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Fall 2021

Urban Mayors Press-Fall 2021

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Urban Mayors Press

President's Corner



Dear New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Members,
 Congratulations to Governor Murphy on his successful re-election and solidifying four more years in office to fight for New Jersey families. We look forward to continuing to work with the Governor and his cabinet to create a stronger and fairer New Jersey. As Mayor of the City of Newark and President of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA), I would like to thank you for being a dedicated member of the NJUMA and I would also like to send special congratulations to our members who recently won their respective re-election. As members of the NJUMA, we have the unprecedented opportunity to convene with leaders who govern communities with similar realities and come up with

viable solutions to some of our greatest challenges. This year, we have continued to collectively take stances on key policy issues that will advance our cities. This includes successfully advocating for the passage of the Urban Enterprise Zone legislation to restore UEZ funding to urban business corridors, continuously working with the Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) on creating an equitable cannabis industry in our state, pushing to ensure minority contracting firms benefit from the federal infrastructure legislation, and efforts to increase public safety in our urban centers. While we have made great improvements, we know much more work must be done.

We will continue to work with you on key initiatives for our residents. In the latest issue of the *Urban Mayors Press*, we have a plethora of information on climate change and preparing for increased flooding as our communities anticipate increased storms while simultaneously addressing our aging infrastructure. In this issue, we have announcements that you will not want to miss! These include resources from the NJ Department of Transportation which currently has \$400 million to distribute to municipalities for infrastructure projects, resources from the NJ Department of Corrections to support reentry efforts in our communities, and information on entering the state's cannabis industry and so much more. Moreover, thank you to Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson for her contribution to this issue, submissions also include highlights of the great work of my colleagues in East Orange, Paterson, Plainfield, and Trenton.

Last but most certainly not least, I look forward to seeing all of the Mayors at this year's 106th Annual New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference, where it is my hope that you join us for all of the NJUMA events at the conference. This year, we will collectively gather around critical issues facing our cities. Our Annual Policy Breakfast will afford us the opportunity to hear from representatives from federal agencies who have identified resources and opportunities for our urban centers. Additionally, our League Session will focus on New Jersey establishing civilian complaint review boards to bring about transparency and accountability in police forces as we strive for better policing relations and public safety for our municipalities. We are also excited to have our NJUMA Annual Reception this year for our NJUMA members, municipal staff, policymakers and guests to celebrate the successes of the NJUMA, network, and take time to discuss and share information and ideas. Thank you for your time and continued support for the NJUMA. You have been a true partner to move us all forward.

Regards,

The Honorable Ras. J. Baraka
 Mayor of Newark
 President of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association

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THE HONORABLE RAS. J. BARAKA
MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEWARK
PRESIDENT OF THE
NEW JERSEY URBAN MAYORS ASSOCIATION
 cordially invites you to the

New Jersey Urban Mayors Association events at the
106th ANNUAL NEW JERSEY LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES CONFERENCE
 Wednesday, November 17th, 2021

New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Policy Breakfast
 (Closed Mayors Meeting)
 7:30 AM - 9:00 AM

New Jersey Urban Mayors Association League Session:
Building Community: The Necessity of Civilian Complaint Review Boards
 Atlantic City Convention Center, Room 419
 10:45 AM - 12:00 PM

Also join us for the
New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Annual Reception
 Borgota Water Club, Tides Room
 1 Borgota Way
 Atlantic City, NJ 08401
 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Reception Sponsored by Verizon and Paramount Assets

Please RSVP to Ms. Ishiya Hayes, Associate Director/Senior Policy Analyst
 of the Urban Mayors Policy Center at ihayes@kean.edu



Improving Public Safety in the City of Newark

By: Mayor Ras J. Baraka, City of Newark



In my first term as Mayor, our City's police department was under a court-ordered consent decree with the Justice Department. This required major reforms for Civil Rights abuses and came directly after the ACLU documented more than 400 cases of misconduct by the department and nearly \$4.8 million in settlements paid out in just a two-year period. With the thoughtful leadership of former Newark Public Safety Director Anthony Ambrose, we began to adopt progressive police reforms on use of force, body worn cameras, and mandated implicit bias training. This continues today under the leadership of our current Director of Public Safety Brian O'Hara. Public safety is the job of the police, but a shared responsibility between law enforcement and the community, and this philosophy is at the heart of Newark's Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery (OVPTR).

The Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery (OVPTR) manages and coordinates all City of Newark anti-violence policy initiatives and programs and is supported by five percent, or about \$12 million, of the City's public safety budget. These initiatives led by Director Lakeesha Eure, include the use of data to guide the City's investments in violence prevention strategies, assuring targeted approaches to violence prevention in City government and the community at large. The Office is also establishing a database (registry) of hate groups existing within the United States and adding to that list as new groups are identified and makes hate group activity illegal in Newark.

Under Director Eure's leadership, the OVPTR created the Brick City Peace Collective. The collective united other non-profit organizations and forged relationships with community based organizations such as Newark Anti-Violence Coalition, Newark

Street Academy, the HUBB, with the same common goal "To Stop Violence." We know that this work is not easy, so we decided to tackle violence by utilizing a holistic approach to ensure that our citizens receive wrap-around services and support. Our Hospital-based Violence Prevention program allows victims of violent crimes to receive intensive case management services to prevent further offenses. The Newark Community Street Team also became valuable members of our team. They know our community and use a high-risk interventionist model and mentorship to stave off gang conflict, redirect those members to more positive pursuits, and work side by side with police to de-escalate situations and prevent retaliatory crimes.

We know that in order for our work to be successful, we must give people options, we must empower them to want more for themselves and their families. With this goal in mind, The Safe Streets Academy was created. This program will begin the first week of November. We start our second job skills "safe academy" where people we identify as at-risk are enrolled in entrepreneurial classes to find "legal hustles" and given quality of life lessons. We have experienced business owners come in to teach them how to earn profits, and in some cases, offer jobs. This follows the successful summer academy, where separate entrepreneurial classes were held for juveniles, young adults, and older adults, many with multiple arrests.

But perhaps the greatest resource the OVPTR provides is hope. It shows the people who live in our neighborhoods where crime is most concentrated there are pathways for peaceful solutions, personal growth, and economic independence. It shows them that they do not have to individually accept the negative legacies of poverty and violence. And, in time, those legacies will be unacceptable for our entire community.

Op-Ed: Adverse Childhood Experiences, the Lifelong Consequences of Trauma

By: Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Deputy Majority Leader, New Jersey General Assembly, 15th District



In urban areas like Trenton, Newark, Elizabeth and Camden a discussion on the topic of mental health can be taboo but ultimately this very topic is highly important for youth of color. This is why my student intern, Zanolvia Shaw, and I are advocating in favor of high school youth taking the ACE test. The high school students would take the test during their health class portion of the school year. ACE, which is an acronym for: Adverse Childhood Experiences Test, contains 10 questions that delves into trauma experiences that a youth can go through and it helps determine the social, emotional or health problems that the youth has already encountered. This test will help students to recognize and address their issues and will also assist with their overall performance in school relationships.

The main goal is to help identify mental health issues early on for students. The implementation of this test would help youth not only identify issues but it will assist them by providing them with a support system and the proper tools they can use to overcome current issues and any future issues they may encounter.

"Nearly half of all children nationally and in most states have experienced at least one ACE. Disturbingly, black and Hispanic youth, which Trenton is mostly made up of. in almost all regions of the country" have experienced more than their white counterparts. During the pandemic Trenton reached its largest homicides in a single year, 42 people were murdered, more than 2013. Out of the 42, 8 of them were under the age of 21. Out of the 8 that were killed ALL of them died from gun violence.

Op-Ed: Adverse Childhood Experiences, the Lifelong Consequences of Trauma (Continued)

“Experiencing *ACE*’s can have an impact on our future physical and mental health, and often *ACE*s can be barriers to healthy attachment relationships forming for children.” The *ACE* test will help identify the future factors of the student’s health. “The CDC issued a special report on Adverse Childhood Experiences and suggested that prevention of *ACE*s may lead to reduction in a large number of health conditions including heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes, as well as depression, unemployment, and substance dependence.” violence and becoming a victim of violence” “Further research has found that not only were people with high *ACE*s scores more likely to make choices that could lead to poor health later in life, but the brain itself is changed by trauma. Those changes, independent of the person’s choices, could also have negative impacts on their health.” In an urban area such as Trenton it is important to make sure that the youth are able to cope properly when it comes to issues like gun violence which is a factor of having a high stress level.

Experiencing *ACE*s can also affect a child’s performance in school “When activated repeatedly or over a prolonged period of time (especially in the absence of protective factors), toxic levels of stress hormones can interrupt normal physical and mental development and even change the brain’s architecture.” The toxic stress these kids suffer affects their school performance and their very ability to learn. This transfers to their academic setting and can cause educators to experience secondary traumatic stress.”

Without identifying these issues at a young age it will cause major health problems in the future for the students becoming adults. “By screening for *ACE*s, providers can better determine the likelihood a patient is at increased health risk due to a toxic stress response, which can inform patient treatment.” Children growing up with toxic stress may have difficulty forming healthy and stable relationships. They may also have unstable work histories as adults and struggle with finances, jobs, and depression throughout life.” The other troubling issues such as unemployment, homelessness, drug abuse can all be prevented in the future if there is a factor to help identify the reasoning for the negative impact on their health.

These effects can also be passed on to their own children. “Toxic stress experienced by women during pregnancy can negatively affect genetic “programming” during fetal development, which can contribute to a host of bad outcomes, sometimes much later in life.¹² Infants born to women who have experienced four or more childhood adversities are two to five times more likely to have poor physical and emotional health outcomes by 18 months,” This can prevent the cycle of trauma being passed down. The child would have a more likely chance of being in the same dilemma as the mother was. When the problem is faced and talked about it gives the person a chance to confront the mental instability.

When the student does take the test it would give them “The ability to recognize and manage different emotions, the capacity to make and keep healthy friendships and other relationships and the ability to manage behavior in school settings.”

California in 2020 started an *ACE* initiative, with the help of, Medi-Cal paying for the screenings, to express the issues of trauma and stress in people’s childhoods.

“The two-hour online curriculum will be easy to access for a wide range of health care professionals and will provide continuing medical education (CME) and maintenance of certification (MOC) credits. Beginning January 1, 2020, Medi-Cal physicians can be paid for *ACE*s screenings for Medi-Cal patients.”

“In California if a child has a worrying score, the provider is instructed to give information about helpful resources such as food stamps or housing assistance, discuss how trauma and stress affect the developing body and brain, and, if necessary, make referrals to specialists, such as psychologists.”

“Detecting *ACE*s early and connecting patients to interventions, resources and other support can significantly improve the health and well-being of individuals and families.” When the student takes the test and receives the packet, the schools will have the guidance counselor to set up a meeting discussing the students next steps to help confront their issues and give them the packet of local organizations in the city. “With Trauma-informed therapies, including talk therapy, art, yoga and mindfulness training,” which can all be very beneficial

“And other pilot studies suggest basic services such as food and shelter, counseling, and instruction in techniques such as meditation can also help children overcome trauma.”

Having a support system and learning about things like “resilience includes supportive relationships with adults during childhood, a trusted friend to confide in and other protective factors that mitigate the situation.” “Adults can help children with toxic stress, not by erasing their trauma but by helping children develop resilience. Resilience is the capacity that allows kids to cope with their imperfect situations and to move on with confidence and optimism.”

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has *ACE*’s training available for parents and professionals working with families, to help them understand and reduce the adverse experiences children are having.” With this being accessible it would greatly help people to learn more about this topic.

Individuals and communities have within their grasp information that can improve childhood experiences, family relationships, community safety, student success rates and public health. We should utilize this information to change the outcomes of our young people and our communities.

A Forum on Public Safety and Gun Violence



On October 28th, 2021 at the Hamilton Club, Passaic County College in Paterson, New Jersey Mayor Andre Sayegh hosted *A Forum on Public Safety and Gun Violence* with *Former Police Commissioner William Bratton*. The panel included Mayor Sayegh (Paterson), Mayor Ted R. Green (East Orange), and Mayor Reed Gusciora (Trenton), and former Police Commissioner William Bratton and Larry Malone served as the moderator. Panelists explored many proven efforts to increase public safety in high crime areas, and the Mayors called for revisions to the New Jersey Criminal Justice Reform Act (better known as the Bail Reform Act) in reference to permissions regarding the release of inmates with gun possession charges in efforts to increase public safety in many of the state's urban centers. This event was co-sponsored by the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association, The Garden State Initiative, and the Sheriff's Association of New Jersey.

Opportunity in NJ's Cannabis Industry

On October 20th, 2021 the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) members met with the Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) to discuss the state's cannabis regulations and maintaining equity in the cannabis industry as well as municipal approaches to establishing local fees and supporting local cannabis businesses owners.

The CRC has established the following information and resource guides for municipalities and potential cannabis business owners:

- CRC Recreational Cannabis Statewide Information Webinar: <https://www.nj.gov/cannabis/resources/webinars/index.shtml>
- FAQs for Municipalities: <https://www.nj.gov/cannabis/resources/faqs/municipalities/>
- FAQs for Cannabis Businesses: <https://www.nj.gov/cannabis/businesses/#faqs>
- Additional FAQs: <https://www.nj.gov/cannabis/resources/faqs/index.shtml>
- The Cannabis Regulatory Commission website: <https://www.nj.gov/cannabis/>

The NJUMA members would like to thank Chairwoman Houneou, the Commissioners, and staff at the CRC for the meeting and all of their efforts to establish NJ's cannabis industry and provide resources for communities to gain ownership in the industry and the Association looks forward to continuing to work with the CRC.

Resources from the NJ Dept. of Transportation

On October 14th, 2021 Zenobia Fields, Director of Government and Community Relations at the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) presented to the members of the NJUMA on the various programs and resources the NJDOT has established to support transportation infrastructure projects.

The NJDOT Resource Center website provides information on various programs established to allocate \$400 million to cities and counties. Such programs include The Local Bridges Fund, The Local Freight Impact Fund, Project Management and Reporting System (PMRS) and other state and federal funded programs. For more information on how to apply and application deadlines cities are encouraged to visit: <https://njdotlocalaidrc.com/>.

The New Jersey Transportation Infrastructure Bank is an independent State Financing Authority responsible for providing and administering low interest rate loans to qualified municipalities, counties, and regional authorities in New Jersey for the purpose of financing transportation quality infrastructure projects. Construction loan program interest rates are as low as 0.30%. For more information visit: <https://www.njib.gov/njitib>.

NJDOT also established the New Jersey 2020 Strategic Highway Safety Plan which provides a framework for reducing fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads in the State. The plan integrates the 5Es of safety including engineering, education, enforcement, emergency medical services/emergency response, and equity. For more information and to view the plan visit: <https://www.saferoadsforallnj.com/>.

Funding Opportunities from the NJ Department of Corrections

In November the **New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC)** announced the trailblazing NJ Locally Empowered, Accountable, and Determined (LEAD) Notice of Grant Opportunities supporting the expansion of post release reintegration services targeting urban communities.

Reintegration is a local process that occurs at the community level. While NJ leads the nation in criminal justice reform, this does not occur by embracing a one-size fits all approach. Successful criminal justice reform and offender reintegration efforts occur in partnership between provider agencies, private citizens, and prison leadership.

To continue NJ's success in transforming the lives of the formerly incarcerated and the communities in which they will return, the LEAD Initiative will support local agencies and organizations to develop and implement strategic evidence informed programs for the provision of wraparound reentry services that assist in the transition from corrections to the community. LEAD strives to reduce service gaps by increasing the capacity of community-based providers who work with people who were formerly incarcerated by improving the mechanism for how a person transitions out of the criminal justice system.

NJDOC offers three categories of grant opportunities:

Reintegration Service Coordination in the Urban Communities

This category will support a Municipal Reintegration Service Coordinator who will serve as the lead convener of interagency interdisciplinary service coordination for the Mayor's Office and the Chief liaison to the New Jersey Department of Corrections.

Reintegration Supportive Services in Urban Communities

This category will support nonprofit community-based corporations or associations for the provision of comprehensive post release case management and wraparound supportive services for people returning home from incarceration.

Innovative Reentry Initiatives in New Jersey

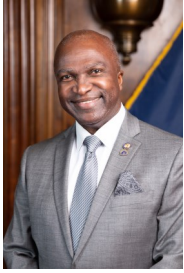
This category will support nonprofit community-based corporations or associations for the provision of Innovative Reentry Initiatives that will increase and improve the ability of the formerly incarcerated to achieve economic stability.

The grant application period for categories A and B opens November 1, 2021 and closes on November 22, 2021, at 12 P.M. The grant application period for a category C opens December 6, 2021 and closes on November 22, 2021, at 12 P.M.

Grant applications will be posted on the New Jersey Department of Corrections website located at: <https://www.nj.gov/corrections/pages/grants.html>.



Development and Investment Projects Boosts Plainfield's Economic Viability



Plainfield is a city experiencing unprecedented growth under the leadership of Mayor Adrian O. Mapp. Construction is occurring in every sector of the City. There is private investment to the tune of over a billion dollars, and transit-oriented and opportunity zone development is expanding. Every ward now boasts high-quality affordable and luxury residential development, even as recreational spaces have been transformed into state-of-the-art facilities. The City has repaved forty-one miles of roadway across our 6.2 square miles. New businesses are opening despite the pandemic, including a culinary school and a co-sharing workspace. Industrial spaces are being reimagined; however, this is only the beginning of the City's transformation. With its existing stock of historic homes nestled on timeless tree-lined streets, Plainfield is truly the crossroad where Urban Chic meets Suburban Charm.

Over the next three to five years, we'll see 4000-5000 new units of residential housing and more than 500K square feet of retail and commercial space that will change the landscape of Plainfield irrevocably. In 2021, ribbon cuttings occurred throughout the City in record numbers. **The Randolph, The Station at Grant, Elmwood Square, and 1000 North Avenue** are a few projects that combine luxury living with affordability, convenience, and style. We also welcomed a **CVS Pharmacy** in 2021



The Randolph



CVS Pharmacy



The Station at Grant

On Plainfield's South Avenue. **The Centurion Plainfield** is one of a few ongoing projects, and nearby, a **Wawa** will be completed by Thanksgiving.

Downtown Plainfield is also poised to undergo significant growth and significant transformation. Coming soon is the \$100M plus **TODD West** project, which spans 4-10 story buildings which will transform three city blocks. It features market-rate residential units, retail and restaurants, a parking garage, and other amenities. Close by the **Third and Richmond Project**; it also features market-rate residential units and ample retail space. Approvals for other downtown projects are underway. The **Second Street District** Project will include the **Transit Park District**, a pedestrian mall in front of the Plainfield Train Station.

Like every other City, Plainfield businesses suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The City helped bolster businesses by establishing a 2020 COVID-19 Relief Fund and directing federal and state resources. The fund helped 40 small businesses stay afloat at the height of the pandemic. The City's commitment to small businesses remains strong, and grant awards continue to be disbursed. As a result of the City's efforts, we've grown the number of local businesses exponentially. Adapting to the new virtual world, City-led workshops to help businesses moved to an online platform. With new outdoor dining stipulations, the sign and façade grant program was used to facilitate outdoor dining for restaurants. The City has ensured that every support possible has been proffered to keep our businesses afloat through a challenging time.

Plainfield is embarking on a new frontier by opting in and allowing cannabis enterprise in our City. Soon, the City will see cannabis cultivators, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and retailers. The City's plans have essential social equity requirements for cannabis vendors that incorporate local hiring, local sourcing, minority and women equity participation, and management apprenticeships that lead to equity participation for those disenfranchised by former marijuana laws.

The transformation of the City's recreation landscape includes the rehabilitation of the Rushmore Recreational Complex. The field was transformed from grass to an artificial multi-sport turf facility, boasting new bleachers, a press box, and beautiful privacy fences. A new basketball court, peewee soccer field, refurbished pool, and new kiddie splash fountain solidify this space as an oasis in the middle of Plainfield's fourth ward. This aligns with other recreational improvements that have taken place, such as the multi-million dollar renovation of Seidler Field with turf fields, electronic scoreboard, and press boxes, and re-surfaced Tennis Courts at Milt Campbell Field. From the West side to the East side, recreational spaces are systematically being improved.

Climate Change Strategy Aims to Build Stronger, Fairer, More Resilient New Jersey

By: Shawn M. LaTourette, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Climate change is the single greatest long-term threat to our state, our nation and our world.

And New Jersey is ground zero for adverse climate impacts – from higher temperatures to rising sea levels, from more frequent wildfires to increased rainfall and storm intensity.

When the remnants of Tropical Storm Ida tore through the Garden State on Sept. 1, it caused rivers to spill over their banks and into our communities and homes, overwhelmed our aging and undersized stormwater infrastructure and caused yet untold damages to homes and businesses. And worst of all, it claimed the lives of 30 people, most of whom died by drowning, including those in cars submerged on roads overwhelmed by the record-setting rainfall.

The extreme weather we saw across New Jersey and the globe this summer alone has made New Jersey's need for climate and flood resilience solutions all the more clear: These risks will only worsen in the years to come. We must act now to safeguard New Jersey's 9.4 million residents, our communities, our environment and our economy.



Flooding in Hoboken

Thanks to [Governor Phil Murphy's foresight](#) and [our Administration's commitment](#), the Garden State is in a better position to take on that challenge, having jump-started the hard, prolonged work of climate resilience planning. On Oct. 12, Governor Murphy released [New Jersey's first Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy](#), which includes more than 125 recommendations to promote the long-term mitigation, adaptation and resilience of the state's economy, communities, infrastructure and natural resources.

New Jersey defines "climate resilience" as the ability of social and ecological systems to absorb and adapt to shocks and stresses resulting from a changing climate, while becoming better positioned to respond in the future.

The Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy is a science-based blueprint that will aid all levels of government in protecting our residents, communities, environment and economy from the impacts of climate change. The strategy recognizes that climate change will not impact all New Jerseyans equally and that we must ensure climate and environmental justice in its execution. The state's more vulnerable communities already face disproportionate climate risks and are likely to face greater adverse outcomes if equity and justice are not prominent and consistent features of our adaptation efforts.

The strategy's six priorities include:

Building resilient and healthy communities with a statewide technical assistance program supporting local climate resilience action; increased integration of climate change in local regional and state planning; expanded support for workforce development and capacity building; focused resources and policies to address inequities in underserved communities

Strengthening the resilience of New Jersey's ecosystems to climate change by enhancing ecosystem services, such as water storage and filtration, flood attenuation, carbon sequestration and urban heat mitigation; and better positioning natural resources, agricultural and public lands to adapt to environmental changes

Promoting coordinated governance with efficient, proactive, communicative governance of statewide climate resilience policy through the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience; high level engagement and accountability across state agencies; inclusion of local government and community leaders in state resilience decisions

Investing in information and increasing public understanding through a multifaceted public education and risk communication campaign; improved data and methods for understanding climate resilience; increased engagement from the public, business community and all levels of government

Expanding resilience funding and financing by integrating climate considerations and fiscal risk from climate change impacts into funding criteria; prioritizing socially vulnerable populations in funding decisions; expanded use of private capital and innovative financing mechanisms

Coastal resilience plan that includes an expanded tidal wetland monitoring program; resilience incorporated in the design of development and redevelopment projects; prioritization of state funding for coastal resilience projects to protect major population and economic centers, concentrations of critical infrastructure and socially vulnerable populations; more private property owners adapting to climate change; assessment of relocation policy opportunities and obstacles

Climate Change Strategy Aims to Build Stronger, Fairer, More Resilient New Jersey (Continued)



Camden Waterfront

While the work of climate resilience planning is a continuing endeavor, the Murphy Administration is taking action now to partner with and better protect communities across the state. For example, DEP has launched the online [Resilient NJ: Local Planning for Climate Change Toolkit](#). This tool, along with our [Sea Level Rise Guidance](#), is meant to help municipal and county officials, planners and volunteers take actions to protect communities through land-use planning based on sound climate science and projections.

Using the best available science on precipitation, temperature and sea-level rise, Resilient NJ can help communities plan for how the changing climate may affect residents, businesses and the natural and built environments. It can inform decisions by local and regional governments on zoning, redevelopment, housing, open space and capital investments.

The toolkit provides guidance, resources and tools to walk municipalities through the process of creating a climate change-related vulnerability assessment. It also offers advice on developing local climate resilience strategies to address New Jersey's Municipal Land Use Law requirements that call for Master Plans to include a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment.

The toolkit also is designed to guide communities through implementing a robust public engagement process, including the voices of socially vulnerable populations, which is key in setting the appropriate vision for each community.

In addition to community guidance and assistance, as part of the toolkit, the state is providing funding for four multi-municipal regions to develop and implement their own Regional Resilience and Adaptation Action Plans. The regions include northeastern New Jersey; Raritan River & Bay communities; the Long Beach Island region; and the Atlantic County coastal region. Teams of municipalities, counties and community-based organizations working on these projects are charged with cultivating strong community engagement during the process and supporting socially vulnerable populations in their project areas.

All levels of government, sectors of our economy and our communities have a stake in meeting this critical moment. And we will do it together — with efforts that include climate resilience planning initiatives and infrastructure projects to protect our communities and environment, grow our economy and lift all of our people.

Today, we have one more tool in our kit: a *Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy* that will help us down the path to a stronger, fairer and more resilient New Jersey.



Perth Amboy Waterfront

How We Prepare NJ for Increased Flooding

By: Molly Riley, Water Quality Coordinator of New Jersey League of Conservation Voters and Bill Cesanek, AICP, Vice President at CDM Smith, Co-Chair of the Water and Planning Network of the American Planning Association

"Getting flooded is just depressing. Do you clean up and redo, or do you give up? This time I feel like I want to just give up. It will flood again. Newscasters talking about the 100-year or 500-year storm is a joke. It will keep happening, more and more often. This is the reality. It's gross and dirty to clean up, and I worry about toxic molds. I try not to dwell on the lost items or the money, because I need to move forward. It's also hard physical labor—I am lucky I am young and healthy enough to do most of it myself. I feel lucky that it was not worse." - Katharine, Hillsborough resident

It's no secret that New Jersey is the most densely developed state in the nation. Additionally, it also has the highest percentage (12%) of impervious surfaces relative to the state's land area. This impervious cover includes roofs, asphalt and concrete, and other non-porous surfaces. When it rains on impervious surfaces, water cannot soak back into the soil, leading to widespread and frequent flooding. While flooding is dangerous when water inundates streets and neighborhoods, it also picks up waste and pollution that drain into waterways that supply drinking water and are used for recreation. Runoff contains

How We Prepare NJ for Increased Flooding (Continued)

harmful bacteria like E.coli, metals, and known carcinogens that can lead to illness. The more polluted our sources of drinking water are, the more we must pay to treat them with chemicals. Furthermore, flooding compromises traffic and road safety in an already congested state and triggers economic losses by affecting individual and business productivity.

According to the [Delaware Riverkeeper report](#) on water quality, 77% of assessed stream miles in the watershed do not meet federal water quality standards, mostly due to uncontrolled runoff. This watershed is responsible for the drinking water of millions of individuals and feeds delicate ecosystems like the Highlands and Pinelands. Flooding from impervious surfaces also causes extensive damage to homes and businesses. Unfortunately, NJ's stormwater problem is predicted to get worse due to climate change. In 2018, NJ saw 10 out of 12 months with above-average precipitation, making it the wettest year on record. Complete data is not available yet for 2021, but storms like Henri and Ida suggest that this year will top the 2018 record.

NJ not only has flooding and water quality problems related to extensive development, but increasingly suffers from deteriorating stormwater infrastructure as well. There are 213 combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in NJ that serve 21 communities and a total of 1.4 million residents. These systems mix the runoff that enters storm drains with flows in the sewer system. When heavy rains occur, the system overflows and discharges into nearby water bodies. Polluted runoff leads to costly clean-up, impacts a community's economic prosperity, and degrades the local environment. CSO communities are more likely to be in underserved communities of color. Historic redlining—based on 1930s flood maps—means that present-day Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are disproportionately experiencing the damages of flooding and antiquated infrastructure. Therefore, managing stormwater is also a social justice issue, our responsibility to prioritize and address. The projected statewide cost of implementing plans to reduce CSOs is approximately \$2.6 billion for the duration of the plans. An average of 38% of residents served by CSO communities already struggle to pay water and sewer bills due to historic inequities.

“In communities with combined sewer systems, combined sewage generated from rain falling onto large areas of impervious surface—like parking lots and parking garages—can account for up to 40% of the total sewage flow treated in an average year, based on studies done in Wilmington, DE and Camden, NJ. Combined sewage costs the same to pump and treat as regular sewage, because when you mix a gallon of rainwater with a gallon of sewage, you now have two gallons of sewage. The generators of combined sewage, especially the owners of large areas of impervious surface, do not pay their fair share of these costs. That means that the average homeowner in combined sewer communities foots the cost of pumping and treating this sewage. As a result, everyone who is paying a sewer bill is overpaying because of these extra unbilled costs for stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces. This is unjust to ratepayers. It also has a disproportionate impact on lower-income households because, while no one—regardless of income—should have to pay for something that they did not create or generate, extra costs weigh more heavily on lower-income households” - Andrew Kricun, Managing Director at Moonshot Missions, Senior Fellow at the US Water Alliance, and Member of the NJ Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

The good news is that solutions are available not only to help communities that have combined sewers, but for municipalities statewide that are struggling to address their flooding issues and deteriorating drainage infrastructure. One proven and cost-effective solution to help manage polluted stormwater runoff is investing in green infrastructure. Green infrastructure is an approach to stormwater management that mimics the natural water cycle and absorbs runoff into the soil and cleans it up. There are economic benefits, too; every dollar spent on green infrastructure can realize between \$7 to \$27 dollars in ancillary benefits, including improved health outcomes and increased property values. You can learn more at <https://gitoolkit.njfuture.org/>.

Another strategy for municipalities to fund stormwater infrastructure improvements is a stormwater utility. A stormwater utility is a dedicated funding mechanism to pay for a community's stormwater management program. Much like a water/sewer or electric utility, a stormwater utility assesses a user fee based on a property's impervious surface area and contribution to polluted stormwater. The funds are legally dedicated and cannot be diverted to a municipality's general fund. Across the U.S., there are nearly 1,800 stormwater utilities, and they are so popular that they exist in 41 states. This approach to funding stormwater management is also considered the most financially equitable way to secure funding and incentivizes those generating the most runoff to better address their stormwater management.

Stormwater pollution is an increasingly serious problem in NJ, and it will get worse if we don't act now. Thankfully, there are many tools and organizations available to localities to tackle this problem and to provide guidance on optimal solutions. For more information, reach out to Jersey Water Works at info@jerseywaterworks.org for technical assistance and in-depth resources. These resources address many topics, including how to install green infrastructure, navigating I-bank funding for water infrastructure, and technical assistance for stormwater utility feasibility studies. Let's work together and get NJ moving toward a brighter and more flood-resistant future for all.

Molly Riley and Bill Cesanek are Co-Chairs of the Stormwater Utility Ad-Hoc sub-committee of Jersey Water Works

Urban Communities for Climate Accountability

By: Lauren O' Brien, NJ Campaign Director, Pay Up Climate Polluters and David Zeballos, Outreach Associate, Center for Climate Integrity

Last month, Hurricane Ida barreled through the state of New Jersey, [causing \\$35 million in infrastructure damage in Jersey City alone](#), and [killing 27 residents across the state](#) -- the highest death toll in the country for the storm. Ida brought into sharp relief the threats to the lives and financial well-being of New Jerseyans caused by climate change.

While there have been many innovative state and local government programs to mitigate future damage by reducing carbon emissions and investing in clean energy solutions, those programs unfortunately do little to address the impacts and costs that communities already face. Any path forward for climate-resilient cities must address existing issues: curbing future global warming as well as adapting to the impacts communities are facing today.

Hurricane Ida is only one event in a growing list of climate-related challenges facing New Jersey cities. For example, a 2019 study found that the state can expect to spend [\\$25 billion on seawalls and other coastal defenses by 2040](#), with the brunt of that falling on Atlantic City, Mystic Island, North Beach Haven, Ocean City, and Brigantine. Jersey City, Hoboken and Weehawken will spend [\\$230 million to protect their cities from devastating flooding during storms](#), including flood barriers to protect low-lying neighborhoods, by 2022. And in a study released this year, the [cost of retrofitting public schools with HVAC systems to address higher temperatures during the school year topped \\$5 billion](#), with school districts in Newark, Paterson, and Elizabeth being the hardest hit. Finally, earlier this year, New Jersey's Chief Resilience officer [warned](#) local governments that they would need to take most of the financial responsibility of preparing for flooding and other climate impacts.

Without critical state and federal funding to help meet the needs of our cities, municipal leaders have three options: raise taxes, cut services, or get creative.

One New Jersey city decided to try the latter. In September

of 2020, the city of [Hoboken filed a consumer protection and cost recovery lawsuit](#) against major oil and gas companies as well as the world's largest oil and gas trade association for the increasing costs of climate disasters and slow onset climate impacts to property, public health and the people of New Jersey. [The majority of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming can be attributed to just 100 companies](#) -- most of which are large fossil fuel companies such as ExxonMobil, Shell, BP, and Chevron. These same companies and industry groups [knew their products would lead to climate change as early as 1968](#), but deliberately misled the public on their scientific findings and downplayed risks in order to protect their profits.

While Hoboken is the only New Jersey city to have taken legal action to hold the industry accountable, [26 other communities across the United States](#) have filed similar suits against major oil and gas companies. While all of these cases are still in the early stages of litigation, they follow the same tried-and-true legal theories that helped communities across the country recover damages from the tobacco and opioid industries in recent years.

While climate liability litigation might not be viable for every community, there are other ways for local elected leaders to champion common-sense climate solutions for their communities. Leaders for Climate Accountability grew out of an organic movement from state and local public officials who came to the same conclusion: climate change is hitting local governments in the pocketbook, hard — and communities shouldn't be paying the price to clean up the oil and gas industry's mess. The Center for Climate Integrity (CCI) helped create a space to unify and elevate these local voices fighting to make sure their constituents aren't stuck with a massive bill for adaptation and resilience. For more information on Leaders for Climate Accountability, or to join the network, [visit our website](#) or reach out to David Zeballos at david@climateintegrity.org.

New Jersey's Model Statewide Municipal EV Ordinance and Incentives

By: Maria Connolly, PP, AICP, Principal Planner, Local Planning Services, NJ Dept. of Community Affairs and Peg Hanna, Assistant Director, AQ Monitoring and Mobile Sources, NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection

Drive Green! That's easier said than done, which is why the State is rolling out a suite of strategies to pave the way for electric cars. But why? The climate crisis is real and we must tackle it head on. A new report by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that, "It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land at a rate that is unprecedented in the last 2000 years." With 42 percent of our climate pollution coming from the transportation sector, transitioning to electric vehicles (EV) is important if we're going to reduce global warming pollutants.

The Murphy Administration took another step toward electrifying New Jersey's transportation sector on September 1, 2021, with the unveiling of a statewide municipal ordinance that makes it easier for people to drive electric by streamlining the local approval process for installing convenient and cost-effective charging infrastructure. The Model Statewide Municipal

Electric Vehicle Ordinance was written by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) with support from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to comply with a law Governor Phil Murphy signed in July.

The law requires that Electric Vehicle Supply/Service Equipment ("EVSE" or "charging stations") and Make-Ready parking spaces be designated as a permitted accessory use in all zoning or use districts and establishes associated installation and parking requirements related to EVSE in New Jersey's 565 municipalities. In order to implement this, the law requires that DCA publish a Model Statewide Municipal EV Ordinance on its website. The model ordinance is required to include the installation and parking requirements detailed in the law, as well as address installation, sightline, and setback requirements and other health- and safety-related specifications for EVSE and

New Jersey's Model Statewide Municipal EV Ordinance and Incentives (Continued)

Make-Ready parking spaces.

The law has many unique aspects. It did not require DCA to go through the rulemaking process when initially publishing the ordinance, although DCA did seek extensive stakeholder input. Additionally, the EV ordinance is mandatory; it became effective in all municipalities upon DCA publication in September 2021. Municipalities are allowed to make changes to the Reasonable Standards section of the ordinance through the normal municipal ordinance amendment process but may not change the parts of the ordinance that are required by the law such as installation and parking requirements.



For municipalities with existing EV ordinances, the statewide ordinance will supersede those requirements. Municipalities don't technically need to adopt the ordinance because the legislation says, "The model land use ordinance published by the Commissioner of Community Affairs shall be effective in each municipality."

However, municipali-

ties may want to add an ordinance number so they can fit the EV ordinance into their existing ordinances, add cross-references, and add EVSE and Make Ready parking spaces to the permitted accessory uses in each of the municipality's zones. They may also want to add their own penalties; the locations of the publicly-accessible, municipally-owned EVSE parking spaces; and usage fees for the municipally-owned EVSE.

Yet another unique aspect of the bill is that it requires the Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) and the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) to be consistent with the requirements set forth in the model ordinance. The RSIS and UCC must be updated if the model ordinance is updated. Both regulations must incorporate the requirements within 90 days of enactment of the law.

The EV ordinance was designed to ensure that municipalities are requiring installation of EVSE and Make-Ready parking spaces in a consistent manner and also to provide an ordinance that can be easily used by every municipality with no or minimal amendments by the municipality. The law states that municipalities may encourage additional installation of EVSE and Make-Ready parking spaces, but may not require more EVSE or Make-Ready parking spaces than what is required in the EV ordinance. In crafting the ordinance, DCA aimed to provide an ordinance that municipalities could simply take and begin to implement without having to pay additional costs for consultants to make further changes.

The most significant requirement of the ordinance's mandatory provisions is that EVSE and Make-Ready parking spaces be treated just like any other permitted accessory use, whether the EVSE or Make-Ready parking spaces are included with a site plan application for a new development or being added to an already existing building or development. This addresses inconsistencies throughout the state on how charging station installation was being handled by municipalities and their building and zoning departments. The EV ordinance also includes specific requirements for existing buildings and developments. For example, the application for a zoning permit for the charging station must conform with conditions of previous approvals.

DEP and DCA are currently working on a Best Management Practices (BMP) Manual to assist with the Reasonable Standards section of the ordinance. The BMP will cover topics including signage, whether to put a time limit on charging, whether to charge usage fees and the structure of the fees, and comparing networked vs. non-networked charging stations. Look for the BMP on the [DEP Drive Green](#) website and the [DCA Local Planning Services](#) website in the near future.

Because any changes to the ordinance will affect 565 municipalities, changes to the EV ordinance will have to be limited. However, it can be anticipated that changes to the ordinance will be made in the future in response to issues identified through real world implementation.

So how many EVs do we really have in New Jersey and what else is the State doing to help increase the numbers? Over the last three years New Jersey has doubled its EV ownership. The state now has one of the strongest EV laws in the country, which aims to put 330,000 EVs on the road by 2025 while expanding charging infrastructure. With more than \$10 million in infrastructure investments, New Jersey is eliminating range anxiety through our [It Pay\\$ to Plug In](#) program. New Jersey already has 1,495 publicly accessible chargers at 608 locations statewide and we continue to add more, putting public charging within easy reach of most New Jerseyans.

And New Jersey provides the most generous EV purchase incentives in the country through a combination of the Charge Up New Jersey program (to relaunch soon) and a sales tax exemption. Since launching in 2020, this program has reduced the upfront cost for the purchase of 9,000 EVs.

As we continue to expand charging and financial incentives, it is equally important to communicate, collaborate, and educate. [Drive Change. Drive Electric](#) raises awareness of the growing availability of charging and shows that driving electric is practical, sustainable, and enjoyable.

The recently published [Green City Guides](#) are a one-stop resource to exploring some of the most EV-friendly cities in the Northeast including Princeton, Jersey City and Red Bank, NJ.

[PlugStar](#), a dealer training and certification program, aims to provide a better consumer buying experience and ultimately boost the sale of EVs in New Jersey.

Through this program, dealers can sign up for an EV training course and access marketing and educational materials that will boost their comfort level in selling EVs on the showroom floor and provide a better experience for consumers looking to buy a new EV.

Residential drivers alone will not be enough. We are counting on all partners in government to embrace the switch. The [Clean Fleet Electric Vehicle Incentive](#) Program supports local and state governments as they transition their fleets to EVs. DEP's [resource guide](#) provides a listing of information and funding to help local governments go electric. Clean transportation must also be available for residents of low- and moderate-income communities even if they're not looking to purchase an EV. Earlier this year, DEP [awarded](#) money to several electric ride sharing programs that will enable all residents to have access to clean transportation.

With the release of the Model Statewide EV Ordinance, financial incentives, and communication campaigns, New Jersey is paving the way for EV adoption in the state. The Model Statewide EV Ordinance will enable EV adoption among residents who can't charge at home and will alleviate "range anxiety" by increasing the proximity of charging infrastructure and giving residents the confidence to drive electric. We believe this ordinance is unprecedented in the country and will help propel the state to become the EV Capital of the East.

To learn more about the Statewide EV Municipal Ordinance, visit <https://www.nj.gov/dca/dlps/home/modelEVordinance.shtml>

Resources

- [2019 NJ Energy Master Plan](#)
- [P.L. 2021, c. 171](#)
- DEP Drive Green website: <https://www.drivegreen.nj.gov/index.html>



Newark School Library Media Specialists Lead the Way to Assist Students

By: Margaret Adjoga-Otu, District Librarian/Liaison, Newark Public Schools and
Timothy Nellegar, Director of Educational Technology, Newark Public Schools

As school districts start the school year, consider the ways that school libraries and certified School Library Media Specialists (SLMS) can be maximized to their fullest potential to assist students and staff as they begin to recover from the previous school years and move forward with academic gains. Today's school library is more than a warehouse of books. Not only are digital resources found in school libraries, but Makerspaces, STEM/Innovation Labs and a judgment-free space, making the school library feel welcoming, comfortable and safe. School librarians, certified as School Library Media Specialists in New Jersey, are instructional partners, program administrators, educators and information professionals who work with classroom teachers to design learning experiences that promote inquiry, critical thinking and the development of life-long learning skills. Newark Public Schools are leading the way utilizing their SLMS to help their students move forward with accelerated learning, providing equity, diversity and inclusion for their students and meeting students' social and emotional learning needs.

There is a body of research confirming the significant social, emotional, and academic benefits of library services for school children in underserved populations. More than three dozen [national studies](#) have shown a direct correlation between strong school library programs and student achievement. In May, results of a three-year longitudinal study were released, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) — a test administered to 10-year-olds in over 50 countries — found that school libraries and their collections were the main contributing factor to higher reading scores, and made up for some of the negative effects of poverty. Furthermore, this study revealed that direct teaching and early literacy did not have a significant effect ([Lao et al.](#)).

Accelerated Learning

SLMSs cultivate and nurture a love of reading, a key skill that will help address learning deficits created by the COVID-19 pandemic. SLMSs work with every student every year that student is in the school. This fosters personalized learning - SLMSs put the right book in the right hands at the right time and they know which digital resources can best support student learning. They provide resource access to the entire school community. With a strong budget, they are able to purchase materials to build a collection that is current, diverse, and addresses a range of abilities.

Newark and Accelerated Learning

During the previous school years, SLMS worked with Newark's Educational Technology department to analyze various digital platforms and databases that were available to students. While re-evaluating their resources, they took a hard look at what was working and what was not working, including professional development for teachers. They discov-

ered that most digital platforms and databases were geared towards elementary students. In order to create more comprehensive research-based environments for high schoolers that will assist with college readiness and other career paths, they needed to beef up their resources. Looking at Newark's Toy Chest of resources required assessing and prioritizing the needs of the students.

Available platforms and databases include:

- EbscoHost, eLibrary, Jstor, Grolier, ProQuest, Online Tutorials
- Partnership with Newark Public Library with for all Newark students to receive public library card and access to all public library resources print and digital resources
- Webquests
- Weblibliographies
- Infobase databases, includes k-12 resources, audiobooks, and instructional films for teachers
- Discovery Education, k-12 resources with virtual field trips

Other ways that Newark SLMSs contributed to students' academic achievement included maintaining partnerships with Mayor Baraka's Office to distribute monthly titles books from the Mayor's Book Club through the Newark Public Library. Additionally, other specifics included:

- Providing instruction in the use of information technology and search strategies.
- Providing opportunities for students and staff to become life-long learners who can independently access, evaluate, and use information.
- Promoting literacy and reading
- Supporting the instructional programs of the school
- The Newark Board of Education Library Media Centers are the central hub of the 21st century learning experience.
- School libraries are an integral part of the educational team by providing enriching environments within the centers, assisting with technology integration, and acquiring resources and activities in print, audio, visual, and electronic media, which satisfies educational needs, encourages interdisciplinary studies, and inspires a love for recreational and independent reading.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

SLMSs support equity, diversity, and inclusion in a myriad of ways. They analyze their collection to ensure there are

Newark School Library Media Specialists Lead the Way to Assist Students (Continued)

materials that represent marginalized groups and that students are able to see themselves reflected in books. They promote books written by authors who have lived the experiences of the characters in their books, and they ensure that the nonfiction collection contains materials that cover a variety of perspectives and experiences.

Newark's SLMS Contributions to Equity, Inclusion and Diversity

With differentiated instruction and inclusion SLMSs utilized the following platforms and databases to provide for equity, inclusion and diversity for students:

- Discovery Education includes text to speech features
- Learning Ally, provides library of audiobooks read by humans and talk to text
- All district student Chromebooks have the text-reader app, "Read and Write"
- Culturegrams
- Facilitating after school tutorial/homework centers
- Training with Assistive Technology
- Working to develop students' ingenuity and creativity through the use of the physical layout of the school library
- Building bridges with staff, students, community members through having the physical library open to family members after school

Another way that The Newark Board of Education provided for equity of access to information was that they provided funding for laptops for every teacher and chromebooks for every student in the district. Additionally, the Office of Educational Media Services continues to be actively involved in developing partnerships with The Newark Public Library, The Newark Museum, The New Jersey Historical Society, and Learning Resource Centers. As a result of these partnerships, Newark SLMSs have been instrumental in providing an array of materials to enhance students' knowledge base across all areas of the curriculum.

Social and Emotional Learning

For many students, the school library is a safe space - a judgment-free zone where they can select any book they want regardless of their reading level. Students often turn to their school libraries for safe spaces and growth opportunities; this space becomes a home away from home for many. School libraries provide access to books about mental health, physical and emotional development, and sensitive topics. SLMSs are able to provide bibliotherapy: "a therapeutic approach employing books and other forms of literature, typically alongside more traditional therapy modalities, to support a patient's mental health and to support struggling students." (Psychology Today)

Many SLMSs have added makerspaces to their library programs. Maker activities encourage collaboration, critical

thinking, perseverance, problem-solving, and creativity. They provide opportunities for students to experiment and explore in a low-stress environment.

Newark, School Libraries and Students' Social and Emotional Learning Needs

The Newark SLMSs and their school libraries / media centers provide a welcoming and safe environment for students. Often the media center may be the only quiet place that students can find in a day. Additionally, many of the Library / media centers are open after school for students and family. SLMSs have also used social media apps like Bitmoji to create online tutorials for students on use of library resources. SLMSs web pages are also friendly and inviting. The school libraries are provide books whereby students can identify with the characters because they see themselves reflected in those characters.

Conclusion

Newark Public Schools are utilizing their School Library Media Specialists as one of their tools in their tool box to assist students as they begin to recover from the disruptions of the previous school years. School Library Media Specialists play an integral role in students' academic success preparing them with necessary career and college-readiness skills. Since Newark SLMSs serve all students, faculty and community members in a school this makes them the best tool for the district to work towards accelerated learning for students, providing equity, diversity and inclusion resources and providing for students' social and emotional learning needs. SLMSs will help lead the way for Newark Public Schools towards increased student academic success.

Newark Superintendent Roger León received the Superintendent of the Year Award from the New Jersey Association of School Librarians in 2020 for his support of school libraries in Newark Public Schools. Margaret Adjoga-Otu, the Newark SLMS who nominated Mr. León, wrote: "Under State Control, Roger León fought cuts to School Libraries and was able to convince the various school principals to retain their media specialists. Since León's tenure, there has been a tremendous retention of SLMSs. Not one SMLS or School Library Program has been cut in the last 3 years." Upon receiving this award, Mr. León reflected on his experience as a Newark Public Schools student and then as a principal and stated "I learned and, now as Superintendent, I bring with me this clear understanding that it is about learning to read and reading to learn" and in light of inevitable impacts COVID-19 will have on education that "We know that the way we will answer this digital divide is with our librarians in school."

For Further Reference:

Education's Silver Bullet? School Libraries. Knowledge Quest Blog, October 4, 2021. Click [link](#) to view.

School Librarians Help Address Learning Loss, SLJ, September 3, 2020. Click on [link](#) to view.

School Libraries Can Help Students Recover From Pandemic Year, NJ Spotlight, July 16, 2021. Click [link](#) to view.

Project REAP: A Formula for Cultivating Capital for Urban Redevelopment

By: G. Lamont Blackstone, Chairman, Project REAP

“The flow of capital determines—for better or worse—everything!” This observation was cited by Margaret Anadu, Chairwoman of Goldman Sach’s Urban Investment Group, during an April 2021 event. That virtual assembly had marked the completion of an internship program in community development finance, an initiative called Open Access, which was supported by a national initiative known as Project REAP. Although Ms. Anadu was clearly referring to the flow of financial capital, the same could also be said of *human* capital. For without confidence in the managerial talent leading economic development, financial capital rarely flows.

Government administrations, at all levels in the public sector, recognize the importance of staffing their development agencies with professionals prepared to spearhead projects—either independently or with the private sector. And Project REAP, one of the nation’s leading diversity initiatives serving the commercial real estate (CRE) industry, is well-positioned to serve New Jersey’s cities in honing the human capital of its public- and private-sector development professionals.

In addition to the Open Access pilot program, Project REAP has partnered with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) during the pandemic to launch the ULI/REAP virtual academy. This online platform is an adaptation of the in-person professional development program that REAP pioneered some 23 years ago, a remarkable experiment in talent development which has graduated over 1400 minority professionals nationwide. Essentially a boot camp in CRE fundamentals, the academy exposes its fellows to the fundamentals of the various real estate asset classes and the functional areas in the practice of commercial real estate, e.g., finance, development, brokerage and leasing. REAP and ULI are launching the third cycle of this academy this October, which will run from October 18th to December 16th. The prior two academies, combined, had over 290 fellows from across the nation, inclusive of 14 from New Jersey. That speaks to the power of this online platform to reach professionals of color aspiring to connect with the CRE industry—historically one of the least-inclusive of economic sectors.

But before Project REAP partnered with ULI, which itself is an industry leader in commercial real estate research and education, it operated an in-person classroom experience in nine cities across the USA. Accordingly, REAP has served economic development professionals who have advanced in government and the private sector. While they constitute a fraction of REAP’s alumni base, they illustrate how this ecosystem for professional development and networking can prepare future economic development practitioners.

Keith Sellars graduated from one of REAP’s earlier academies in its inaugural market of Washington, DC. He now serves as President and CEO of the Washington, DC Economic Partnership, where his goal is to make the federal capitol the top city to start, grow and conduct business in the nation. Shmel Graham, a past member of REAP’s board of directors, completed her REAP certification at our 2012 Los Angeles academy. As a land use and permitting issues attorney, she previously served the city of Los Angeles as the Director of Mayor Eric Garcetti’s Operations Innovation Team and Program Manager for Real Estate Asset Management Reform.

Yet another alum, Courtney Pogue, completed REAP’s Chicago academy—as well as obtaining three additional professional designations (CCIM, CECD, CRE). This multi-credentialed administrator has served in economic development roles in Cook County, IL; Dallas, TX; and currently is the Director of Economic and Community Development in Nashville, TN—the city picked by Amazon for one of its HQ2 locations. Of his REAP experience, he asserts: “... Project REAP has been very instrumental to my career due to relationships that I have developed from the program and the confidence the REAP network has provided to my commercial real estate and economic development career. I fully believe in the program in that it provides the foundation for the next group of emerging commercial real estate professionals that may be key to the economic development profession as either practitioners or partners.”

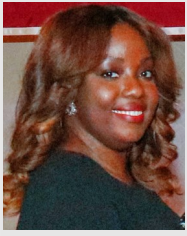
So just as major commercial real estate firms such as JLL and Cushman & Wakefield have sent their staff to REAP’s academies, New Jersey mayors should consider Project REAP as a resource for their economic development managers—as well as a potential source for minority talent interested in such roles. Likewise, the state’s urban developers and real estate operators can look to REAP as a cultivator of talent. Although the fall 2021 application window has closed, we will be formulating plans for our 2022 programmatic calendar and welcome potential linkages with NJUMA and the state’s CRE development community. Topics slated for the fall 2021 season include sustainable development, medical office building leasing, multifamily finance and mixed-use development—in addition to over a dozen other modules. All sessions are taught and presented by seasoned industry practitioners affiliated with prominent commercial real estate firms. Contact chair@projectreap.org for more information.

Prepared, connected and inspired human capital is as critical to the growth of New Jersey’s cities as the flow of financial resources. Operating in an industry which historically has under-represented BIPOC professionals, Project REAP has been cultivating that human capital while advancing diversity, equity and inclusion.

For more information visit: www.projectreap.org.



A Message from the Editor



Dear readers,

I hope you enjoyed this issue of the *Urban Mayors Press*. This quarterly publication was created to highlight the work of New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) members and to provide resourceful information to municipalities throughout our state.

Ishiya A. Hayes is the editor of the Urban Mayors Press and the Associate Director/Senior Policy Analyst of the Urban Mayors Policy Center where she provides support through policy analysis and program coordination for the NJUMA.

NEW JERSEY URBAN MAYORS ASSOCIATION

To submit to an upcoming issue of the *Urban Mayors Press* or for more information on the NJUMA contact:

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About the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association

The New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) is housed in the Urban Mayors Policy Center at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University. The Urban Mayors Policy Center coordinates all activities of the NJUMA and provides policy and legislative analysis.

Established in 1991, the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association is dedicated to working with state and federal lawmakers and officials to develop appropriate and effective public policy measures that benefit the state's urban centers and to help lawmakers understand how public policy affects New Jersey's municipalities.

NJUMA is an organization comprised of 32 New Jersey urban and rural municipalities. NJUMA serves its members through meetings and annual conferences which keep them informed on issues affecting their ability to provide adequate services to their residents.

NJUMA also assists its members in interpreting legislation and state policy and works with the Governor's Office to assist in defining an urban policy agenda. NJUMA uses its *3-Point Plan for Strengthening Cities, Families and Communities* as a guide for addressing the critical issues of its member cities. This plan is designed to aggressively address the areas of crime and public safety; education and positive youth development; environment and public health; family and community welfare; housing and economic development; tax reform and intergovernmental relations, and unfunded mandates.

NJUMA is a proactive organization that pursues opportunities from the government and the private sector to advance the interests of its members. We are consistently exploring opportunities which will strengthen our communities and ultimately the state of New Jersey.



Asbury Park

Atlantic City

Bayonne

Bloomfield

Bridgeton

Camden

East Orange

Elizabeth

Hillside

Hoboken

Irvington

Jersey City

Kearny

Lakewood

Linden

Millville

Neptune Township

New Brunswick

Newark

North Bergen

Orange

Passaic

Paterson

Perth Amboy

Plainfield

Pleasantville

Roselle

Trenton

Vineland

Wildwood

Willingboro

Woodbridge