


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 6: Create vibrant places and neighborhoods that will attract and retain residents, workers and visitors.**

What and why. To be competitive in today’s economy, we must make North Jersey a place that attracts and retains workers, residents and visitors of all generations. Our region must focus on creating and sustaining the kind of places that appeal to all age groups—especially baby boomers and millennials, who will play an outsized role in shaping market demand in next 20 years. Both of these groups show strong preferences for areas with residential neighborhoods, work environments, retail and cultural amenities, and public spaces that are accessible by walking, biking and public transit. As baby boomers age, they will be less able to drive, increasing the need for public transportation and safe places to walk. Meanwhile, millennials have a documented preference for living and working in walkable, dynamic places, with a diversity of amenities and mobility options. At a time when “talent is mobile”—meaning people with high-value skills are able and willing to relocate to communities that match their lifestyle preferences—communities and employers must adapt to attract and retain talented young professionals.

Communities and developers need to think holistically about the kind of public and private spaces they build, ensuring that their work collectively yields homes, business, public spaces, cultural and commercial centers that are accessible, vibrant, amenity-rich and in keeping with local culture and traditions. Investing in efforts to increase the attractiveness of the region’s communities—if done in coordination with a larger economic development strategy—can help drive growth and create more sustainable patterns of development. It can also establish a framework for stewardship, long-term maintenance and upkeep of public infrastructure.


How. Creating quality places is not just about buildings and infrastructure. It’s also about the kind of active, engaged programming and management that requires sustained focus and attention over time and new partnerships between private, institutional and public sector players. Creating lively, livable communities requires a local vision, design guidelines and historic preservation ordinances that capture the unique character of a particular place, and active programming and management should be integrated into the on-going community planning process and economic development decision-making.

 **Strategy 6.1: Design places that meet the diverse needs of people in all age groups**

What and why. Our region should focus on creating and maintaining places that appeal to diverse groups of people. These places should connect residential neighborhoods and work environments to retail and cultural amenities. They should link public environments to their surrounding communities by both streets and facilities for walking, biking and public transit. They should also include small, attractive parks and plazas with street-oriented retail, arts and cultural attractions and wireless

networks, all while building upon local character and culture. We can build such places and spaces by identifying opportunities for infill housing, retail amenities and healthcare services, and by revamping zoning ordinances, community plans and transportation plans to accommodate transit-connected, mixed-used development that offers a range of needed services and diversified amenities.


	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Identify opportunities for infill housing, retail amenities and healthcare services.	Municipal government	Ongoing
2.	Facilitate, through zoning, mixed-use development projects that incorporate a variety of housing options; as well as retail, healthcare services, public spaces, etc.	Local zoning boards	Short term – then ongoing
3.	Identify and implement improvements to public infrastructure, such as streets, parks and plazas, for accessibility by all users of all capabilities.	Public Works departments	Long term
4.	Incorporate access to health care services in overall community planning and design for connectivity.	Planning Boards	Long term
5.	Amend targeted land use ordinances to achieve Complete Street policies.	Zoning authority	Short – then ongoing
6.	Administer connectivity and multi-modal transportation plans to minimize auto-centric design.	Local government with NJDOT	Long term
7.	Create public-private-nonprofit partnerships to enable wi-fi availability in public spaces.	Municipal government	Short term
8.	Organize and provide technical assistance to individual municipalities to implement transfer of development rights.	Municipal governments, NJOPA	Medium to long term



Strategy 6.2: Create a physical vision for new development based on an understanding of the unique characteristics that define each place

What and why. People like to visit, live, work and play in places that feel special and unique. Therefore, development decisions should take into account the local landscape, customs and history. Development should complement open space, be appropriately scaled for people rather than fast-moving automobiles, and create a cohesive, welcoming environment that encourages people to come and stay in the community. We can accomplish these goals by providing resources for communities to develop vision plans; marketing our region to emphasize its most unique and attractive qualities; educating residents, business owners, community groups and elected officials on the process of developing sustainable design and unique, vibrant places; and appointing officials at the state and local level to oversee design standards and implementation.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Establish funding for vision plans.	Foundations, NJOPA	Short to medium term
2.	Educate a full range of stakeholders about the economic value of quality design and placemaking.	Professional and civic organizations (APA, AIA, NJ Future, etc.).	Medium term
3.	Establish placemaking leadership— Chief of Placemaking at the State level, Chief of Urban Design for large municipalities within their Department of Planning – to oversee development and ensure the integration of placemaking principles.	State and local governments	Short term
4.	Publicize adopted vision statements, market them with tools such as community tag lines, and employ them consistently in relation to projects to enhance character of places.	Local governments/ economic development agencies	Short term




Strategy 6.3: Establish programming and management practices to create active, actively-managed spaces.

What and why. Public spaces can be “activated” by creating programs and attractions that draw people to those places—farmers markets, walks and runs, night-out events, public art festivals, and streetfairs are all examples of ways to activate a public space. Streetscapes, public gathering places and outdoor spaces should be creatively designed, effectively managed, and activated to complement street-oriented retail and arts and cultural facilities. We can foster active spaces by organizing and supporting Business Improvement Districts, prioritizing public space enhancements in municipal infrastructure budgets, and by revamping zoning ordinances to ensure buildings are well integrated with the street, ensuring foot traffic and activity.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Organize and support Business Improvement Districts, Special Improvement Districts, and local merchants associations.	Local government in partnership with local stakeholders	Short term
2.	Prioritize and program public space enhancements into municipal infrastructure budgets.	Public Works Departments	Short term

3.	Apply principles of CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) to promote eyes on the street. See Strategy 12.6.	Local public safety agencies	Short term and ongoing
4.	Establish amenities such as Wi-Fi in downtown public open spaces.	Municipalities	Medium term
5.	Promote active ground level uses that integrate well with the streetscape through zoning and design guidelines.	Zoning authorities	Medium term and ongoing
6.	Establish protocols for periodic review of management processes to address issues as they arise.	Local government	Short term




Strategy 6.4: Locate development in areas that are walkable, bikable, and accessible by public transit

What and why. Local municipalities should ensure that planning and redevelopment efforts create places and spaces that are accessible to surrounding districts by foot and bike—whether they be new or reimagined existing development. This means locating new development in areas that are or can be made walkable and bikable as well as completing pedestrian networks to better link areas of existing development. In places where pedestrian and bike connections do not exist, new public spaces, such as parks and plazas, can provide a framework for adding new infrastructure and fostering biking

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Identify priority locations for investment in the public realm and infill development.	Local planning, economic development, and zoning authorities	Short term and ongoing
2.	Zone to allow for compact and mixed use development.	Local zoning authorities	Short term
3.	Change how mixed use development is assessed for financial risk.	Urban Land Institute, Universities, Financial industry	Long term
4.	Develop material on the benefits of walkable compact development, statistics on the costs and benefits to school districts of mixed-use transit oriented development, and planning for multi-modal access for Planning Board training programs.	Educational institutions and planning professionals	Short term and ongoing

5.	Prepare local connectivity plans that map out the relationship of the pedestrian environment, pedestrian walking desire-lines and destinations; use as a guide to improving pedestrian facilities.	Local Planning Boards	Medium term
6.	Develop zoning design guidelines to require pedestrian facilities as part of development where appropriate.	Local Zoning Authorities	Short term
7.	Prioritize government investment in improvements to pedestrian and bicyclist facilities.	Local governments/Public Works agencies	Long term




Strategy 6.5: Invest strategically in catalyst *spaces*, rather than stand-alone building *projects*

What and why. Catalyst spaces are public areas such as small parks, streets and village centers that are designed in concert with the associated buildings. At their best, these spaces have demonstrated an ability to serve as the focal points for new development, attract private investment and create value for the surrounding community. Communities should approach land use planning and manage the development process by considering the best locations for investing in catalyst spaces. Research into the costs and benefits of public space can bolster this approach. We should also develop public incentives and revamp zoning to encourage development around public spaces, and work to identify strategic investment opportunities.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Sponsor research to determine and document the cost/benefit ratio of investing in public infrastructure (e.g. streets and public open space) in downtown environments.	Universities, professional & trade associations	Medium term
2.	Establish “strategic investment areas” in municipalities.	Local Planning, economic development and zoning authorities	Medium term
3.	Create a toolbox that identifies public incentives and zoning options to advance the implementation of redevelopment projects.	Economic development agencies	Medium term
4.	Develop graduated incentive programs that offer the strongest financial incentives to first-in developers who invest in priority growth areas.	Economic development agencies	Long term

5.	Assess priority growth areas and identify redevelopment opportunities (see Somerset “Great Place” investment program).	NJ Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA)	Long term
----	--	--------------------------------------	-----------



Strategy 6.6: Create the local organizational framework to implement and manage these strategies.

What and why. Creating and sustaining vibrant places and neighborhoods requires the coordinated efforts of many different players at the local level, including developers, property owners, residents, local civic and municipal leaders, with the support of state, county and transit agencies. Supporting and sustaining these complex efforts requires an organizational framework and resources. Toward this end, communities should consider establishing and supporting local organizations like Business Improvement Districts and merchants associations; creating community development corporations and nonprofit real estate development organizations; and fostering partnerships between key organizations and institutions to increase their capacity to attract resources and implement shared development goals.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Work with the region’s leading corporations, local business leaders, and institutions to establish non-profit downtown development corporations that can advance public-private partnerships for infrastructure investment in catalysts places.	Local municipal government; County Economic Development, BAC Business action Center	Short term
2.	Establish new multi-municipal coalitions and governmental associations for local municipalities and community-based organizations to collaborate on addressing regional challenges.	County Economic Development, Foundations such as LISC	Medium term
3.	Develop educational modules on public-private partnerships as part of required Planning Board training programs.	NJ Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA)	Medium term
4.	Facilitate collaboration between the development community, local municipalities, and universities to develop and adopt targeted zoning regulations and streamline development application procedures to facilitate place-based development.	Regional planning agencies in association with universities	Long term

5.	Establish state or foundation grant matching program for municipalities to hire professional staff to manage redevelopment implementation process. Consider making this a pilot action to allow the program to be tested, or identify a foundation program that supports similar work but uses CBO's as the point organizations (see the Wells Fargo Foundation neighborhood planning grants).	NJ Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA), Non-profit foundations	Long term
----	--	--	-----------

