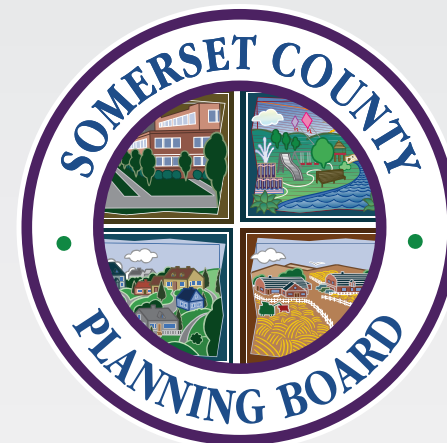




Creating Quality Communities Together



SOMERSET COUNTY **MASTER PLAN**

HOUSING ELEMENT
NOVEMBER 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Somerset County Master Plan - Housing Element* represents an update of, and supersedes the original Housing Element that is contained in the 1987 Somerset County Master Plan. The updated Housing Element is aligned with the Somerset County Investment Framework Map, which identifies areas where policies and investments that support growth and preservation are preferred. The County Investment Framework strives to retain the balance between rural and developed areas necessary for supporting holistic, healthy lifestyles and that enhance “sense of place” at both the regional and local levels. The County Investment Framework, in tandem with the updated Housing Element, recommends focusing residential growth toward the County’s existing developed centers and corridors that possess redevelopment and infill opportunities and that have the infrastructure and community assets needed to accommodate it, while reducing residential development pressure on the County’s remaining farmland, forests and other environmentally sensitive natural resource areas, consistent with the principles of smart growth and sustainable development. The Housing Element advocates for the provision of a broad range of housing types at all levels of affordability, in inclusive neighborhoods and communities; in response to the County’s growing and diversifying population. It supports the preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock, and enhancement of existing neighborhoods. It recognizes the dynamic relationship between housing supply, quality of life and the strength of the economy; and encourages the integration of workforce housing opportunities into redevelopment and infill projects, which can act as a catalyst for community and economic revitalization.

Integration and implementation of this Plan’s goals, objectives and strategies at the local level countywide are encouraged. These goals can be achieved by adopting residential zoning and planning policies that ensure mixed use and residential redevelopment and infill development that complements and enhances surrounding areas in term of architectural style and scale; and is reflective of the character of historic neighborhoods. It promotes the use of site and landscape design strategies that enhance and restore environmental features; incorporate parks and greenway linkages that serve as both recreation and green infrastructure; help connect residents with both urban amenities and nature; and encourage active, healthy lifestyles. The Plan also recognizes that residential redevelopment and infill development can also catalyze the renewal and enhancement of existing aging infrastructure and utility systems in support of making our communities more resilient.

The County Planning Board has a very long history of supporting the County’s municipalities in implementing the State Fair Housing Act. The County’s municipalities have always been proactive in this regard, and continue to work cooperatively with the Courts throughout the Mount Laurel IV process, with the goal of identifying reasonable and realizable updated affordable housing obligations. The value of these efforts in terms of ensuring affordable, safe housing opportunities are available for entry level workers, seniors on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, veterans and others with limited financial resources and/or wage-earning opportunities is recognized by County leaders. The Housing Element supports the establishment of a realistic, simplified policy and regulatory framework governing affordable housing delivery statewide.

The Housing Element includes the following main guiding principles and planning objectives. The numbering system that has been applied below is for reference-purposes and does not reflect prioritization. Together these Guiding Principles and Planning Objectives provide a framework for guiding and shaping sustainable regional and local housing-related plans, policies, programs and investment decisions.

Guiding Principle 1: Respond to the changing needs of the County’s population by encouraging a broad range of housing types at all levels of affordability

Planning Objectives

- 1A. Address the demand for a wide range of supported senior and special needs housing types.
- 1B. Meet the needs of the growing number of both larger and smaller households.
- 1C. Increase the supply of rental and for-purchase housing affordable to low-and moderate-income eligible households and those earning between 80 and 120 percent of median household income.
- 1D. Maximize the utilization, functionality and benefits of the housing stock.
- 1E. Expand alternative housing opportunities.
- 1F. Enable the efficient provision of community-based care and residential support services.

Guiding Principle 2: Create healthy, attractive, walkable neighborhoods with proximity and access to jobs, cultural and recreational amenities, services and transportation choices

Planning Objectives

- 2A. Enhance in-town living and retrofit the suburbs by adding neighborhood amenities and enhancing community assets such as infrastructure, schools, recreation, historic and cultural amenities (particularly within Priority Growth Investment Areas where additional residential growth is encouraged).
- 2B. Maintain and enhance the existing housing stock.

2C. Layer green infrastructure, open space and pedestrian linkages to create attractive walkable neighborhoods and reduce auto dependency.

2D. Promote inclusive communities by providing a wide range of housing choices in all neighborhoods.

2E. Improve neighborhood resiliency and reduce vulnerability and exposure to hazard risks.

2F. Link neighborhoods to the broader community and region.

2G. Promote healthy lifestyles through neighborhood and housing design.

2H. Ensure the architecture and design of new housing enhances surrounding areas and includes pedestrian amenities.

Guiding Principle 3: Align housing policies and strategies with the principles of regional and local smart growth and sustainability

Planning Objectives

3A. Guide residential and mixed-use infill and redevelopment into areas where existing infrastructure, employment, services and other community assets are concentrated (i.e. Priority Growth Investment Areas).

3B. Retain a regional balance between rural and developed areas in accordance with the existing hierarchy of place types and land use categories defined by the Somerset County Investment Framework.

3C. Avoid the adverse impacts of residential development on environmentally sensitive areas, farmland and rural landscapes; and enhance and restore green space within residential and mixed-use areas.

3D. Promote efficient land use patterns and residential densities that provide "economies of scale" necessary for cost-effective infrastructure maintenance, renewal and enhancement.

3E. Encourage residential densities that support transit expansion in areas served by existing transit and where transit improvements are planned.

3F. Encourage development patterns that allow residents to reduce the costs associated with auto-ownership; total vehicular trips and travel time; as well as vehicular pollution and traffic congestion.

3G. Implement coordinated, mutually supportive housing, land use and infrastructure policy, regulatory and investment decisions at all levels of government.

Guiding Principle 4: Maximize the dynamic relationship between housing supply, quality of life and the strength of the economy

Planning Objectives

4A. Expand the workforce and retain and attract employers by increasing the supply of affordable workforce housing.

4B. Use residential and mixed-use redevelopment to return underutilized and vacant properties to productive use and catalyze community revitalization.

4C. Balance residential growth with investments in community and infrastructure support systems.

4D. Strengthen pathways to homeownership and financial opportunities that improve access to quality housing for all residents.

4E. Support property tax reforms that reduce the cost of living and improve economic competitiveness.

Guiding Principle 5: Support efforts to advance the Federal and State Fair Housing Acts and “Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing” requirements

Planning Objectives

5A. Create opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing necessary for meeting the needs of all types of very-low, low- and moderate-income households.

5B. Support the update, adoption and implementation of Municipal Housing Elements and Fair Share Plans.

5C. Match affordable housing solutions to community characteristics and infrastructure and community system capacity; while conserving and protecting environmental, cultural and historic resources.

5D. Locate affordable housing near transportation and other community assets, and expand pedestrian and mobility linkages.

5E. Promote inclusive neighborhoods.

5F. Incentivize the creation of a wide variety of affordable housing options and alternatives.

5G. Reduce homelessness.

5H. Preserve and improve the existing affordable housing stock.

Guiding Principle 6: Enable informed housing policy, regulatory and investment decision-making

Planning Objectives

6A. Maintain and provide access to the best available data and objective information for use by both the public and private sectors on an ongoing basis.

6B. Educate the public and enable communities to respond to changing conditions, needs and opportunities by analyzing and interpreting trends and their impacts on land use planning, the housing stock, residential market conditions, housing needs, policies and programs.

6C. Support fact-based planning, policy and investment decisions by encouraging the use of sound, comprehensive, current and accurate data.

6D. Evaluate existing housing-related policies, programs and regulations utilizing comprehensive, objective information to identify improvements that will help achieve housing and land use goals at all levels of government.

II. INTRODUCTION

The *Somerset County Master Plan – Housing Element* is intended to serve as a guide for informing land use and housing plans, programs, policies and regulations at the state, regional and local levels. It includes general recommendations pertaining to the location, design and composition of the housing stock throughout the County. It is intended to provide a framework for strengthening the County's housing market, overall economy, desirability as a place to live, work and play, and for meeting the needs of current and future residents. The Housing Element encourages the appropriate investment of public and private funds for the provision of infrastructure, services, pedestrian amenities and other neighborhood and community-wide assets necessary for creating safe, sustainable and resilient neighborhoods and communities. The Housing Element brings attention to the hierarchy of communities and variations in land use patterns across the County that makes Somerset County unique in terms of its character and high quality of life; and identifies complementary housing types and densities associated with each of the land use categories represented in the County Investment Framework. The Housing Element encourages the provision of a broad range of housing types at all levels of affordability in diverse neighborhoods and communities. The plan supports preservation and enhancement of the existing housing stock.

The first Housing Element was adopted as part of the Somerset County Master Plan in 1987, and has served the County admirably for the past 30 years. However, significant demographic, economic, environmental, policy and regulatory changes have taken place

since that time. In early 2016, the County Planning Board, in recognition of these changes and the time that has elapsed, conducted a comprehensive "Housing Trends Assessment" for Somerset County. The Assessment Report was completed and made available to municipalities, stakeholders and the general public in July 2016. This report was used to facilitate a dialogue on housing issues and solutions at the state, county and local level; as well as serve as the platform upon which the updated Housing Element is based.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The County Planning Board completed a Housing Trends Assessment Report in 2016, which examines the various forces influencing housing supply and demand that have occurred at the national, state and local levels since the original Housing Element was adopted as part of the Somerset County Master Plan in 1987. The Assessment Report examines the major demographic and socioeconomic trends that are shaping the characteristics of the County's population, communities and economy. It examines changes in the County's housing stock and the forces that underlie these changes. The report also describes the economic forces that have shaped the housing market and are driving residential real estate trends. Planning policy and regulatory changes that address housing issues are described, including federal and state housing policies and regulations; and state and regional land use plans that contain housing related goals and objectives. Emerging planning priorities are also examined. This report was released as a draft for public review and comment during the summer of 2016 and refined based on the feedback that was received. The finalized report was posted on the County's website in October 2016 (please see <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/home/showdocument?id=20804>).

During the proceeding months, the County Planning Division identified the emerging guiding principles, planning objectives and implementation strategies that formed the basis of the updated plan. These draft plan components were presented at various meetings including regularly scheduled monthly meetings of the Somerset County Planning Board held during 2016 and 2017, the regularly scheduled bi-monthly meetings of the County Planning

Board's Housing & Demographics Committee and Master Plan/Land Use Committee beginning in early 2015, and quarterly Planning Partners Forums hosted by the County Planning Division beginning in March 2016. Information about the draft plan was presented at regularly scheduled meetings of the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center Board, the Human Services Advisory Council, the Continuation of Care Committee, Healthier Somerset, the Somerset County Business Partnership and Leadership Somerset in late 2016 and early 2017. In addition, draft components of the plan have been posted on the County Planning Board Website, which were announced to the public via press releases, and several rounds of letters have been sent directly to municipal officials and various stakeholder groups inviting them to review draft documents, attend meetings and provide written input. The draft plan was released for public review following endorsement by the Somerset County Planning Board at its regularly scheduled May 20, 2017 meeting. A press release inviting the public to review the draft plan was posted on the County Planning Division website and published in local newspapers in early June. The press release also advertised a public meeting about the draft plan, which was held on June 28, 2017. The draft plan was refined to reflect comments received during the public review period, and presented to the Planning Board at its regularly scheduled August 15, 2017 meeting. Authorization to hold a public hearing on the draft plan on September 19, 2017 was granted by the Board at this meeting. A public notice announcing the hearing was published in August, concurrent with the release and distribution of the Final Draft Plan for public review. Formal adoption of the updated Housing Element of the Somerset County Master Plan took place on November 20, 2017 at the County Planning Board's regularly scheduled meeting.

IV. HOUSING TRENDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of the key recommendations that have emerged from the Housing Trends Assessment Report prepared by the County Planning Board in 2016 (available at the following link: <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/home/showdocument?id+20804>) and the ensuing public involvement process associated with the development of the updated *Somerset County Master Plan – Housing Element*. New information and recent data acquired as part of the update of the *Somerset County Trends and Indicators Report*, which is currently underway, has been used to support this work as well. The Trends and Indicators Report is a background element of the County Master Plan which was adopted in 2014 and undergoes a comprehensive update process every few years. It is available at the following link: <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/home/showdocument?id=8870>.

A. Monitor Housing-related Trends

The Housing Trends Assessment Report and the changes it recognizes underscore the importance of keeping a finger on the pulse of Somerset County's communities on an ongoing basis. As noted above, the County Planning Board maintains the *Somerset County Trends and Indicators Report*, which serves as a background element of the County Master Plan and resource for regional and local planning. Ongoing monitoring is valuable for understanding how communities are changing in response to local issues as well as broader global, national and regional trends; and the impacts these changes are having on the characteristics and needs of communities, residents, economies and the environment. Understanding changes in the housing market and economy is

needed in order to inform housing policies and programs at all levels of government and to advocate for appropriate private sector responses to changing consumer needs and preferences. The County Planning Division is committed to ensuring access to the best available data and objective information to support land use planning, policy and investment decisions on an on-going basis.

B. React to shifts in Population Growth and Housing Demand

Although New Jersey's population continues to grow, its rate of increase is lower compared to other states and past decades. Furthermore, growth is not occurring evenly across the State. Somerset County sits on the dividing line between New Jersey's counties to the west and south that have been experiencing population and employment losses since 2010, and those to the north and east that are growing, reflecting the major demographic shifts that have occurred during this period. County-level projections show Somerset County is anticipated to remain among the top six (6) growth counties within the state during the next twenty (20) years.

Within Somerset County, growth has not been evenly distributed at the municipal level, and the pattern of growth is changing. The County's older town centers that were previously characterized by flat-growth and even decline have experienced a recent escalation in growth as redevelopment initiatives move ahead. Meanwhile, the growth rates in several of the County's previously booming suburban townships has tapered off in recent years as demand for costly large-lot single family homes has waned. Overarching factors contributing to these changing growth patterns include: 1) the

increase in the number of retirees, millennials and employers leaving New Jersey in search of lower taxes and cost-of-living since the Great Recession; 2) the decline of sprawling suburban office parks, which have become obsolete as technology and business models change; 3) the growing popularity of vibrant walkable communities with transit and other urban amenities among workers and employer; 4) workforce housing shortages, which are linked to the housing market crash and foreclosure crisis that began in 2008; and 5) land use policies that limit the development of rental and attached housing types within employment centers and areas served by transit service.

Somerset County's location within the major highway and rail corridors of the greater New York Metropolitan Area; the County's thriving regional and town centers and commercial corridors; well-maintained neighborhoods; and surrounding bucolic rural landscapes provide a high quality of life. By working together, the County and its municipalities can identify and implement strategies that will ensure Somerset County as a whole remains economically competitive and attractive as a place to live, work and play. The County and its municipalities can build upon the growing popularity of in-town living and mixed-use neighborhoods with the amenities of urban living by

- enhancing downtown areas and surrounding neighborhoods;
- retrofitting single-use corporate office parks and nearby suburban areas;

- encouraging compact, mixed-use transit-oriented infill and redevelopment through strategic land use and infrastructure investment decisions;
- incorporating safe, inviting multi-use green spaces into neighborhoods;
- providing convenient residential access (especially pedestrian linkages) to jobs, services and amenities; and
- supporting healthy lifestyles (i.e. by integrating community gardens, farmers markets and other health-promoting assets into neighborhood design).

Adopting housing policies and land use strategies at the state, regional and local levels that will support the provision of a range of housing types; meet the needs of younger generations entering the workforce and housing market; as well as address the needs of existing residents, including seniors, is vital to achieving this goal.

C: Respond to the Impacts of Fluctuations in the Housing Market and Economy

The housing market crash that occurred in 2007, together with the Great Recession, which ended in October 2009, resulted in a number of financial setbacks for communities, households and individuals. These factors caused a drop in family incomes, an increase in poverty rates, a reduction in household wealth, and increased difficulties affording rent and making mortgage payments. The aftermath of the Great Recession continues to be felt today, particularly in New Jersey, where the economic recovery has lagged behind most of the nation and where foreclosure rates remain among the highest nationally. Many homeowners have been faced with upside-down mortgages (current home values are less

than the original purchase price), which some can no longer afford to pay. Foreclosures represent a loss of household assets and mortgage credit, in addition to losing one's home. Foreclosures are a drain on neighborhood vitality and a destabilizing force. They curtail mobility within the housing market, which is evidenced by reduced demand for large single-family suburban homes. Somerset County is among a handful of growing counties where the economic recovery was stronger than the rest of the State. Yet, foreclosure risks remain high for households that have become under-employed or that have gone from having two wage earners to just one per household. Foreclosures indirectly impact the growing number of suburban empty-nesters and young retirees on fixed incomes who are interested in downsizing to smaller more manageable housing types within their communities as their needs change. Residents in some high-end suburban markets are having a hard time finding buyers and recouping their investments; and are also having a hard time finding more suitable housing options. Many are being forced to remain in larger homes that are increasingly difficult for them to maintain and afford.

Income levels in Somerset County remain higher than almost all other counties in the state, and Somerset County consistently ranks among the top ten wealthiest counties nationally. However, there are wide income disparities among households and communities across the State and Somerset County, resulting in increasing concentrations of poverty in distressed and disadvantaged neighborhoods in both suburban and urban areas across the State. As part of the 2015 Together North Jersey (TNJ) Regional Plan, Rutgers researchers worked with HUD to utilize HUD's new Assessment of Fair Housing Model to identify areas where poverty,

minority groups and other disadvantaged groups are concentrated. According to the TNJ Regional Fair Housing and Equity Assessment, approximately half of the County's municipalities contain one or more block groups identified as "Communities of Concern"; and a total of 132,492 people (based on the 2010 Census) live in a Community of Concern in Somerset County.

The Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County, Phase I Study completed by the County Planning Board in 2015 identifies the high cost of living as a major challenge to Somerset County employers and workers alike. The high cost of living makes it very difficult for entry-level workers, retirees and other lower-income households to live in Somerset County; while leaving them with less disposable income. A growing proportion of households struggle to afford basic necessities. To complicate matters, pay scales have not kept pace with inflation. The greatest employment growth in the County is projected to occur in relatively low wage occupations including healthcare and social assistance, retail, and accommodations/food services. The Phase I Study notes that the long-term strength of the County's economy will depend upon ensuring an adequate supply of quality housing (both rental and for-purchase), which is affordable to both low- and moderate-income workers; as well as those whose incomes are above State income eligibility thresholds but still below the threshold needed to meet basic household needs. These issues are compounded by the fact that property taxes in New Jersey continue to be the highest in the nation, and add to the financial burden that households face. Statewide solutions are needed that work across city and suburban areas including but not limited to targeted investments and incentives aimed at promoting redevelopment and revitalization

projects in all areas of the State that include affordable housing; and by implementing mobility strategies that open up opportunities to housing choices, jobs and services for lower-income households.

Today's Millennial Generation (those born between 1977 and 1994) has less financial flexibility, making it harder for them to address the multitude of costs associated with homeownership. Therefore, the greatest current demand is for affordably-priced rental housing. The private sector is responding with recent residential development dominated by multi-family rental housing types across the County. However, rental housing costs remain high, and more needs to be done to ensure a portion of all new rental housing being created is reserved for lower-income households. Homeownership provides residents with financial benefits including tax advantages, borrowing power, and equity growth. Therefore, policies that will allow the conversion of some units from rental to for-purchase/sale in response to improving financial conditions and increases in homebuyer demand should be implemented following periods when new housing construction is dominated by rental housing types. In order to provide this type of flexibility in the housing stock, new rental units should be designed to include key amenities typically found in for-purchase units.

The long-term strength of the County's economy will depend on ensuring an adequate supply of quality housing options (both for sale and for rent), which is affordable to low-and moderate income households, down-sizing retirees and new entrants to the housing market and work force. Pockets of poverty exist throughout the State, including within Somerset County, highlighting the need for regional solutions that work across urban and suburban areas. These include, but not limited to, targeting investments that

improve and revitalize distressed neighborhoods; implementing mobility strategies that expand access to affordable housing, jobs and services; and adopting state and local policies that support the development of new affordable housing opportunities near employment, transit and community services. Policies and strategies that will reduce property tax burdens, particularly on low- and moderate-income households who spend a greater proportion of their incomes on housing are also needed.

D. Create a Variety of Affordable Housing Options

It has become increasingly difficult for younger generations that are newly entering the housing market to attain homeownership because of changes in the structure of the economy, housing market and finance industry; the high cost of living in Somerset County; and the more constrained personal finances that many face (due to high outstanding college loans and other debts). The pool of first-time home buyers looking for starter homes has been replaced with an increase in households seeking affordable rental housing. Today, both rental costs and home prices are outpacing wage levels. The interrelationship between the availability of affordable housing choices and the County's economic vitality and competitiveness is of growing importance. The degree to which more affordable rental and for-purchase housing types can be added to the housing stock will have a direct impact on the ability to retain and attract younger workers as well as enable long-term residents to stay in Somerset County. By addressing affordable workforce housing shortages within the County, more people will be able to live closer to places of employment within the County,

allowing them to avoid long commute distances, reduce roadway congestion, decrease vehicular emissions and save energy.

The number of smaller empty-nester households is rising as the number and proportion of the County's households that include individuals 65 years of age and over continues to rise. Younger retirees are fueling demand for multi-family residential opportunities (apartments, condominiums, accessory units, etc.) within the County, as this age group tends to prefer smaller, more manageable housing types (both in terms of cost and maintenance requirements) with convenient access to community services, transportation and amenities. The high cost of living and lack of appropriate housing choices is making it difficult for many retirees to remain in their home-towns. An increased supply of reasonably-priced multi-family housing opportunities will also benefit seniors, the local organizations and communities they serve, and the nearby businesses they support.

Refinements to State and local affordable housing plans, policies and programs that increase the amount of affordable alternative housing such as home-sharing, accessory apartments and long-term boarding houses (including but not limited to affordability controls, affirmative marketing requirements and facility licensing standards) could make it easier for municipalities to count these types of housing toward meeting the requirements of both the State Fair Housing Act and the diverse needs of the County's population. Refinements to State and local regulations, building and zoning codes and incentive programs could potentially increase the number of rooming and boarding opportunities and accessory dwelling units, and make it easier to both establish and maintain high-quality alternative and supported housing options that are

safe, efficient and well-operated; and that complement surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition to providing housing that is affordable to income-eligible households pursuant to the State Fair Housing Act, workforce housing is needed that is attainable by those whose incomes are above these eligibility limits, but still struggle to afford housing close to their places of employment. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines workforce housing as affordable to households earning 80 to 120 percent of median household income.

E. Advance Smart Growth and Sustainable Community Principles

Development patterns consistent with the principles of smart growth and sustainable development have increased in importance and correlate directly to the kinds of communities that are in greatest demand. *The Somerset County Master Plan – County Investment Framework Map*, adopted in 2014 as an update of the County's 1987 Land Use Management Map, is based upon these principles. Increasing housing choices and opportunities within mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods is a high priority. Linkages between the County Investment Framework and the Housing Element are described in Chapter V. Mixed-use walkable neighborhoods offer residents greater proximity and access to jobs, cultural and recreational amenities, services and mass transit. The shift to compact, mixed-use development forms can lead to efficiencies at the household, community and regional levels. For example, transit-oriented infill and redevelopment allows residents to avoid the costs associated with auto ownership and reduces both

travel time and total vehicular trips. Furthermore, the average per-capita cost of maintaining roads, water and sewer systems have been shown to be lower in higher-density urban areas compared to sprawling suburban areas. Potential changes to zoning codes include but are not limited to the addition of mixed-use provisions; allowance for higher floor-area ratios (FARs), higher permitted multi-family residential housing densities, form-based zoning and the use of the NJ Redevelopment and Housing Act. Focusing higher-density residential land uses within redevelopment and infill areas that are already served by transportation and utilities is consistent with the County Investment Framework and can reduce development pressure on greenspace and protect the environment countywide. Environmentally sensitive design principles can also be applied to protect and restore local and site-specific environmentally sensitive features. Sustainable Jersey has developed a “*Model Green Development Checklist*” aimed at assisting local government entities in understanding a development’s sustainable aspects and its impact on the community; as well for implementing green design. Use of a green development checklist is another strategy that can enhance the sustainability of residential infill development and redevelopment. Information about creating a Green Development Checklist can be found at the following link: <http://www.sustainablejersey.com/actions-certification/actions/#open/action/483>.

The most sustainable way for municipalities to grow is through redevelopment. Compact, mixed-use redevelopment strategies can maximize infrastructure investments, revitalize neighborhoods, restore degraded environmental assets, and improve both the local

and regional economies. The County Investment Framework Map calls for focusing growth in “Priority Growth Investment Areas” where existing development and the infrastructure and services necessary to support growth are already concentrated. The County’s residents highly value the remaining rural landscapes, farms, forests and riparian areas that contribute to Somerset County’s character and quality of life. Guiding residential growth to the County’s Priority Growth Investment Areas in accordance with the County Investment Framework (see <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/master-plan>) reduces development pressure on the County’s Priority Preservation Investment Areas; curtails inefficient development patterns; preserves farmland and open space, maximizes public and private sector infrastructure investments; promotes co-location of new jobs with growth in the local labor force; and increases energy efficiency and overall community sustainability.

Somerset County and many of its municipalities have embraced the NJ Department of Transportation’s (NJDOT) Complete Street Policy, which was finalized in 2009. Somerset County adopted a Complete Streets Policy in 2016. This policy requires that future roadway improvement projects include safe accommodations for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and the mobility-impaired. This policy is being implemented at the State, County and municipal levels through planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of new or rehabilitated transportation facilities within public right-of-ways that are federally- or state-funded. In addition to improving safety for the traveling public, complete streets provide connections to bicycling and walking trip

generators such as employment and retail centers, residential uses, neighborhoods, parks and recreation facilities; and are “context sensitive” (consistent with scale, character and types of land uses along the corridor). Complete Streets promote healthy lifestyles, economic development and livable communities. Public sector investments in Complete Street initiatives can leverage private sector investments in mixed-use workforce housing/commercial redevelopment of vacant and underutilized sites within the County’s Priority Growth Investment Areas.

F. Support Inclusive Communities

The County’s population, much like that of the State and nation, continues to become more racially and ethnically diverse as a result of international migration, which is the primary force contributing to population growth. U.S. Census data shows that young adults are leaving the State at a higher rate than any other cohort, followed by new retirees. Despite this out-migration, Somerset County, like the State, continues to grow, due to international immigration and natural increases. Communities throughout the County can be strengthened by embracing the growing diversity of the population and promoting strategies that will support vibrant, inclusive communities and attract a highly talented workforce.

Newcomers and young entrants into the County’s labor force and housing market share similar characteristics and preferences as many new retirees and independent senior households. They prioritize housing affordability and access to transportation, services, recreational amenities and jobs. Since many of the needs of these generations are similar, the creation of intergenerational communities that bring residents together by providing a variety of

high-quality, compact attached housing types through infill and redevelopment in the County’s Priority Growth Investment Areas is supported, as well as by expanding alternative housing choices. Greater application of universal design features will also facilitate intergenerational living because it offers expanded access to housing for residents of all abilities and at various life cycle stages.

With the increase in popularity of compact attached housing types such as condominiums, townhouses, the form of ownership in which some property in a development is owned in common by all owners in the development has grown, and continues to expand throughout Somerset County and the State. While this form of ownership offers many benefits to residents, including shared maintenance and management costs, it is important that homeowner/condominium owner associations follow all associated rules and regulations enacted by the State of New Jersey and the Federal Government and that their bylaw processes follow these regulations. Association rules and regulations are aimed at ensuring the health, safety, welfare and enjoyment all residents, and should be fairly and transparently enforced through an open governance process in accordance with the NJ Common Interest Community and Homeowners Association Act (N.J.S.A. 46:8B1 et seq) and other applicable laws and regulations. Association fees, annual budgets, maintenance and capital improvement projects should be clearly established by and conform to the association by-laws and applicable laws and regulations; and the routine monitoring of financial records should be reported and made available for member review. A comprehensive review and update of the above-referenced State rules and regulations, and corresponding update of the NJ Department of Community Affairs guidelines and guidance

documents aimed at assisting associations in identifying and implementing new or retrofitting existing improvements such as cost-effective pedestrian amenities, transit linkages, green infrastructure strategies and other improvements that promote healthy lifestyles, sustainability and resiliency are recommended.

G. Meet the Needs of Seniors and Others with Special Needs

The elderly portion of the County's population is also increasing consistent with state and national trends. Changes in Federal and State Human Service and Medicaid policies require community integration of supported living opportunities for people with disabilities. These trends, together with changing policies affecting de-institutionalization, long term and community-based care and alternative living opportunities require a variety of new and innovative "aging in place" and "special needs" housing and service delivery solutions. These solutions can be designed to help minimize homelessness in the County; and should align with the Federal "Home and Community-based Services" Rule. Ongoing efforts to better understand the needs of the homeless population and their service requirements are supported. This will help government and non-profit service providers develop holistic policies and strategies that enable homeless individuals to become better integrated, functioning members of the community.

The New Jersey Fair Housing Act and associated Council on Affordable Housing's (COAH) Substantive and Procedural Rules allowed for up to 25% of new affordable units to be age-restricted. As a result, senior housing became a preferred solution for addressing affordable housing obligations by many municipalities.

As of 2014, 32 of the 126 inclusionary and municipality-supported affordable housing projects in the County included age-restricted units. By the mid-2000s, an oversupply of senior independent living options became evident and age restrictions were lifted from a handful of affordable housing projects to address market demand units that were non-age restricted. On the other hand, the demand for affordable supported living opportunities remains high. A few municipalities have been successful in negotiating for the set-aside of beds (often 10%) within some assisted living facilities for low- and moderate- income seniors during the development review process. However, few new assisted living facilities have been proposed in recent years. Policies and programs that facilitate the conversion of additional existing market-rate assisted living facility beds to low- and moderate-income beds are needed.

Many municipalities in Somerset County have partnered with non-profit special needs housing and service providers to create supported group homes that meet the special needs of people with disabilities. Over 100 group homes that serve over 540 individuals with disabilities have been created as of 2015, which are located in all types of neighborhoods across the County. The majority of these group homes fall under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS). According to the April 17, 2015 Statewide Transition Plan, the DHS's Community Care Waiver Program serves more than 10,700 individuals with developmental disabilities statewide in licensed residential settings including group homes, supervised apartments and other supported housing programs. However, DHS's extensive waiting lists serves as an indication that the demand for special needs housing far exceeds supply, as a result of population growth, national and state

deinstitutionalization policies and recent changes to Federal Medicaid community-based care policies and programs. The new Statewide Transition Plan requires new housing for persons with disabilities to be located in areas that offer opportunities for community engagement and are integrated among other private residences near business and community services and amenities. Disabled persons receiving Federal and State assistance are also to be given expanded opportunities to live in either licensed or unlicensed independent housing under the new plan.

The oversight of alternative living facilities such as group homes serving residents with special needs, as well as their service providers, is necessary and important to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their residents, many of whom are medically frail and vulnerable, and to prevent neighborhood disruptions. Pedestrian amenities and transit linkages that make it safer and easier for residents with mobility constraints to enjoy the outdoors and access community services and amenities should be a required for all alternative living facilities.

H. Address the Needs of Households at Both Ends of the Household Size Spectrum

Shifts in household types affect housing demand as well. The growing number of single-person households represents demand for smaller, affordable rental housing types; while at the other end of the spectrum, the County is also experiencing growth in the number of larger households as multigenerational and alternative household living arrangements become more common, resulting in increased demand for larger homes with flexible floorplans.

The high cost of private assisted living facilities and continuing care retirement communities make these options out of reach for many elderly people and those with disabilities. They have to rely on family and friends to address their supported living and long-term care needs, adding to the growing popularity of multi-generational households. This trend indicates the need for policy changes that will allow modifications to existing homes to better accommodate multi-generational households, which can promote more efficient use of the current oversupply of large single-family detached homes in some areas of the County. Strategies such as home-sharing, the provision of accessory apartments within existing single-family homes and other approaches that blend with and enhance neighborhoods are encouraged, in order to increase housing choices and opportunities for these growing housing demand segments. Policies that promote the inclusion of affordably-priced larger attached rental housing types such as three and four bedroom apartments with two full baths would help to address the growing needs of larger households for whom homeownership is not attainable. This trend is also increasing demand for community-based support systems that aid family members and friends in providing needed services and assistance to the elderly and disabled individuals they care for.

The increasing proportion of small (one-person) households is also causing shifts in housing demand, increasing the need for small rental apartment types and other alternative living options such as accessory apartments, home-sharing, rooming and boarding homes and other options. Refinements to State and local regulations, municipal master plans and building and zoning codes could potentially increase the supply of accessory dwellings and

alternative housing types, and make it easier to ensure their quality and safety.

I. Support Municipalities in Meeting their State Fair Housing Act Requirements

Municipalities in New Jersey have a statutory obligation to provide affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households pursuant to the State Fair Housing Act of 1985. Enormous progress has been made by the County's municipalities in addressing the first and second round of affordable housing obligations in accordance with the NJ Council on Affordable Housing's substantive and procedural rules. However, the State has experienced a period of uncertainty with regard to State affordable housing policy and associated third-round municipal fair-share obligations; which is currently being addressed through the Courts in response to the Supreme Court's March 10, 2015 Mount Laurel IV Decision. The need for more affordable housing statewide and within Somerset County is unquestioned; however the actual number of affordable housing units municipalities should be obligated to accommodate is currently being debated. It is critical that the all of the elements that contribute to the creation of healthy, safe, quality places to live, work and play are taken into consideration during this process, including but not limited to

- housing market and economic conditions;
- environmental impacts;
- infrastructure, transportation and utility capacity;

- education, healthcare, recreation and other community services and assets;
- local employment opportunities; and
- transit and pedestrian mobility alternatives.

Municipalities are encouraged to continue to address their affordable housing obligations in ways that enhance quality of life, respect the environment and strengthen community sustainability. The establishment of State policies that ensure obligations are reasonable and actionable are supported; along with implementation strategies that are consistent with regional and local smart growth and sustainable development principles, including the *Somerset County Investment Framework*.

Continued cooperation and collaboration among public and private sector leaders and organizations is encouraged. State affordable housing policies can be made more effective by taking into consideration the challenges faced by both the public and private sectors. By working together, long-term policy solutions to the shared responsibility of providing adequate affordable housing opportunities that meet current and future needs can be identified. The establishment of equitable, effective affordable housing policies at the state level is needed to ensure that affordable housing requirements are addressed in a way that contributes to high quality, sustainable, resilient neighborhoods and communities.

J. Incorporate Workforce Housing as an Economic Growth Catalyst

The number of Somerset County residents in their prime working years (ages 25 – 54) has been declining and is projected to continue

to decline. Like the State, out-migration is impacting the County's labor force which jeopardizes economic growth and community stability. As noted previously, the high cost of living, including high housing costs, changing lifestyle preferences, and comparably less favorable taxation policies are some of the reasons young adults/new entry-level workers are leaving. There has also been a growing tendency for New Jersey-born young adults to attend out-of-state colleges and universities, which are often more affordable than those in-state. Many are choosing to pursue careers elsewhere upon graduation for the reasons stated above. This "brain-drain," if unabated, may result in labor shortfalls as older residents retire and there are insufficient replacement workers available; putting New Jersey and Somerset County at a competitive disadvantage and dampening economic growth. Increasing the supply of affordable workforce housing in vibrant, mixed-use walkable neighborhoods is one of the most effective ways to reverse this trend and is needed to boost the ability of local businesses to recruit and retain a quality talent pool.

One of the greatest opportunities for increasing the supply of affordable and workforce housing opportunities in the County lies in the oversupply of vacant and/or underutilized office, industrial and commercial space. Many of these underutilized sites are in prime locations, are well served by transit and utilities, are in close proximity to community assets, and are within the County's Priority Growth Investment Areas. By including a residential component in the re-use and redevelopment of these sites, housing can become a catalyst for the economic revitalization of these sites and surrounding areas; and for restoring existing degraded environmental assets. Redevelopment and re-use of these

properties is a valuable mechanism for accommodating residential and economic growth in a manner that is also consistent with the principles of smart growth, community sustainability and the County Investment Framework. Municipalities wishing to encourage sustainable economic growth and long-term resiliency can refine land use plans and zoning policies; as well as adopt redevelopment plans that allow for a mix of land uses at increased densities in areas served by transit, utilities and community services. Improving multi-modal linkages between employment and housing nodes; and co-locating residential and employment opportunities and community amenities can increase walking and biking, create opportunities for social interaction, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and limit commuting times and costs. These recommendations align with the priorities identified in the *Somerset County Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*, adopted as an element of the County Master Plan in 2014; wherein the highest economic priorities are to strengthen business resources and services, re-use significant vacant and underutilized properties, and reduce the regulatory burden through simplified customer-oriented permitting and approval processes. Medium CEDS priorities include workforce development and delivery, improved transportation and commuting, hazard mitigation, and enhancing quality of life.

K. Preserve the Existing Affordable Housing Stock

Given the enormous public investment communities have made, and continue to make in meeting their New Jersey Fair Housing Act obligations, affordable housing itself has become a valuable community asset that warrants careful monitoring and preservation. Programs that support the maintenance and

rehabilitation of the existing affordable housing stock are encouraged. Strategies that ensure that units remain affordable, such as the application, extension and enforcement of deed restrictions that comprise affordability controls are supported. Likewise, it is important that local housing trust funds collected by the County's municipalities are spent in a timely and efficient manner and benefit local residents. These funds can be used to preserve the existing affordable housing stock. Housing plans and policies at the local and county levels should align with existing and new state and national housing policies, including the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" requirements so that alternative living facilities for individuals with special needs remain viable for the long-term.

L. Promote Community Resiliency and Sustainability

Among the most pressing issues facing the County today, community resiliency and sustainability top the list. Resilient communities are better able to bounce back from disasters and disruptions in a sustainable way and maintain a good quality of life for all. Many counties and cities across the United States have begun to integrate resiliency actions into their plans, policies and programs so that they are better able to respond to extreme weather, energy and water supply issues and economic challenges. Sustainability and resiliency-based economic, land use, infrastructure and environmental policies; green building and low-environmental impact design and engineering strategies; and solutions that will reduce exposure of both people and property to hazards such as flooding, severe storms and associated prolonged

power outages and disruptions to communication, transportation, water and wastewater systems are strongly encouraged. As the cost differential between traditional and green building standards continues to decline, the implementation of green building strategies will become increasingly more common and visible. The incorporation of energy efficiency and conservation strategies along with renewable energy systems as part of residential development and redevelopment projects will help reduce carbon emissions and other air pollutants; reduce energy costs for property owners and tenants; and addresses the increasing demand for high-performance buildings associated with a growing pool of more environmentally conscious housing consumers. Similarly, the incorporation of water conservation measures in new residential development and redevelopment projects will help reduce the strains on the potable water supply system, which is especially important during periods of reduced rainfall and drought; while reducing water bills for property owners and tenants. The application of LEED and green building standards also result in healthier indoor living environments. More information about residential sustainability best practices is available through U. S. Green Building Council New Jersey (see <https://usgbcnj.org/>).

The implementation and enforcement of residential building codes and standards including but not limited to electrical and fire safety protection standards and that prevent over-crowding remain equally important.

The County is currently embarking on an update of the Countywide Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). The new plan will be informed by and linked to the County Master Plan Housing Element by promoting hazard mitigation strategies that avoid

exposure of the County's residents, businesses, community facilities and environmental assets to the risks associated with flooding, severe weather, temperature extremes and other natural hazards. The updated HMP will include recommended policies, projects and initiatives aimed at strengthening the housing stock, removing and keeping homes and residents out of harm's way, and ensuring that critical communication, power and utility systems remain operational during times of crisis. Long-term strategies for reducing flooding, including the integration of green infrastructure into new development and redevelopment projects and restoring degraded environmental assets are promoted. Communities must also identify effective emergency preparedness measures, educate the public on risks from natural and man-made hazards and increase residents' awareness of mitigation, response and recovery activities. The vulnerability assessment included in the HMP can be used to support appropriate land use policies and acquisition investment decisions; and the application of stronger building standards that will improve the resiliency of the built environment.

Minimizing the adverse impacts of human activity on the environment, while maximizing societal and economic benefits, is a central theme of the sustainable communities movement, which is being advanced across the State by *Sustainable Jersey*, a non-profit organization that provides training and financial incentives to support communities as they pursue sustainability programs. The Somerset County Green Leadership Hub, which is comprised of County and local representatives, was formed in 2015 to support municipal efforts to implement sustainable actions and achieve *Sustainable Jersey* certification. In 2008, New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law was amended to include a "Green Building and

Environmental Sustainability Element" in the list of allowable master plan elements. Local government entities are encouraged to add this new element to their master plans, which is aimed at providing for, encouraging and promoting the efficient use of natural resources and the installation and use of renewable energy systems. The Environmental Sustainability Element also takes into consideration the impacts of buildings on the local, regional and global environment; and strategies that allow ecosystems to function naturally; conserve and reuse water; treat stormwater on site; and optimize climate conditions through site orientation and design. This plan element is intended to guide land use decisions and provide the basis for ordinances addressing sustainability concepts.

Concerns about the finite nature of fossil fuels, associated greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, public health, and rising energy costs are driving the development of new renewable, clean energy and energy conservation technology and policy solutions. These concerns are transforming the way communities, buildings, infrastructure systems and transportation vehicles are designed, powered, constructed, maintained, and operated. The application of high-performance, green building principles together with actively planning for sustainable communities have emerged as important drivers of regional and local land use policy throughout New Jersey and nationwide. The regulatory framework and home-building industry is responding by integrating more resilient, resource efficient and environmentally responsible designs, technologies and materials. For example, the NJ Department of Community Affairs formally adopted the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) in September 2015, which is increasing

the numbers of high-performance homes entering the market. In addition to energy savings and air quality improvements, the following positive outcomes can also be realized by integrating green infrastructure and low-impact design strategies into new residential and mixed-use redevelopment projects: stormwater runoff can be mitigated, groundwater reserves can be recharged, urban heat island effects can be reduced, ecological functioning of degraded environmentally sensitive areas can be restored, and open space amenities that promote active lifestyles can be provided. In addition to becoming more sustainable, the integration of green building best practices will help the housing stock evolve toward becoming more cost-efficient in terms of energy and water savings, which is of particular benefit to lower-income households.

M. Encourage a “Health in All Policies” Framework

Somerset County ranks within the top five New Jersey Counties with regard to health factors and outcomes according to the *2015 NJ Health Gaps Report* provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. However, the Report shows there is still considerable room for improvement, particularly with regard to social and economic factors (unemployment, income inequality, children in single-parent households, and crime) and the physical environment (severe housing problems and long commutes - driving alone). Planners and policy makers are encouraged to use a “Health in All Policies” framework in the process of establishing new state and local housing policies and community support programs as a strategy for addressing health gaps. Housing is one of several key public health determinants. Health considerations should shape residential building codes, ordinances and housing policies.

Keeping health considerations in the forefront of local and regional land use planning and implementation decisions can promote healthy communities and environments, as well as improve living and working conditions.

Economic wellbeing is one of the most critical determinants of health. Living in poverty is associated with significantly worse health outcomes across all population groups, which is why access to quality affordable housing in high cost-of-living areas can be a key health determinant. Updated rooming and boarding home regulations and standards aimed at improving the health and safety of residents, coupled with increased monitoring and oversight, are needed to increase the viability of this form of alternative housing as a strategy for addressing affordable housing needs. Neighborhood characteristics also have significant health impacts. The well-being of residents that live in neighborhoods with safe parks and green space, and that have lower crime rates and access to healthy retail food options is substantially improved as compared to those who live in neighborhoods with opposite characteristics. Properly located and well-designed residential development and redevelopment can ensure healthy living environments; reduce exposure to flooding, pollution and other hazards; and increase pedestrian access to community assets such as parks, schools and health care facilities. Increased utilization of *Health Impact Assessments*, a tool for integrating health in all policies considerations into the development of housing policies, programs and initiatives is recommended. *Health Impact Assessments* can also be applied when planning and designing of new housing development and redevelopment projects to improve residents’ health outcomes.

The context-sensitive application of “*Complete Street*” principles will also improve public health, safety and quality of life, especially in mixed-use neighborhoods and communities. The establishment of programs that support the creation of “ladders of opportunity” by connecting people to housing, employment, education, services and other opportunities are encouraged, consistent with the United States Department of Transportation’s (DOT) *Ladders of Opportunity Initiative* aimed at connecting individuals and communities to economic opportunities. This Initiative promotes transportation infrastructure that can revitalize neighborhoods and regions; provide safe, reliable and affordable connections to employment, education, health care and other essential services; and create jobs and business opportunities.

N. Build upon Prior State and Regional Planning Initiatives

As part of the process of updating the Housing Element, the 1987 Housing Element was compared with the housing aspects of the major state and regional planning initiatives that influence land development decisions, infrastructure investments and environmental policies in the County, including the *Somerset County Investment Framework Element* of the *Somerset County Master Plan*, the *Together North Jersey Plan* which was completed in 2016; the *State Development and Redevelopment Plan* adopted by the State Planning Commission (SPC) in 2001, the *Final Draft State Strategic Plan* prepared by the New Jersey Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA) in 2012 and the *Highlands Regional Master Plan* adopted in 2008. Many of the recommendations, goals and strategies contained in the County’s 1987 Housing Element have

been found to be consistent with these plans as well; and have been carried forward into the updated Housing Element. These state and regional plans contain a number of additional recommendations, goals and strategies that remain relevant today, which have been taken into consideration during the housing element update process. By enhancing the County’s Housing Plan Element to reflect the assessment results and recommendations, it has become more closely aligned with these plans. The alignment of land use and investment plans and policies and strategies at all levels of government supports greater collaboration and the leveraging of resources and investments in order to address local and regional priorities and achieve shared goals.

V. LINKAGES TO THE COUNTY INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

The *Somerset County Investment Framework* (CIF) Map was adopted by the Somerset County Planning Board as an update of the 1987 *County Master Plan – Land Use Management Map*. The CIF builds upon the smart growth principles embedded in the 1987 Master Plan, and thereby strengthens and reinforces the County’s long-established local and regional land use priorities. The primary purpose of the CIF is to align land use planning and policies at the state, county and local levels; and enable effective resource allocation, coordination and cooperation among all jurisdictions and the private sector in order to achieve vibrant communities, economic revitalization and environmental protection. The CIF is intended to serve as the overarching geographic framework for identifying and prioritizing projects and infrastructure investments that will strengthen community and regional sustainability. The CIF represents a hierarchical framework for community, economic and residential land use intensities, ranging from the higher-density mixed-use Priority Growth Investment Areas (PGIAs), where investments that support redevelopment and growth are preferred; to Alternate Growth Investment Areas (AGIAs) and Local Priority Areas (LPAs), which are dominated by existing small town and village centers and residential suburbs; to low-density residential Limited Growth Investment Areas (LGIAs); and Priority Preservation Investment Areas (PPIAs), where preservation of rural landscapes, farmland, environmentally sensitive features and open space areas are the highest priority. The following table describes existing residential development characteristics and recommended housing types and scales that are best suited for each of these land use categories:

HOUSING ELEMENT - SOMERSET COUNTY INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK CROSSWALK			
INVESTMENT AREA	EXISTING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS	RECOMMENDED TYPE AND SCALE	SAMPLE BEST PRACTICES
Priority Growth: Centers for regional and community-focused economic and civic activity, where primary economic growth and community development strategies that enhance quality of life and economic competitiveness are preferred; and where appropriate growth inducing investments	Mixed-density mixed-use centers and neighborhoods that include a variety of housing types at all levels of affordability; are well served by public sewer, water and transit systems; are in close proximity to jobs, services, civic, cultural and recreational amenities; contain redevelopment and reuse opportunities; and where living in vibrant, walkable , live-work-play environments with convenient access is preferred.	Medium to higher density development patterns. Mix of 1 to 3 story single-family detached housing on small to mid-size lots, multifamily housing complexes and alternate housing options, with some taller apartment buildings (4+ stories) within walking distance of transit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layer green infrastructure, parks, and streetscapes with transit access to create a pedestrian realm that promotes active, healthy lifestyles, connects people with nature and promotes sustainable communities. • Establish close-knit, inclusive neighborhoods by providing a mixture of housing types ranging from single-family, duplexes and townhouses to condominiums, apartments and accessory units, at all levels of affordability. • Incorporate workforce housing into redevelopment projects that will transform underutilized and vacant areas; renew existing infrastructure; and revitalize downtowns and commercial corridors.

that will transform these areas into vibrant, thriving, sustainable and resilient places are encouraged.			
INVESTMENT AREA	EXISTING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS	RECOMMENDED TYPE AND SCALE	SAMPLE BEST PRACTICES
<u>Alternative Growth:</u> Suburban residential areas located within assigned sewer service areas where policies and investments that strengthen neighborhood character, maintain and enhance infrastructure, ensure a healthy and safe environment, enhance civic amenities and increase community stability are preferred.	Existing substantially developed maturing suburban neighborhoods and emerging suburban areas that have experienced rapid growth during the past 30 years. Comprised predominantly of single-family homes with some community-oriented shopping and service establishments. Served by public sewer and water systems. Generally auto-oriented; with high-quality public schools, parks and open space amenities. Contain some redevelopment and infill development opportunities.	Medium-density development patterns. Predominantly single-family neighborhoods, 1 to 2 stories with mid-sized lots. Homes vary in size, age and style. Some 2-and 3-family homes may be present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote holistic, healthy lifestyles by enhancing pedestrian linkages to schools, parks and downtown areas. Preserve the housing stock by promoting maintenance, rehabilitation, supporting alternative housing options such as home-sharing and accessory apartments, and continuing affordability controls where applicable. Infuse greater housing choices and options by allowing for higher-density attached housing types as part of residential and mixed-use infill development and redevelopment.
INVESTMENT AREA	EXISTING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS	RECOMMENDED TYPE AND SCALE	SAMPLE BEST PRACTICES
<u>Local Priority:</u> A subset of AGIAs, LPAs are distinct small town centers and employment nodes that have limited growth opportunities due to their historic character, environmental, infrastructure and/or access constraints and community preferences; where	Historic towns, villages and hamlets with walkable neighborhoods comprised of a mix of housing types and uses; some of which are served by transit; contain limited infill and redevelopment opportunities; and where a small-town atmosphere and convenience access to jobs, services and pedestrian amenities are preferred.	Medium-density: 3 to 10 units per acre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce the historic character and the vibrancy of existing traditional town, village and hamlet centers by requiring compatible architectural scale and style for all residential infill and redevelopment activity. Leverage residential redevelopment and infill to achieve infrastructure renewal and increase housing options within walking distance of transit, jobs and amenities.

investments that maintain and enhance small-town atmosphere, historic character, pedestrian amenities and community sustainability are preferred.			
INVESTMENT AREA	EXISTING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS	RECOMMENDED TYPE AND SCALE	SAMPLE BEST PRACTICES
<u>Limited Growth:</u> Low-density residential neighborhoods in non-sewer areas where policies and investments that strengthen existing rural/residential character, protect and restore environmental assets and enhance neighborhood health, safety, tranquility and sustainability are preferred.	Exiting large-lot single-family auto-oriented neighborhoods and farmettes in rural and natural settings, which are served by onsite septic systems and/or private wells; and where privacy and living close to nature are preferred. Limited undeveloped lands continue to experience strong development pressure.	Low-density rural/residential development patterns. Predominantly large-lot single family detached homes, often larger in scale with private amenities such as multiple-car garages and extensive landscape/hardscape features including swimming pools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the impacts of existing and future residential development by preventing the exceedance of septic carrying capacity and promoting septic management best practices. • Create high-performance landscapes that recharge ground water, mitigate stormwater runoff; sustain ecological communities; and support small-scale agriculture • Provide open space linkages that enable residents to enjoy nature and the outdoors. • Minimize landscape fragmentation and the diminishment of scenic corridors by employing clustering, development transfer, strategic open space acquisition, appropriate set-back requirements, facade improvements standards and other strategies.
INVESTMENT AREA	EXISTING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS	RECOMMENDED TYPE AND SCALE	SAMPLE BEST PRACTICES
<u>Preservation</u>	Large country estates and single-family homes in close proximity to farms and agricultural activities, equestrian facilities, preserved lands, ridgelines, headwater areas and riparian corridors; served by on-site septic systems and private wells; auto-oriented; and where living close to nature, linkages agriculture and access to rural and open space areas and natural resource conservation are preferred.	Very low-density: min. lot size >6 acres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid additional fragmentation of the landscape by discontinuing large-lot residential development patterns. • Promote land stewardship best management practices and adopt conservation ordinances aimed at regenerating and sustaining publicly and privately owned and managed natural systems (forests, wetlands, riparian corridors, ecological communities). • Make agriculture a principle land use; and promote the use of agricultural best management practices.

VI. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The County Master Plan – Housing Element is intended to provide a comprehensive framework for guiding housing policy, community development, regional and local land use planning, and infrastructure and program investment decisions countywide. The following implementation strategy aims to complement and reinforce efforts at the state, county and municipal levels; as well as by the private and non-profit sectors to address the shared guiding principles and planning objectives identified in this Plan. This Plan serves as a bridge between the various housing-related land use and functional plans underway by individual municipalities and by various state and regional agencies. It calls for a collaborative, coordinated approach for addressing housing policy and land use issues that spans across municipalities and the State. It recognizes that a broad range of partners, each having unique roles and responsibilities, are needed in to effectuate the breadth and scope of the housing goals, objectives and associated planning and policy solutions identified in the Plan Implementation Matrix. The Plan’s Guiding Principles, Planning Objectives and Implementation Strategies have not been prioritized and the timelines provided are generalized in recognition that conditions, resources, partners and levels of interest and support are complex, dynamic and constantly evolving; and flexibility is needed to take advantage of opportunities as they arise in order to maximize outcomes.

SOMERSET COUNTY MASTER PLAN - HOUSING ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PLANNING OBJECTIVES		IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERS
1. Respond to the changing needs of the County's population by encouraging a broad range of housing types at all levels of affordability				
1A. Address the demand for a wide range of supported senior and special needs housing types. (1a,1d,1g) 1B. Meet the needs of the growing number of both larger and smaller households. (1b,1c) 1C. Increase the supply of rental and for-purchase housing affordable to low-and moderate-income eligible households and those earning between 80 and 120 percent of median household income. (1b, 1c) 1D. Maximize the utilization, functionality and benefits of the housing stock. (1c) 1E. Expand alternative housing opportunities. (1e) 1F. Enable the efficient provision of community-based care and residential support services. (1f,1h)	1a	Enact housing and social service policies and programs, land use plans and zoning strategies that lead to the creation of a wide range of senior and special needs housing options with transportation access, varying degrees of support services; and at all levels of affordability.	Short-Term	municipal govt.
	1b	Establish housing policies, land use and zoning strategies that allow for the integration of a wide variety of high-quality for-purchase and rental housing types at all levels of affordability that meets the needs of large-, mid- and small-size households.	Short-Term	state and municipal govt.
	1c	Allow the application of flexible architectural designs and floor plan layouts in new home construction and existing home retrofits in order to better accommodate the needs of multi-generational families and diverse household types.	Short-Term	state and municipal govt.
	1d	Apply universal design and accessibility standards in all housing types, both new and rehabilitated, to support residents as their mobility needs change and to accommodate those with existing mobility limitations.	Short-Term	state and municipal govt.
	1e	Improve housing policies and regulations to ensure the safety and quality of various alternative housing types (home-sharing, supported group homes, rooming and boarding homes, accessory apartments, etc...); increase the availability of alternative housing choices; create a source of income for "host" homeowners; and allow municipalities to earn credits for alternative housing toward their NJ Fair Housing Act requirements.	Short-Term	state and municipal govt.
	1f	Identify and implement neighborhood and residential access, pedestrian and bicycle improvements and technology solutions to ensure the efficient delivery of residential support and transportation services and improve mobility options for non-auto dependent residents.	Short-Term	state, county and municipal govt., developers, property owners
	1g	Modify plans, policies and ordinances to ensure community integration of supported living opportunities for people with disabilities and others with special needs.	Short-Term	state, county and municipal govt.
	1h	Support "aging-in-place" by strengthening linkages to community support networks and providing programs and services that alleviate care-giver burdens.	Short- to Mid-Term	state, county and municipal govt.
2. Create healthy, safe, attractive, walkable neighborhoods with proximity and access to jobs, cultural and recreational amenities, services and transportation choices				
2A. Enhance in-town living and retrofit the suburbs by adding neighborhood amenities and enhancing community assets such as infrastructure, schools, recreation, historic and cultural amenities (particularly within Priority Growth Investment Areas where additional residential growth is encouraged.) (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d) 2B. Maintain and enhance the existing housing stock. (2e, 2f, 2h) 2C. Layer green infrastructure, open space and pedestrian linkages to create attractive walkable neighborhoods and reduce auto dependency. (2c, 2h) 2D. Promote inclusive communities by providing a wide range of housing choices in all neighborhoods. (2a, 2b, 2j) 2E. Improve neighborhood resiliency and reduce vulnerability and exposure to hazard risks. (2e, 2f, 2g, 2h)	2a	Adopt land use and zoning policies, utilize form-based codes and apply architectural standards that protect and enhance the character of existing suburban and in-town traditional neighborhoods.	Short- to Mid-Term	municipal govt.
	2b	Introduce new, architecturally compatible housing types and choices and non-residential uses into suburban neighborhoods and turn vacant/underutilized single-use suburban office parks into vibrant mixed-use neighborhoods by modifying master plans and zoning ordinances, establishing redevelopment areas and/or providing developer incentives.	Short- to Mid-Term	state, county and municipal govt., developers, property owners
	2c	Provide parks, greenways, street trees, green infrastructure, community gardens, pedestrian, recreation and cultural amenities in all residential and mixed-use neighborhoods to promote active, healthy lifestyles.	Mid-Term	state, county and municipal govt., developers, neighborhood groups, non-profits
	2d	Prioritize investments that increase, restore and enhance community assets, including pedestrian and transit amenities, broadband and other utilities, schools, recreation, historic and cultural facilities in mixed-use town centers and higher-density residential and mixed-use neighborhoods.	Ongoing	federal, state and municipal govt.
	2e	Enhance the resiliency, safety and quality of the housing stock by updating and implementing zoning, building and fire safety codes and residential design and construction and standards.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal, state, county and municipal govt., property owners, developers

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PLANNING OBJECTIVES		IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERS
<p>2n) 2F. Link neighborhoods to the broader community and region. (2d, 2i) 2G. Promote healthy lifestyles through neighborhood and housing design. (2d, 2e, 2f, 2h) 2H. Ensure the architecture and design of new housing enhances surrounding areas and includes pedestrian amenities. (2a, 2i)</p>	2f	Require the use of appropriate building materials and employ new technologies so that dwellings can withstand extreme weather events, utility disruptions and flooding.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal, state, county and municipal govt.
	2g	Strengthen community and neighborhood resiliency by updating and implementing hazard mitigation plans, projects and initiatives.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal, state, county and municipal govt.
	2h	Reduce residential exposure to flooding by adopting plans and ordinances that prevent new housing construction and redevelopment in flood prone areas; implementing public buy-outs of properties that have undergone repetitive losses; and ensuring all new construction meets flood-proofing standards.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal, state, county and municipal govt. and developers
	2i	Adopt and implement context sensitive "Complete Streets" policies and plans.	Short- to Mid-Term	county and municipal govt.
	2j	Apply a "Health in All Policies" framework during the process of establishing new and updated housing policies and programs. Utilize Health Impact Assessments as a tool for integrating "Health in All Policies" considerations into new residential infill and redevelopment projects.	Mid- and Long-Term	federal, state, county and municipal govt., private and non-profit entities
3. Align housing policies and strategies with the principles of regional and local smart growth and sustainability				
<p>3A. Guide residential and mixed-use infill and redevelopment into areas where existing infrastructure, employment, services and other community assets are concentrated (i.e.. Priority Growth Investment Areas) (3c, 3g) 3B. Retain a regional balance between rural and developed areas in accordance with the existing hierarchy of place types and land use categories defined by the County Investment Framework 3C. Avoid the adverse impacts of residential development on environmentally sensitive areas, farmland and rural landscapes; and enhance and restore green space within residential and mixed-use areas (3a,3d,3e,3f) 3D. Promote efficient land use patterns and residential densities that provide "economies of scale" necessary for cost-effective infrastructure maintenance, renewal and enhancement (3d) 3E. Encourage residential densities that support transit expansion in areas served by existing transit and where transit improvements are planned (3c,3g)</p>	3a	Apply green building design principles; enforce green building codes and standards; implement energy efficiency, renewable energy and energy conservation strategies; utilize water conservation best practices and re-use technologies; and optimize climate conditions through site orientation and design in all types of new and rehabilitated housing, including housing affordable to low- and moderate-income eligible households, to create a durable, low-maintenance, resource-efficient housing stock.	Short- to Mid-Term	state and municipal govt.
	3b	Create opportunities for increased governmental cooperation and collaboration at all jurisdictional levels, and establish an improved institutional framework for solving housing problems in collaboration with private and non-profit stakeholders.	Ongoing	federal, state, county and municipal govt., neighborhood and non-profit stakeholders
	3c	Adopt planning, zoning and redevelopment policies that strategically locate new higher density residential and mixed use infill and redevelopment within walking distance of jobs, transit, services and amenities; and use land use planning and zoning to establish the density thresholds necessary for supporting investment in various forms of transit by both the public and private sectors.	Short to Mid-Term	state, county and municipal govt.
	3d	Implement conservation and agricultural land use planning and zoning policies and strategies in rural areas; such as clustering, transfer of development rights, agricultural zoning and targeted open space and farmland preservation in order to protect landscapes from fragmentation and inefficient development patterns.	Short- to Mid-Term	state, county and municipal govt.
	3e	Identify and implement site-specific and area-wide green infrastructure stormwater management solutions, retrofit stormwater management facilities and restored degraded riparian areas to improve neighborhood resiliency and environmental quality and sustainability.	Short- to Mid-Term	state, county and municipal govt., property owners and developers
	3f	Strengthen and enforce environmental regulations and policies, land use planning, zoning and site improvement standards that prevent the encroachment of residential and mixed-use development and redevelopment into flood-prone areas, wetlands, C1 riparian areas , steep slopes, prime farmland and habitat areas; and that reduce development-related environmental impacts.	Ongoing	state, county and municipal govt.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PLANNING OBJECTIVES		IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERS
<p>3F. Encourage development patterns that allow residents to reduce the costs associated with auto-ownership; total vehicular trips and travel time; as well as vehicular pollution and traffic congestion</p> <p>3G. Implement coordinated, mutually supportive housing, land use and infrastructure policy, regulatory and investment decisions at all levels of government (3b)</p>	3g	Target investments in transit expansion, pedestrian amenities and other community assets to attract higher-density residential and mixed-use infill and redevelopment to areas targeted for growth (Priority Growth Investment Areas).	Ongoing	state, county and municipal govt., property owners and developers
4. Maximize the dynamic relationship between housing supply, quality of life and the strength of the economy				
<p>4A. Expand the workforce and retain and attract employers by increasing the supply of affordable workforce housing. (4a,4c)</p> <p>4B. Use residential and mixed-use redevelopment to return underutilized and vacant properties to productive use and catalyze community revitalization. (4b,4d)</p> <p>4C. Balance residential growth with investments in community and infrastructure support systems. (4g)</p> <p>4D. Strengthen pathways to homeownership and financial opportunities that improve access to quality housing for all residents. (4e,4h)</p> <p>4E. Support property tax reforms that reduce the cost of living and improve economic competitiveness. (4f)</p>	4a	Adopt housing and land use policies and strategies that ensure a wide range of affordable housing options are available in walkable, transit oriented town centers and mixed use neighborhoods consistent with the locational preferences of entry-level workers.	Short- to Mid-Term	municipal govt.
	4b	Support the creation and maintenance of an inventory of redevelopment and re-use assets and opportunities; and the utilization of updated market analyses and other tools to assess market conditions and determine viable redevelopment/re-use options.	Short- to Mid-Term	state economic development agencies, regional and local business organizations such as the Somerset County Business Partnership
	4c	Reserve a portion of all new residential units created through residential and mixed-use redevelopment for low- and moderate-income households and workers earning below 120% of median income as a strategy for addressing State Fair Housing Act requirements and expanding the local workforce.	Short- to Mid-Term	state and municipal govt.
	4d	Adopt redevelopment plans, policies and incentive programs that support residential and mixed-use redevelopment as a catalyst for community revitalization and strategy for returning underutilized and vacant properties to productive use.	Short- to Mid-Term	state and municipal govt.
	4e	Encourage the inclusion of design features and amenities in rental projects that will enable units to be successfully converted to for-purchase housing in response to potential changes in the housing market.	Short- to Mid-Term	state and municipal govt.
	4f	Enact policies and regulations that moderate fluctuations in the housing market, reform lending policies to reduce risks to both lenders and borrowers, reduce foreclosure rates and improve housing stability and financial security for residents.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal and state govt. and financial institutions
	4g	Create public/private partnerships for addressing the infrastructure and community needs associated with residential growth.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal, state, county and municipal govt. and the development and business communities
	4h	Provide first-time home buyer and renter education and savings programs; as well as housing subsidies for households with financial/earnings constraints.	Short-Term	federal and state govt., financial institutions and non-profits
5. Support efforts to advance the goals of the Federal and State Fair Housing Acts				
5A. Create opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing necessary for meeting the needs of all types of very-low, low- and moderate-income	5a	Support policies, programs and partnerships that examine and address the needs of homeless individuals and families; and include holistic, long-term solutions that enable them to become better integrated, functioning members of the community.	Short-Term	federal, state, county and municipal govt., non-profit and religious groups

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PLANNING OBJECTIVES		IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERS
<p>households. (5d,5g,5i,5j)</p> <p>5B. Support the update, adoption and implementation of Municipal Housing Elements and Fair Share Plans. (5e,5i,5l,5m)</p> <p>5C. Match affordable housing solutions to community characteristics and infrastructure and community system capacity; while conserving and protecting environmental, cultural and historic resources. (5e)</p> <p>5D. Locate affordable housing near transportation and other community assets, and expand pedestrian and mobility linkages. (5h)</p> <p>5E. Promote inclusive neighborhoods. (5e, 5n)</p> <p>5F. Incentivize the creation of a wide variety of affordable housing options and alternatives. (5b,5f,5m)</p> <p>5G. Reduce homelessness. (5a,5h)</p> <p>5H. Preserve and improve the existing affordable housing stock. (5c,5k)</p>	5b	Implement a variety of municipal-specific strategies for addressing affordable housing obligations pursuant to the State Fair Housing Act, including but not limited to the provision of density bonuses in exchange for the creation of a specific proportion of affordable units (either on or off site), accessory units in existing large homes, home-sharing, buy-down of market rate units, municipally-sponsored 100% affordable housing projects; affordable alternative housing types, contributions to municipal affordable housing trust funds; the extension of expiring deed restrictions, etc.	Ongoing	state and municipal govt.
	5c	Enact policies and programs (including the utilization of municipal housing trust funds) that support maintenance and rehabilitation of the existing affordable housing stock, as well as newly-identified substandard homes occupied by income-eligible families.	Ongoing	municipal govt.
	5d	Promote programs that help very-low, low- and moderate-income households and individuals develop the financial capability to gain access to affordable housing.	Ongoing	federal and state govt.
	5e	Enact zoning and planning policies that discourage tear-down of affordable housing and replacement with high-cost housing.	Short-Term	municipal govt.
	5f	Target developer incentives such as density bonuses, tax abatements, and/or reduced review fees in PGIAs to redevelopment areas and other sites with access to jobs, transit and services where a variety of affordable housing types and unit sizes can be best accommodated.	Short- to Mid-Term	state and municipal govt.
	5g	Expand rental assistance and other forms of financial support for very-low, low-, and moderate- income households to help them obtain affordable housing. Provide deeper subsidization of housing for very low income eligible households.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal and state govt.
	5h	Prioritize infrastructure and transportation investments that create "ladders of opportunity" by physically connecting homeless and disadvantaged people with housing, employment, education, services and other community assets.	Mid- to Long-Term	federal, state, regional, county and municipal govts., non-profit and religious organizations
	5i	Support the expansion of federal and state programs aimed at providing financial assistance to municipalities so that they can better address their very-low income affordable housing obligations.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal and state govt.
	5j	Support the expansion of rental assistance and other forms of financial assistance to very-low, low- and moderate-income households to help them obtain housing. Provide deeper subsidization of housing for very-low income eligible households.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal and state govt.
	5k	Inventory, monitor and enforce deed restrictions on affordable units; and preserve the existing affordable housing stock by extending expiring affordability controls.	Short- to Mid-Term	municipal govt.
	5l	Simplify and fast-track the use of municipal housing trust funds consistent with adopted trust fund spending plans that correspond with updated municipal housing elements and fair share plans.	Ongoing	State and Municipal Govt.
	5m	Update regulations and increase incentives for creating healthy and safe supported, special needs housing alternatives that address the unmet housing needs of income-eligible individuals with physical, mental and medical disabilities, which can be also used toward addressing municipal affordable housing obligations.	Short- to Mid-Term	federal, state and municipal govt.
	5n	Identify and encourage programs and services that welcome newcomers and help them become active members of their communities.	Ongoing	municipal govt., community groups, non-profits and religious institutions
6. Enable informed housing policy, regulatory and investment decisions				
<p>6A. Maintain and provide access to the best available data and objective information for use by both the public and private sectors on an ongoing basis. (6c)</p> <p>6B. Educate the public and enable communities to respond to changing conditions, needs and opportunities by analyzing and interpreting trends and their impacts on land use planning, the housing stock, residential</p>	6a	Strengthen opportunities for multi-jurisdictional land use planning and development review coordination , and enable modifications to development and redevelopment proposals that minimize adverse development impacts and respond to changing trends, conditions and market demand forces.	Short- to Mid-Term	state, county and municipal govt.
	6b	Monitor demand for community and social service programs, utilities and transportation, other public service needs in areas experiencing rapid growth and change.	Ongoing	state, county and municipal govt.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PLANNING OBJECTIVES		IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	TIMEFRAME	PARTNERS
<i>market conditions, housing needs, policies and programs. (6b,6d,6e)</i> <i>6C. Support fact-based planning, policy and investment decisions by encouraging the use of sound, comprehensive, current and accurate data. (6c)</i> <i>6D. Evaluate existing housing-related policies, programs and regulations utilizing comprehensive, objective information to identify improvements that will help achieve housing and land use goals at all levels of government. (6a, 6f, 6g)</i>	6c	Provide data and information necessary to inform housing policies, regulations, programs and investment decisions, including a reasonable set of projections of future population, household, employment and housing stock growth.	Ongoing	state, county and municipal govt., NJTPA and other regional planning entities, private and non-profit academic, financial and real estate institutions
	6d	Implement community outreach initiatives aimed at educating regional and local leaders, stakeholders and the public regarding land use and socio-economic housing trends and issues and associated housing needs and potential solutions.	Ongoing	state, county and municipal govt., academic institutions, non-profit stakeholder groups
	6e	Foster housing industry/research university partnerships to develop and make market-ready new housing materials and technologies, construction techniques and appliances and products in order to lower housing costs, increase housing options, improve the resiliency and sustainability of the housing stock, and make homes healthier and safer.	Mid-to-Long Term	federal, state, county and municipal govt., housing industry and research universities
	6f	Promote the identification of new and updated policies, programs, regulations and legislative solutions for solving housing problems at all levels of government and within the private and non-profit sectors.	Ongoing	federal, state, county and municipal govt., community and non-profit stakeholders
	6g	Update and streamline residential development review procedures and permit requirements; eliminate redundancy; expedite approvals and reduces costs. Encourage the use of pre-application meetings.	Ongoing	state, county and municipal Govt., developers and non-profit stakeholders

NOTES:

Timeframes are estimated. Short-term = 1 to 5 years, Mid-term = 6 to 10 years, Long-term > 10 years.

The numbering system applied to the Guiding Principles, Planning Objectives and Implementation Strategies is for reference purposes only. It does not denote prioritization or level of importance.

The Implementation Strategies that align with the Planning Objectives associated with each Guiding Principle are shown in parentheses in order to assist the reader.

**SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE
ADOPTION OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY MASTER PLAN –
HOUSING ELEMENT**

WHEREAS, In accordance with the provisions and spirit of the New Jersey Planning Act, N.J.S.A. 40:27-2 et seq., the Somerset County Planning Board has prepared a Housing Trends Assessment Report and Updated Housing Element of the Somerset County Master Plan to serve as a guide for residential land use planning and investment decisions; and

WHEREAS, in conjunction with the foregoing, a public hearing was held by the County Planning Board as required on September 19, 2017 concerning the proposed replacement and succession of the aforesaid updated housing element for and to the existing 1987 version contained within the Somerset County Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, heretofore, as part of the process for the formation of the aforesaid updated housing element, the Somerset County Planning Board conducted an extensive public outreach process throughout 2016 and 2017 in the form of municipal and peer review of the draft Housing Trends Assessment Report and Draft Updated Housing Element; numerous meetings with municipal officials and stakeholder groups, presentation of the Draft Housing Trends Assessment Report and draft Updated Housing Element and related documents at the Planning Partners Forums and regularly scheduled meetings of the Somerset County Planning Board held throughout 2016 and 2017 in order to obtain public input; and

WHEREAS, based upon the foregoing, the Somerset County Planning Board has taken into due consideration the public comments and communications presented to the Board throughout this process; and


WHEREAS, the various committees of the Board, including the Master Plan and Land Use Committee and Housing and Demographic Committee have reviewed and provided their comments at various stages throughout the development of the Housing Trends Assessment Report and Updated Housing Element and approved these documents on that basis and in so doing, effectively rescinds and replaces the previous 1987 version thereof.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT that the Somerset County Planning Board hereby formally adopts the updated Housing Element an element of the Somerset County Master Plan; and does so in support of the implementation of the Somerset County Investment Framework and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Somerset County adopted by the Somerset County Planning Board as amendments to the County Master Plan in 2014; and is support of municipal efforts to address their responsibilities pursuant to the State and Federal Fair Housing Acts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Somerset County Planning Board declares its intent to periodically review these documents and up-date them appropriately so that same remain relevant and valuable tools for county and local planning.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT electronic copies of the Housing Element shall be made available to the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the municipalities of Somerset County, adjacent counties, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, the New Jersey Office for Planning Advocacy, the Somerset County Business Partnership and the general public through the County Planning Board's website: <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/planweb/sustainable/index.htm>.

I, Matthew D. Loper, Secretary of the Somerset County Planning Board, County of Somerset, in the State of New Jersey do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a resolution adopted by said Planning Board of Somerset at its regularly convened meeting on November 20, 2017.


Matthew D. Loper, Secretary
Somerset County Planning Board