

The following Action Plan provides 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 1: Create and retain well-paying jobs by supporting growth in our region's key industries

What and Why. Attracting world-class companies to locate in North Jersey used to require little effort. Our region's location, highly educated workforce and high quality of life made it an easy sell to corporate America. From 1980-2000 our region emerged as one of the premier office markets in the United States. Economic development was driven by strong market demand for new office space that could meet the needs of a growing service economy.

In the 1990's and early 2000's growth in high-quality, knowledge-based jobs was strong in our region. By the mid-2000's, our region had proportionally more jobs in a range of key industries when compared to the national economy. These industries included: educational and health services; professional and business services; wholesale trade; transportation and utilities; financial services; and information services. Many of the jobs in these industries paid well and, as a result, the region's economy thrived.

Economic realities have shifted. Location is less important than it used to be and demand for office space is down. Our region, and New Jersey as a whole, has become a comparatively expensive place to do business, and market preferences for both living and work environments have shifted to favor walkable, transit served, amenity-rich locations. Not only has this left our region with an abundance of underutilized suburban office parks and buildings, but our region's overall declining competitiveness threatens the future prosperity of the region. Today, attracting and retaining companies and well-paying jobs demands collaboration, coordination and innovation.

One approach that has proven effective in other parts of the U.S. is to concentrate on supporting growth in "Regional Innovation Clusters" (RIC)—geographic concentrations of interconnected businesses, institutions and organizations, such as universities and talent networks, that support one another and foster innovation. New Jersey has identified seven major clusters: Bio/Pharma and Life Sciences; Transportation, Logistics, and Distribution; Financial Services; Manufacturing; Healthcare; Technology; and Tourism. These clusters can and should provide our region with a focus for its economic and workforce development activities. Strong regional innovation clusters can spur job growth, boost wages, and encourage entrepreneurship. For North Jersey, we should increase our overall competitiveness by fostering regional innovation clusters in those industries that North Jersey is uniquely positioned to nurture.

How. Successfully implementing a RIC-focused economic development approach, will require close collaboration among the private sector, local government, regional planning organizations and higher education institutions. These efforts should focus on strengthening industries that have the potential to drive the regional economy by stream-lining permit processes so that it is easier and cheaper to locate and do business in the region. We should also explore the creation of an economic development entity that can help to coordinate local efforts, bring needed financial resources to the region and take on initiatives that will make all jurisdictions in the region more competitive. Our region should consider creating a "Futures Council," an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to studying and improving the region's long-term economic competitiveness. Finally, our region should create a public-private initiative designed to

help the small businesses that support our region’s seven innovation clusters to expand their professional networks and grow their companies.

TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY Strategy 1.1: Develop and implement a pilot program that makes it easier for businesses to obtain the permits they need to locate and expand in the region.

What. Obtaining the necessary permits to locate or expand a business in North Jersey can be expensive and time consuming. Simplifying the regulatory process in New Jersey is essential for attracting business investment. Businesses are drawn to states and regions where they can expect predictability, consistency and efficiency in the permitting process. Working with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection, the Business Action Center in the Lieutenant Governor’s office, the Office for Planning Advocacy and one or more willing local jurisdictions, our region should develop and implement a permit streamlining pilot project that includes a one-stop permit portal and expedited reviews for projects that meet certain standards. Such a program can serve as a model that can be replicated throughout the region and elsewhere in New Jersey.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Engage a municipality to serve as the pilot location for streamlining the permitting process.	NJTPA, NJLM	Medium term
2.	Establish an interagency working group to identify a project and the appropriate agency to administer it.	Pilot community, NJTPA, NJLM	Medium term
3.	Categorize the resources available in the pilot location.	Pilot community, NJTPA, NJLM	Medium term
4.	Develop a plan and timeline for project implementation.	Pilot community, NJTPA, NJLM	Medium term
5.	Report annually on the progress of the project and lessons learned.	Pilot community, NJTPA, NJLM	Medium term

TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY Strategy 1.2: Explore creating an organization to help coordinate economic development activities region-wide.

What. The U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) is authorized under federal regulations to designate Economic Development Districts (EDD) anywhere in the United States that meet certain criteria. EDDs are created to help coordinate economic development activities among

member jurisdictions in a way the supports and complements state, county and local economic and workforce development initiatives. Once the Together North Jersey regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is approved, our region will meet the U.S. EDA criteria for an EDD. After the CEDS is approved, our region should request that the U.S. EDA designate the North Jersey region an EDD. This designation could make the district and its member jurisdictions eligible for various U.S. EDA funding programs that would not otherwise be available. To advance the process of having the region designated an EDD, the NJTPA should consider establishing an economic development liaison position responsible for securing EDA approval of the region’s CEDS and establishing an EDD consistent with federal regulations.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Consider establishing an economic development liaison office within NJTPA to assist in the implementation of the CEDS and the process for creating an EDD.	NJTPA	Short term
2.	Create a working group to explore the best options and process for establishing a regional EDD.	NJPTA, Rutgers-Bloustein	Short term
3.	Consult with the EDA about the formal application process for establishing an EDD.	NJTPA	Short term
4.	Hold a regional meeting of economic development stakeholders and state officials to formally agree to establish an EDD.	NJPTA , and other partners	Short term
5.	Make a formal application for EDA approval.	NJTPA	Short term




Strategy 1.3: Provide a forum for highlighting the economic and workforce development needs of our region’s key industries.

What. Our region has strengths in seven key industries—Bio/Pharma and Life Sciences; Transportation, Logistics and Distribution; Financial Services; Manufacturing; Healthcare; Technology; and Tourism. The industry clusters provide an opportunity to foster innovation, growth and job creation. The understanding of the needs of these industries is an important first step in making this happen. Our region should establish a series of annual North Jersey CEO Roundtables, one for each of the seven innovation clusters identified in our region. The roundtables will provide a forum for forward-thinking industry leaders to identify ways the region can keep ahead of trends and remain competitive for the long-term. The roundtables will provide an opportunity to discuss the short and long-term economic, infrastructure and workforce needs of each innovation cluster and can improve communication and information sharing among local economic development groups, industry organizations, companies and local businesses. NJTPA’s economic development liaison should work with county economic development officials and New Jersey’s seven

Talent Networks to organize and convene the inaugural round of meetings.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Reach out to statewide industry associations, Talent Networks, and business groups to endorse the roundtables and identify participants.	NJ EDD, NJTPA, NJDOLWD, NJBAC, NJIT, Choose New Jersey	Medium term
2.	Explore potential state and private funding sources for the roundtables.	NJ EDD, NJTPA	Medium term
3.	Work with local chambers of commerce and business partnerships to host CEO roundtables in different locations in the region.	NJTPA, Chambers of Commerce, and Business Partnerships	Medium term




Strategy 1.4: Consider creating a North Jersey Futures Council

What. The region should consider establishing a North Jersey Futures Council —an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to studying and improving the region’s long-term economic competitiveness. The Futures Council could help to develop an overall investment agenda for the region that is informed by private sector needs and supported by independent research and analysis. The council could also employ a professional staff and be guided by prominent North Jersey private sector and institutional leaders. The first step toward establishing a Futures Council could be to form an exploratory committee of corporate, business and institutional leaders in the region to examine how similar organizations established in other parts of the country function and explore the feasibility, costs and efficacy of creating such an organization for the North Jersey region.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Organize a group of regional leaders to serve on an exploratory committee. Committee members will visit potential benchmark organizations such as the Greater Louisville Project (GLP), Austin Area Research Organization, and the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia. The purpose of the visits will be to learn best practices and lessons regarding the leadership, structure, and support of such an organization.	NJTPA, Rutgers-Bloustein, NJBAC, NJDOL	Short term

2.	Coordinate with the State of New Jersey and Choose Jersey.	NJTPA, Rutgers-Bloustein, NJBAC, NJDOL	Short term
3.	Explore options for a mission and business plan for the Futures Council.	NJTPA, Rutgers-Bloustein, NJBAC, NJDOL	Medium term
4.	Reach out to statewide industry associations, Talent Networks, and business groups to endorse the roundtables and identify participants.	NJBAC, NJDOL, WIBs, Talent Networks	Medium term
5.	Consider hiring a full-time professional to lead the organization.	NJTPA	Medium term
6.	Seek support from other regional and statewide institutions, industry associations, business groups, nonprofits, and foundations.	NJTPA, Rutgers-Bloustein	Medium term



Strategy 1.5: Connect small businesses that support the region’s innovation clusters to growth and development opportunities.

What. Companies thrive when they have the resources and connections they need to sustain and increase their business activities. Some regions in the country have public private initiatives designed to help small businesses that support and foster innovation in various industry clusters to expand their professional networks and increase sales and revenue by providing technical assistance, mentorships, supplier development initiatives, group purchasing and procurement arrangements. Our region should establish such an initiative to provide opportunities for networking, matchmaking and the creation of an online marketplace to connect suppliers and buyers. Initial steps to developing such a program should be to inventory existing business assistance programs, identify needs and gaps in business services and programs and developing a plan to fill critical gaps by establishing regional programs that coordinates with local and state business assistance programs.

	<i>Actions:</i>	<i>Suggested Responsibility:</i>	<i>Timeframe:</i>
1.	Identify and inventory local business technical assistance programs in the region.	Rutgers-Bloustein	Medium term
2.	Work with Regional Innovation Clusters and Talent Networks to identify gaps in business assistance programs and develop strategies to meet those needs.	Talent Networks	Medium term
3.	Work with the New Jersey EDA to explore the potential of establishing a Regional Business Connect program.	NJTPA, NJEDA	Medium term