

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 8B: Address barriers to housing mobility, increase access to areas of high opportunity and affirmatively further fair housing policies region-wide ●

What and why. According to federal and state law, people have a right to “fair housing,” meaning everyone, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, family status, disability, ancestry or military status, can secure the housing they want in a neighborhood of their choice. It also means that housing should be structurally accessible to and useable by all persons, particularly people with disabilities. The New Jersey Fair Housing Act states that “municipalities cannot discriminate against low- and moderate-income persons and households. The Supreme Court of New Jersey in its Mount Laurel decisions demands that municipal land use regulations affirmatively afford a reasonable opportunity for a variety and choice of housing, including low- and moderate-cost housing, to meet the needs of people desiring to live there. While provision for the actual construction of that housing by municipalities is not required, they are encouraged but not mandated to expend their own resources to help provide low- and moderate-income housing. (NJAC 52:27D-302 h).

Given that fair housing is a right guaranteed by law, government agencies must take affirmative steps to protect against and eliminate discrimination, and promote housing choice for all persons. But despite decades of governmental efforts to subsidize affordable housing and to address disparities in housing opportunities, North Jersey remains divided. The majority of lower income and minority residents live in the region’s cities and older suburbs, with far less access to the higher quality housing, neighborhoods, public services, schools and employment opportunities enjoyed by white, higher income residents of wealthier suburbs. Our region must tackle the problems of persistent segregated housing patterns and unequal access to opportunity. Not only will doing so improve the lives of tens of thousands of individuals, but it will also improve the region’s long-term economic competitiveness. All of our region’s residents should have a fair chance to find the housing they need where they choose to live. As more people gain access to opportunity, our region as a whole will benefit from greater stability, security, and prosperity.

How. Improving access to well-paying jobs, safe neighborhoods, quality public services and high performing schools will require two key changes. First, our region must increase housing mobility for lower income residents. We must make it easier for low-income residents to move to and afford to live in places where better opportunities exist. Second, our region must improve conditions in the places where lower income residents currently live, and build better connections between these neighborhoods and areas where there are better opportunities. These goals can be achieved by taking steps to ensure fair housing policies and plans are in place and enforced, implementing long-term residential mobility strategies, and using public investment programs to create, connect, and strengthen access to opportunity.


TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY Strategy 8B.1: Affirmatively further fair housing policies region-wide

What and why. Ensuring fair housing polices and plans are in place and enforced requires the establishment of a comprehensive, region-wide assessment process that systematically identifies impediments and barriers to fair housing and the actions needed to eliminate those barriers. Toward this end, counties, municipalities and public housing authorities in our region should work with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs to prepare and routinely update assessments of fair housing that comply with the requirements of state and federal laws and regulations. The assessment processes should ensure transparency and create a stronger link to planned public investments that can promote fair housing and increase access to opportunity. Data and analysis from the Together North Jersey Regional Fair Housing and Equity Assessment should be used to inform these assessments.

To promote regional planning and coordination in fair housing policy, our region should explore the creation of a North Jersey Fair Housing Coalition, similar in structure to those that exist in other regions of the country. Such a group could: help to coordinate fair housing assessments, support investigations of housing discrimination complaints, examine enforcement of fair housing laws, and help coordinate regional initiatives such as mobility counseling and efforts to enhance voucher portability.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Investigate the creation of a North Jersey Fair Housing Council that could coordinate and facilitate the preparation of fair housing assessments region-wide and the implementation of programs and initiatives that have benefits beyond local jurisdictional boundaries.	Non-profits, PHAs	Short term
2.	Increase funding available to non-profits and state agencies to Investigate individual claims of discrimination.	Governor; NJ Office of the Attorney General, Div. of Civil Rights; Fair Housing Councils	Short term
3.	Collect and distribute data required to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, including geographic and financial data on public infrastructure investment in New Jersey and the TNJ region.	HUD; NJDCA, NGOs	Short term
4.	Improve the transparency, comprehensiveness, accuracy and transferability of State and local data sets collected in association with Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing requirements of the Federal and State Fair Housing Acts.	NJDCA	Short term
5.	Prepare and post online an issue brief regarding opportunity mapping. Develop an online portal for delivery of FHEA data sets in customized formats.	Together North Jersey	Short term

6.	Prepare fair housing assessments and implement housing programs that comply with the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Requirements of the Fair Housing Act which ensure transparency, increase the role of the public planning process, and create a stronger link to planned public investments.	Public Housing Authorities and other recipients of HUD funding	Medium term
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Strategy 8B.2: Promote regional housing mobility by fostering innovation in the use of Housing Choice Vouchers

What and why. The tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, has great potential to improve low and moderate-income households’ access to communities with high-performing schools, quality housing and jobs. However, the current structure of the program tends to restrict the low- and moderate-income families who receive vouchers from moving beyond our region’s cities and older suburbs. For example, the way vouchers are allocated provides an incentive to retain users within the jurisdiction of the agency administering the vouchers.

Knowledge of the program among landlords outside of urban areas is limited, so few participate in the program; and services to help program participants understand fully the options available are not readily available or accessed. To achieve the program’s full potential, our region must promote more innovation in how voucher programs are implemented. These innovations should reward public housing authorities that promote regional housing mobility; provide incentives to consolidate administration of programs to optimize limited resources and expand the services available to tenants, such as mobility counseling; and link housing choice vouchers with school funding allocations so that communities that takes steps to promote more inclusive patterns of family housing get more funding to support their schools.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Organize an advocacy campaign to lobby HUD to modify the administration of the Housing Choice Voucher program to promote regional mobility.	NGOs	Medium term
2.	Increase the transferability of Housing Choice Vouchers among public housing authorities to provide more housing options closer to better job and education opportunities.	PHAs	Medium term
3.	Provide Housing Choice Vouchers and low cost loan opportunities to residents facing displacement from gentrification.	PHAs, with support from HUD	Medium term
4.	Increase the use of CDBG program funding to cover costs of housing mobility counseling to both households and landlords.	CDBG recipients	Medium term

5.	Place families using Housing Choice Vouchers into high and maximum Areas of Opportunity.	PHAs	Medium term
6.	Increase administrative fees to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) for Housing Choice Vouchers that assist families in locating in areas of high opportunity.	HUD, with support from PHAs	Medium term
7.	Reduce administrative fees to PHAs for Housing Choice Vouchers that over-concentrate families in low and medium Areas of Opportunity.	HUD, with support from PHAs	Medium term
8.	Update and increase, as appropriate, Fair Market Rent calculations, particularly in areas of High Opportunity, to ensure that HCVs cover monthly rents without need of supplemental rent assistance programs.	HUD with support from NJDCA	Medium term
9.	Link regional Housing Choice Voucher programs with Federal and State public education funding to provide affordable housing in communities with high quality schools.	HUD with support from NJDOE, NJDCA	Medium term
10.	Provide incentives to encourage consolidated administration of Housing Choice Vouchers through consortia of public housing authorities within regions.	HUD, with support from PHAs	Long term
11.	Consolidate and centralize the administration of Housing Choice Vouchers through consortia of public housing authorities within regions.	PHAs with support from HUD	Long term



Strategy 8B.3: Use public investment programs to create, connect and strengthen access to opportunity

What and why. Our region invests hundreds of millions of dollars each year in public infrastructure, transportation, community development, housing, education, workforce development and economic development projects and programs. These funds can be used in innovative ways to help create, connect and strengthen access to opportunity. The agencies and organizations that manage the budgeting and allocation of these funds should develop, adopt and utilize project criteria that give priority to projects that promote fair housing and increase access to opportunity for low-income residents and communities of color. For example, priority can be given to transportation projects that improve transportation options between low-income neighborhoods and job concentrations; or a portion of Low Income Tax Credit investments can be targeted to places where there are more and better job opportunities and high-performing schools. Investment decisions and outcomes should be monitored and evaluated over time to understand the benefits and burdens of various investments, and

<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
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Focus Area 8B: Address barriers to housing mobility, increase access to areas of opportunity and affirmatively further fair housing policies region-wide.

1.	Enforce Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 to ensure that employment and other economic opportunities generated by Federal financial assistance for housing and community development programs are, to the greatest extent feasible, directed toward low- and very low-income persons, particularly those who are recipients of government assistance for housing.	HUD; Recipients of HUD funding	Short term
2.	Offset educational expense with PILOT contributions from subsidized housing developments and residential redevelopment.	Municipalities; Redevelopment agencies, School districts	Short term
3.	Develop leadership capacity of representatives from communities of color and low-income communities where needed to influence infrastructure investments.	NGOs	Short term
4.	Allocate federal Low Income Tax Credits (LIHTC) to emphasize the location of family-oriented affordable housing in higher opportunity suburban communities.	NJHMFA, with support from HUD	Short term
5.	Prepare an Infrastructure Needs Assessment identifying capital projects required to implement the strategies and actions of the TNJ Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA).	NJ Office of Planning Advocacy, with support from State agencies with capital projects, Rutgers-Bloustein	Medium term
6.	Use the Infrastructure Needs Assessment to evaluate the equity of public infrastructure investments in the region, provided that information is made available to determine whether the investments will increase access to opportunity or decrease equal access to opportunity.	NJ Office of Planning Advocacy, with support from All State agencies, Rutgers-Bloustein	Medium term
7.	Apply Choice Neighborhood program concepts to work with institutions and businesses near housing projects to increase local employment and provide neighborhood services and amenities.	HUD, with support from Municipalities, NJEDA, PHAS	Medium term
8.	Create a pilot program that creates incentives to businesses to provide for employer-assisted housing that is accessible to employment centers by walking, bicycle, or public transit.	NJEDA, NJ Business Action Center	Medium term
9.	Review all capital budgets, programs and project plans to determine their impact on FHEA strategies and actions, and give greater priority to resource allocation and timing to programs and projects that affirmatively further fair housing in the TNJ region.	State Agencies	Long term

TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY **Strategy 8B.4: Increase the supply of affordable, accessible housing options for people with disabilities and seniors in appropriate locations**

What and why. Affordable, accessible housing is an important component of making a community more livable for people with disabilities and older adults. Today, 40 percent of our region’s population is between the age of 35 and 64—7 percent more than in 1980. The number of seniors will continue to increase over the next 20 years as the large baby boomer generation ages, and as average life expectancy increases. In addition, according to the 2010 census, nearly 10 percent of New Jerseyans report having at least one type of disability. People with disabilities and the growing number of older adults in our region require a greater supply of housing options with accessibility features such as wider doorways, ramps, lifts and elevators; modified kitchens and grab bars in bathrooms; and increased security. Municipalities, counties and state agencies should identify regional needs for accessible housing. Our region should encourage and/or mandate the inclusion of accessibility features in at least a portion of new housing units, and target a portion of affordable housing program resources to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Municipalities and state agencies should also provide incentives to encourage the construction of more affordable, accessible housing units in locations where residents can walk and take transit to get where they need to go.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Expand supportive services under Medicaid as a potential alternative to providing Special Needs housing. Use Medicaid savings to the State that will result to fund Special Needs housing where feasible and appropriate	Governor and Legislature	Short Term
2.	Review and revise plans, programs and regulations to encourage and/or mandate the inclusion of accessibility features in at least a portion of new housing units.	Municipalities	Short term
3.	Target a portion of affordable housing program resources to meet the needs of people with disabilities.	NJCDA, NJHMFA, PHAs	Short term
4.	Through zoning or redevelopment plans, encourage mixed-use developments or mixtures of land uses that provide opportunities for supportive housing within 1/8 mile of a transit station or stop.	Municipalities	Short term
5.	Use HOME and other program funding and municipal and state housing trust funds to increase the supply of housing options available to low income and special needs populations.	Governor and Legislature	Short Term
6.	Revise zoning to require Universal Design and other appropriate design requirements for accessibility of buildings in all commercial and institutional zones, in all residential zones within ¼ mile of transit stops, and in all age-restricted (55+) housing developments.	Municipalities, NJCDA, NJ Office For Planning Advocacy, NJ	Medium term

		Department of Human Services, PHAs, NGOs	
7.	Incorporate appropriate changes to NJ's Uniform Construction Code affecting new construction and renovation of residential properties to increase the supply and accessibility of housing for people with disabilities and special needs.	NJDCA, NJ Department of Human Services, Municipalities, Developers, NGOs	Medium term
8.	Replenish the currently depleted Special Needs Housing Trust Fund.	Governor and Legislature;	Medium Term
9.	Increase funding for State Rental Assistance Program vouchers (SRAP) since they are needed along with the capital dollars to house these very low income populations.	Governor and Legislature	Medium Term
10.	Research the other federal, state, regional, and local standards and actions that impede increasing the supply and accessibility to housing for people with disabilities and special needs, and identify appropriate changes and priorities.	NJ Department of Human Services Support: NJDCA, NJHMFA, Municipalities, CDBG Recipients, PHAs, Developers, NGOs	Long term

