

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### *GOAL 1: Become the model for smart growth and sustainable development both in New Jersey and in the region*

#### *What is it?*

The principles of sustainable development seek to balance goals for economic development, environmental protection, and social equity. Smart growth, particularly the land use and development design techniques, including mixed-use development and transit-oriented development, provide the opportunity for a variety of land uses within walking distance, and access to trains, buses, and other forms of public transportation. These concepts borrow from the land development patterns that existed prior to the introduction of the automobile, where daily needs (work, shopping, services, and housing) were located within walking distance, or at least close enough to a train station or other transit hub that could provide access to larger markets. More compact development reduces infrastructure costs and environmental impacts, reduces the appearance and negative impacts of sprawl, limits automobile congestion, protects natural lands and open space, increases a sense of place, and typically provides a more diverse housing stock to serve a wider audience.

#### *What will it do?*

Smart growth and sustainable development will create communities that cater to both people and their environment. Mixed-use development will create communities where residents can live, work, and play. Transit-oriented development will provide the county the opportunity to connect residential areas and business districts to rail and bus lines, allowing county residents, workers, and visitors ease of access to these areas. It will lower dependency on cars and free up space no longer needed for parking.

#### *Why should the county pursue it?*

Mixed use development and transit-oriented development increase the accessibility of retail shopping and services, restaurants, and office space to residents of all income groups and ages. These development patterns have greater flexibility to adapt to changing market demands than a standalone retail or office structure. Millennials and empty nesters have demonstrated an interest to mixed-use developments, where they can live, work, and engage in recreation, all at the same location, or within close proximity. Different arguments exist for what drives this interest, but compact development reduces the need for automobile use, which provides a number of benefits, including: reduced automobile use frees up roadway capacity; walking between destinations promotes an active lifestyle; and, younger adults can more easily afford and older adults can more safely “age in place” if they feel they can access their services and maintain their lifestyle without a car. Smart growth and sustainable development also ensure that the county continues to thrive economically without sacrificing scarce vacant land or encroaching on open space or other protected areas for development.



Ridgewood. Source: Colliers Engineering & Design



Hackensack Bus Terminal. Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County

### Objective 1.1: Assist municipalities through the development of ordinances and standards

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Create model ordinances and standards for location and design of bus stops (including Bus Rapid Transit-adaptable bus stops), bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, siting of electric vehicle charging stations, and other green neighborhood design standards. Incorporate these model ordinances into a “Best Practices” manual that provides instructions for implementation and describes relevant issues to consider as well as flexibility to respond to emerging technologies.



### Objective 1.2: Study possible financial incentives for development which includes bike-friendly services, such as bicycle storage and showers in employment centers, and other ecologically sustainable practices that minimize surface parking, increase the proportion of non-vehicular trips, decrease commuting time, reduce traffic congestion, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through fewer vehicle miles traveled

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Provide technical assistance to municipalities who seek to link incentives such as density bonuses, floor area ratio (FAR) bonuses and property tax incentives (in redevelopment or rehabilitation areas) to smart growth and sustainable development best practices. Encourage bicycling through the provision of model ordinances and standards for the location and design of bike racks, bike storage spaces, bike lanes, and bike parking requirements. Continue to research planning grants for bike-ped plans using pass-through funding obtained from agency or non- profit organizations promoting bicycle use.

Encourage municipalities to revisit municipal off-street parking requirements, which may have been based on studies that have since been revised. While residential parking requirements are preempted by state regulation (N.J.A.C. 5:21-1.1. et. seq, known as the Residential Site Improvement Standards, or RSIS”), municipalities or a group of municipalities can apply to the state for a special area standard designation to deviate from these requirements.



### Objective 1.3: Balance new development and redevelopment with access to parks and open space

As described throughout the Open Space, Agriculture, Parks and Recreation Element, opportunities to access parks and open space are critical to maintaining Bergen County's quality of life; this applies to both its rural and suburban communities, particularly open space, passive recreation, and preserved farmland, but also the more densely populated suburban and urban communities, where parks, street trees (and other forms of green stormwater infrastructure, such as green roofs, rain gardens, and bioswales), and community gardens provide numerous benefits. These benefits, many of which are also described in the Environment and Natural Resources Element, Sustainability Element, and the Economic Vitality Element of this Master Plan, include access to recreation, stormwater management, improved aesthetics and landscapes that create desirable destinations, and mitigation of urban heat island effects from development. The numerous benefits offered by green space can help to ensure that their inclusion in a community can address multiple goals, such as a park that also works to reduce nuisance flooding in a community. As a result, communities have different tools available to encourage green spaces alongside new development.

As described in the Environment and Natural Resources Element, the state adopted amendments in 2013 to the Municipal Land Use Law that provide municipalities with additional options to regulate new development, including non-contiguous clustering and lot size averaging. In contrast to a traditional subdivision, where a tract of land is divided into smaller components of equal size, or a contiguous cluster, where development is concentrated on a portion of the site and the remainder is preserved as open space or farmland, non-contiguous clustering permits development at greater density on one site, while preserving another site. While similar to a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, noncontiguous cluster relies on a private transaction between landowners, and does not include many of the regulatory requirements and infrastructure that is required for a TDR program. Lot size averaging permits residential subdivision of lots smaller than permitted, provided that the density of the underlying zoning is not exceeded. These can be used by municipalities to enable the subdivision of land while protecting specific features important to the community (including historic sites, farmland, and natural lands). Communities interested in protecting landowner equity while also achieving specific preservation or conservation goals should consider these as potential options in addition to the existing suite of tools like cluster zoning and TDR.

In March 2019, Governor Murphy signed the Clean Stormwater and Flood Reduction Act (S1073/A2694) into law, which gives municipalities and counties the option to establish stormwater utilities. Stormwater utilities are a tool used in communities throughout the country to fund maintenance, construction, and operation of stormwater management systems through the assessment of fees on certain impervious surfaces that contribute into the stormwater system, Philadelphia is one notable example where a stormwater utility has been adopted. Establishment of these utilities can encourage development and redevelopment that incorporates green infrastructure and open space, while maximizing the use of developed spaces. For example, in the case of a large, underutilized surface parking lot that generates a significant quantity of stormwater, a stormwater fee incentivizes property owners to reconsider its use, by either reestablishing portions of it as vegetated, or through infill development. Assisting communities interested in pursuing a stormwater utility through technical assistance and model ordinances will help to achieve many of the County's goals for parks, open space, stormwater management, community development, and economic development.



Overpeck County Park. Source: Colliers Engineering & Design

#### Objective 1.4: Provide convenient access to information on best practices

Promote smart growth and sustainable development principles by providing a clearinghouse of information for access by municipalities, developers, community leaders, and residents. Information could include case studies (including projects in Bergen County, but also statewide) or links to websites from successful projects and statistics on value added to residential and commercial real estate based on integration of community facilities and public open spaces. These resources can serve to aid municipalities when considering proposed changes to zoning and updating master plans, as well as exploring opportunities for community and economic development. Community leaders, residents, and developers can use these resources to help clarify potential questions or concerns, as well as become effective advocates of smart growth during the review of development applications, zone change proposals, master plan updates and reexaminations, and redevelopment plan proposals.

Facilitate the education of municipal officials, planning board members and zoning board members on the benefits of sustainable neighborhood development. Sustainable neighborhood development should promote the efficient use of land through reasonable residential density, and it should mix residential and nonresidential uses within walking distance of transit service to promote commuting and live-work environments. Resources such as the New Jersey Chapters of the US Green Building Council (USGBC) and the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) provide a resource for guest lecturers on sustainable development at quarterly meetings with local officials and board members.



Electric Vehicle Charging Station at Overpeck County Park. Source: Colliers Engineering & Design



Office Building in Montvale:  
Source: Colliers Engineering & Design

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### *GOAL 2: Advance the redevelopment of brownfields & underutilized sites (“Grayfields”)*

#### *What is it?*

Redevelopment of contaminated industrial sites and economically obsolete buildings to productive uses that are sensitive to the context of the surrounding landscape.

#### *What will it do?*

Brownfield redevelopment will address contamination issues and clean up fallow land. Grayfield redevelopment will reimagine unproductive sites into uses that meet the needs of the community. Directing development toward these sites helps reduce the need to develop new, previously undeveloped sites (“greenfields”), and can mitigate sprawl.

#### *Why should the county pursue it?*

Pockets of previously-developed land within municipalities remain vacant, unused, or underutilized have the potential to generate and enhance economic activity. According to NJDEP, there are a little over 100 total known brownfield sites in Bergen County.

#### **Brownfields and Grayfields**

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In contrast to undeveloped open areas known as “greenfields,” sites known as “brownfields” and “grayfields” are those where development has previously taken place. Brownfields are generally considered to be sites that have been developed for commercial or industrial use where there is suspicion or evidence of contamination. Grayfields refer to sites that have been previously developed for industrial, commercial, or even residential use, but are not considered to be contaminated.



Barrymore Film Center (Artist Rendering). Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County.

**Objective 2.1: Encourage development and investment in areas with existing infrastructure, supporting redevelopment of brownfield sites through traditional development or locally designated redevelopment/rehabilitation areas, and Transit Oriented Developments (TODs)**

Prioritize funding for county infrastructure projects to support the redevelopment of brownfield sites, locally designated redevelopment and rehabilitation areas, and Transit Oriented Developments (TODs). To further support the allocation of funding, the county may wish to pursue instituting a ranking system. The ranking system would provide the County Administration with an objective basis for prioritizing investment of county resources where new or improved infrastructure will leverage private investment in redeveloping brownfield sites, TODs or corridor centers or nodes.

**Objective 2.2: Capitalize on the high value of the scarce remaining developable land**

Continue to update GIS data so the inventory of vacant and brownfield sites can be kept current and mapped on a county-wide basis. Utilize the County GIS mapping capabilities to inventory the existing brownfield sites that are large enough to have the potential to generate regional impacts if redeveloped. Identify areas for potential redevelopment by undertaking an inventory and map of available redevelopment parcels with potential for inter-municipal impacts and encourage alternative zoning at the municipal level.

For large sites located within a half mile walk of a train station, or a quarter mile of a bus stop served by two or more major bus routes, negotiate integrating community facilities and public open spaces into new development projects. Other sites may have historic or architectural significance. To encourage their preservation and avoid discouraging new investment, explore opportunities for adaptive reuse by providing flexibility toward redevelopment while protecting, replicating, or complementing the elements of specific significance.

**Objective 2.3: Promote the economic redevelopment of large brownfield sites for uses that provide positive fiscal benefits to the host municipality and larger region without increasing negative externalities such as traffic congestion and disproportionate municipal costs on any one municipality**

As described in the Economic Vitality Element, while the county is largely built out, there are numerous opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization of previously developed sites, including brownfields. Establish a Brownfield Redevelopment Task Force with representation from the County Planning Board, NJDEP, and municipalities with large brownfield sites. County planning staff can assist the Task Force to generate a report to the County Administration on land use plans and zoning amendments that distribute the benefits and costs of significant brownfield site redevelopment among affected municipalities. In addition to the economic benefits of redevelopment into productive uses, the report could also evaluate the economic impacts of remediation for open space and recreation. The county can then work with partners to market these sites.





Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### *GOAL 3: Limit sprawl development patterns which increase vehicle traffic and congestion*

#### *What is it?*

Downtowns and urban centers concentrate economic and social activity within the business districts of a town or city, especially areas where historic development patterns predated the automobile. In other areas, particularly in more suburban settings, major employment centers, shopping destinations such as Garden State Plaza, event venues like MetLife Stadium, and the entertainment and shopping space known as American Dream that concentrate along the corridors of the county's major highways and mass transit facilities, draw significant numbers of visitors and their vehicles. In a way, these destinations serve as a form of center, and development surrounding these centers and along the county's major highways should discourage the need for multiple local vehicle trips that increase vehicle congestion.

#### *What will it do?*

Downtowns and urban centers give municipalities distinctive character and identity, provide municipalities with a strong economic base, and often serve as a cultural or historic hub of the community. Transit centers in these locations make destinations more accessible to more residents and visitors; restaurants, bars, and hotels are complementary to destination land uses. Development surrounding destination land uses creates pathways for residents, workers, and visitors that further encourage economic activity between destinations.

#### *Why should the county pursue it?*

Municipalities that invest in creating accessible, unique, interesting, and profitable downtowns and urban centers can increase resident and visitor interest and satisfaction. Investing in downtown areas and urban centers can attract potential employers and businesses interested in such settings, either as referenced in the Economic Vitality Element with the example of Amazon, or for retailers that depend upon a specific volume of customers. Increased development surrounding destination land uses will encourage increased spending and activity, giving people a reason to stay longer and visit these destinations more often.



**Objective 3.1: Continue to explore grant funding opportunities to identify available vacant land or underutilized brownfield sites for transit-oriented infill redevelopment or development**

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Investigate and inform municipalities on the availability of different funding tools, including Economic Redevelopment & Growth (ERG) grants, Opportunity Zones, and Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) for financing redevelopment and rehabilitation projects in urban areas, especially where redevelopment is linked to the provision of affordable housing.

**Objective 3.2: Continue to support small businesses, entrepreneurs, and start-ups which traditionally seek out downtown locations. Support should range from start-up assistance to finding brick-and-mortar locations in targeted downtowns that show potential for activity**

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Assist municipalities by identifying zoning ordinance improvements that respond to changing economies. An outdated zoning ordinance may not allow for present day uses. For example, many ordinances still have standards for haberdashers, milliners, shoe repair, photography and cameras, and news dealers, but not 3D Printing, microbreweries, indoor recreation, animal daycare facilities, eCommerce fulfillment centers, or “lifestyle” uses that incorporate a retail and service element. Unfortunately, outdated zoning may discourage businesses from considering an area if it appears that a project would require use variance relief or other similar hurdles.

Continue to follow legislative changes (both locally and nationally) and best practices in order to provide assistance to municipalities, through informational resources or model ordinances, on emerging land use issues, including recent challenges presented by short term rentals and medical and recreational cannabis (including production, manufacturing, distribution, and retail facilities).

**Objective 3.3: Facilitate multijurisdictional coordination between the New Jersey Sports and Exhibition Authority (NJSEA), NJ Transit, and constituent municipalities in furthering transit connectivity and intensified development near destination land uses**

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Encourage municipalities to zone for higher-density development near transit stops and stations to increase connectivity between the places where people travel as well as mixed uses that cater to commuters and visitors. Facilitate dialogue between NJ Transit and individual municipalities to advocate for and plan future transit routes and development locations.



**Objective 3.4: Develop innovative corridor-based regional plans in cooperation with the stakeholder towns along highways**

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Ensure seamless access to commercial and industrial land uses, and major employers concentrated along Bergen County’s major highway corridors, and identify opportunities and actions to improve the visual aesthetics of these corridors. Coordinate with municipalities to create cohesive land use plans for areas along highways with heavy commuter traffic that strive to reinvent the land use patterns along these major arteries to reduce traffic congestion, reduce automobile dependency (Vehicle Miles Traveled, or VMTs), improve multi-modal connectivity, and reduce commuting distances through land use planning. A corridor plan would seek to establish common land uses, consistent signage, appropriate truck routes, and a network of electric vehicle charging stations. The county will continue to assist municipalities by updating GIS parcel layers and MOD-IV property tax data to enable the use of GIS mapping to identify and map potential centers and nodes along highway corridors, which will in turn show where higher density development is appropriate and economically feasible.

Incentivize constituent towns through funding and prioritization of capital improvements by the county and NJDOT to make necessary changes to their master plans and land use regulations, to adopt recommendations from these plans, and to facilitate center-based corridor planning that limits commercial sprawl development patterns and reduces traffic congestion.







*The James Mixed Use Redevelopment in Park Ridge.  
Source: Google StreetView*

## **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

### ***GOAL 4: Encourage a wide variety of housing types, range of densities, and price points***

#### ***What is it?***

Municipal zoning codes generally prescribe minimum residential property sizes, and often limit the types of housing permitted. Larger lots, an acre or more in size, discourage pedestrian activity and require more time, money and energy for landscaping and upkeep, while a zoning code that permits a variety of housing densities and types will accommodate a variety of different needs, abilities and lifestyles more effectively. Building design and its relationship to the site and surrounding landscape also plays an important role in addressing perceptions about density. Numerous housing typologies and densities exist, such as townhomes, duplexes, fourplexes, cottages, and in-law apartments that introduce higher densities but do not necessarily contradict the existing design of the community. Mixed-use housing approaches provide another alternative, for example, apartments above retail and commercial land uses.

#### ***What will it do?***

A variety of housing types provide homes for residents of all ages, income levels, preferences, abilities, and family sizes. Mixed-use and mixed-income housing make lower price-point housing economically feasible for municipalities and developers. These strategies add density beyond single-family residential while maintaining the aesthetics and scale of the surrounding development.

#### ***Why should the county pursue it?***

Diverse housing stock is aging friendly. It provides space for the elderly and their caretakers, young adults, and empty nesters who may not want, or cannot afford, to live in a single-family home. This will help retain existing residents interested in downsizing within the community and may attract new residents who seek alternate housing options. In addition, when employed strategically, increased densities can foster a more welcoming business climate by providing the necessary pedestrian activity to sustain commercial districts. Compact development affords the opportunity for people of different abilities, ages and income levels to live within proximity to commercial centers, reducing the need for an automobile to accomplish everyday tasks. For older adults, this means an opportunity to remain independent longer, as well as providing safe areas to stay active and remain socially connected.

## Objective 4.1: Encourage municipalities to welcome more mixed-use projects

Encourage municipalities to consider mixed-use projects in existing downtown areas, areas served by public transportation, and areas in proximity to major job centers to promote the creation and long-term maintenance of housing that meets the needs of all ages, abilities, incomes and household sizes. Provide technical assistance to municipalities who seek to link incentives such as density bonuses, floor area ratio (FAR) bonuses, or property tax incentives (in redevelopment or rehabilitation areas) to larger infill projects that achieve a mix of ages and income levels within the same project.

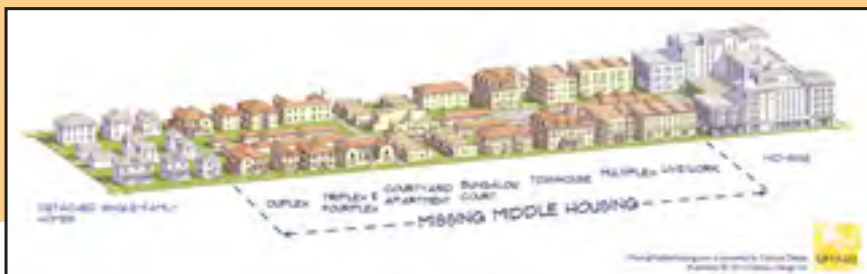
Provide technical assistance to municipalities with access to rail or bus transit to make necessary changes to their master plans and land use regulations to incorporate transit-oriented development (TOD). Consider additional incentives such as funding and prioritization of capital improvements by the county, NJ Transit, and NJDOT.



### “Missing Middle” Housing

The concept of “Missing Middle” housing was developed by Daniel Parolek of Opticos Design, Inc. to describe “a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living” that meet different levels of affordability and lifestyles. These house include designs such as duplexes, 3- and 4-family units, live/work units, and townhouses.

<http://missingmiddlehousing.com/about/>



### Visualizing Density (2007)

Visualizing Density is a book and tool commissioned by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to improving quality of life through the effective use, taxation, and stewardship of land. Prepared by Julie Campoli and Alex MacLean, this 2007



book consists of photos and illustrations that are designed to assist planners, public officials, and the general public in better understanding what varying levels of density can look like as a way to help correct misperceptions of what some may picture as being associated with medium or high density.



## Objective 4.2: Help municipalities identify how to seamlessly integrate a more diverse housing stock into a community

Educate leaders about strategies to and benefits of integrating diverse housing types successfully into existing communities in the county. To some people, “density” carries negative connotations of unsightly sprawl development. Design can play an important role in addressing these concerns. Certain resources, such as *Visualizing Density*, can provide visual examples of different housing types at different densities, while Congress for the New Urbanism’s Missing Middle Housing initiative recommends housing types compatible in scale with single-family districts.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### *GOAL 5: Mainstream the use of green building and sustainable design*

#### *What is it?*

Green building is the technique used to integrate ecologically-sustainable practices throughout the development process. Building materials, utilities, water, waste, and landscaping should adhere to current standards of efficiency. Sustainable best practices also apply to neighborhood development through the creation of strong public transit, electric vehicle, bike, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.

#### *What will it do?*

Providing municipalities with resources and guidelines for the creation of green building and sustainable design related-ordinances may help to address other concerns identified by the community, such as parking availability or nuisance flooding.

#### *Why should the county pursue it?*

Promoting sustainable best practices reduces waste and greenhouse gas emissions, conserves natural resources, and creates overall healthier environments for residents, employees, and visitors.



Solar Parking Canopy. Source: Donna Brennan, Bergen County



**Objective 5.1: Continue to promote sustainable neighborhood design techniques and green building best practices through the county’s newly-adopted standards for land development**

The county adopted new Site Plan and Subdivision regulations in 2018 which incorporate and encourage the use of sustainable design, including standards and requirements for green infrastructure, standards and requirements to promote bicycle and pedestrian traffic, financial incentives for obtaining LEED Certification, and fee waivers for parking stalls that provide electric vehicle charging stations or designated for car sharing services. Some of these requirements only apply if the local municipality’s plans recommend such infrastructure (i.e. “A bikeway shall be provided within or adjacent to the County right-of-way if such is required by any municipal plan, and approved by the County Engineer.”). This ordinance serves as a demonstration for municipal replication, as well as a basis from which to continue to incentivize green building practices.

**Objective 5.2: Educate and empower local decision makers to employ sustainable design**

Develop a Best Practices manual with model ordinances that provides guidance and encourages municipalities to incorporate green neighborhood design standards into their land development ordinances.

**Objective 5.3: Reduce impermeable surfaces, heat island impacts, and stormwater runoff**

Continue to promote the incorporation of green roof, permeable pavement, reflective materials, shading and other best practices for reducing impervious surfaces, reducing heat island impacts and reducing stormwater runoff produced by new development.

**Objective 5.4: Require sustainable best practices in all new county facilities, including county-controlled stormwater management facilities**

Incorporate green infrastructure and sustainable design into county facilities. This serves two purposes: it retrofits to the county’s infrastructure to provide the aesthetic and environmental benefits to the county, with any long-term cost savings associated with operating expenses benefiting taxpayers; and, the process of identifying, planning and implementing improvements can serve as a local demonstration project for municipalities. The county should begin with a systems performance audit of all current and planned county facilities and stormwater control facilities. The findings from this study will identify where sustainable retrofits can create efficiencies, cost savings, or other benefits. The county can then use this experience to prepare a sustainable best practices design manual that includes suggested procedures, design options and details, as well as any “lessons learned.” The manual would provide a helpful reference for municipalities and serve as a guideline for all future county capital projects.

In its updated land development regulations, the county strove for consistency with DEP practices, to help expedite the review process for applicants. In line with this, the county will continue to update its stormwater management standards to maintain consistency with the State, and to allow for innovation in best management practices for county facilities as well as development projects, both public and private.



Storm drain warning signage. Source: Colliers Engineering & Design.



nickelodeon

Rendering of the Nickelodeon Universe Theme Park at American Dream. Source: Bergen County Division of Economic Development