

# LEADERSHIP HUNTERDON 2013 CLASS



## WHITE PAPERS





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Leadership Hunterdon Board of Trustees & 2013 Class

Letters from Hunterdon County Leaders

## WHITE PAPERS

### **Mission of the White Papers:**

To research an issue related to a critical issue in Hunterdon County from multiple perspectives and write a report on your findings that can be shared with the appropriate organizations.

### **Team Clinton -Infrastructure - Connecting Communities & Building a Foundation for Economic Development**

Brad Muller, *Norris McLaughlin & Marcus*

Caroline Scutt, *United Way of Hunterdon County*

Tony Veneziale, *The Accounting Firm of The Accounting Firm of Marguiles, Englehart, & Veneziale*

### **Team Flemington - Hunterdon County Industry Sectors & Workforce Development**

Dave Johnston, *Amwell Ridge Wealth Management*

Kathleen Perez, *Hunterdon Medical Center*

Dorothy Wantrobski, *Fulton Bank*

### **Team Frenchtown - Business Retention, Expansion, Recruitment & Attraction**

Harrie Copeland, *Hopewell Valley Community Bank*

Jerri Collevecchio, *Hunterdon Prevention Resources*

Stephanie Taylor, *Merck*

### **Team Lambertville - Tourism**

Diana Fredericks, *Gebhardt & Kiefer*

Rob Gebhardt, *Merck*

Bill Harnden, *Raritan Valley Community College*



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June 6, 2013

To the Leadership Hunterdon Class of 2013:

If it is true that a community can be judged by the way it responds to the needs of its citizens, then Hunterdon County residents have many reasons to be proud.

*"Leadership Hunterdon will work to transform people to become trustees of our communities, to become leadership resources and work for the betterment of Hunterdon County"- that is our goal. Over the past nine months your successful completion of the Hunterdon Leadership program means you have distinguished yourselves as leaders and speaks volumes about your dedication and commitment to improving the needs in Hunterdon County. These white papers speak to the in-depth approach, through new eyes, of your understanding of the economic development needs here at home in this County. Together you have achieved much, and achieving the change you envision will require unified support from all segments of our community. That is why I hope you will be inspired to join an organization and work to build a healthier, safer, more vibrant community for all.*

Through excellence in organizational leadership and governance, you will become mission-driven, where those around you are passionate, focused and aligned to achieve goals. You will have credibility, add value, and be recognized as indispensable to your community's health and well-being. You will continuously improve and innovate, you will become more resilient and able to negotiate, navigate and capitalize on opportunities. Finally, you will develop a reputation for integrity, transparency and accountability and be recognized as a leading voice for human welfare in Hunterdon County.

To all our graduates, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Leadership Hunterdon and the Chamber of Commerce, – Congratulations! I wish you much success and hope to see you at the table leading Hunterdon County towards community solutions in an ever increasingly complex environment.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Duncan,

CEO , United Way of Hunterdon County

2013 Chair, Board of Trustees, Leadership Hunterdon

**GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.**



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*...in the business of promoting business*

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*Hunterdon Healthcare, LLC*

June 2013

*If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader. — John Quincy Adams*

It has been a great privilege to get to know the Leadership Hunterdon Class of 2013 over the past nine months. This group has spent their time meeting with a multitude of leaders, businesses and organizations immersing themselves into the fabric of Hunterdon County.

The Leadership Hunterdon Class of 2013 has been inspired and has heard many of the challenges that face Hunterdon County in the upcoming years. I commend you on the time and thoroughness of your White Paper project. The insights and the recommendations you have made will have a lasting impact on our business community. A strong business community can only help so many other facets of our County, from education, healthcare, non-profits, civic groups and government to be that much stronger.

I know in speaking to each of you that this experience has been one that has sparked a new appreciation for the significance of why strong leadership throughout our twenty six communities is so critical for our future. Thank you again for your dedication to Leadership Hunterdon. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you officially to the ranks of our Alumni joining our Inaugural Class of 2012!

With best regards,

Christopher J. Phelan  
President  
Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce



Bedard, Kurowicki & Co.

Certified Public Accountants, PC

[www.bkc-cpa.com](http://www.bkc-cpa.com)

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June, 2013

On behalf of the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce and our Board of Directors I congratulate the Leadership Hunterdon Class of 2013. Leadership Hunterdon has been an exciting initiative that is already having a very positive impact on so many individuals and organizations throughout the County. The goal of Leadership Hunterdon is long-term.

I know that the Leadership Hunterdon Board of Trustees is very proud that you have been so committed and dedicated in this endeavor. It is our hope that each of you takes the experiences of these past nine months and continues to contribute to making Hunterdon County such a wonderful place.

Throughout your travels these past months, you've heard the future challenges of Hunterdon County. These challenges cannot be taken for granted. What makes Hunterdon County such a great place to live and work takes a tremendous amount of commitment, time and energy on behalf of many individuals.

Each of you is entrusted to help us face these challenges and opportunities to ensure that Hunterdon County remains what it is today. Again congratulations on your completion of Leadership Hunterdon and I look forward to your active participation in the years to come.

Thank you,

Edward J. Kurowicki, MBA, CPA/CFF, CVA

*President, Bedard, Kurowicki & Co., CPA's, PC*

*Chairman of the Board, Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce*

June, 2013

The Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce, like most non-profit organizations, relies heavily on volunteerism and the leadership of its Board of Directors. While not always easy, the commitment to lead an organization can be enormously fulfilling.

The success of this year's Leadership Hunterdon program is a result of the dedication of the participants, the vision of the Chamber and the insight provided by local business, non-profit and political leaders. Henry Kissinger once said that "the task of a leader is to get his people from where they are now to where they have not been." I hope that the Leadership Hunterdon program has encouraged you to embrace leadership positions that will serve your business and the county as we move forward to help enhance the quality of life in our community.

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I congratulate the 2013 class of Leadership Hunterdon.

Sincerely,

Nicholas F. Pellitta  
Norris McLaughlin & Marcus,  
Immediate Past Chairman of the Board  
Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce



April 24, 2013

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# Infrastructure

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*Connecting Communities  
and Building a  
Foundation for Economic  
Development*

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Team Clinton: Caroline Scutt, Brad  
Muller and Tony Venezia

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## **Introduction**

Sidewalks. Not the first image that comes to mind when discussing infrastructure. Yet sidewalks provide pedestrians with a safe walkway to navigate their neighborhood. Sidewalks connect them to other people and places within their community and to the greater global community. Sidewalks are taken for granted until you step off a curb and suddenly find yourself hugging the edge of the road in an effort to distance yourself from passing vehicles. A neighborhood with sidewalks functions differently than one without. This is not an opinion. This is a fact. Just as a community without sewers or high-speed internet or access to public transportation functions differently than one with all of those infrastructure components in place. And whether that infrastructure supports a neighborhood with high-density, mixed-use zoning or one with single-family dwellings on several-acre lots also makes a difference.

Hunterdon County is the eighth largest county in the state, spanning 437.44 square miles, yet there are only 300 residents per square mile, compared to 1,195 in New Jersey as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the population is not dispersed equally. There is no reasonable way to put together a plan for improved infrastructure that approaches all corners of the county in the same manner. There is a preponderance of data supporting the need to improve upon our existing infrastructure, and some work is already being done. There are a handful of comprehensive plans, specifically around the Flemington-Raritan Township area.<sup>2</sup> But there is no evidence of a comprehensive development strategy – economic or otherwise – that incorporates infrastructure as a component of a holistic plan.

The 200-plus-page Growth Management Plan<sup>3</sup> (Reference 3) developed by the county discusses each area: infrastructure, housing, economic development, etc., but there is no overarching recommendation and very little specificity. The plan also needs to be updated to reflect current demographics and economic realities and trends.

For example, chapter nine in the county's management plan ends with "Hunterdon County Planning can assist in the coordination of TOD [Transportation-oriented Development] initiatives with the New Jersey Highlands Council, County planning agencies in adjacent counties, as well as with NJTPA, NJ Transit, and HART Commuter Services as requested." The term "as requested" does not invite action.

So what is being done? Data exists in support of TOD initiatives but there are also valid concerns. There are certainly municipalities within the county that would be appropriate candidates for this type of plan. This invites a more strategic discussion which should take place between municipal and county government with the goal to define the type of community that is being built.

To review infrastructure challenges and needs without taking into account changing demographics as well as economic development plans is a tactical exercise, not a strategic one. A recent study by Rutgers Transportation Center<sup>4</sup> identifies that Latin American immigrants utilize mass transit when it is accessible. The survey suggests that while serving the dispersed workplaces of this immigrant group may be impractical, "NJ TRANSIT might be able to play a role in subsidizing employer vanpools and in advocating for better regulation of vanpool services." Could HART do something similar? Another interesting point the study revealed was that there remain significant language barriers and evidence of discrimination by drivers. There is an assumption that

the decrease in LINK usage in Hunterdon County is attributable to factors such as the increase in taxi services (many of them catering to the Latino population). However, could driver discrimination or language barriers be an issue with the LINK as well?

Would it be sensible to introduce a weekend tourist route using the LINK and which local residents could utilize as well, perhaps as a joint venture with TransBridge Bus Lines and other local counties with tourist destinations? The vehicles could be rebranded to market to tourists, similar to the Atlantic City Jitney service. This suggestion will be discussed further in the “Public Transportation” section of this paper.

Census data demonstrates Hunterdon County’s Latino population has doubled over the past several years; while the population as a whole has declined.<sup>5</sup> If part of our economic development plan focuses on agriculture and tourism, we can be fairly certain Latin Americans will be a large segment of that workforce. Furthermore, we are seeing a greying of America but not necessarily of retired Americans as once predicted. Many older Americans want to continue working or must out of necessity. Offering accessibility to workplace is vital to this segment of the population as well.

Experts in various areas of infrastructure, planning and government all agree something needs to be done to improve the county’s existing infrastructure with an eye toward maintaining an exceptional quality of life for residents as well as encouraging economic development within the county without losing our historic farming roots.

These expert opinions are supported by numerous studies and surveys that are supportive (often redundant) of each other. The time has come for the studying to end and the work to begin. For example, the Flemington Circle remains an unsolved problem. Surveys suggest communities want sustainable development and revitalized Main Street

business districts, yet big box stores and new shopping centers continue to take root – a few feet away from empty downtown spaces.

According to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), studies show people generally will not take public transportation if they live more than a ½ mile from the depot. Furthermore, transportation companies will not entertain routes that stop in low-density zoning areas. If community members want train service but do not want zoning for multiple-family dwellings, they need to understand and accept the trade-off. Simply put, a mass transit center in a low-density area is a non-starter.<sup>6</sup>

There needs to be focus. And perhaps focus on getting it right in a handful of neighborhoods – those most interested in working collaboratively toward a common vision of a thriving community.

Four municipalities – Califon, Frenchtown, Lambertville and Raritan have adopted plans to implement Complete Streets initiatives. Complete Streets is an effort to improve transportation infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists.<sup>7</sup> These communities are taking initial steps in infrastructure planning and rebuilding. Perhaps the county might more actively support these municipalities in their efforts and work with each of them to develop a comprehensive revitalization plan using infrastructure as the foundation. Of course, there will be a need for support resources (e.g., staff) in order to implement any such plan and then hold the municipality accountable (using financial or other incentives) for implementing the plan within a specific timeframe.

Lastly, whether the focus is transportation of individuals over roads or rails or communications via satellite or cable, or even the transportation of waste materials, the challenges in Hunterdon County are the same: density and distance. The same features –

rolling hills and open spaces -- that attracted individuals and then businesses to our area are ongoing challenges to its infrastructure and continued growth. The single greatest challenge, however, is building and maintaining an infrastructure that meets the wants and needs of the people who make up this diverse community.

To that end, this portion of the 2013 Leadership Hunterdon Economic Development White Paper is not attempting to provide solutions for the county's infrastructure issues – they are too complex to be examined in a vacuum. The goal is to provide another viewpoint of the current situation and suggestions that might feed into a larger economic development plan.

Infrastructure is the backbone of a community and the foundation of economic development. Although often overlooked, infrastructure investment is key to the success of a community. In the context of this discussion of economic development the reference to infrastructure is focused on three areas: transportation, utilities and communication.

### **Public Transportation – A Small Start**

A discussion of public transportation within Hunterdon County and from Hunterdon to other counties and states usually focuses on taking vehicles off the road by increasing bus and rail travel; and by expanding and improving existing roads that crisscross the county. However, despite numerous efforts, these types of public transportation efforts in our county seem to fail due to the same issues. First, the county lacks the population density that public transportation officials seek before offering increased rail and bus services. The idea of building additional high density residential developments to attract this population is distasteful to most residents who appreciate

Hunterdon County's rural nature. Moreover, current rail lines are insufficient and/or will need to be expanded and/or rebuilt at great cost in both construction and land acquisition.

Residents are hesitant to see new railways built in what is viewed as tranquil areas. They also hesitate to support road expansion and widening projects that would increase the efficiency of traffic through the area, because these changes increase vehicle speeds and would cause these routes to be alternatives for trucks and other "pass-through" commuters seeking quicker routes through New Jersey.

Commuters tend to go in many different directions from Hunterdon County, ranging from New York to Philadelphia and neighboring counties of Mercer, Somerset, Lehigh and Bucks. This challenges the potential effectiveness of set routes in specific directions, which is how rail and bus service are usually most effective. Finally, public transportation is expensive. All public transportation systems (including our roadways) rely on public funds in addition to fee collections to provide their service. Without federal and/or state support, the county is limited in the services it can provide and priorities do need to be put in order.

At this time, Hunterdon County public transportation consists of the LINK and various privately owned and operated taxi services. The challenges with the LINK as an effective public transportation system are well known. Only the Flemington Shuffle Service has fixed routes and schedules. The Cross County Service is based solely on service requests and availability. The Flemington Shuffle Service runs until 11:00pm on weeknights and 10:00pm on Saturdays. The Cross County Service runs only until 7:00pm and only runs on weekdays and nights, not on weekends.<sup>8</sup> The service also has a reputation within the community to be for the poor, elderly or disabled. Most residents

do not see it as an available resource that can be utilized by all. Taxi service is generally unregulated and therefore, can be unsafe or expensive. Taxi service is also viewed as an acceptable option for certain citizens and/or groups.

We suggest exploring a cooperative between the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), various government entities, and private enterprises. To begin, the various municipal governments, with urging from the county government, should pass a set standard of rules and regulations for the various taxi and limo services that serve within the county. The idea is to make pricing consistent throughout the county so that users feel confident no matter which service they use; they will be treated equally and fairly. These regulations will also allow the customer to feel that their safety is being addressed, and finally that all drivers are properly licensed and trained.

The Chamber and various private enterprises can combine resources to promote taxi, LINK and other transportation services. Tourism could be an ideal platform to promote and build upon existing transportation options.

The Chamber or another county-wide organization could assist in the organization of cross-promotion efforts. Restaurants, bars and clubs, bed and breakfasts, hotels, and the many tourist attractions could be included within a transportation-focused tourism guide developed around alternative transit options. This would allow visitors staying in Flemington for the weekend to shop in Clinton and/or Frenchtown during the day, stop at a winery and dine in Lambertville in the evening, all while leaving their personal vehicle where they are staying.

This would require that the taxi services be available during the working hours of the participating businesses, and the businesses promote these services. Potential benefits

include: a greener and visitor-friendly way to explore the county, greater exposure for businesses involved, and increased revenue for transportation services such as taxis and the LINK.

In order for the LINK to be a viable component, the service would need to be expanded, with a more formal schedule throughout the county that includes popular tourist attractions. The initial schedule could be Friday, Saturday and Sunday service specifically targeting tourist venues. In addition to appealing to visitors, the hope would be that individuals who work at these venues would use the service as well. Additionally, these routes would benefit from a rebranded LINK service. For example, specific branding that would appeal to visitors such as “Hop Around Hunterdon” or “Go Green Hunterdon” should be utilized. The schedules and stop locations would need to be clearly defined on public signage and through promotion by all the parties involved.

If successful, this program would serve as a catalyst and foundation for a smaller yet effective public transportation network within the county and could expand to include limited train travel on existing track.

This network, if set up and marketed correctly, could benefit the local tourism industry by providing visitors with an option to leave their car and enjoy. The ultimate goal is to inspire confidence among county residents that public transportation is an effective, reliable and inexpensive alternative on a day-to-day basis.

Another small step in improving our transportation infrastructure is to encourage smooth traffic flow throughout the county, not by major road construction projects or by the installation of rail lines, but by a more focused and practical approach. One such idea is the “Sustainable Corridor” improvements project in Somerset County.<sup>9</sup> The project will



reconstruct and widen certain shoulders and auxiliary lanes at key points to make travel safer and ease congestion.

Another laudable project is the Route 22 traffic signal plan in Somerset and Union counties.<sup>10</sup> This project hopes to improve traffic mobility by interconnecting traffic lights into one system along a 13 mile stretch of road. Finally, park and ride options already available to commuters should be reviewed to determine if enhancements can increase ridership and cut down on local and flow-through traffic.

### **Utility Infrastructure: An Unlikely Impediment to Economic Development**

When one considers the question of how to promote economic development, the sewer system is not the first consideration to come to mind. However, for Hunterdon County, our lack of a widespread, inter-connected sewer system creates a roadblock to economic development. This is an obstacle that, with some creativity, can be surmounted.

It is not surprising that Hunterdon County, with its vast swathes of undeveloped/preserved land, rocky terrain and relatively sparse population, has one of the least developed sewer systems in the entire state. Only approximately 20% of the County's residents are connected to public sewer. These sewer systems are limited to the County's more densely populated areas, such as towns like Lambertville, Raritan, and Clinton.<sup>11</sup>

For residential areas and small businesses, a lack of a public sewer system is a minor drawback. However, for large companies, a lack of available public sewer may be a deal breaker.

For businesses, there is no longer the desire or economic ability to invest huge sums of money into turning undeveloped land into corporate centers. The days of Merck-type building projects are over. Moreover, there are simply no public funds available to undertake a large-scale, county-wide sewer construction project.

Rather, what we suggest is that when attempting to recruit large companies that require a viable public sewer system in order to consider expanding into Hunterdon County, such efforts should focus on those parts of the County that already have existing sewer systems. Public investment should be utilized to expand the capacity of the County's existing sewer systems so that such systems are capable of handling the increased stress that would come from the addition of several large businesses to the area.

These sewer-capacity-expansion projects should not wait until large companies begin expressing an interest in re-locating to Hunterdon County. Rather, the County needs to be able to demonstrate to prospective companies that it is ready and capable of bringing them on-board in mere months, not years.

Focusing on expanding the capacity of existing sewer systems, rather than building-out public sewer to all parts of the County, also dovetails with the overall theme of this white-paper: that Hunterdon County should make use of and promote its existing developed areas rather than engage in large-scale development of new lands, as doing so will encourage economic expansion in a cost effective manner that leaves the smallest possible environmental footprint.

Conversely, Hunterdon County's power grid sufficiently supports the electrical needs of the county. Increased demand can be met; however, the cost associated with new

projects would likely be incurred by the developer with an opportunity to recoup the cost at a later date.<sup>12</sup>

### **Can You Hear Me Now? – A Review of Current Communications Infrastructure in Hunterdon County**

In this era of tweets and telemedicine, a strong communications infrastructure is no longer a nicety. It is a necessity. In fact, the debate continues to rage over whether or not internet-related services should be regulated as a public utility.<sup>13</sup>

While we live in a high-tech age, advances in telecommunications are only as “advanced” as they are accessible and functioning. A representative of CenturyLink pointed out that urban centers usually are not reluctant to allow H-frames and poles to go into a neighborhood. Hunterdon residents, conversely, often take a “not in my back yard” approach. While this may help preserve the physical beauty of the county, it certainly undermines attempts to improve its communications infrastructure.<sup>14</sup>

Topographically there may be several miles of rock and shale laden country between homes, which makes laying wire difficult. As a result, places like the Hunterdon County Medical Center in Flemington are wired for telemedicine, while some of the more remote physician offices may not.

In order to promote continued economic development and to make our county an attractive place for current and new businesses, the ultimate goal is to have 100% high speed internet access and sustainable cell coverage throughout the county.

In addition to 100% high-speed Internet access, the perfect scenario would be to bury all lines. Many people are not aware that landlines are necessary to connect cell towers. Of course, making sure emergency centers and the 9-1-1 system never go off-line is the utmost priority. Burying all lines will help harden our system against the effects of

severe storms. CenturyLink, Verizon (which covers the southern part of the county) and JCP&L continue to improve their collaborative efforts and those with local and state government to ensure disaster recovery plans are in place.

When planning communications' projects business zones are always less of a challenge than residential neighborhoods and from a planning perspective it would be optimal if municipalities and state government would lift some of the restrictions currently in place. Of course, homeowners do not necessarily have the same perspective.

Bandwidth is the backbone to telecommunications and where towers and H-frames are located will impact the surrounding signal. If a tower needs to be relocated because of an obstinate homeowner, the result will be a gap in coverage. This might be acceptable, but its effects need to be understood. If one community opposes a tower, the communications company will go to Town B even though it may not be in an optimal area for the best overall coverage.

This may be part of the reason more communities do not establish wireless neighborhoods. The political will and financial support must be in place. That said, this is an area that can and will be explored.

Representatives from CenturyLink noted that the proof is in the planning and the Hunterdon County Planning Board could be a more proactive partner in identifying areas of business growth in collaboration with communications and utilities companies. These experts also noted that municipalities could better collaborate with each other and with the county.<sup>15</sup> This speaks to old-fashioned communication – no need for high speed. Furthermore, if there is no political push behind infrastructure improvements, it is very difficult to compel individuals to support them.

### **Mixed-Use Development: Increasing Density in an Environmentally Friendly Way**

As discussed earlier in this white-paper, part of the problem that Hunterdon County faces is that while many of its residents desire access to reliable public transportation, the County does not have the population density to entice NJ Transit to invest in the area. The only way the county can increase its population density in a significant fashion without losing its historic charm or falling victim to the over-development seen in other parts of the state is to engage in mixed-use development and re-development of existing downtrodden areas.

Mixed-use development often takes the form of combining the construction of commercial buildings with high-density residential complexes. A recent example of such a project was the “Pier Village” complex in Long Branch, New Jersey, which combined the construction of hotels and commercial shops with luxury apartments and up-scale condominiums on the oceanfront.<sup>16</sup> A much smaller version of a mixed-use project is under construction, after a several-year delay, in Frenchtown, where George E. Michael Builders are combining street level shops with 27 apartments and luxury condominiums in its “River Mills at Frenchtown” project.<sup>17</sup>

In Hunterdon County, there are many existing abandoned business sites that could be converted to mixed-use properties in an effort to both increase population density and commercial space. This will help preserve the agrarian character of the County by limiting large-scale development to these mixed-use locations, while helping promote the County’s environmentally-friendly nature by making use of existing, abandoned space rather than clearing forest or farmland for new development.

Another reason why this approach is favorable is that by increasing the availability of lower-cost, mid-level, and even luxury high density housing, the potential customer base for the County's various businesses, large and small, will also be expanded. It is a simple fact that with the influx of "big box" stores into the County, particularly the Flemington/Raritan area, there is increased competition amongst all businesses. These businesses are fighting over a pool of customers that is not growing at the same rate as the available commercial choices. One has to wonder whether the Flemington/Raritan area will be able to sustain having a Costco, BJ's, and Wal-Mart all within a mile-radius of one another.

However, when a large commercial project is accompanied by high density housing, it brings in more potential customers for the new business and the existing businesses, and expands the tax-base for the municipality. While it is true that high density housing carries with it potential costs, such as increased stress on public infrastructure and educational services, it will also bring many benefits, such as making the County more attractive to NJ Transit.

### **Conclusion**

While there are existing wide-scale plans to revamp Hunterdon County's transportation network and general infrastructure, we believe interim, interconnected steps can be taken to improve the quality of life and economic outlook for the county. This could be achieved within a reasonable timeframe and sensible budget. A holistic approach to economic development requires that infrastructure be one component of an interdependent plan. This paper will hopefully spur a dialogue among various groups to develop a comprehensive vision of economic growth for the county.

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## **Leadership Hunterdon Class of 2013**

**Over-arching Theme: Hunterdon County Economic Development**

**Subsection: Hunterdon County Industry Sectors & Workforce Development**

**May 1, 2013**

**Submitted by:**

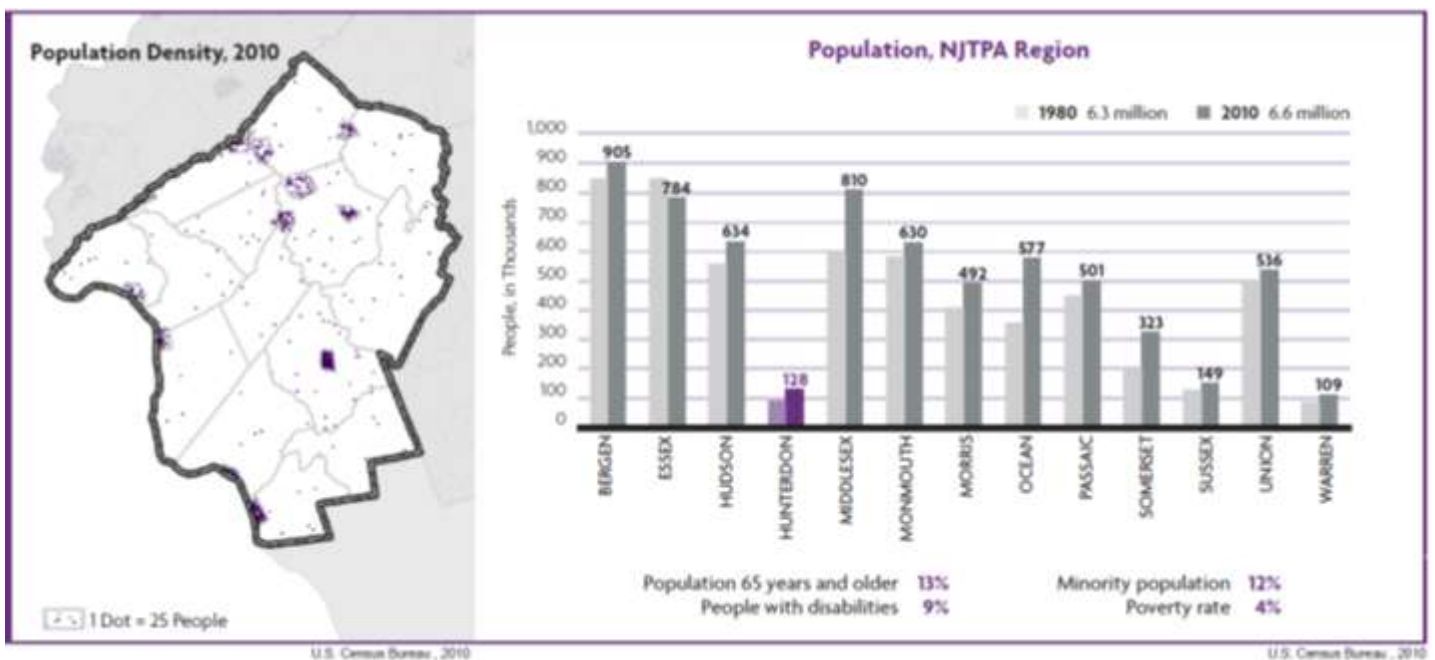
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## INTRODUCTION

As the United States continues a dramatic shift from an industrial based to a knowledge-based economy, the improvement of the workforce development system is critical to our nation's success for a variety of reasons. In order to compete in an increasingly competitive global marketplace, organizations and regions need to attract, retain, and develop their workforce. The demand for skilled labor is increasing (as more and more positions require increased skill standards), yet the labor force is growing more slowly. The skill gap continues to widen, as more workers become technology dependent.. Wealth is being created by research, discovery, and innovation; it's driven by human capital.



**Region Density**  
Population ~1580 /sq.mi

Here is an excerpt from an April 24, 2012 article in *Forbes* entitled “America’s Richest Counties”:

*Tucked in northwestern New Jersey is the nation’s richest county that does not depend on a large amount of federal government dollars. Hunterdon County, N.J., is a rural area that borders Pennsylvania. It has become popular as a bedroom community for well-off people who work in New York and as a result has median annual household income of \$100,980. The federal government has next to no presence in Hunterdon. In fact, tax dollars generally don’t flow into Hunterdon County, instead they flow out. The county has long had some of the nation’s highest median state property taxes. “There are no federal facilities here,” says Robert Walton, director of the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders. “From a state tax standpoint, we get about 6 cents per dollar returned to the county—we pay so much in income tax.”*

New Jersey Counties Ranked By Per Capita Income						
<i>* Data is from the 2010 United States Census Data and the 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.</i>						
Rank	County	Per Capita Income	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Population	Number of Households
1	Hunterdon	\$48,489	\$100,980	\$121,166	128,349	47,169
2	Morris	\$47,342	\$96,747	\$114,694	492,276	180,534
3	Somerset	\$47,067	\$97,440	\$115,214	323,444	117,759
4	Bergen	\$42,006	\$81,708	\$100,310	905,116	335,730
5	Monmouth	\$40,976	\$82,265	\$102,074	630,380	233,983
6	Mercer	\$36,016	\$71,217	\$88,694	366,513	133,155
7	Sussex	\$35,982	\$83,089	\$93,701	149,265	54,752
	New Jersey	\$34,858	\$69,811	\$84,904	8,791,894	3,214,360
8	Burlington	\$34,802	\$76,258	\$91,185	448,734	166,318
9	Union	\$34,096	\$66,791	\$80,818	536,499	188,118
10	Cape May	\$33,571	\$54,292	\$69,978	97,265	40,812
11	Middlesex	\$33,289	\$77,615	\$91,543	809,858	281,186
12	Warren	\$32,985	\$71,364	\$85,635	108,692	41,480
13	Essex	\$31,535	\$55,125	\$68,683	783,969	283,712
14	Gloucester	\$31,210	\$72,664	\$85,832	288,288	104,271
15	Hudson	\$31,024	\$55,275	\$58,968	634,266	246,437
16	Ocean	\$29,826	\$59,620	\$73,672	576,567	221,111
17	Camden	\$29,478	\$60,976	\$74,385	513,657	190,980
	United States	\$27,334	\$51,914	\$62,982	308,745,538	116,716,292
18	Salem	\$27,296	\$59,441	\$72,537	66,083	25,290
19	Atlantic	\$27,247	\$54,766	\$66,920	274,549	102,847
20	Passaic	\$26,095	\$54,944	\$67,208	501,226	166,785
21	Cumberland	\$21,883	\$50,651	\$60,642	156,898	51,931

## HUNTERDON COUNTY INDUSTRY SECTORS AND CLUSTERS

As noted above, Hunterdon County is the most affluent county in the state (and fourth in the country); one would expect more employment opportunities. However, it seems the business climate in Hunterdon County is stagnant and lacks any significant growth. The employment clusters that have emerged in Hunterdon County over the past decade have been primarily in retail, professional (including scientific, technical, financial), and healthcare (including pharmaceutical).

### Total Jobs in Region (full-time and part-time): +3.7 million (2009)

Wage and salary jobs: 2.9 million (79%)

Self-employed workers: 773 thousand (21%)

Rank	Top Employers Hunterdon County	Number Employees	Trend
1	Retail trade	9,139	
2	Professional, scientific, and technical services	8,887	
3	Health care and social assistance	7,496	
4	Finance and insurance	5,938	
5	Construction	5,347	
6	Real estate and rental and leasing	5,168	
7	Other services, except public administration	3,617	
8	Accommodation and food services	3,500	
9	Manufacturing	2,990	
10	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	2,811	

A question that needs to be answered for Hunterdon County is: **What's next?** Pharmaceutical firms are contracting/merging and spending less money. The forthcoming exodus of Merck from Whitehouse is a prime example of this.

Additionally, the retail landscape is changing (many would argue HAS changed). The online shopper has spent more money year after year for some time now, and places such as *Liberty Village Outlets* seem to be stuck in a time warp holding onto the “good ole days” when outlet shopping was a novel idea and truly offered bargains. Many firms now produce specific lines of clothing especially FOR their retail outlets – these outlets are now mainstays on their corporate balance sheets (as opposed to after-thoughts). Our research also found high rental prices were another barrier to entry for new businesses.

Manufacturing has become much more technical. Mike Metzgar, Executive Director, Workforce Delivery at Raritan Valley Community College adds, “The person who used to work the assembly line and put the gloves in the boxes has been replaced by a robot. But now and again the robot breaks down and needs a technician to fix it.” This is an example of the changing landscape. Additionally, the manufacturing employees’ average wages are ever-increasing; (by and large) they have not furthered their education and training ; and therefore, may find/have found themselves in very difficult positions when seeking new employment.



On the financial front – and perhaps not surprisingly due to per capita income stats highlighted previously – the number of firms offering financial planning, investment management, and insurance services has grown significantly in the county.

The healthcare industry continues to grow at rapid speed. All the rumors of 10,000 baby boomers turning age 65 each day for the next 17 years are true. An 85 year old spends twenty times more money on healthcare than a 65 year old. Healthcare is both the fastest growing and largest percentage of the United States' gross domestic product, and it is one of two industries that added jobs throughout the recession promising growth and opportunity over the next decade.

As it relates to our scope, Hunterdon Medical Center is the largest employer in Hunterdon County and continues to expand. Just recently, Hunterdon County was considered New Jersey's healthiest county for the fourth consecutive year. A national survey of county health statistics conducted by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin shows Hunterdon followed by Morris, Somerset, Bergen and Middlesex counties. The survey shows how long and how well people live depending on multiple factors that include childhood poverty, rates of smoking, obesity levels, and access to physicians and dentists.

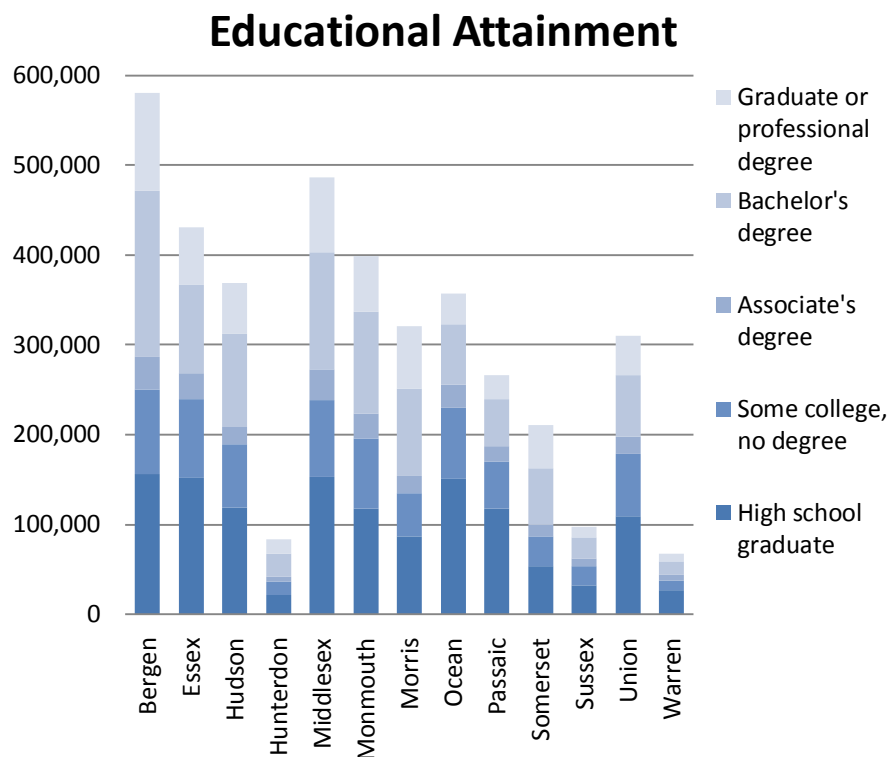
Jobs for registered nurses are projected to increase by 23 percent: for licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses, by 22 percent. This surge in demand for nurses has put additional pressure on nursing schools to increase enrollment and replace retiring nurses. Healthcare support occupations will provide the healthcare industry with competent, cost-effective workers. Expanding services provided by support workers will allow healthcare professionals to treat patients more efficiently.

Not surprisingly, home health aides, nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants are among the fastest growing occupations in Health Science. Many of these support occupations do not require a high level of education or substantial training; they tend to have high turnover rates and relatively low wages. Jobs for home health aides are projected to increase 50 percent between 2008 and 2018 due to the aging population

opting for home healthcare rather than long-term care facilities. Jobs for nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants will grow 19 percent to care for the elderly in long-term care facilities.

## EDUCATION

Jobs for workers with only a high school diploma or less than high school still exist but are quickly declining. Thirty-seven percent of all jobs in 2018 will be for workers who have either a high school diploma or incomplete high school education with some on-the-job training. This number is down from 72 percent in 1973, 44 percent in 1992, and 41 percent in 2007. The overall share of employment opportunities requiring a high school diploma or less gets smaller for all career clusters by 2018, except for Architecture and Construction, where there is a very slight increase. The best opportunities for workers with a high school diploma are in male-dominated fields. Over 80 percent of the workforce in manufacturing, architecture, construction, transportation, distribution, and logistics are men.



Workers with post-secondary middle skills (some college/no degree or an Associate's degree) will comprise 29 percent of all job openings by 2018. Jobs for workers with post-secondary middle skills are concentrated in six occupational clusters (compared to four for those with a high school diploma or less). Sixty-four percent of all new and replacement jobs in the U.S. economy between 2008 and 2018 will be in manufacturing (8%), marketing, sales, and service (9%), transportation, distribution, and logistics (9%), health science (10%), business, management, and administration (13%), and hospitality and tourism (16%).

A Bachelor's degree or better guarantees access to all career clusters. Seventy-two percent of jobs available for workers with a Bachelor's degree or better are found in nine occupational clusters; however, at this education level, all career clusters are essentially accessible. The remaining 28 percent of jobs for workers with a bachelor's degree or better pay the highest wages relative to the career cluster. A bachelor's degree or better offers accessibility to all high-paying jobs within occupational clusters, but it is not a guarantor. Occupation matters a great deal. The top three career clusters (business, management and administration, marketing, sales, and service, and hospitality and tourism) are expected to grow and retain their top ranking in terms of number of jobs. Health science is projected to rank first in the number of jobs added and second in growth rate through 2018. Registered nurses hold the largest number of jobs in healthcare. Most individuals enter the field with an Associate's degree. The same is true for a large number of allied health occupations, such as diagnostic technician and/or therapy assistant. These occupations have smaller employment sizes but are still expected to show rapid growth due to the increased demand for healthcare.

Inclusion of certifications-preparation should be a part of career-ready education. The educational system requires substantial high school CTE programs that provide not only solid academics, but also state-of-the-art training in the career cluster. Even where good high school CTE programs exist, employers often require not only a high school diploma, but also some form of industrial certification.

Raritan Valley Community College in partnership with Hunterdon County Polytech Career Academy and Hunterdon Medical Center sponsors SUMMER Healthcare Exploration and Training for students entering their



junior or senior year at Hunterdon County High Schools. This introduces high school students to the nursing profession and other healthcare careers and increases their interest in knowledge of nursing and other healthcare professions. It provides an opportunity for high school students to gain accurate knowledge of health field careers and determine which pathways are best suited for their interests and aptitudes.

By introducing the students to the realities of nursing roles and nursing education, they will be able to make an educated decision regarding their plans for higher education and career goals.

### **HUNTERDON COUNTY POLYTECH**

Polytech is the county public high school for career and technical education. Open to all Hunterdon County students, the school has two campuses in Raritan Township: Bartles Campus off Bartles Corner Road, and the Central Campus next to the Hunterdon Central High School Field House.

Students attend their home high school for all academic requirements and are bussed to Polytech for half-day programs. Polytech courses run for a full year and offer 20 elective credits. Most students come to our school at the beginning their sophomore / junior year due to the scheduling requirements necessary for graduation.

The 11 core program areas allow students to explore technical and career options in a hands-on environment. All programs offer college credits, licensing, credentials, skills or certifications. Polytech's programs include:

- Education (Early Childhood & Teacher Academy)
- Law Enforcement (Law Enforcement & Criminal and Crime Scene Investigation)
- Health Sciences

- Visual Communications (Graphic Design/Digital MultiMedia, Commercial Arts-Advertising & 3D Computer Animation)
- Nursing (Nursing & Anatomy and Physiology).
- Automotive (Auto Tech, Auto Body Restoration and Repair & Auto Services)
- Career Exploration
- Cosmetology
- Culinary (Culinary & Baking and Pastry)
- Building Technologies (Construction Science & Energy Technologies)
- Pre Vet (Large and Small Animals).

Polytech was cited in a national study for academic improvement ; over 70% of Polytech graduating seniors attend various colleges and universities across the state. Students participate in various organizations, community service projects, and earn induction into the National Technical Honor Society. Polytech students earned over \$550,000 in local, state and national scholarships.

Matt McPherson, a 1995 Hunterdon County Polytech graduate and owner of Matt's Red Rooster Grille on Bloomfield Avenue in Flemington believes, "My time spent within the culinary curriculum at Polytech was critical to fostering my appreciation for the culinary arts and provided me with an excellent skill set to take with me into my career."

During one of our Leadership Hunterdon monthly field trips, we witnessed a Polytech student working alongside technicians at Flemington Car and Truck Country. Byron Brisby, President of Flemington Car and Truck Country stated, "The Polytech automotive program offers a wonderful opportunity for students to get a head start in their career and we will continue to be big supporters of the program." From our perspective, this relationship between Hunterdon County Polytech and Flemington Car and Truck Country is a prime example of how local education-business partnerships should work.

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The alignment of the supply and demand side of the workforce market is fundamental to a successful workforce development system. On the demand side, businesses require specialized skills from employees. On the supply side, potential employees must gain such technical knowledge from regional educational and training programs. If regional industries do not have employees that meet skill requirements, productivity and growth decreases. Even in the midst of the recent year's recession and slower economy, the threat of talent shortages and skilled labor still looms.

Experts in the field have supported the concept of workforce development being critical to economic development. Two national surveys of economic developers, workforce development identified as the skilled workforce shortage, was the number one issue impacting economic development. Such depth of a skilled and specialized labor force can often lead to future industry cluster development as well as enhance the cluster base already present. Therefore, if the workforce system understands the needs of significant clusters in the region, economic development will benefit. Today however, the reality is that the gaps between the supply and demand for labor pose a serious threat to sustain economic competitiveness. Without an organized effort to examine and foster a dynamic cluster- driven workforce development infrastructure that supports the current and future demands of industry, regions may put themselves at a significant economic disadvantage. The workforce market is a complex system, comprised of diverse stakeholders on both the supply and demand side, as well as in between. Regions that can work collaboratively to attract, develop and retain a world class workforce market will establish significant competitive advantage.

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OFFERED THROUGH RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

As highlighted above, the need for post-secondary education has never been greater – yet the cost associated with such has never been higher. Not surprisingly, enrollment at Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) has spiked post 2007. In addition to the undergraduate offerings, we found workforce development opportunities to be plentiful – yet extremely under marketed. RVCC offers innovative programming for businesses and workers to help build a strong, secure, and productive workforce.

For businesses, RVCC offers customized training, small business assistance, and is a partner in developing programs to meet workforce needs. For individuals, RVCC provides high quality, affordable professional development courses in a wide array of areas including health and technology. In addition to various levels of English as a Second Language instruction, RVCC offers programs in HVAC, auto technology, auto body, plumbing, carpentry, electrical and cosmetology.

RVCC is the only college to New Jersey to be awarded a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to work in partnership with local businesses to train workers in new career paths. The three-year, \$4.6 million grant—the largest in the College’s history—is expected to help train more than 750 students in programs that meet industry needs. Employers are guaranteed highly qualified employees, and students are offered career pathways that will lead to viable employment. The grant represents a true community partnership; many local business and community partners worked with the College in identifying workforce development needs.

## CAREER TRAINING FOR BABY BOOMERS

With many adults age 50 and over out of work or seeking to transition to a new career, a new program will be offered by Raritan Valley Community College that helps to update the skill sets of baby boomers and assists them in career makeovers.

RVCC has been selected to join the *Plus 50 Encore Completion Program*, a national effort to train 10,000 baby boomers for new jobs in healthcare, education, and social services. The program is sponsored by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and RVCC's Workforce Development division will oversee the implementation of the grant.

As one of 36 new colleges recently selected for the project, the college will assist adults ages 50 and over in completing degrees or certificates in high-demand occupations that give back to the community. In addition to receiving grant funds to augment training programs, participating colleges gain access to toolkits and extensive marketing resources tailored to reach boomers.

The results seem promising. An independent evaluation of AACC's *Plus 50 Initiative* found 89% of students agreed the work force training helped them acquire new skills; 72% attributed landing a job to such training. "Many adults age 50 and over want to train for new jobs that help others and are hiring, but they need to update their skills. Community colleges offer a supportive environment where baby boomers can train for new jobs quickly and affordably, while completing a marketable degree or certificate," said Mary Sue Vickers, director for the Plus 50 Initiative at AACC.

## **“SOFT SKILLS”**

Often during discussions with various stakeholders in the community, the leaders brought up the importance of so-called “soft skills”. Examples include critical thinking, decision making, listening, integrity leadership, and promptness. Not only did various business owners reiterate the need for a responsible workforce, but also expressed disappointment with the frequency of routine background checks yielding unsatisfactory findings which made the employers unable to extend a job offer to an otherwise qualified candidate.

Additionally, a key element for preventing high turnover in the workplace is through teaching critical thinking, cognitive reasoning and people skills as well as leadership. A study published by Child Trends in 2008, shows that career planning, decision-making, listening skills, integrity, and creativity are all considered vital to entering the workplace, but are not part of college readiness.

While these skills seem to have been generally overlooked in our educational system, they are considered vital by business leaders around the world. We have many instances where the lack of integrity behind executive-level decisions has resulted in economic catastrophe ; we know that when we interact with the customer facing unit of a company only to have our concerns dismissed or continue to go unheard, we tend to take our business elsewhere. Instilling these traits at the earliest levels of education has been projected to have significant positives outcomes on our future workforce; it will not only lead to but also adapt to and succeed in our changing economy.

Soft skills are increasingly becoming the hard skills of today's work force. It's just not enough to be highly trained in technical skills, without developing the softer, interpersonal and relationship-building skills that help people to communicate and collaborate effectively. Increasing diversity in the workplace requires workers to have a broader set of “soft skills”. Whether it relates to differences in culture and language or

generational gaps, our increasingly diverse society is being reflected in the workplace. This diversity can make communication among workers and between workers and supervisors more complex, requiring workers to develop new people skills and other soft, nontechnical skills.

These people skills are more critical than ever as organizations struggle to find meaningful ways to remain competitive and be productive. Teamwork, leadership, and communication are underpinned by soft skills development.

## SUMMARY

The economic competitiveness of Hunterdon County has been eroding for more than a decade, and attracting employers is crucial to the local economy. Hunterdon County needs a coordinated plan to attract business, provide zoning and incentives to locate businesses in targeted areas, improve transit connections, and somehow contain sprawl while attracting new businesses to the area. Do we want industry or open space?

There was a near unanimous agreement that Hunterdon County “attraction power” includes its convenient location between two major cities, excellent schools, highly educated workforce, access to recreation facilities, and access to healthcare.

That said, the near non-existent public transportation system and lack of affordable housing are two major detractors. There is a mismatch between job locations and the location of affordable housing. Pressure on State and local budgets have led to tax increases and service cuts. Business owners are reluctant to invest locally because of what is perceived as a bloated bureaucracy cumbersome processes, and excessive fees.

We found the workforce development resources available through Raritan Valley Community College to be vast and plentiful. Yet it seems to be a well-kept secret; a marketing outreach program is needed. The best opportunity for growth is located in jobs that cannot be outsourced (trades, healthcare, etc.).

The County should also capitalize on the “slow food” movement. The “farm to table” craze could reenergize the agriculture industry.

The various pockets of downtown districts are in desperate need of revitalization. A coordinated plan to recruit “name brand” stores to anchor such will help the “mom and pop” shops thrive. Finally, how about a movie theater in the wealthiest county in the state with 5 large high schools?



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Brisby, Byron, President, Flemington Car and Truck Country

McPherson, Matthew, Owner, Matt's Red Rooster Grille & Gallo Rosso Ristorante.

Metzgar, Michael, Executive Director, Workforce Delivery, Raritan Valley Community College

Belin, Jacki, Dean, College Advancement & Strategic Initiatives, Raritan Valley Community College



## **Leadership Hunterdon Class of 2013**

### **White Paper**

#### **Team French Town**

**Harrie Copeland**

**Jerri Collevchio**

**Stephanie D. Taylor**

As members of the Leadership Hunterdon Class of 2013, we were tasked with researching a critical issue related to economic development in Hunterdon County. The economic development topic selected for Team Frenchtown was Business Retention, Expansion, Recruitment and Attraction.

### **KEY ISSUES**

The Chambers has asked us to address a number of key issues related to economic development:

- *Within your area of concentration what is the current sense of the Business Climate in Hunterdon County?*
- *Currently who are the stakeholders, the types of programs, services and organizations addressing issues within your area of concentration?*
- *What are the Challenges that your area of focus faces?*
- *What are the areas of opportunity and growth for your area of concentration?*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hunterdon County was established on March 22, 1714 and named after colonial Governor Robert Hunter's old world home, Hunterston<sup>1</sup>. Hunterdon County has several strengths that are positive for business retention, expansion, recruitment and attraction:

- A large, affluent resident base
- A convenient transportation highway system/close proximity to highways
- Desirable living conditions
- Family based community
- Outdoor recreation
- Favorable quality of life with open space encompassing rural ambiance, water resource protection, wildlife habitat, and natural recreation
- Premiere education/school systems
- Close to metropolitan areas (NYC and Philadelphia)

Hunterdon County has attracted a large affluent resident base due to its' location which is midway between New York and Philadelphia, two of the nation's largest metropolitan areas, Hunterdon County is only a 90 minute drive away. Despite the convenient location, Hunterdon County is a relatively rural area with a leading agricultural economy. Hunterdon County lies mostly in the Delaware River Valley and its tributaries and is characterized by rolling wooded hills.

The eighth largest of the New Jersey counties, Hunterdon encompasses a total area of 437 square miles or about 279,680 acres and is comprised of 26 municipalities that range in size and character. These include fourteen townships, ten boroughs, and Clinton Town. Lambertville, one of the oldest communities, is Hunterdon's only city<sup>2</sup>. Several Hunterdon municipalities have no towns, only hamlets, and some townships span little more than one square mile.

There are also weaknesses associated with Hunterdon County; however, they are few

- Due to the economic recession, several businesses are struggling and going out of business.
- For example, in Flemington, the county seat has a large vacant building on Main Street resulting in a less than vibrant downtown. A revitalization of this building is needed to improve this property but also improve other Main Street properties and subsequent retail sales in the downtown area.
- The permit process is difficult resulting in an unfriendly business atmosphere.
- Property taxes for occupied and unoccupied buildings are expensive.
- The real estate market and the residential property taxes are expensive.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/history.htm](http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/history.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hunterdon-chamber.org/services2.asp?service=Community%20Profiles>

With weaknesses, there are opportunities for economic development:

- The Business Improvement District (FBID) is actively recruiting retailers and customers to the Flemington area
- New businesses are moving to the area. Costco will open in Flemington
- Conversion of industrial sites to residential areas
  - Vacant industry buildings are being repurposed for luxury housing
- Expansion of current businesses
- Potential for redevelopment exists

Other threats to economic development:

- Private sector regulatory (permits) obstacles – long approval processes
- Economic Downturn
- Cost of Labor
- Labor Supply
- Business owners may go to business friendlier areas or states – the longer a business has to wait for permits and other regulations to pass, the more costly, the greater the chance the business owner may seek an alternative location – particularly ones that do not require a lengthy approval process.

Based on the interviews and research, opportunities for business retention, expansion, recruitment and attraction involves (1) building a solid relationship with business owners in the community, (2) collecting data from local, state and national businesses, (3) tracking the collected data to predict trends that may impact Hunterdon County positively or negatively, (4) assisting businesses with problems if possible to avoid closure or relocation (5) looking for opportunities to expand businesses in the county.

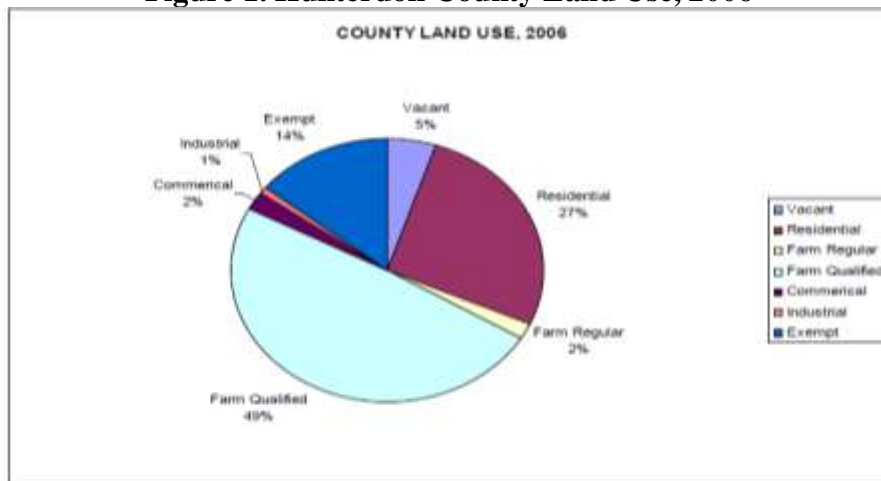
This white paper is meant to educate the Chamber of Commerce (referred to as the Chamber) and local businesses on the issue of economic development in Hunterdon County in an objective manner. The white paper will not propose solutions but offer several concepts as options to enhance the economic viability of Hunterdon County. The creation of effective and efficient economic development is no easy task. However, the dynamics of Hunterdon County creates an opportunity for business retention, expansion, recruitment and attraction. The white paper contents will aid the Chamber as they champion economic opportunities for Hunterdon County.

## HUNTERDON COUNTY BACKGROUND

As of the 2010 United States Census, Hunterdon County, New Jersey has approximately 129,000 residents with an unemployment rate of 6.6%. In 2006, agricultural/farming represented the predominant land use (51%), with residential lands (27%) as the second largest category followed by commercial (2%) and industrial development (1%). Today, Hunterdon County is transitioning from a rural community to a suburban community. Although still a viable business land use for agriculture/farming has reduced to about 39% of the total acreage of the County and 13.6% of New Jersey's total farmland. The average farm size in Hunterdon County is 72 acres<sup>3</sup>. As a result, many Hunterdon County farmers have recreated the way they farm in order to make a profit, this transformation is known as Agri-Tourism, farms that have a dual purpose to produce food, fruit and vegetables and attract visits from residents and tourists, some of these attractions are pick your own fruit/vegetables, corn mazes, hay rides, pumpkin picking, haunted hayrides and farm tours<sup>4</sup>.

Despite continuing development pressure, Hunterdon County residents are supportive of preserving Hunterdon's rural character<sup>5</sup>. Hunterdon County is fortunate to have numerous lands set aside for open space purposes, which has been vital in preserving the physical beauty that makes Hunterdon County unique.

**Figure 1. Hunterdon County Land Use, 2006**



Source: Hunterdon County Board of Taxation, 2006

<sup>3</sup> Hunterdon County Planning Board, 2013

<sup>4</sup> Skyland's Visitor

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/cadb/preserve.htm>

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION, RECRUITMENT, AND ATTRACTION IN HUNTERDON COUNTY

Team Frenchtown's objective was to understand how economic development can be improved. We assessed how local business owners, politicians and community leaders viewed each of the themes and we asked their recommendations to augment and improve economic development in Hunterdon County. The summary information will provide guidance and common goals on methods and ideas to attract, expand and retain businesses in Hunterdon County.

To address economic development in Hunterdon County, Team Frenchtown interviewed leaders from various sectors of the community. We gained perspectives from long-term residents and business owners, Bob Benjamin, Flemington Furs; Craig Proctor, Commercial Realtor Coldwell Banker, Bill Harnden (RVCC), Jacki Bellin (RVCC), Mike Metzger (RVCC), Rebecca Fraccia, Workforce Development Raritan Valley Community College; Megan Jones-Holt, (Town of Clinton, Council woman, Owner of Rent Your Boxes), George Muller (owner of former site of Flemington Cutglass, former freeholder, Chris Phelan, President of Chamber of Commerce; Joe Colalillo, ShopRite, Steve Kalafer, Flemington Car & Truck Country, Bob Wise, CEO Hunterdon Medical Center).

### Within your area of concentration what is the current sense of the Business Climate in Hunterdon County?

There is a consensus among the business owners that Hunterdon County is a vibrant rural county that offers a wonderful quality of life; however, there are concerns of labor, transportation and health care costs associated with conducting business in Hunterdon County.

**Cost:** Due to the high cost of living in the state of New Jersey, many employees are living in Pennsylvania and working in New Jersey. Therefore, these out-of-state commuters are utilizing public utilities paid by New Jersey residents but not contributing to the tax base. Additionally, the cost of conducting business in New Jersey is quite expensive such as the cost of business analysis (e.g., soil testing), length of time to gain approval state and local permits, the length of time of county, state and municipal approvals which results in costs to business owners. These features make Hunterdon County a difficult place to retain, expand, recruit, conduct and attract business.

**Lack of Town Center and Entertainment:** Because of the "hamlets", there is no central town center for Hunterdon County but each small town may have a main street. These hamlets results in lack of cohesiveness and do not lend themselves to a central entertainment hub. Because there is no town center which offers activities such as a movie theatre, no live music or dancing, no real restaurants, no real elegant nice restaurant for the older adult crowd, most Hunterdon County residents seek entertainment activities outside of county and spend their discretionary funds outside the county contributing to another county's economic development.

An example to increase business attraction in the county seat, Flemington is to revitalize, the Union Hotel. The hotel was once the anchor of downtown Flemington and with its closure

downtown has suffered. It is projected that the revitalization will attract shoppers and link segments of the town.

One of the challenges is the lack of connection of the various shopping areas in Flemington such as Turntable Junction, Main Street, and Liberty Village. There is a disconnect between the three shopping areas but there is also a differential in rental prices. There is no focal point. Frank Banish mentioned creating the town center concept creating an inviting space or some type of façade that would connect the town. Liberty Village is an opportunity. Stigel Factory is an example of bringing the cultural historical aspects back to the town; there are other opportunities in the cut glass factory such as luxury housing.

Much of the identity of Hunterdon County focuses on family entertainment and outdoor activities. Hunterdon County should continue to capitalize on this excellent feature.

**Economic Forecast:** The economic forecast of the county is uncertain due to the recent announcement of Merck relocating the global headquarters to Summit. The move could possibly impact the revenues of the Whitehouse Station businesses in Readington Township. Another recent relocation includes the River Horse Brewery formerly of Lambertville moving to Ewing NJ. The owners cite location, rental costs and "cramped" quarters as the reasons for the move. This is an example of a business wanting to expand but the current location could not accommodate their needs. They essentially outgrew their location<sup>6</sup>. This expansion was needed as there was a significant demand. "As beer sales dropped overall, the trade association projects continued growth for craft breweries. About 2,300 small breweries provide an estimated 104,000 full-time and part-time jobs. New Jersey now ranks only 32nd in craft beer production while, just across the river, Pennsylvania has aggressively tapped into the market and risen to second in the nation. Perhaps River Horse Brewery, in its new digs, will assist New Jersey in gaining market share in this growing industry.

**Lack of External Economic Development Funding.** The county government no-longer funds the Economic Partnership (an \$80,000 budget line) this was eliminated due to budget cuts six years ago<sup>7</sup>. This gap provides an opportunity for the Chamber to fill this gap and lead this effort. The Flemington Business Improvement District's board is interested in several activities to Hunterdon County. The FBID emphasizes improving the business climate in Flemington, for example, in Flemington, there is a 10% vacancy of existing businesses, there were over 30 grand openings in 2012. The emphasis is focused on increasing the people traffic in Flemington. A recent example of this campaign to enhance the borough was the Easter egg hunt at Liberty Village that created a scavenger hunt through downtown. Other planned events include Flemington Restaurant Week<sup>8</sup>. To assist with business retention and recruiting, the FBID has implemented the Façade Enhancement Program (FEP) Grants to help business owners spruce up existing business, such as a new façade, awnings, siding, painting; this will help attract new businesses as well<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> NJ.com January 15, 2013

<sup>7</sup> My Central Jersey.com February 12, 2013

<sup>8</sup> Hunterdon County Democrat February 21, 2013

<sup>9</sup> Interview Chris Phelan, Chamber of Commerce April, 2013

Currently who are the stakeholders, the types of programs, services and organizations addressing issues within your area of concentration?

There are several organizations that support economic development and the overall enhancement of Hunterdon County within New Jersey. These entities include the Economic Development Committee (EDC), Cultural and Heritage Committee, Chamber of Commerce, the planning board, state and local (including township, borough council) government leaders, the Freeholders, the business owners and the residents of Hunterdon County. The “at large” membership of the chamber of commerce can also serve as key personnel in the program with respect to collecting the necessary industry and business data.

Additionally, George Muller suggested that industry executives should be involved. He recommended that the Chamber and other government officials in Hunterdon County should foster a relationship with industry leaders. By engaging the private sector in economic development, this engagement creates a mechanism to encourage collaboration among industry and government agencies. Industrial recognition programs will not only create bonds between businesses and the community but also provide a needed service to the businesses involved. Companies need to maintain a positive reputation to attract the best possible employees, sell their products and garner political support.

What are the Challenges that your area of focus faces?

**Lack of Common Goals:** One of the major challenges is to get all of the stakeholders on the “same page” as it relates to economic development. A plan is needed to accommodate the needs of the various organizations and stakeholders while stimulating economic growth in a sustainable manner while taking into account the unique history and natural resources. The Business Survey responses indicated that the county needed a master plan that balances growth and quality of living.

**Status Quo:** Another challenge is the desire of the residents and town’s people to live in the past. Some of the residents do not want change. The residents want the townships and hamlets to remain as they were during their childhood. All of the interviewees agree that the area has historic characteristic but not all of the architecture can be maintained. For example, George Muller expressed that he was asked not to change the old cut glass factory to luxury housing. The town wanted him to restore the building. However, the building cannot be restored due to safety issues. However in some cases, adaptive reuse is possible. The Stangl Factory is an excellent example of retaining the building’s historic qualities while making the building compatible for a commercial use.

**Identity:** What is the identity of Hunterdon County? What is the marketing plan? What type of business does Hunterdon County want to attract? For example Readington Township Committee denied a special event permit for The Great American Mud Run at Solberg Airport. The rationale for denying the permit included the event would bring a lot of traffic and the land



would have to be modified to create water obstacles and enough mud. The committee decided the event was “inappropriate for the property”<sup>10</sup>. Although the committee admits the need for attracting events that would generate revenue, this denial is a prime example of a community unsure of the type of business they want to attract. This denial is a direct contradiction to the perception that Hunterdon County is known for the outdoor recreation. In order to market Hunterdon County, an identity must be established.

**Rental rates:** Rental rates are expensive; permit approval is a long and costly process. In Clinton, the shop rentals are very expensive. Many building owners are not Hunterdon County residents and therefore may not be as vested in keeping the stores occupied, and hold out for higher rents.

**Economy:** The economy continues to be a problem but once the economy recovers; it is important to have a plan in place. Those in charge should review the master plan. Based on the Hunterdon Business Survey, one of the major challenges for businesses is internet competition. It is suspected that internet shopping will become a detriment to local businesses.

**Communication:** Effective communication between vested stakeholders to come up with a master plan is key to a successful economic development plan.

**Community Involvement:** Community needs to be involved in the planning. Community leaders play a large role in business development regarding expansion, retention, attraction. In order to be successful in these areas the right players must be at the table, including The Chamber of Commerce, local business partners, local and county government, and possibly a business development group. Working together as a team is vital to a communities’ success, these groups are interdependent. The team must have a strong strategic plan in place, to entice new business for county growth and success. A friendly business environment will encourage local residents to invest in a business venture and may attract small business to locate in Hunterdon County, instead of a nearby town in a different state. The opposite is true as well, if Hunterdon County has the reputation of being difficult to conduct business, this will discourage business expansion, or attract new business.

**Taxes:** Corporate taxes are high and there are limited rebates. In the state of New Jersey, business owners have to pay state taxes even if they net zero dollars, even if the business has a loss. The survey results and the interview results expressed the same theme that taxes were high and there was too much bureaucracy all of which make doing business in Hunterdon County difficult.

**Staffing and Salaries:** These are big challenges for small business owners. It is difficult to find quality employees. Individuals who are qualified do not want to work for minimum wage. Business owners cannot meet the demand for the high salaries. Some of the benefits used to attract employees beyond salaries are training, flex time, and commissions. There are also matters related to the work ethics due to the affluence of the community, especially among high

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<sup>10</sup> [http://newjerseyhills.com/hunterdon\\_review/news/](http://newjerseyhills.com/hunterdon_review/news/)

school and college students. The people who want to work in the county cannot afford to live in the county; therefore, employers are forced to go out of the county to hire employees. There are a host of issues such as a small employee base, physical labor, communication barriers Spanish speaking – dialects. There is a need for support to post and provide instructions, in different dialects. Manual labor is difficult to find in this area.

What are the areas of opportunity and growth for your area of concentration?

- The Flemington Business Improvement District (BID) is actively recruiting retailers and customers to the Flemington area (New businesses - Costco is building in Flemington)
- Conversion of industrial sites to residential areas
  - Vacant industry buildings are being repurposed for luxury housing
- Expansion of current businesses
- Potential for redevelopment exists
- Transportation: improve passenger rail system

The key to success in building a healthy business community is to create an economic development plan that maximizes the community’s strengths and minimizes its weaknesses. Team Frenchtown will focus on areas of business retention, expansion, recruitment and attraction in Hunterdon County. In order to maintain economic viability, the county must retain current businesses.

**Business retention** will involve not only the county but all levels of government – the state, county and local entities. Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce is integral; as the Chamber has access to information from the state and local governments and provides a conduit for the businesses to take advantage of opportunities. An opportunity that exists is to refocus the work of economic development organizations (such as the FBID), Chamber of Commerce, business owners, community leaders to better understand the needs and plans of existing businesses in Hunterdon County in order to grow new jobs locally. This approach will provide “early detection” and identification of problems that may lead to business closures and relocations. Such strategies will provide advanced warning signs that will enable proactive interventions and creative solutions to retain businesses. Another low-cost campaign suggested by one of our interviewees is an ongoing “buy local” campaign. This business owner stated that Hunterdon County residents did not support local businesses and more emphasis should be placed on supporting local businesses. One such program in Flemington is FBID Dollars, certificates that can be used in participating Flemington businesses, these dollars are given away at local events as an incentive to encourage local shopping.

Business retention is a struggle. Hunterdon County does not have enough people to support the current businesses. Current businesses are struggling; members of township committees do not have differentiation (i.e., no diversity in businesses – several ice cream shops (4 in Clinton how will they be able to sustain their business)).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Megan Jones-Holt April, 2013

**Business expansion** is indicative of economic development. There are several opportunities for expansion and growth in Hunterdon County. Current businesses can take advantage of available spaces. The Chamber and local governments can assist potential businesses to expand by offering incentives such as tax breaks/cuts/abatement. Additionally, the leadership of the county must be open to new industries such as technology center, high tech start-ups, convention centers, art centers, trade shows and potentially a RVCC extension office. For business expansion, one must review the documentation requirements. If the process is arduous, Hunterdon County may consider streamlining the approval process and adding flexibility (e.g., electronic submissions or extended hours). Also, the county should review the fees and fee structure to ensure they are reasonable. Also, consider developing a small business economic development program in the governor's office or have a lobbyist in the state office.

**Business recruitment** is needed to promote economic viability and sustain economic development. Potential businesses must clearly understand the target market but they must also be aware of the available workforce. Again, the area must be attractive to recruit businesses. Businesses should be made aware of the affordability of HC. Offer incentives to new businesses to locate in the community. These could include tax breaks, micro-loans and discounted registration/application/permit fees.

**Business attraction** is paramount for economic development. The area must be attractive to potential businesses and to potential residents. The community assets must be showcased. There are so many assets such as the rural climate; the vicinity to NYC and Philadelphia (airports, theater, professional sport teams). Hunterdon County is close to nature - from the mountains to the shore; the changing seasons and pleasant weather, the availability of water such as the Delaware River which allows fishing, canoeing, and tubing; the educational system with the Blue Ribbon schools and there are great restaurants, and antique shopping. Other attractive qualities of Hunterdon County include a safe community, family-friendly, pet-friendly environment and outstanding medical care facilities.

Hunterdon County should continue to capitalize on opportunities for tourism as Hunterdon County ranks 18<sup>th</sup> among the state's 21 counties when it comes to income derived from tourism. According to the NJ Tourism, visitors to the county spent 291 million in 2011, an increase of 12.4% over the previous year<sup>12</sup>.

The matter of business attraction is related to the need for Hunterdon County to develop an identity. Is the county a farming community? Also, there is the question of who guides the identity of the county – planning board, Freeholders or Chamber? Furthermore, for there is the desire for open space and land preservation that precludes the building of homes for people to live here.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.centraljersey.com/article/20130119](http://www.centraljersey.com/article/20130119)

## **Conclusion**

Today, forward thinking community leaders all across Hunterdon County are embracing a strong Business Retention, Expansion, Recruitment, and Attraction strategy. Having the best people and stakeholders who communicate regularly is imperative. A successful economic development program must have a strategy that focuses on all of these components. Any strategy must also encourage collaboration among community and business leaders to identify new opportunities, have a plan to implement these opportunities with an attainable timeline. Stakeholders must also communicate with local businesses and industries in the County, and have a complete understanding of their needs, so as not to be surprised with relocation such as Merck and have a plan in place if such relocation does take place.

**Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce  
Leadership Hunterdon  
Class of 2013**

**Economic Development**

*Tourism*

**Hunterdon County Tourism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
A White Paper**

**April 30, 2013**

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## **Executive Summary**

White Papers have tried to perform the dual role of presenting firm government policies while at the same time inviting opinions upon them.<sup>1</sup> White Papers are used as a means of presenting government policy preferences prior to the introduction of legislation; as such, the publication of a White Paper serves to test the climate of public opinion regarding a controversial policy issue and enables the government to gauge its probable impact.<sup>2</sup>

This White Paper will examine economic development as it relates to tourism and will attempt to respond not only to the questions as set forth in detail below, but will also research and examine additional dimensions as it relates to this important topic.

To adequately address economic development as it relates to tourism within Hunterdon County, we must not only define tourism and economic development, but we also must ask the following questions:

Within tourism, what is the current sense of the business climate? Who are the stakeholders? What types of programs, organizations, and services must be addressed? What are the challenges? What are the areas of growth and opportunity? How can Hunterdon County compete with the State of New Jersey for funding for tourism? How can Hunterdon County cultivate its economic development as it relates to tourism?

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<sup>1</sup> Pemberton, John E. Government Green Papers. *Library World* 71:49 Aug. 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Chapin, Henry and Denis Deneau. *Citizen involvement in Public Policy-making: Access and the Policy-making Process*. Ottawa, Canadian Council on Social Development, 1978. p. 33.

## **Introduction**

No single definition incorporates all of the different strands of economic workforce/development. Typically economic development can be described in terms of objectives. These are most commonly described as the creation of jobs, wealth, and the improvement of quality of life. Economic development can also be described as a process that influences growth and restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well-being of a community. The main goal of economic development is improving the economic well-being of a community through efforts that entail job creation, job retention, tax based enhancements and quality of life. As there is no single definition for economic development, there is no single strategy, policy, or program for achieving successful economic development. Communities differ in their geographic and political strengths and weaknesses. Each community, therefore, will have a unique set of challenges for economic development.

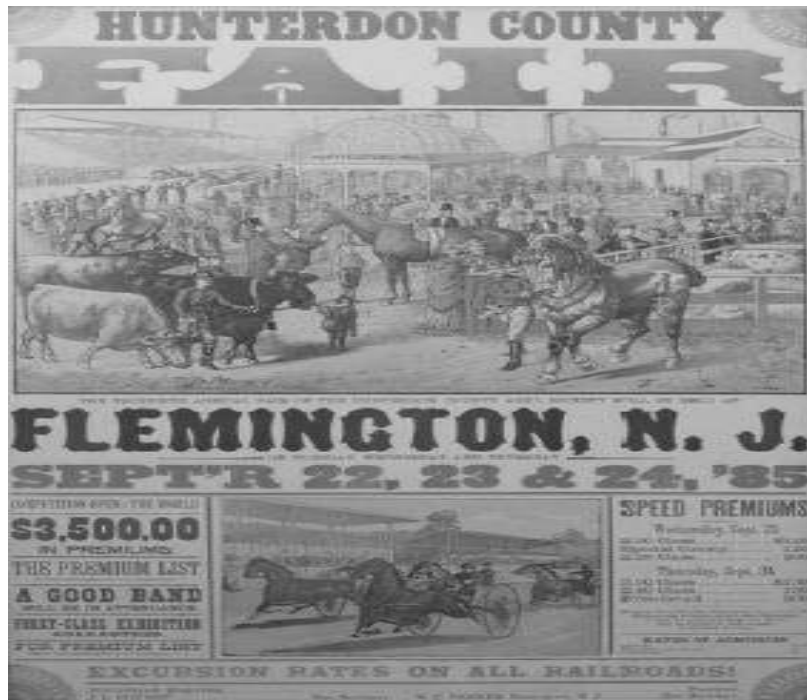
Tourism as an industrial sector encompasses portions of many other sectors including hospitality, transportation, retail, and entertainment. Tourism attracts temporary visitors to places where they purchase goods and services before leaving. Tourism provides a positive economic and "quality of life" contribution to society and the destinations they represent. The Tourism industry has a significant impact on the community, creating and expanding the economic base in a variety of ways. Tourism stimulates the economy by providing new revenue and visitor traffic that boost the local business community while providing local residents with an upgraded infrastructure for use 365 days of the year. These "quality-of-life" upgrades and positive economic impact derived from tax revenues generated often save residents on property taxes that would otherwise be imposed for the same level of services.



For this reason, Tourism is considered an exported commodity totaling more than \$90 billion nationwide. Here, in the State of New Jersey it is a \$38 billion dollar industry, making it the second largest industry sector in the State. The hotel/motel industry alone generates over \$150 million in combined sales and occupancy taxes to the State general fund. If the Tourism industry did not exist in New Jersey, each individual would see an increase in their taxes by approximately \$1,700 per year.

### **Background**

Hunterdon County tourism has evolved from its humble origins. In the mid 1800's farmers built summer boarding houses to rent to city dwellers trying to escape the summer heat. In 1885 the Flemington Fair was born which attracted tourists from New York, Pennsylvania, and other parts of New Jersey. Given the challenges associated with travel during the late 1800's, the willingness to travel speaks volumes as to the quality of tourism that has existed in Hunterdon County for more than a century.



At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Hunterdon County train system was expanded, enabling places like Bellwood Park and Gray's Cabins to emerge and offer tourists places for amusement, recreational activities, social meetings and vacation housing for relaxation. In 1904 more than 10,000 people attended opening day at Bellwood Park. A year later, in 1905, President Roosevelt visited Bellwood Park and mingled with 6,000 members of various religious groups.



In 1915, Flemington Speedway was opened. The Speedway attracted car enthusiasts from all over the County. In 1992, Presidential candidate H. Ross Perot made a public appearance at the Speedway, attracting 25,000 people who tied up local roads for hours.



As the popularity of these turn-of-the-century attractions waned over time, the County has worked to improve and reinvigorate these attractions and tourism in general. Tourists who visit Hunterdon County today have a wide variety of options, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, inns, world-class restaurants, wineries, beautiful parks and nature trails, fishing, boating, unique retail shops, agricultural attractions and events, historic sites, baseball and softball athletic venues and much, much more.

Hunterdon County is the hidden gem of the Garden State. Known for its rural beauty, Hunterdon also boasts countless tourism opportunities which should be showcased as a means to stimulate additional economic growth. Perhaps nowhere else in the State does a County offer an experience that connects the past and present through history, agriculture, the great outdoors, and emerging arts and entertainment activities.

### **Proposal**

The current economic climate presents significant challenges for Tourism; there is great competition for funding and support State Wide and untapped resources within the County itself. Accordingly, a study should be developed and implemented to explore the benefits of creating a multi-use cultural and event facility which will not only create jobs but filter tourism dollars to the County's retailers, hotels, and restaurants which will assist in stabilizing the tax burden of its residents.

Through a series of interviews with key County leaders, we learned that a great need exists to join together the various groups, both civic and private, who collectively can promote the vibrant and diverse landscape of Hunterdon County. Specifically the twenty six communities within our County must work cooperatively towards a unified goal. The absence of a central location is the missing component to the County's success.

This center should be spacious and house a general events center for 3,000 people; a 1000-seat general-use cultural theater; 2,500 sq. /ft. of office space, and an event food preparation area. Bathroom and parking facility requirements should follow standard, local commercial code requirements. Additionally, the Hunterdon Historical Society and Hunterdon County Department of Tourism shall be invited to rent space.

### **Location**

A cultural center near Flemington Borough is the most logical location to consider recognizing its proximity to the major crossroads of the County (Rt. 31, Rt. 202, and Rt. 12) as well as the much anticipated return of a regional train line. A property that borders the borough, allows access to local residents through walking and biking paths, and is situated close to the major highways to help draw tourists from outside the County is ideal. Space for parking and easy access to County roads will also be crucial components for consideration. It is well documented that consumers are becoming more urban and environmentally conscious and therefore will be looking for a method of transportation that will bring them to Hunterdon County with limited effort.

### **Mayor of Tourism**

One of the most significant challenges facing tourism in Hunterdon County is the lack of unification. Each town and municipality has their own planning board, each with a separate master plan that does not always support the plans of surrounding communities. Some towns are more inclined to encourage growth that supports tourism, while others seek to stifle such plans. Additionally, numerous independent organizations who are seeking to establish and showcase dance, theater and the arts but do not have the means could benefit from a cohesive approach.

To link all tourism and efforts together, Hunterdon County should elect a Mayor of Tourism and create The Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism & Special Events<sup>3</sup> to foster the growth of the cultural community; promote public participation in the arts and public celebrations; and advance cultural tourism in Hunterdon County. This office should be housed in the Cultural Center proposed in this submission and funded by the resolution proposed.

This office should be staffed by three members in addition to the Mayor; specifically, a sales/marketing director, event coordinator and administrator. The following are the job requirements and specifications for each recommended staffed position as well as the elected Mayor:

Mayor of Tourism, Job Description:

- Must be able to set a clear vision for growing tourism in the County through the use of the Event center.
- Maintain positive customer relationships with external organizations, local and State business, as well as community members.
- Forge a cooperative relationship between all existing entities within the community.
- Foster a strong marketing outlet for events throughout the County and State.
- Prepare event newsletters
- Prepare annual budgets and quarterly reports
- Ensure that communication for upcoming business is handled through the correct media outlets.
- Work closely with local, County and State tourism groups.
- Develop a good working relationship with State, regional and national entertainment organizations.
- Promote local tourist attractions through the cultural center.
- Ensure that the facility support teams and maintaining safe working standards.
- Must be willing to travel throughout the State to promote Hunterdon County.

Experience:

- A BS degree in Sales/or Hospitality Management is required
- Must have at least 10 years of experience in event management with a proven track record of annual sales growth.
- Keep abreast of industry trends through national event organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cityofboston.gov/arts/>

- Superior quantitative, oral and written communications and problem-solving/strategizing skills.
- Excellent overall computer skills with advanced knowledge of Excel and PowerPoint.
- Proactive mindset to anticipate and support changes in our business.
- Conformity to the highest standards of personal integrity and ethical behavior.
- Exceptional sales abilities.
- Must be a County resident with a strong understanding of the tourism history within the area.

Director of Sales and Marketing, Job Description:

- Will work with the mayor in developing a sales and marketing plan that will enable the Hunterdon County Cultural and Event Center to operate self-sufficiently.
- Able to make sales calls to existing and future event organizations and sponsors.
- Ensure that communication for upcoming business is handled through the correct media outlets.
- Work closely with local, County and State tourism groups.
- Develop a good working relationship with State, regional and national entertainment organizations.
- Must be willing to travel throughout the State to promote Hunterdon County.

Experience:

- A BS degree in Sales/or Hospitality Management is required
- Must have at least 5 years of experience in event sales management with a proven track record of annual sales growth.
- Must be able to develop a sales and marketing plan that will enable the Hunterdon
- Superior quantitative, oral and written communications and problem-solving/strategizing skills.
- Excellent overall computer skills with advanced knowledge of Excel and PowerPoint.
- Conformity to the highest standards of personal integrity and ethical behavior.
- Exceptional sales abilities.
- Must be a County resident with a strong understanding of the tourism history within the area.

Event Planner, Job Description:

- Must effectively plan and communicate to all departments the expressed need of the customer.
- Manage the daily operations of the Center
- Maintain positive customer relationships and ensure timely response to all inquiries for space or service needs. Confer with customers in the pre, during and post planning and execution of their event. Then communicate to all departments the needs of the customer.
- Answer calls and handle requests that pertain to scheduled events.
- Ensure that all appropriate communication for upcoming business is complete and distributed in a timely manner to support staff.
- Work closely with the Audio Visual team to ensure room set-ups, A.V. needs, and special requests are being addressed.
- Take special events and theme parties to a new level thereby increasing revenue.

- Work directly with outside catering services to ensure space and set up needs are addressed in advance of events.
- Ensure that the facility is being maintained in a safe and clean manner.
- Work with organizers on special permit requirements.

Experience:

- A BS degree preferred but not necessary if candidate has related event experience.
- Must have at least 2 years of experience in event planning at a venue of similar size.
- Keep abreast of industry trends, share information with all staff.
- Superior quantitative, oral and written communications and problem-solving/strategizing skills.
- Excellent overall computer skills with advanced knowledge of Excel and PowerPoint.
- Proactive mindset to anticipate and support changes in our business.
- Conformity to the highest standards of personal integrity and ethical behavior.
- Exceptional customer service abilities.
- A willingness to help promote Hunterdon County.

Administrative Assistant, Job Description:

- Must be able to work independently on numerous projects.
- Maintain positive customer relationships with external organizations, local and State business, as well as community members.
- Is responsible for the event calendar.
- Able to anticipate needs and inform the Director or other event center employees of possible issues.
- Ensure that communication for upcoming events are free of grammatical errors and formatted properly for the media outlets being used.
- Become familiar with local, County and State tourism groups and provide support in the director's absence.
- Promote local tourist attractions through the cultural center.
- Ensure that the all necessary event paperwork maintained on file.
- Compile a data base of past events and have the ability to run forecast reports or other necessary information

Experience:

- Must have at least 5 years of experience as an administrative assistant with prior hospitality or event exposure.
- Superior quantitative, oral and written communications and problem-solving/strategizing skills.
- Excellent overall computer skills with advanced knowledge of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Crystal reporting.
- Proactive mindset to anticipate and support changes in our business.
- Conformity to the highest standards of personal integrity and ethical behavior.

## Advertising

Although not specifically asked to address advertising, it is an undeniably significant part of Tourism. Part of that promotion and marketing should address all that Hunterdon County has to offer. In recognition of that, an overarching theme should be considered. As can be seen from the sample flyer prepared, “Hunterdon Harry” would be the informational guru for the County and an instantly recognizable figure akin to a team mascot. Noticeably absent from the draft flyer is any reference to theater, arts, events and concerts demonstrating the need for the proposed Cultural and Events Center.





## Funding

In 1997 the residents of Hunterdon County passed into law the County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland Preservation and Historic Trust Fund. In Calendar Year (CY) 2012, the fund revenues collected amounted to \$6,934,682, of which 10% was allocated back to each of the municipalities, leaving \$6,241,214 to be allocated as follows: Land Preservation (70%), Non-Profit (15%) and Historic Preservation (5%). It is from this that the Cultural and Events Center should be funded/subsidized; thereafter the Center should be self-sufficient, including payment of the salaries of the proposed employees based on revenues collected from rent and events.

YEAR COLLECTED	FY 2010	FY 2011
<b>Annual Total Revenue</b>	<b><u>\$7,209,757.19</u></b>	<b><u>\$6,934,682.34</u></b>
<b>Municipal Allocation</b>	<b><u>\$ 720,975.76</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 693,468.24</u></b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Yr. Allocated</b>	<b>CY 2011</b>	<b>CY 2012</b>
<b>Nonprofit Allocation</b>	<b><u>\$ 1,081,463.60</u></b>	<b><u>\$1,040,202.37</u></b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Yr. Allocated</b>	<b>CY 2011</b>	<b>CY 2012</b>
<b>COUNTY APPORTIONMENT</b>		
<b>Historic Preservation</b>	<b><u>\$ 360,487.87</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 346,734.13</u></b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Land Preservation</b>	<b><u>\$4,900,000.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$4,854,277.60</u></b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>2010 County Budget</b>	<b>CY 2010</b>	<b>CY 2012</b>

## Resolution

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.2, the Freeholders may submit to the voters of Hunterdon County in a general or special election a proposition authorizing imposition of an annual levy for an amount or at a rate deemed appropriate for the acquisition and development of lands for recreation and conservation purposes. The selection of lands for acquisition for recreation and

conservation purposes shall be in accordance with an open space and recreation plan prepared and adopted by the County. Monies acquired in the trust fund as a result of the levy may be used to pay the cost of preparing and adopting the plans and projects.

Therefore the following resolution and question should be placed on the next General Election Ballot and the County voters asked to determine whether the project as proposed herein should be paid for by the County. Specifically, whether the funds remaining in the County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland Preservation and Historic Trust Fund shall be used to secure a building for the Cultural Center as proposed herein?

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
COUNTY OF HUNTERDON**

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, In 2013, under Chapter 24 of the Public Laws of 1997, authorizing the acquisition of lands for conservation of open space and provided for a special taxation in an amount or rate to be approved by the voters of the County, and established that all funds to be raised be deposited in a “County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland Preservation and Historic Trust Fund” was approved by the voters of Hunterdon County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders is desirous of using the Hunterdon County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland Preservation and Historic Trust Fund to allow a specific source of funds for the County acquisition of lands for recreation; to be created in the form of a Hunterdon County Cultural Center designed to house The Mayor's Office of Arts, Tourism & Special Events, Hunterdon County Historical Society; a performing arts center; educational center; and

**WHEREAS**, the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders is also desirous of placing on the Ballot for the November 5, 2013 General Election a Referendum which would permit use of the County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland Preservation and Historic Trust Fund to loan funds to the County Cultural and Events Center to secure a building, with all funds subject to an annual independent audit; and

**WHEREAS**, the selection of lands for acquisition for recreation, conservation, general open space, farmland preservation and the selection of historic preservation projects will be in accordance with plans prepared and adopted by the County in accordance with the requirements of N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.2.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Hunterdon that the Hunterdon County Clerk be and is hereby requested to place the following question on the November 05, 2013 General Election Ballot:

**COUNTY QUESTION**

Shall the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders grant the request to use of a loan from funds from the "Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund" for the purposes of acquiring, developing, and maintaining land and a building for recreation purposes, namely a County Cultural and Events Center, to be guaranteed by a bond, with all funds subject to an annual independent audit?

**INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT**

A “yes” vote will permit the County to continue the existing Hunterdon County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund with a specific allocation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ of funds shall be loaned to:

- i. Provide recreation land;
- ii. Acquire land for other conservation, recreation, and historic preservation purposes;
- iii. Develop and maintain County and municipal lands for recreation purposes;
- iv. and
- v. Pay debt service on indebtedness incurred by Hunterdon County for any of the above purposes.

Projects for this funding would be selected through a fair and open process. Land will be purchased from willing sellers only on a voluntary basis. A “yes” vote will permit the County to loan \$\_\_\_\_\_ for the purchase and acquisition of land/buildings for a County Cultural and Events Center. There would be no increase in the current County Open Space tax rate per \$100 of assessed value. A Bond would be guaranteed for repayment of the loan in \_\_\_\_\_years.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Clerk of the Board of Chosen Freeholders deliver a true copy of this resolution to the Hunterdon County Clerk for appropriate action to be taken by that official in accordance herewith.

ROLL CALL	MOVED	SECONDED	AYES	NAYS	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
ROBERT WALTON, DIRECTOR						
J. MATTHEW HOLT, DEPUTY DIRECTOR						
JOHN KING						
GEORGE B. MELICK						
WILLIAM G. MENNEN						

**Adopted** \_\_\_\_\_

Denise B. Doolan, Clerk of the Board

## **Economic Development and Community Impact**

Economic benefits resulting from tourism can take a number of forms including: *jobs, increased spending, and economic diversification.*

The recognition of a community's arts and culture assets is an important element of economic development. Recognizing and strengthening existing assets are vital parts of community development and can contribute to economic development. Assets include those related to entertainment (e.g., theaters, performing groups), personal development (e.g., community centers, bookstores), and education (e.g., schools, museums), as well as more directly to job creation and industry (e.g., translators, designers). Cultural and creative amenities are assets as well as excellent tools for identifying and promoting other community assets. A flourishing arts and culture sector can affect where workers in the information economy, especially younger ones, want to live and as such is important for workforce recruitment and retention strategies.

For example, Taos, New Mexico, has a number of designations intended to promote it as an arts and culture magnet. The State of New Mexico has designated Taos an Arts and Cultural District<sup>4</sup>. The New Mexico Arts and Cultural District Resource Team reviews the State of the creative economy and emphasizes building upon current assets to develop economic well-being. Additionally, Taos is pursuing the New Mexico "Quality of Life" local option tax to support the continued formal existence of the Arts and Cultural District. Taos's approach to economic development is based on asset recognition and directly connected to the arts and culture sector.

Arts and cultural activities in an area can draw crowds from within and around the community. Arts and cultural activity can increase attention and foot traffic to an area, including

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<sup>4</sup> Rick Romancito, "Taos Arts and Cultural District a First for New Mexico," *Taos News*, October 24, 2009; available at [ww.taosnews.com/articles/2009/10/28/entertainment](http://ww.taosnews.com/articles/2009/10/28/entertainment)

attracting visitors and increasing the length of time and money they spend, thereby contributing to continued development. Arts and cultural activity often attracts attention, whether for casual perusal or artistic investment.

### **Additional Funding**

Currently several local vendors require that participants “stay to play”. For example, Diamond Nation requires players to stay locally when participating in a tournament at their venue. To participate in any Diamond Nation Tournament, all teams are required to book hotel accommodations at one of the listed Diamond Nation host hotels offered at discounted prices.

Health Quest, Rogers Dance, and other performance groups currently use local high schools for their recitals. Currently Health Quest has to split up the show to accommodate everyone. The proposed Cultural and Events Center would accommodate the community.

### **Conclusion**

This proposal faces two significant challenges; taxes and politics. Taxes have always been a delicate subject for Hunterdon County residents but in 1997 the County recognized the importance of preserving its beautiful landscape. In that year the County voted to accept a small tax assessment for the preservation of land. Since that time, the County has expanded the dynamics of this tax to include the preservation of history and several community grants.

If a general consensus of the voters is achieved, the final challenge is to change the culture of County politics. The County continues to struggle to develop a cohesive approach that leverages all of its tourism resources. Electing a Mayor of Tourism will bridge our tourism gaps which will lead to a productive effort to ensure Hunterdon County remains New Jersey’s gem. Members of some sectors of today's workforce seek certain characteristics in the places they choose to live. Places with entertainment options, public interaction, lively streets, and

recreational and educational amenities are preferred, along with arts and culture activities and amenities.

## **Interviews**

- Robert G. Walton, Hunterdon County Freeholder
- Mary Melfi, Hunterdon County Clerk
- Chris Phelan, Hunterdon Chamber President & CEO
- Mayor David Delvecchio, Lambertville
- Members of the Hunterdon Historical Society
- Jim Gano, CRA, Owner Crowne Trophy
- Todd Cook, Chairman, Land use Board, Borough of Flemington (Flemington Borough Resident)
- G. Sue Dziamara, Director, Hunterdon County Planning Board
- Ken Bogen, Principal Planner, Hunterdon County Planning Board

## **References**

Executive Summary references provided by the Hunterdon Historical Society on March 21, 2013

Hunterdon County Planning Board Trust Fund Allocation and Distribution Report  
<http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/openspace/pdfs/2012AllocationandMunicipalDistribution.pdf>

Flemington Speedway History; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flemington\\_Speedway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flemington_Speedway)

Flemington Fair History; <http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/depts/rutgers/2012-4HAgFair/history.html>

Hotel Occupancy rate; Flemington Business Improvement District (BID) market research and feasibility analysis developed by Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) in 2012

2010 US census

Master Plan of the Borough of Flemington, April 8, 2012

2007 Hunterdon County Growth Management Plan

Diamond Nation Website, <http://diamondnation.com/tournaments/>;  
[www.diamondnation.com/about-us/hotel-partners-2](http://www.diamondnation.com/about-us/hotel-partners-2)

Round Valley Website, <http://www.State.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/round.html>

Hunterdon Tourism, <http://www.experiencehunterdon.org/shop/category.asp?catid=19>

<https://www.msu.edu/course/prr/840/econimpact/michigan/ecimpest.html>

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Doerr, Audrey D. The Role of White Papers. In: Doern, G.B. and Peter Aucoin. The Structures of Policy-making in Canada. Toronto, MacMillan, 1971. pp. 179-203.<sup>1</sup>

Pemberton, John E. Government Green Papers. Library World 71:49 Aug. 1969.

Chapin, Henry and Denis Deneau. Citizen involvement in Public Policy-making: Access and the Policy-making Process. Ottawa, Canadian Council on Social Development, 1978. p. 33.

<http://www.flemingtonbid.com/>

Leadership Hunterdon, White Paper Criteria

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/arts/>



<http://www.planning.org>