

The following Action Plan provide detailed strategies and specific actions, serving as a technical guide for implementing the recommendations of The Plan. These action plans are intended to be living documents, being revised and updated as Together North Jersey works with various partners on implementing recommendations in the plan.



Focus Area 12: Improve health outcomes for our region's residents.

What and why. While a community's plan to build a supermarket or road may not sound like health policy at first, public decisions like these can have a profound effect on residents' health. Heavy construction could create air pollution that harms people in the surrounding neighborhoods, but a new supermarket could make it more convenient for them to buy healthy food. A new bike lane could increase physical fitness of residents and provide alternative transportation options that reduce stress, but it could increase the number of bicycle accidents and potential injuries to cyclists.

Genetics play an important role in health, but social conditions, such as a family's ability to afford safe housing or medical care, also affect health outcomes. Physical environment is also important, including air and water quality, proximity to outdoor and recreational opportunities, affordability and accessibility of fresh, healthy foods, and the safety of streets and neighborhoods.

Improving the health of the region's residents and communities is critically important to ensuring the region's long-term sustainability. Improving health can reduce health care costs, increase social cohesion, and boost overall well-being and satisfaction—all of which are key elements of sustainability. Building healthy communities requires a "health in all policies" approach by all partners within the region. This means that no matter what their primary mission is—transportation, recreation, arts and culture, housing, natural resource protection or community development—the policies they develop should take potential health impacts into account.

How. This focus area seeks to improve the health of North Jersey residents by integrating the consideration of health outcomes into all policies and planning. Some specific areas for improvement include: increasing access to healthy food and healthcare facilities; enhancing health education programs; creating safe and healthy buildings and neighborhoods; reducing crime in dangerous neighborhoods through better planning and design; and improving conditions in communities that are disproportionately burdened by air pollution and other environmental hazards.




Strategy 12.1: Integrate public health considerations in all aspects of planning and policy-making

What and why. Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is an emerging practice in the United States that illustrates how policy and planning decisions might impact public health. HIAs can be done for all kinds of plans or policies, including anything from installing bike lanes or building a new housing development to choosing a site for a landfill. HIA practitioners collect and analyze data on associated

health impacts of a plan or policy, engage the public and local leaders in the process of considering health risks and benefits and make recommendations based on what they find. In order to increase the prevalence of HIAs in North Jersey we need to provide training for local planners, engineers and public health officials in HIA methods; integrate HIA in the policy-making process; conduct research; and document outcomes of HIAs to establish how important they can be in decision-making processes.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Identify a key set of specific and pending policy or project decisions that will be made in the Together North Jersey region over the next three years and undertake HIAs to integrate health considerations into the decision-making process.	New Jersey Health Impact Collaborative (NJHIC)	Short to medium term
2.	Provide training on the practice of HIA for interested practitioners in the Together North Jersey region, including but not limited to local planners, engineers, and public health officers.	NJHIC	Short to medium term
3.	Overlay research on Together North Jersey HIAs to use metrics and indicators to assess the financial savings from avoided healthcare costs realized as a result of integrating health considerations early into the decision-making process.	NJHIC, with support from NJDOH, health funders, and federal agencies	Long term
4.	Document outcomes of conducted Together North Jersey HIAs to inform greater deployment of HIA as a practice in the region.	NJHIC	Long term



Strategy 12.2: Increase access to affordable, healthy foods and maximize access to locally produced fresh food

What and why. Our region has a high number of “food deserts”—areas where there is very limited (or no) access to fresh foods. We can improve health outcomes for north Jersey residents by identifying the location of these food deserts and building coalitions of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to make fresh and nutritious food accessible to all residents, regardless of income. Efforts to eliminate food deserts can boost local economies; reduce emissions and other environmental impacts from the transportation of foods to market; and promote exercise if supermarkets, farmers markets, community gardens and other sources of healthy, local food are located in downtown areas, especially near public transit.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>

1.	Identify specific geographic locations in the Together North Jersey region that are "food deserts," where residents have limited access to fresh foods, and target efforts and resources to developing fresh food programs in those areas.	Together North Jersey	Short term
2.	Develop a local government best practice guide for Together North Jersey communities with specific actions (e.g. adopt-a-lot ordinances) that local government can take to promote use of unused city land for urban gardens.	Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension Service.	Medium term
3.	Create an easy-to-use curriculum for cooking classes that encourage people to eat healthfully through a coalition of government, nonprofit and healthcare and other organizations.	Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension service.	Medium term
4.	Establish a regional "food innovation zone". The zone would be designed as a venue to allow for incubation of entrepreneurs that develop new methods of cultivating fresh food and opportunities for startups that are re-imagining the way restaurants create and sell food and ways in which access to fresh and healthy foods for underserved populations can be enhanced. Develop a work plan and seek funding, through a collaboration of Together North Jersey partners and state agencies. The work plan should go beyond food cultivation to also include a focus on delivery of fresh foods, access to fresh foods and cooking/preparation methods tying into local economic development, school curriculum and jobs creation especially in underserved communities.	NJ-EDA	Long term
5.	Convene a forum for to bring together diverse leaders, practitioners and stakeholders in the agriculture, education, healthcare, business, and community development sectors along with local and state governments to better understand the challenges of accessing fresh and healthy food in the region and effective best practices that have been in place elsewhere to address those challenges.	Together North Jersey	Medium term

What and why. Residents in the region should have ready access to medical facilities that meet their health needs—regardless of their income level or where they live. We can improve access to healthcare by opening more medical facilities throughout the region, ensuring that these facilities are accessible by public transit as well as personal vehicles, and conducting outreach to inform the public about available health care resources and options for receiving affordable healthcare.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Develop a regional assessment, through a stakeholder driven process, to identify those areas in the region where current healthcare facilities are insufficient to address the medical needs of the serving community, taking into consideration transportation modes for gaining access to the facilities.	New Jersey Department of Health (NJ-DOH)	Medium term
2.	Use the outcome of the regional assessment to inform development efforts by hospitals, government public health agencies and other stakeholders to develop community health needs assessments and the adoption of implementation strategies that address priority health needs within the community served. Focus on innovative solutions to better imbed facilities that provide underserved communities with ready access to quality healthcare.	Nonprofit hospitals in the region	Long term
3.	Convene healthcare providers, facilities, community based organizations and state and local agencies to review effective experiences from both within the region and outside the region in deploying innovative strategies for providing enhanced physical access to healthcare facilities, including multimodal transportation options, establishment of community based medical clinics and urgent care centers.	NJ-DOH, Together North Jersey	Medium term



Strategy 12.4: Enhance health education programs

What and why. Educating residents about healthy lifestyle choices is an important complement to building healthy communities. Effective education programs must be easy for residents to access and attend, and must meet the specific needs of local populations. They must be offered in the languages commonly spoken by participants, include special accommodations for senior citizens and children and/or focus on the specific issues that can most improve health for residents in each community. Our region should establish a multi-lingual “Building Healthier Communities” initiative to promote healthy lifestyles, physical activity, nutrition and personal preventative care for all residents in the region.


	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
1.	Convene healthcare educators, practitioners, healthcare facilities, local business leaders, faith-based and other nonprofit organizations and local and state government to establish a regional “Building Healthier Communities” initiative that is designed to serve as a network for sharing information, resources, best practices and opportunities for healthy lifestyle education.	NJ-DOH	Medium term
2.	Prepare a compendium of healthy lifestyle education program “best practices” to serve as a resource guide for health education programs in the region. Seek funding to support development of the compendium through the business community and healthcare facility foundations. Focus the compendium on being a practical, evidence-based guide that local healthcare educators can readily and immediately use to plan programs and identify resources that are available for use.	NJ-DOH, Together North Jersey, other state agencies	Short term
3.	Partner with arts organizations to develop education and outreach materials on the role of the arts in improving health outcomes and develop create ways to educate about personal behavior and healthy choices.	NJ-HIC, arts advocacy nonprofits	Medium term
4.	Create a fund, through a partnership of healthcare facility foundations and the business community, to support development and deployment of innovative healthy lifestyle education programs to create a “community of practitioners” as part of the “Building Healthier Communities” initiative.	New Jersey Department of Health	Long term



Strategy 12.5: Create safe and healthy buildings, neighborhoods and communities through planning and design

What and why. The Local governments must adopt and implement policies and programs that protect residents from sources of pollution, especially in communities that already experience significant environmental burdens. Municipalities should: establish and enforce smoking restrictions; reduce the density of stores that primarily sell unhealthy products including alcohol, tobacco and fast food; and limit advertising (e.g. billboards) that promote such establishments—especially near schools and in neighborhoods with a high number of children. In addition, municipalities should ensure that property maintenance codes are properly enforced and should develop new standards that promote healthy homes and green design. Expanding community policing efforts can also reduce crime and enhance community-police relations. Programs should be developed to educate residents about lead and radon testing and abatement

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Establish and enforce no smoking restrictions.	Local health agencies	Short term
2.	Restrict the density of alcohol establishments, fast food restaurants and billboards advertising unhealthy behaviors in residential areas.	Municipalities	Medium term
3.	Increase enforcement of existing property maintenance codes.	Municipal code officials	Short term
4.	Increase use of community policing.	Municipalities	Medium term
5.	Make resources available for lead and radon abatement and increase education of residents and municipal leaders about the importance of testing for and mitigating for lead and radon.	NJ-DEP	Medium term
6.	Promote energy efficiency and health in both existing buildings and new construction through local and state tax incentives	NJ-EDA, NJ-BPU, NJ-DEP, local governments	Medium term

	<p>Strategy 12.6: Expand the use of <i>Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)</i> strategies to integrate safety considerations into community planning and design</p>
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What and why. CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach that seeks to deter criminal behavior and fear of crime through the design of buildings and neighborhoods. For example, windows can be configured to give residents and business-owners a clear view of the street, vacant lots can be renovated as actively programmed parklets and abandoned properties can be secured from trespassing. CPTED incorporates collaborative efforts involving law enforcement, city planners, landscape and interior designers, residents and architects. Our region should expand the use of CPTED by: developing a CPTED toolkit that can be used as the basis for a voluntary municipal certification programs; establishing an ongoing program of CPTED continuing education training and promoting the use of CPTED principles and practices by planning departments, police departments, nonprofit organizations and research institutions in the region to identify specific elements of municipal master plans and ordinances that can make neighborhoods safe.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
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1.	Identify effective CPTED training programs for community organizations in high-crime areas, as well as funding sources to support participation.	Together North Jersey	Short term
2.	Provide community organizations with technical expertise, including, but not limited to, the areas of land use, design, surveying, data analysis, Geographic Information Systems and graphic presentation.	Local Planning Divisions, CDCs, Rutgers-Bloustein	Short term
3.	Fund a CPTED/Community Safety Pilot Program which brings together all affected stakeholders including regional and local government and NGO partners to enhance transit, pedestrian, and general community safety.	NJTPA, NJ TRANSIT, NJ-OPA	Short term
4.	Conduct research to identify specific components of municipal master plans and ordinances that foster CPTED outcomes.	Together North Jersey	Short term
5.	Establish effective data partnerships that provide local CPTED initiatives with more precise information regarding all aspects of the local area related to crime prevention.	Municipalities, Rutgers-Bloustein	Medium term
6.	Incorporate the strategies of the CPTED toolkit into a voluntary municipal certification program.	Sustainable Jersey [®]	Medium term
7.	Develop and offer CPTED continuing education training programs and credits to community planners, engineers, law enforcement officials, planning and zoning board members, and architects.	APA-NJ, Together North Jersey	Medium term
8.	Complete the development of a municipal CPTED toolkit begun as part of Together North Jersey.	NJTPA, Together North Jersey	Medium term
9.	Build broad formal coalitions of and strengthen ties between community organizations, local residents and businesses, police departments, code enforcement offices, schools, and other stakeholders to pursue concerted, long-term CPTED initiatives.	Municipalities, CBOs, Together North Jersey	Long term



Strategy 12.7: Improve conditions for communities that are disproportionately burdened by air pollution

What and why. While air quality in many parts of the region has improved over the past several decades, 30 census tracts in 12 municipalities located in the northeast corner of the region are severely burdened by the cumulative impacts of multiple sources of air pollution, including automobile and truck

traffic and industrial facilities. While we should take steps to improve air quality generally, specific actions are required to improve conditions in these overburdened areas, including adopting improved data collection and analysis techniques; implementing land use policies and green infrastructure projects that have proven successful in reducing emissions and mitigating pollution impacts; and ensuring continued financial and institutional commitment to implementing the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's Clean Air Strategy.

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Commit to continued implementation of the Clean Air Strategy for the Port Authority of NY/NJ.	Port Authority of NY/NJ	ongoing
2.	Make the existing integrated environmental stressor method and associated data publicly available for use by outside parties to identify pollution hotspots.	NJDEP	Short term
3.	Host a symposium to roll out the Sustainable Jersey cumulative impacts model ordinance.	Sustainable Jersey, TNJ, nonprofits	Short term
4.	Apply Health Impact Assessments (HIA) to development and infrastructure projects in overburdened communities.	NJ-HIC, local health boards, municipalities	Short term
5.	Continuously improve data collection and analysis methods to identify "hotspots".	NJDEP, EOHSI, NJOT, UMDNJ	Long term
6.	Apply Health Impact Assessments (HIA) to development and infrastructure projects in overburdened communities.	NJ-HIC	Short term
7.	Use Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program to award grants for clean construction vehicles and construction practices such as reduced idling; enforce anti-idling law for diesel trucks and facilitate upgrades to cleaner vehicles for municipal-owned or municipal-subsidized fleets.	NJTPA	Short term
8.	Develop and enforce standards for clean construction vehicles and construction practices such as reduced idling; enforce anti-idling law for diesel trucks and facilitate upgrades to cleaner vehicles for municipal-owned or municipal-subsidized fleets.	Municipalities	Short term
9.	Install trees/street-scaping, green walls and berms to mitigate local air pollution.	Counties, Municipalities	Short term
10	Reduce congestion and emissions from vehicles, through transportation pricing policies and by shifting mode share from single-use vehicles to carpooling, transit, biking, walking, etc. by administering grants for local and regional CMAQ initiatives.	NJTPA, NJ Transit	Short term

11	Launch a campaign to raise awareness of the effects and sources of pollution among policymakers, local residents, industry and port workers, industry leaders, and private freight operators.	Community-based organizations (CBOs), Together North Jersey, municipalities	Short term
12	Reduce diesel emissions at the Port of NY/NJ and in urban areas by building coalitions with Port interests, communities and private freight operators.	CBOs, municipalities, Port Authority of NY-NJ	Short term
13	Adopt a cumulative impacts land use ordinance and design guidelines for proposed development and infrastructure evaluating air pollution emissions and their health impacts, based on Sustainable Jersey's model ordinance.	Municipalities	Medium term
14	Provide funding for local governments to increase air monitoring in hot spot areas. Implement monitoring at the neighborhood scale to better understand how pollution levels differ across a local area.	NJDEP	Medium term
15	Enforce the NJ Pollution Prevention Act in order to require certain industries affecting overburdened communities to submit pollution prevention plans to the NJDEP; make facility-wide risk assessments a requirement for applications for new or renewed Operating Permits (Air Program).	NJDEP	Medium term
16	Require more stringent standards for hot spots under the State Implementation Plan for criteria air pollution.	NJDEP, State Legislature	Medium to long term
17	Dedicate staff from each state agency to work collaboratively with NJDEP to plan agency projects taking into account impacts on overburdened communities.	NJDEP; all other state agencies	Long term