

## **COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, NEW JERSEY GENERAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Introduction**

The County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey (“County”) was one of the first four counties into which the Province of East Jersey was divided by an Act of the Assembly in 1682. Located in central northeastern New Jersey astride a major transportation corridor, the County is accessible to New York City and Philadelphia.

### **Governmental Structure**

A seven (7) member Board of Chosen Freeholders (“Board of Chosen Freeholders” or “Board”), elected for staggered terms of three (3) years, governs the County. The Board of Chosen Freeholders operates under the commission form on a committee system. Professional department heads in County government are appointed by the Board of Chosen Freeholders and are responsible to the chairman and the committee charged with the specific operation. The County follows the Civil Service merit system of employment, and the Board of Chosen Freeholders abides by the regulations of the State Merit System Board.

The County also established an Office of Administration under the direction of a County Administrator. The County Administrator is a statutory position for a term, authorized by N.J.S.A. 40A:9-42. The County Administrator shall report directly to the Board of Chosen Freeholders on policy matters (i.e., all matters affecting the citizens of the County), and act as its chief executive and administrative officer on all matters involving County Government and have administrative responsibility for all County matters. The County Administrator oversees the preparation of the County's annual operating and capital budgets and may perform other executive or administrative duties as are necessary to ensure the effective functioning of County operations and the efficient use of County resources. The County Administrator shall also perform such other duties as are assigned by the Board of Chosen Freeholders pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:9-42. 2012.

### **Governmental Services**

**Health and Hospitals.** The County provides certain medical, health and extended-care services to residents through the George J. Otlowski Sr. Center for Mental Health, numerous public health clinics and the extended-care facilities at Roosevelt Care Center in Edison and Roosevelt Care Center at Old Bridge. As the historic Edison building of Roosevelt Care Center aged, having originally been designed as a tuberculosis sanitarium with an emphasis on isolation, it had been impossible to operate as a skilled-nursing facility with an efficient staff-to-resident ratio.

In order to address the significant operating inefficiencies at the existing facility, the Board of Chosen Freeholders authorized in 2001 construction of a 180-bed, state-of-the-art, long-term care facility across from the historic building. Today the facility operates efficiently: Operating subsidies have been reduced. In October 2011, Roosevelt Care Center at Old Bridge opened its doors. Constructed to LEED Gold standards, the building is the first long-term care facility of its kind in the State to take such stringent measures to limit its ecological imprint. These efforts include an extensive recycling protocol, a nearly paperless operation and automated utility system for maximum energy conservation. Embracing the latest innovations, staff utilize handheld computers for daily communication, employ digital records with regularity and access any number of the building's other contemporary amenities, including complete wireless internet capabilities. These measures further reduce the facility's overall day-to-day operational costs.

Both 180-bed facilities, which in addition to providing quality long-term care, offer a full range of rehabilitative, dementia, and sub-acute services. They are able to operate with staffing costs that are significantly lower than those required by the original building. The construction of these facilities and the

operating efficiencies they have brought, are intended to lower the cost of operating the care facilities while continuing to offer the highest level of care to County residents.

**Education.** The Middlesex County Vocational and Technical School System is acclaimed as one of the finest in the nation. The system provides pre-employment training in approximately 43 vocational and technical skilled areas to high school and adult students. Approximately 3,833 full- and part-time students are served annually. The system, serving industry and labor, contributes greatly to the industrial growth and stability of the County. The mission statement of the County Vocational and Technical Schools is: “To prepare students for employment in the competitive labor force and for life-long learning by providing a program that stresses the expectation that all students achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) at all grade levels; work ethic; technology; industry driven occupational skills competency; broadly transferable academic thinking, problem solving and communication skills; diversity and equity behavior; and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”

Middlesex County College, established by the Board of Chosen Freeholders in 1964, has an enrollment of more than 13,000 students. The college prepares students for transfer to some of the nation’s most prestigious universities. The College also offers career programs in which graduates directly enter the workplace. The institution has a tremendous positive effect on the local economy. Rutgers, the State University, including Douglass, Cook, Livingston, Busch and Rutgers campuses, is located within the County, as well as Rutgers School of Biomedical and Health Sciences (which has been merged with the former University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey), Princeton University – Forrestal Campus and DeVry University.

**Parks and Recreation.** The Middlesex County Office of Parks & Recreation currently manages 10,545 acres of parkland for the enjoyment of County residents. Eighteen (18) County Parks and Recreation Facilities totaling 2,916 acres provide recreational and cultural activities with extensive facilities for summer and winter sports, theater and concert programs. Thirty-one (31) Conservation Areas and Preserves, totaling 7,629 acres, offer passive recreation opportunities including hiking along nearly 30 miles of marked trails, bird watching, photography and nature study, while providing important protection to pristine and ecologically sensitive habitat. In addition, three (3) golf facilities are operated and leased by the Middlesex County Improvement Authority (MCIA): Tamarack Golf Course (36 holes); The Meadows at Middlesex (18 holes); and Raritan Landing Golf Course (18-hole executive course). The County has been investing in parks and recreation to add to its long-term livability and its socioeconomic stability. The Open Space and Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund was established in 1996. Through this fund, the County has acquired over 7,464 acres of open space either directly by the County or in partnership with its municipalities. This Trust Fund has also been used to develop County and municipal recreational facilities through a grant program focusing on development and redevelopment of municipal parks.

The County is currently pursuing an active program of facility improvements and renovations in existing parks. The County recently completed renovations of Merrill Park in Woodbridge that separates vehicular and pedestrian traffic within the park provides additional parking for recreational events and the construction of new pedestrian paths and two (2) new footbridges connecting core areas of the park. The County also plans to complete a new maintenance facility in Davidson’s Mill Pond Park in South Brunswick Township and renovations to the college soccer field in Thomas A. Edison Park, Edison Township this year. New projects in 2014 include upgrades to the tennis and basketball facilities at Roosevelt Park in Edison with new surfaces and improved lighting, and resurfacing nearly 2 miles of paved walking paths in Thomas Edison Park. The total purchase of development easements through 2013 has brought the County’s preserved farmland to 4,817 acres.

**Transportation.** The County is one of the most heavily traveled regions in New Jersey. Located at the crossroads of the Northeast Corridor, the County is traversed by the New Jersey Turnpike, the Garden State Parkway, Interstate 287 and U.S. Routes 1, 9, and 130. There are also other arterial roads, including State Routes 18, 27, 28, 32, 33, 34, and 35, in addition to 600 County routes which traverse the County and provide access to numerous residential, shopping, educational, medical, and recreational facilities. The Northeast Corridor rail line provides both Amtrak and NJ Transit commuter rail service (five stops within the County),

and there also is regular NJ Transit service on both the North Jersey Coast Line (four stops within the County) and the Raritan Valley line which has a stop in Dunellen. Intercity rail service is also provided by Amtrak. These routes run through the County and have regular stops at either New Brunswick or Metropark. The Acela Express and Northeast Regional operate between Boston and Washington D.C., as the Keystone operates between Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and New York Penn Station.

Commuter bus service is available through NJ Transit, Suburban Transit – Coach USA, and Academy Bus Lines along parts of Routes 1, 9, 18, 27, 34, 130, the Garden State Parkway, and some secondary roads, and includes regular service to New York. Some of these commuter bus routes also serve regional destinations north and south of the County such as Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Lakewood, Jackson, Freehold, Toms River, and Seaside Heights during seasonal times. Local bus service to various parts of the county is available through the NJ Transit 800 routes and the Middlesex County Area Transit (MCAT) shuttle route. Funding for improvements and maintenance of this extensive transportation system comes from Federal, State, County, local and private sources. Additionally, the New Brunswick-Piscataway corridor is served by the Rutgers University inter-campus bus system, which is among the largest in the nation carrying over 6.7 million passengers per year.

Funding sources include Federal Highway Administration funding for eligible roads and bridges, and State aid funds, through the New Jersey Department of Transportation, for State, County, and eligible municipal roads. Funding is also available through local capital improvement programs for County and municipal roads. The Federal Transit Administration and New Jersey Transit provide funding for public transit systems. Funding by private industry for transportation improvements is also possible when private development impacts on transportation facilities. The County's transportation management association, Keep Middlesex Moving, Inc., works to reduce traffic congestion on existing roads through various management strategies, such as car and van pooling, ride-matching, staggered hours, compressed work schedules, and telecommuting. Pedestrian and bicycle mobility service for transportation and recreation needs are available in certain areas and are being expanded through State, County, and municipal initiatives. Major bicycling facilities within the County include the Johnson Park Bikeway, the Middlesex Greenway, parts of the East Coast Greenway and D&R Canal Towpath, as well as the New Brunswick Bikeway to be constructed in 2014. Bike lanes and bike routes have also been placed on many County and municipal roads throughout the County.

The County's Division of Transportation under the Department of Community Services, Office of Aging and Disabled Services operates an area-wide transit service for citizens in addition to the MCAT shuttle routes that provide important linkages and support to the County's regional and local rail and bus system. MCAT also coordinates transit services between municipalities and major job and activity centers; provides various fixed-route bus shuttle services that supplement the NJ Transit bus services; and provides special transportation services for senior and disabled residents.

### **Economy**

The County has been a leader in new construction for many years. According to the December 2013 issue of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs' Construction Reporter, the County, with \$1,104,977,010 in total dollar amount of Construction Authorized by Building Permits, is second (of the 21 counties) in the State overall; fifth in Residential Construction Authorized by Building Permits with \$428,716,639 and first in the Nonresidential Construction Authorized by Building Permits with \$676,260,371. The same report ranks the County second in Office Square Feet Authorized by Building Permits (1,011,038 sq. ft), fourth in Residential Construction Authorized by Building Permits (1,651 units) and first in Retail Square Feet by Square Footage (706,991 sq. ft). Building Permits issued for retail square footage in the County represented 31% of the total permits issued in New Jersey in 2013. The Office Square Feet Certified for the County in 2013 is first in the State at 1,386,043. The County's 2012 median household income was \$77,407. The State's median household income was \$66,950 in 2012. The median household income for the United States was \$50,157 for 2012.

Highlights of the December 2013 report included several from the County:

- The Township of Woodbridge had 22.1 million dollar amount of construction authorized by building permits in December 2013. The modernization of an existing distribution warehouse for Federal Express was one of the bigger projects.
- The City of New Brunswick led all localities in the State with 283 authorized dwellings in December 2013. All are part of a 126-store, mixed use building with apartments, retail space and a health club.
- With the County's 42,863 businesses, employment was the second highest in the state with 343,400 workers. New Jersey's three largest counties, including the County, accounted for 91.1% of the total employment in the State.

#### **Pension Information**

Those County employees who are eligible for pension coverage are enrolled in the State of New Jersey pension system. The two State-administered pension funds are the Police and Firemen's Retirement System (N.J.S.A. §43:16A-1 et. seq.) and the Public Employees' Retirement System (N.J.S.A. §43:15A-7 et. seq.). Benefits, contributions, means of funding and the manner of administration are determined by State Legislation. The Division of Pensions within the Treasury Department of the State of New Jersey is the administrator of the funds.

This Division annually charges counties and other government units for their respective contributions. State law requires that these systems be subject to actuarial valuation every year and actuarial investigation every three (3) years.

#### **Employees**

The County provides services through approximately 1,851 employees. County employees are represented by twenty-four (24) labor organizations recognized by the County under the Public Employees Relations Act of 1968 (P.E.R.C.).

All labor units have been settled through 2016. The County considers relations with its unions to be good.