



# SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

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## MEMORANDUM

**To: Mayors, Elected Officials and Planning Board Chairpersons**

**From: Robert Bzik, PP, AICP, Director of Planning**

**Date: June 26, 2013**

**Re: County Investment Framework Update**

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We are writing to thank you for the valuable contributions made by our municipalities in the development of the “*Somerset County Investment Framework*”, which received award recognition from the NJ County Planning Officials Association and the Sustainable Raritan Collaborative this summer and was featured as a “Best Regional Planning Case Study” by NJ Future this spring. Staff was also given a Special Recognition Award by the County Employee Recognition Committee for our work.

We continue to work on ensuring that the GIS datasets upon which the “*Somerset County Investment Framework*” and associated “asset mapping” are based remain as updated as possible. We continue, for example, to update the zoning, preserved lands, sanitary sewer service area and other datasets so that they can be used to refresh the map at the end of the year. We will be reaching out to you for assistance reviewing these updated datasets for accuracy in the coming months.

It is important to note that the Somerset County Business Partnership’s recently completed “*Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*” works together with the “*Somerset County Investment Framework*” to prioritize investments, and will be adopted as an element of the County Master Plan. In addition, the County is in the process of finalizing its latest study entitled, “*Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Through Access and Mobility Improvements*”, through which transportation improvements that support redevelopment and targeted growth at a series of pilot sites located in the County’s Priority Growth Investment Areas were identified.

The Together North Jersey (TNJ) Steering Committee has been requested to integrate the County Investment Framework into its Sustainable Communities Plan for the 13-County North Jersey Region. An associated Local Capacity Grant provided to the County through the TNJ initiative will be used to create a detailed existing conditions reports for each of the Priority Growth Investment Areas, including an inventory of businesses and industries; the identification of industry clusters present in the county; the establishment of baseline land use characteristics, an assessment of current land use policies and regulations; the identification of infrastructure and utility issues; and opportunities for expanded workforce housing.

The County Investment Framework and each of the above initiatives will inform a follow-up NJTPA- funded Sub-regional Transportation Study that will identify detailed recommendations for transportation improvements, infrastructure investments and land use and zoning options that advance the smart growth concepts in the State Strategic Plan.

Another recent initiative that built upon the concepts of the “*Somerset County Investment Framework*” was the June 7<sup>th</sup> Conference entitled, “*Showcasing Somerset County’s Economic Competitiveness*”. As an outgrowth of this work, the County is seeking to develop site-specific priority investment criteria that can be used to identify the most promising “repositioning” sites that would benefit from focused attention in identifying their reuse and redevelopment potential. This work will involve close collaboration with our municipalities and the Business Partnership.

We look forward to working with you in the coming months on these important initiatives, which continue to garner the attention of state officials from the State Planning Commission, the State Business Action Center and the Governor’s Office.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like more information regarding any of the above.

Sincerely,

Robert Bzik, AICP/P.P.  
Director of Planning

Cc: Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders and Planning Board  
Gerry Scharfenberger, Director, NJ Office for Planning Advocacy  
Michael Kerwin, CEO, Somerset County Business Partnership