-governmental organizations, other stakeholders and the general public in a strategic planning process designed to address the many challenges facing the region. The planning process will be divided into three phases designed to explore existing conditions and trends, consider different scenarios for future growth and development and develop a detailed action plan for achieving the region’s vision and goals. Public outreach will play a key role in the development of the plan. Each phase will seek to answer specific questions through scenario planning exercises that gather input and explore priorities of residents throughout the region.

Economic Competitiveness	Livability & Environment	Society & Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset-based economic development</li> <li>• Industry sector development</li> <li>• Workforce preparedness</li> <li>• Business Environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land use</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Natural systems</li> <li>• Energy &amp; Climate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community health &amp; safety</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Arts &amp; Culture</li> </ul>

Figure 2: Planning Committees & Topics

Based on stakeholder input to date, the following **planning goals** have emerged as priorities for the regional plan:

- Strengthen North Jersey's economy and help retain/create jobs
- Ensure communities are safe, healthy, great places to live
- Improve access to opportunity (good jobs, quality public schools, and housing that is reasonably priced) for all the region’s residents
- Increase efficiency and conserve land and natural areas
- Protect and enhance the environment
- Address regional growth issues in a coordinated way

## LOCAL DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS.

TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY is utilizing \$2.5 million of grant resources to undertake up to 15 Local Demonstration Projects (LDPs). Each project will create “on-the-ground” success stories and will be an important component of creating a supportive implementation framework and informing plan development. LDPs will achieve measurable, demonstrable goals that make a difference in helping individual communities position themselves for a more sustainable future. Potential LDPs include a variety of local project planning and other implementation activities to make transit corridors and communities “more livable.” Examples include rezoning for infill, workforce housing within targeted communities, creating and implementing community-based shuttle networks, projects that link future transit investments to local decisions about land use, housing and jobs.

## CAPACITY BUILDING.

TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY offers a capacity-building program that includes: a “help desk” to connect residents, officials and businesses with expertise and resources to advance sustainability planning; a web-based library of resources to assist with local planning activities; a speakers bureau of experts to make presentation at meetings and events on relevant topics; a program of educational offering including an annual conference, workshops and webinars; and limited direct technical assistance and advisory services to its members. **TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY** offers two capacity-building grant programs – one for counties and cities participating on the steering committee and a second for NGOs to become involved in the regional planning process.

**For More Information:**

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