



The Official Publication of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association

# URBAN MAYORS PRESS

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## ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY URBAN MAYORS ASSOCIATION

The New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) is housed in the New Jersey Urban Mayors Policy Center at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University. The New Jersey Urban Mayors Policy Center coordinates all activities of the NJUMA and provides policy and legislative analysis. Established in 1991, the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association is dedicated to working with state and federal lawmakers and officials to develop appropriate and effective public policy measures that benefit the state's urban centers and to help lawmakers understand how public policy affects New Jersey's municipalities.

As an organization, NJUMA is comprised of 32 New Jersey urban and rural municipalities. NJUMA serves its members through meetings, policy retreats, and annual conferences which keep them informed on issues affecting their ability to provide adequate services to their residents. NJUMA also assists its members in interpreting legislation and state policy and works with the Governor's Office to assist in defining an urban policy agenda.

It uses a 7-Point Plan for Strengthening Cities, Families, and Communities as a guide for addressing the critical issues of its member cities. This plan is designed to aggressively address the areas of crime and public safety; education and positive youth development; environment and public health; family and community welfare; housing and economic development; tax reform and intergovernmental relations, and unfunded mandates.

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

### Editors' Note

We hope you enjoy reading our Spring 2023 edition of the Urban Mayors Press! This digital newsletter is created to highlight the impactful work of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) members and to provide resourceful information to municipalities throughout New Jersey from federal, state, and local agencies.

Submissions to the Urban Mayors Press are edited and distributed by the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University.

A Big Thank You to all Our Contributors!



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- Hon. Adrian O. Mapp, Mayor, City of Plainfield, Vice President
- Hon. Marty Small Sr., Mayor, The City of Atlantic City, Vice President, (Southern)
- Hon. W. Reed Gusciora, Mayor, City of Trenton, Vice President (Central)
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- Roselle
- Trenton
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# PRESIDENT'S CORNER



## Dear New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Members & Community Partners,

I hope this finds you doing well and full of hope that the newness of this season brings innovative ideas and bold actions that will continue to positively impact urban centers across New Jersey.

Spring is about growth. It seems only fitting, then, to acknowledge the many initiatives, programs, and opportunities happening across the state. As we all work toward our commitments to building ecosystems that support positive change and sustainability, it is imperative that we continue to foster collaborations between stakeholders from all sectors.

The Urban Mayors' Press highlights the tremendous growth and progress in our communities, including advances in public safety, breakthroughs on several redevelopment projects, and municipal fleet electrification. Through innovation, creativity, and perseverance, there have been significant strides in addressing some of the most pressing challenges in our communities. While I recognize that, there is still much work to be done. Let us acknowledge and recognize the progress that has been made and continue to build on those achievements. We can draw inspiration from the accomplishments of our past and work together to tackle the challenges of our present and the future.

In this issue, you will find an editorial on the 2023 NJUMA Policy Exchange which spotlights the recent visit members took to Washington D.C. to connect with our federal partners. The trip offered NJUMA members and key staff an opportunity to engage with the New Jersey congressional delegation, representatives from federal agencies, and White House officials. Collectively, we gleaned a wealth of information,

increased our awareness of resources, and fostered connections with representatives in the areas of housing, environmental justice, transportation, and economic development. We thank the team at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University for organizing the policy exchange and look forward to capitalizing on what we learned to strengthen and stabilize our communities.

Additionally, this issue provides updates on several programs to benefit our communities. Be sure to turn your attention to the resources shared by community partners focused on economics and housing, urban agriculture, healthcare and social services, entrepreneurship, broadband, and more.

While we prepare for what is ahead and all things anew, we must also take the time to celebrate our legacy. Recently, we bade a fond farewell to the late Senator Ronald L. Rice. A model leader and champion of historic legislative agendas, Senator Rice spent his life and career fighting to ensure that state policies supported and advanced the quality of life and interests of all New Jersey residents, particularly those living in urban communities.

It is my hope that as we continue to lead and serve our communities, we embody Senator Rice's legacy, his spirit of service, and his commitment to the advancement of our state and all the residents that we proudly serve. What we do now will be our legacy for the next generation. Forward only, backward never.

Sincerely,

Ras J. Baraka  
Mayor, City of Newark  
President, New Jersey Urban Mayors Association



# Newark Forward: Building an Ecosystem for Change

By Honorable Ras J. Baraka, Mayor, City of Newark

Recently, I was honored to host elected officials, law enforcement leaders, and anti-violence community liaisons from cities across the country for two days of seminars on reinventing, reinvesting, and reimagining public safety. The facilitated discussion was organized by the City and the National League of Cities (NLC) Mayoral Network on Community Safety and Violence Prevention. Participants were able to learn firsthand about our work and how we are placing credible messengers at the very core of our public safety revitalization and how they play a key part as a remedy for neighborhoods mired in generational cycles of crime, violence, and trauma.

During his introductory remarks, NLC CEO and Executive Director Clarence Anthony said the purpose of the convening was to find “tangible solutions” to crime problems in the nation’s cities. “NLC is committed to supporting all cities, towns, and villages as they work to find and advance better community safety and violence prevention efforts,” Mr. Anthony said. “We often say that the City of Newark is a model when it comes to reimagining public safety. We are thrilled that Mayor Baraka partnered with us to share the innovative strategies Newark has put in place, so that local leaders all across America can learn from them and apply similar approaches that make sense in the context of their own communities.”

In Newark, our reimagined public safety structure expands past the bricks and mortar of our precinct buildings and into the hearts and minds of our entire community. Our Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery (OVPTTR) has shifted the culture to approach violence from a public health perspective and not allowing law enforcement to be the only strategy. There is now a community-based public safety entity that is professionalizing the work and the creation of equity in terms of how resources are distributed. Our collective impact strategy is bringing all of the systems together as a true ecosystem to provide resources to the community and to show that law enforcement is not responsible for public safety alone. The public has to have input and be a part of discussions to truly reimagine public safety. OVPTTR uses a portion of our public safety funds to build a different looking public safety ecosystem. We hire one social worker for every ten police officers; they graduate the academy together with an appreciation for each other’s roles that carries through their careers. Our Brick City Peace Collective (BCPC) is made up of community-based violence intervention organizations – a strategy dedicated to coordination, collaboration, partnership and accountability for 18-20 community-based organizations, institutions and individuals.



Public safety OVPTTR meets the community



Police Graduation with OVPTTR Social Workers



NLC conference with Newark Community Street Team

Our ecosystem’s importance is critical to our efforts as they understand first-hand that it is society’s neglect of the underlying causes and conditions for suffering and discontent that prevents harmony and peace.

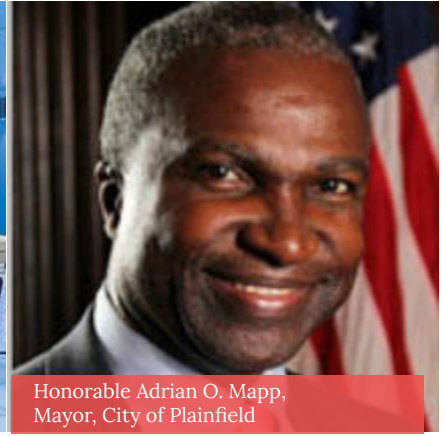
In Newark, we have seen double-digit percentage reductions in violent crime. Last year alone, murders were down 17% to 60-year lows, and non-fatal shootings and non-fatal shootings victims both fell by 36%. In all of 2020, the year of COVID-19 and George Floyd protests, our officers neither used a baton nor fired a shot.

Central to all this activity is the credible messengers, paid and volunteer professionals with life experience as ministers and clergy, community organizers, the formerly incarcerated, neighborhood mentors, and others with deep connections in our neighborhoods who have the knowledge and relationships to support our community in the way that they truly need it. Our credible messengers helped keep the peace during our protests, during which 18,000 marched in our city with no arrests and no damage to property and continue to help us move our city forward to a safer city.

[Click for the Mayoral Network on Community Safety and Violence Prevention Summary Report](#)



# Developments in the City of Plainfield



Honorable Adrian O. Mapp, Mayor, City of Plainfield

## By Honorable Adrian O. Mapp, Mayor, City of Plainfield

As the mayor of Plainfield for almost ten (10) years, I am proud that the Queen City is a testament to the resilience of urban communities when community leaders, residents, and investors with the same vision of a better future work together. Known at one point as the jewel of New Jersey, Plainfield has come through dark times – epitomized by periods of stagnation, a rise in criminal activities, and a struggle to find investors. Years of unrest and injustice led to the Plainfield rebellion in 1967, leaving us with a reputation we couldn't shake and the desertion of wealthy residents and investors. Fifty (50) years later, we created an economic renaissance, rebounded, and are now more robust than ever.

Plainfield, today, is a city with over a billion dollars invested. With continued avid interest from potential partners and plans to create new industries, we are confident that the city's economy will only improve. Since July 2022, over six hundred (600) residential units and over two hundred thousand (200,000) square feet of commercial space have been created. This increase in housing provides options for our existing residents, brings in new neighbors, and expands the customer base for our local businesses.

Exploring all growth opportunities, the city is pursuing opportunities to generate jobs in industries vital to strengthening the existing economic base. Areas of focus are medical, healthcare, and biotechnology; research and development; industrial and warehousing; technology and innovation; and retail sales and services.

Additionally, the city has opted to be a part of the state's newly legalized cannabis industry, providing municipal support for ten (10) businesses doing cultivation and retail. A portion of every support package features an equity component to ensure that residents benefit from these new businesses, especially since urban centers have historically suffered disproportionately from the ill-executed "war on drugs." We continue to facilitate skills training for residents to be prepared for these new industries.

We also recognize that we can only be as strong as the weakest among us, and we must lift every resident with us as we rise. As a result, coming out of the pandemic, we've paid overdue bills for residents whose water was threatened with disconnection, we held taxes steady for two consecutive years, and we continue to find ways to bring relief to those who are feeling the impact of the rise in prices.

Plainfield is ushering in a new era – because we've refined our processes and made it easy to do business here, and we continue to open new doors. Plans are underway for some exciting projects in the Queen City, including a brand-new surgical center, a branch of the Rutgers Behavioral Center, a state-of-the-art spray park at our Rushmore Recreational Complex, and the Plainfield Center of Excellence, which will be a modern space operating year-round, where our residents can gather to take part in recreational activities, learn and explore interests.

We're also investing in SMART technology and building an infrastructure supporting numerous components, including free WIFI in public areas and adding safety elements around the city. Of course, we continue to curate events enabling our community to come together, have fun, and showcase our talent and diversity, such as the Queen City Street Fair, our Arts and Culture Festival, and the House Music Festival.

We are a city as diverse in our interests as we are in our people. Our residents come here from cities across the world, and that is reflected in our eclectic food offerings and numerous cultural festivals. From unparalleled historic homes to convenient, modern, transit-friendly apartments, with two (2) train stations servicing the NY metro area, you may come to visit, but don't be surprised if you fall in love and decide to stay.

Our city continues to rebuild and grow because of the resourcefulness of its residents, the hard work of city employees, and the vision of those chosen to lead. We are grateful for those who continue to support this vision by investing here and believing, as we do, that Plainfield is the city of the future.



Plainfield Center of Excellence



State-of-the-Art park



Photo Credit: City of Atlantic City

# Major Step In The Redevelopment Project Atlantic City Has Been Waiting For

By Honorable Marty Small, Sr., Mayor, City of Atlantic City

Talk about a long time coming. Going back to when I was Council President of the great City of Atlantic City, we've been dealing with redevelopment at Bader Field. I, along with my fellow councilmen, would take trips all around New Jersey trying to understand this concept and come up with solutions. Fast forward to March of this year, and it finally happened under my watch as mayor. After City Council passed the resolution unanimously, I proudly signed a Memorandum of Understanding with DEEM Enterprises for their redevelopment proposal on this beautiful piece of land. This gives DEEM six months exclusivity to do their due diligence on the former airport site, which is very positive news for Atlantic City taxpayers.

DEEM's \$2.7 billion proposal includes housing, retail and a Formula One race track for car enthusiasts living on site to utilize. This project would not only change the landscape of Atlantic City, but gives our taxpayers much needed relief like never before. Once developed, the ratable tax base in the city will nearly double. On top of Atlantic City's budget continuously decreasing due to the debt payment, the proceeds of the sale of Bader Field will be a shot in the arm. So, there's no more excuse for people who want to live in, and invest in Atlantic City. We're on the fast track for tax relief, and for the fifth straight year, we will have a tax decrease this year.

I do not think this gets discussed enough, but this entire Bader Field redevelopment process will not cost the taxpayers a dime. Right off the bat, \$500,000 is deposited in a city escrow account for city and state professionals to do our own due diligence to make sure this project moves along. In addition to the new infrastructure, the city also gets \$100-million for the land, \$7-million for dredging, and up to \$15-million for a recreation center owned by the city. Think about all the new opportunities having our own recreation center alone creates, including opening jobs for kids in this community. Atlantic City residents really do get their just due on all facets of this project, and this will only lead to more development in Atlantic City moving forward.

In a gambling town like ours, you need to take chances, and this is one I truly believe will pay off. This has not been an easy road, but as is the case with anything in life worth having, without struggle there is no progress. I never gave up on this because "surrender" is not a term in my vocabulary. Being able to sign that Memorandum of Understanding, on site, in front of a full slate of media and many of the individuals who helped make this a reality, was not only a great day in the City of Atlantic City, but it was a historic day as well.



Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding at Bader Field.





## City Of Trenton Moves Towards An Electric Fleet Of Municipal Vehicles

By Honorable W. Reed Gusciora, Mayor, City of Trenton

With the support of a \$1.5 million grant from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and a \$125,000 grant from the Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP), the City of Trenton purchased two new electric sanitation vehicles and one low-speed electric patrol vehicle, which will hit city streets within the next year.

As Mayor of the Capital City, I am excited to take this first step toward electrifying our city vehicles. As the world shifts away from gas-powered vehicles, Trenton is joining other cities in taking these bold steps to address climate change and air quality issues. With these incredible grants from the NJDEP and NJDCA, we are saving taxpayers money and taking an important step towards an environmentally sustainable fleet of vehicles.

Under NJDEP's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, grant funding that we received is intended to counter the air quality impacts of excess nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions. The program allows for grant funding to be used in the repower or replacement of equipment, including the replacement of gas-powered vehicles with new electric vehicles. As a result, the City of Trenton purchased two electric-powered refuse trucks from Hudson County Motors, two BYD 40KwH electric chargers, as well as other necessary electric infrastructure. Hudson County Motors will be building the trucks, which will make their debut on Trenton streets next year. The same electric sanitation vehicles are being utilized in Jersey City where they have been operating for over a year with resounding success.

While electric trucks are 30 to 50 percent more expensive than diesel trucks, there are significant benefits to electric trucks, which include savings on maintenance and operating costs throughout the life expectancy of the vehicle. There are also significant air pollution reduction benefits that we can capture as we move toward a fleet of electric vehicles.

Concurrently, in collaboration with the Trenton City Council, Isles, the Trenton Downtown Association, and the Trenton Police Department (TPD), my office acquired a low-speed electric vehicle, purchased using funding from a Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP) grant, which we received from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDEP).

NPP provides financial and technical assistance to municipalities based on strategic revitalization plans; since the vehicle will be deployed in an area critical to revitalization, it is an authorized expenditure. The vehicle will not only help TPD to keep the downtown safe, but the vehicle produces no emissions, is less noisy, and is cleaner for the environment.

Automotive fleet electrification can catalyze global transportation decarbonization and smart urban mobility. In the Capital City, we're doing our part to begin the transition towards an electric fleet; with the support of our state and federal partners, this fleet electrification will continue. Addressing climate change is a global challenge, requiring both local and international solutions, and we are up for the challenge to make critical investments in driving a sustainable future.







**Honorable Helmin J. Caba,  
Mayor, City of Perth Amboy**



## **PERTH AMBOY'S LATEST REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT CREATES SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH WHILE PRIORITIZING ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY**

The Office of the Mayor, City of Perth Amboy

Perth Amboy, a historic city in New Jersey, is taking great strides toward revitalizing its economy and environment with its latest redevelopment project of BridgePort II, a high-capacity storage and distribution center located on a remediated 73-acre waterfront site at 1160 State Street. The City's redevelopment agency marks the latest partnership with Bridge Industrial of Parsippany of two industrial warehouses to be constructed; one comprising 243,600 square feet, and the other will be 800,000 square feet. The groundbreaking of a once-polluted brownfield site marks a significant milestone in the City's efforts to stimulate local tax benefits, job growth, and cleanup.

The project sits on the former Act 2 site, requiring heavy site cleanup and ground improvements. However, the City of Perth Amboy did not let this site become a burden but saw an opportunity to turn it into a thriving economic hub for the community.

This project is expected to create hundreds of new jobs, significantly boosting the local economy with \$2.9 million in gross taxes to the City.

Moreover, the City's initiative to redevelop this brownfield site is expected to provide numerous long-term benefits, including infrastructure improvements of rain gardens, separating the combined sewers to prevent untreated sewage from being released into the Arthur Kill, as well as committing \$1 million to the City's open space trust fund and \$500,000 for off-site improvements. Moreover, the warehouses will be constructed with roofs that can accommodate solar panels.

Furthermore, the redevelopment project is also expected to impact the environment significantly. The site's remediation process will remove harmful pollutants from the area, making it a safer and healthier environment for the community. This process is a crucial step toward the City's goal of achieving sustainable economic growth.

It is essential to note that the City's efforts to redevelop the brownfield site are a local initiative and a significant contribution to the state's environmental and economic goals. New Jersey has a long history of industrial development, and as a result, it is home to many brownfield sites. These sites are typically contaminated with hazardous substances, making them unsuitable for development or human habitation.

However, the state's Brownfield Development Area (BDA) program incentivizes redeveloping contaminated sites like the one in Perth Amboy. The program aims to promote economic growth while addressing environmental concerns by redeveloping brownfield sites.

In conclusion, Perth Amboy's groundbreaking of its latest redevelopment project is a testament to the City's commitment to creating sustainable economic growth while prioritizing environmental safety. This project provides significant tax benefits and job growth and contributes to the state's goal of redeveloping brownfield sites. The City's proactive approach to redeveloping the brownfield site is a model for other communities to follow, proving that environmental and economic goals can be achieved simultaneously with the right vision and commitment.

# It's Our Time: Brick Church Highlights The Future Of East Orange



**Groundbreaking at Brick Church**

From L to R: Rodger Bucchianeri, CEO of Incline Capital, Councilwoman Brittany Claybrooks, Tammy Jones, Co-founder and CEO, Basis Investment Group; State Democratic Chairman LeRoy Jones; Essex County Commissioner Wayne Richardson; Mayor Ted R. Green; Josh Weingarten, Director of Capital Investments Triangle Equities; Lester Petracca, President, Triangle Equities Development Co.; Governor Phil Murphy; Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver; Council Chair Christopher Awe; East Orange Councilman Casim Gomez; Enrico Della Corna, Regional President NJ, PNC; Councilman Bergson Leneus; Councilwoman Alicia Holman; and Mike Lohr, Vice President of Urban Investment Group, Goldman Sachs at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for The Crossings at Brick Church Station, a \$500 million redevelopment project in the City of East Orange.



**Honorable Ted Green, Mayor, City Of East Orange**

## By Honorable Ted Green, Mayor, East Orange

In 2018, I came into office with an array of exciting redevelopment projects on the horizon. Nearly five years later – overcoming enormous challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic – I am pleased to see the fruits of our labor finally coming into view. More than \$2.5 billion in new construction is breathing life into the neighborhoods and commercial districts in every ward of our 3.9 square-mile City. The year ahead will be pivotal for East Orange as we continue to seize opportunities to lock in the economic future of our community.

As we move through 2023, we are focused on forging pathways forward for residents, building modern, state-of-the-art conveniences, and providing progressive opportunities for our neighbors, business owners, and visitors. My administration has activated an ambitious economic plan centered around the transformative development of our commercial corridors while making space to welcome new residents. In the heart of our Transit Village is what will soon become the most significant real estate development in our city's history and one of the most significant in the State – The Crossings at Brick Church Station (533 Main Street).

My intention is that The Crossings at Brick Church is built for East Orange by East Orange. We are investing in the local community by creating spaces for ghost kitchen concepts so that small businesses can utilize it to help get their business started. In addition, we have vocational training, union pre-apprenticeships and job opportunities for East Orange residents on the \$500 million redevelopment project. This is just the beginning of our City's evolution. The development is convenient – connected to public transit and walkable to retail, restaurants, and recreation. It promises a new pedestrian promenade, great amenities including a seven-story parking garage and an expanded and improved new space for the anchoring ShopRite grocery store. With more than 85% of retail space pre-leased, the first phase of the project is expected for delivery by the end of 2024.

When speaking with Glenn Scotland, Esq., Founding Member of McManimon, Scotland & Baumann, LLC and Special Redevelopment Counsel for the City of East Orange, he described the financing of this project as one of the most intricate of its kind. “Unquestionably, this has been one of the most complex and comprehensive public/private partnerships in State history. While it is important to recognize and applaud the very significant contributions by all participants and stakeholders in the transaction - including the State Administration

and its agencies and Triangle Equities and its development and financial partners – the foundation for this successful transaction was the enormous and unprecedented commitment and investment made by the City. This local City government collaboration was the predicate that encouraged and allowed all of the other pieces of the real estate and financial structure to come together. It is remarkable that the City and its partners were able to achieve this in the face and impacts of the pandemic.”

We are thrilled to be building an infrastructure to welcome new businesses and new residents – investments that I believe will provide extraordinary service to everyone with the ultimate goal of meeting the community's growing needs. My mission is to provide convenience, safety and access to moments that engage and bring neighbors together.

By investing in the people of our City, we are laying the foundation for incremental, sustainable, and responsible growth. The return on investment will be both fiscal and cultural. It is my hope that the dynamic work we are doing shines a light on the incredible potential that exists here in East Orange and serves as a national model of excellence, demonstrating the potential that lies within valuable public/private partnerships. I have tremendous pride in our progress and I know that investing in our City now is a guaranteed investment in our City's economic future.



The Promenade at The Crossings at Brick Church Station located in the heart of the Transit Village in the City of East Orange.



The Crossings at Brick Church Station will be the largest real estate redevelopment project in the City's history. It is scheduled for completion in 2025.



The Exterior Courtyard of The Crossings at Brick Church Station located in the heart of the Transit Village in the City of East Orange.



# New Jersey Urban Mayors 2023 Policy Exchange

**SUBMITTED BY: TENISHA MALCOLM, DIRECTOR, URBAN MAYORS POLICY CENTER, JOHN S. WATSON INSTITUTE FOR URBAN POLICY & RESEARCH, KEAN UNIVERSITY**

The Urban Mayors Policy Center at John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University brought members of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) to Capitol Hill and the White House for roundtable discussions on federal policy that impacts urban municipalities.

At the two-day 2023 NJUMA Policy Exchange, held on March 28 and 29, the mayors and their staffs met with New Jersey's congressional representatives, including U.S. Senators Cory Booker and Robert Menendez as well as members of the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Hispanic Caucus. NJUMA members learned more about the tools and resources available to assist municipalities in addressing the many pressing issues facing urban centers.

During the policy roundtable discussions, members met with senior-level agency staff, including Secretary Marcia L. Fudge of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency, and Economic Development Administration.

NJUMA members shared their perspectives on how federal policy initiatives can better support local governments.

The NJUMA delegation also had the opportunity to meet with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Domestic Policy Council for discussions about mental health support services, President Biden's actions to reduce gun violence, and more.

NJUMA members also participated in Communities in Action: Building a Better New Jersey, a White House-led series that brings together local elected officials and community leaders to highlight the investments of the Biden-Harris Administration and their impact in communities throughout the country. The series amplifies the voices and examples of local leaders who are delivering real results for working families. The NJUMA members shared the ways that the administration is supporting their local efforts to create opportunities and improve people's lives.



**Members of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association and staff members of the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research**





**The policy roundtable discussions, offered members the opportunity to meet with senior-level agency staff, including Secretary Marcia L. Fudge of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and representatives from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency, and Economic Development Administration.**



**The NJUMA members shared their perspectives on how federal policy initiatives can better support local governments.**







**The reception was a culmination of the two-day event where NJUMA members shared the ways that the administration is supporting their local efforts to create opportunities and improve people's lives.**



# Essential Tools for the Urban Toolbox

Submitted by James C. Williams IV, Director of  
Racial Justice Policy, Fair Share Housing Center



New Jersey's racial wealth gap is one of the largest in the nation. This is particularly alarming as New Jersey is one of the wealthiest states in the nation. According to the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, the median household wealth of white families in New Jersey is \$322,500, compared to just \$17,700 and \$26,100 for Black and Brown families, respectively. A key driver of that racial wealth gap has been generations of policies that allow white families to become homeowners and pass on wealth and that have not included Black and Brown families.

Today, many of our urban centers such as Jersey City, Camden, and Newark are experiencing revitalization both through market pressures and state investment in economic development incentives. New Jersey has a housing affordability crisis – indeed, a recent study found that North Jersey's housing market is the most competitive in the United States, with 12 families for every apartment that is available. This crisis, as Prof. David Troutt at Rutgers-Newark pointed out as part of his landmark report on housing in Newark, has been driven significantly by exclusionary suburban communities that resist complying with their fair housing obligations, creating tremendous pressure on urban housing markets.

As we all know, housing prices in our urban centers are increasing. Newark recently saw its first home in city history to sell for over 1 million dollars. This is exciting news for a city ten years ago labeled one of America's most dangerous cities. Unfortunately, many long-time residents are not equipped to compete for these homes and benefit from growing home equity.

Historical members of these communities who have been kept out of homebuying by generations of public policy deserve an opportunity to compete in these markets and capitalize on the changing generational wealth. Creating intentional pathways for residents to compete must be a priority.

During Governor Murphy's budget address, he proposed creating a \$15 million allocation for a First-Generation Homeownership Program. This program would be a tool to provide critical down payment assistance for first-time homebuyers whose parents do not own a home, along with people who went through the foster care system. This program could allow Black and Brown residents in the state to gain access to generation-changing wealth. Black and Brown residents face tremendous barriers in closing the wealth gap in New Jersey.

Indeed, down payment assistance is identified as a primary barrier for Black and Brown residents as they look to find a home. A dedicated pot of money will give them the chance to gain a homeownership opportunity. Governor Murphy's allocation can serve as a model of intentional budget expenditures as we look to provide Black and Brown communities with the tools to create the wealth they deserve.

This recommendation was a direct ask of the Fair Share Housing Center and United Black Agenda. Black and Brown organizations are adamant about intentionality for programs that affect their communities. As Co-Chair of the Housing Subcommittee of the Governors Wealth Disparity Task Force, Fair Share Housing Center felt it essential to prioritize this. We are eager to see this and other recommendations made by Governor Murphy and other appropriate agencies as the Wealth Disparity Task Force wraps up its work this year and we will push to translate those recommendations into action.

**“ down payment assistance is identified as a primary barrier for Black and Brown residents as they look to find a home ”**

**JAMES WILLIAMS IV**



# Opportunities for Urban Communities through the USDA

By Lauren Finnegan | Public Affairs Specialist, NRCS, New Jersey

**T**hrough the USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP), the agency is working to support urban agriculture as it plays an important role in growing not only fresh, healthy food, often where grocery stores are scarce, but also providing jobs, responding to climate change, and beautifying neighborhoods.

OUAIP supports urban producers through:

- Grants
- Cooperative agreements
- Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agricultural and Innovative Production
- Programs and services

Currently, the OUAIP is taking applications for the following opportunities:

## Cooperative Agreements for Compost and Food Waste Reduction

Up to \$9.5 million for Compost and Food Waste Reduction (CFWR), pilot projects for the fiscal year 2023 are available. The cooperative agreements support projects that develop and test strategies for planning and implementing municipal compost plans and food waste reduction plans. OUAIP – led by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service – will accept applications on Grants.gov until 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 15, 2023. Projects should span two years with a start date of Dec. 1, 2023, and a completion date of Dec. 1, 2025.

Cooperative agreements support projects led by local governments or other eligible entities that:

- Generate compost;
- Increase access to compost for agricultural producers;
- Reduce reliance on and limit the use of fertilizer;
- Improve soil quality;
- Encourage waste management and permaculture business development;
- Increase rainwater absorption;
- Reduce municipal food waste; and
- Divert food waste from landfills.

OUAIP will prioritize projects that anticipate or demonstrate economic benefits, incorporate plans to make compost easily accessible to farmers, including community gardeners, integrate other food waste strategies, including food recovery efforts, and collaborate with multiple partners. For more information on this opportunity, please visit [www.usda.gov/topics/urban/coop-agreements](http://www.usda.gov/topics/urban/coop-agreements).

## People's Garden Initiative

USDA is leading by example through the People's Garden Initiative, showing its commitment to local, resilient food systems that increase food access for their communities.

The Initiative was launched in 2009 by Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, and since then, it has grown to include more than 2,100 gardens across the country, including eight in New Jersey. The initiative aims to promote sustainable gardening practices, improve access to healthy food, educate the public about the benefits of gardening, and to create vibrant public spaces that promote community engagement.

Whether your community is interested in starting a new garden or there is an existing garden you would like to register, you can do so at [www.usda.gov/peoples-garden](http://www.usda.gov/peoples-garden).

Upon registration, your garden will be highlighted on the People's Garden website and provided a sign to display in the garden. By joining the People's Garden network, you will be granted access to the People's Garden Connect subgroup, a platform to share resources and ideas with gardens across the country. While there you can also explore resources and information available. You can also connect with the initiative on social media to stay up to date on the latest news and events.



For information about NRCS programs and services for urban agriculture, contact NRCS-NJ Urban Conservationist Morgan Devine.



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



## Unite New Jersey Honors Network Partners and Their Impact on Connecting Residents to Much-Need Health and Social Care Services

Unite New Jersey is a coordinated care network of health and social service providers. Partners in the network are connected through Unite Us' shared technology platform, which enables them to send and receive electronic referrals, address people's social needs, and improve health across communities. A New Jersey-based Unite Us team supports the network focused on community engagement, network health and optimization, and customer success. Joining the network is at no cost for community-based organizations, and many organizations are considered part of the safety net, like community health centers, tribal clinics, and mental health centers.

The Unite New Jersey team highlighted network partners such as Greater Bergen Community Action and their impact across the state to improve community health. Since 2022, our network has unified healthcare, nonprofit, and government organizations to collaborate and connect people to the resources they need.

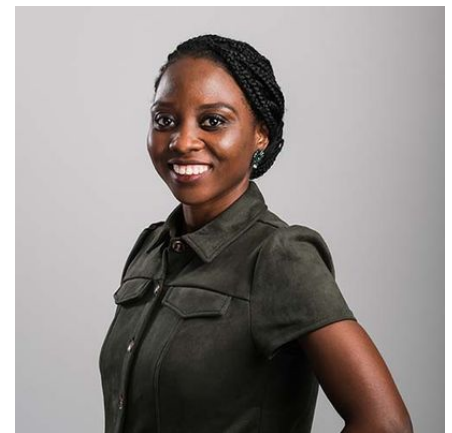
### NETWORK EXPANSION BY THE NUMBERS:

- Unite New Jersey launched in April 2022 and has grown to 129 organizations providing over 249 partner programs eligible to send and receive secure referrals
- 167% network growth in 2022
- In 2022, housing and shelter, employment, and food assistance services were the top three needs requested

### RAISING AWARENESS FOR MATERNAL HEALTH:

In November, the Unite New Jersey team hosted a Maternal Health Roundtable that brought together key stakeholders and community leaders to highlight the importance of communal knowledge, honor community voices, and emphasize the collective impact in bridging the maternal health equity gap in New Jersey.

Nonprofits, community-based organizations, and other providers who want to connect their clients and patients to services within the Unite New Jersey network can reach out to [roseline.atte@uniteus.com](mailto:roseline.atte@uniteus.com). We are excited about what 2023 holds and look forward to making a bigger impact across the state and building healthier communities together!



**Roseline Atte, MPH**  
State Network Director, NJ







## THE NEW JERSEY REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY IMPACTING NEW JERSEY'S ECONOMY AND HOUSING MARKET ONE PROJECT AT A TIME



Leslie A. Anderson, President and CEO of the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority

### SUBMITTED BY THE NEW JERSEY REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The state of the economy has been on the minds of many Americans as each week brings contradictory news about whether we are headed towards an economic recession. There is clamoring about inflation biting into family budgets, and among experts there is a growing concern about the state of housing in America.

It is a known reality that we have been living through a decades-long housing shortage. According to an article published recently by USA Today - the current national housing deficit amounts to between two and six million newly built homes. As a direct result of the shortage, home prices and rents have increased exponentially, pricing out many lower- and middle-income families.

Right here in New Jersey, the reality is much bleaker given the impact of the cost of living. A recent article published by Forbes cited a Credit Karma study of the most expensive states to live in. The study analyzed all 50 states and considered various cost of living indices for everyday expenditures like transportation, groceries, and healthcare, against larger, monthly, and annual expenditures like monthly rent, mortgage payments, property, and sales taxes. New Jersey Ranked among the top five most expensive states to reside in America.

Advocates across the State have attempted to brainstorm creative solutions to the housing shortage, but as many have come to understand, there is no single solution to such a multifaceted problem.

But while lawmakers contemplate changes to zoning, tax credit programs, voucher programs and other long-term solutions, the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority (NJRA) has emerged as a comprehensive resource center in the battle to close the housing gap that focuses on improving quality of life by creating value in New Jersey's urban communities.

"The NJRA invests financial and technical resources into redevelopment projects and plans that create a positive impact in our eligible communities," said Leslie A. Anderson, CEO of the NJRA.

The organization was created legislatively, through the New Jersey Urban Redevelopment Act in July 1996 and is an independent authority allocated to the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

Over the years, Anderson has used the NJRA's financial resources to leverage nearly \$4 billion in new investments, helping to redevelop some of New Jersey's most economically challenged

neighborhoods. Moreover, the authority committed nearly half a billion dollars in direct investments to the 60+ legislatively designated communities that it serves. This has led to the creation of over 15,000 new housing units and over 10 million square feet of commercial and retail space.

This is all possible through their project financing division which has created innovative programs available to redevelopers to finance development and predevelopment in any of their designated communities.

"Our primary goal is to ensure that our projects are urban-focused, neighborhood-based and investment driven," Anderson said.

And the organization shows no signs of slowing down. The NJRA was recently allocated \$25 million from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund with the potential to access additional funds to facilitate affordable housing. This allocation strengthens the NJRA's direct financial commitment to invest in affordable housing development in New Jersey.

But it doesn't stop with providing access to capital. The NJRA recognizes the need for more skilled developers to help combat the housing shortage and they are making strides in this area via their Training Institute.



## CONTINUED

# THE NEW JERSEY REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY IMPACTING NEW JERSEY'S ECONOMY AND HOUSING MARKET ONE PROJECT AT A TIME

NJRA created the Training Institute in 2006 and offers a multitude of intensive workshops in the areas of project finance, tax abatements, redevelopment planning law, tax credits, Community Development Block Grants and Home Funds, and more. Since its creation, the Institute has trained over 2,000 attorneys, planners, elected officials, developers, and nonprofits from nine states across the country.

The NJRA Training Institute has become a nationally recognized and regionally accredited training program centered on the intricacies of the redevelopment process.

"With experts saying it could take nearly a decade to erase the nation's housing shortage, we need to be at the forefront of educating the current generation and NEXT generation of development professionals on the complexities of the redevelopment process," Anderson commented.

Recently, the Training Institute has taken on another area that directly impacts the economy - the small business sector. The new area of focus was a direct result of the disparities that were observed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The New Jersey Redevelopment Authority works in some of the most challenged communities in the state of New Jersey," said Anderson, "When COVID first hit in 2020, I knew that most of the support needed to go to small businesses."

Shortly after the pandemic shuttered businesses across the State, the NJRA created the "Small Business Lease Program", a rental assistance program funded through the CARES Act, which targeted brick-and-mortar businesses operating in spaces that were less than 5,000 square feet.

According to the organization, close to 90% of the businesses supported were minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses.

"This opened the door for us to take a closer look at the crossroads between redevelopment, small businesses and the local economy," Anderson said.

The organization has since launched the "Mind Your Business" podcast which features conversations about business development with small business owners, and in 2023 will launch their first series of small business trainings.

With these areas being such a major part of stimulating the economy and closing the gap in the housing market, the NJRA remains confident they can play a part in making a difference. And despite the conflicting rhetoric we see being played out on a national scale, Anderson remains hopeful.

"The Authority has the opportunity to make a tremendous impact," she said. "With our resources, we can be there first to jumpstart investment and development in New Jersey's communities that have often been overlooked."

To learn more about the NJRA, visit them online at [NJRA.us](http://NJRA.us) or follow them on social media @NewJerseyRedevelopmentAuthority on Facebook and @NJRA-NJ on Instagram. The "Mind Your Business" podcast is available on YouTube, SoundCloud and Spotify.

###

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**Joseph L. Fiordaliso**

# Internet for All in New Jersey Will Help Close the Digital Divide

**State Hosts Broadband Planning Workshop on Resources & Funding for Government, Healthcare, Education, Businesses**

By Joseph L. Fiordaliso President, NJBPU

New Brunswick – The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is providing historic funding and resources for New Jersey local and regional governments, residents and businesses to connect to high-speed internet service.

After the law was established Governor Murphy created the New Jersey Broadband Access Study Commission with a charge to ensure high-speed internet across the state. The Commission is led by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU), which established the Office of Broadband Connectivity (OBC), with a focus on Internet for All programs.

The OBC recently co-hosted a daylong Local Coordination Workshop with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the New Jersey League of Municipalities to share information and highlight opportunities to participate in the Internet for All program in New Jersey.

More than 300 people, including local and county government officials, non-profit organizations, entrepreneurs, business owners and others, attended the workshop in person and virtually at the Heldrich Hotel in New Brunswick.

The Internet for All workshop was led by OBC director Valarry Bullard and NTIA representatives who oversee the federal agencies' broadband initiatives across the country. Led by Brynn Deprey, who serves as New Jersey's federal program officer with the NTIA, the workshop also featured NTIA staff from Washington, DC including Courtney Dozier, Deputy Director of Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD), and Angela Bennett, Digital Equity Director. Other federal representatives who delivered remarks were Jane Asselta, the USDA NJ director, and Alan Davidson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

Workshop sessions featured information useful to local governments and others interested in participating in the broadband revolution in the state. Sessions focused on infrastructure expansion, telehealth, digital access challenges and solutions, local and regional planning, workforce development, and digital equity planning and resources.

This workshop was the in-person kickoff to OBC's extensive public stockholding. The OBC is already running a monthly virtual workshop and is currently planning future in-person opportunities for public comment and teamwork in building broadband for all.

## Ways to engage in the Internet for All Program include:

### Federal Funding Opportunities

The Digital Equity Act is providing opportunities for New Jersey to receive financial and technical assistance to create broadband opportunities across all sectors. The Digital Equity Act provides \$2.75 billion to establish three grant programs to ensure that all New Jersey residents have the skills and technology needed to reap the full benefit of our digital economy. The state has received more than \$6 million in planning funds through NTIA's Digital Equity and BEAD grant programs. For more information, visit NTIA resources.

### How Local and Regional Governments Can Take Advantage

The BEAD Program will provide \$42.5 billion to expand high-speed internet access through funding, planning and infrastructure deployment and adoption programs. New Jersey will also receive nearly \$5 million to fund research and data collection, particularly for unserved and underserved communities.

### Affordable Connectivity Program

I also encourage you to encourage residents to register with the Federal Communication Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provides a \$30 per month benefit for broadband service. Anyone who participates in programs like SNAP, Medicaid, and SSI automatically qualifies for the ACP.

In the coming months, the NJBPU OBC will be hosting community listening sessions throughout New Jersey to understand the challenges and share opportunities for residents and businesses to take advantage of these opportunities to address internet needs for residents and businesses in your town. Reach out to the NJBPU Office of Broadband Connectivity to learn more at [www.nj.gov/connect](http://www.nj.gov/connect).



Valarry C. Bullard, New Jersey Office of Broadband Connectivity Director.



## About Joseph L. Fiordaliso

– Joseph L. Fiordaliso has served as a Commissioner on the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) since 2005 when he was nominated by Governor Richard Codey and confirmed by the Senate. President Fiordaliso is a Cabinet Member in Governor Murphy's administration. On January 15, 2018, he was appointed by Governor Phil Murphy to serve as President of the NJBPU.



# WHAT'S IN THE PIPELINE FOR LEAD?

TWO NEW JERSEY URBAN COMMUNITIES SELECTED FOR FEDERAL ACCELERATION PROGRAM

BY DEANDRAH CAMERON, POLICY MANAGER, NJF

Lead exposure undermines public health, and is a particularly acute issue in communities burdened by systemic inequities. Lead pipes, most of which are concentrated in NJ's older urban cities, account for 75% of all lead in drinking water exposure. Elevated exposure to lead can lead to irreversible health issues affecting the cardiovascular, kidney, and reproductive systems in adults and the neurological system in children and infants, who are especially vulnerable to lead exposure in baby formula.

New Jersey is committed to identifying and removing all sources of lead in drinking water, including the replacement of lead service lines by 2031. Roughly \$379 million is being allocated to NJ exclusively for lead pipe replacement from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), whose funds will flow to the NJ Water Bank over the next five years. These funds can dramatically assist NJ cities in their efforts to remove all lead service lines.

## Resources for Municipalities and Drinking Water Systems

Two collaborative programs that New Jersey Future has been instrumental in starting and supporting, Jersey Water Works (JWW) and Lead-Free NJ (LFNJ), work to build community and public support for lead service line removal as part of our broader commitment to improving our aging water infrastructure in NJ.

The Task Force publishes a regular Lead in Drinking Water Primer for Mayors to provide municipal leaders with resources and best practices for engaging the public and locating funding streams for the crucial work of lead removal. The latest publication advises municipal leaders on efforts with their water systems, such as coordinating road opening moratoriums and paving programs.

## Technical Assistance is Forthcoming

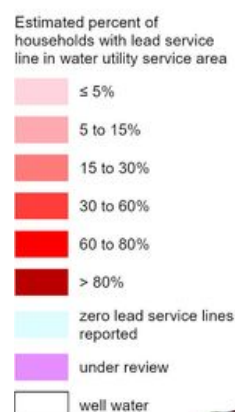
As a member of the Biden-Harris "Get the Lead Out Partnership," New Jersey is one of four initial states to participate in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Lead Service Line Replacement Accelerator Program, which focuses on identifying and replacing lead service lines in disadvantaged communities. The first two New Jersey communities selected for participation in the federal program are East Newark and Harrison. Complimentary to the federal program, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection launched its Technical Assistance Program (NJ-TAP), which offers:

Lead Assistance for inventories replacement plans,  
General (non-lead) Assistance for Asset Management Plans; Capital Improvement Plans; and applications for DWSRF loans,  
Community Engagement and Outreach Assistance.

New Jersey Future (NJF) is partnering with a national organization, the Environmental Policy Innovation Center, as its on-the-ground partner for its national Funding Navigator program. The Funding Navigator will provide technical assistance to help water systems and municipalities—particularly those serving overburdened communities—access federal and state funding for water, sewer, and stormwater issues. New Jersey's Funding Navigator will formally launch later this month.

We're all in this together—the better we coordinate and support one another, the swifter we can achieve the goal of total lead removal from our homes and communities. For more information and to receive the regular Lead in Drinking Water Primer for Mayors, please contact Deandrah Cameron, policy manager, at [dcameron@njfuture.org](mailto:dcameron@njfuture.org) or (609) 262-3545 ext. 1022

Estimated Intensity of Lead Service Lines in NJ



Based on water utility estimates sent to DEP as of August 15, 2019 (subject to significant update/revision).

Map produced by New Jersey Future showing the distribution of lead service lines in drinking water systems across New Jersey. Courtesy of New Jersey Future.





# HOW NEW JERSEY IS CULTIVATING WOMEN CANNABIS ENTREPRENEURS

BY JESSICA F. GONZALEZ, ESQ.,  
CONSULTANT, NJBAC CANNABIS TRAINING ACADEMY

## THE NEW JERSEY BUSINESS ACTION CENTER CANNABIS TRAINING ACADEMY IS HELPING POTENTIAL UNDERREPRESENTED ENTREPRENEURS GET STARTED IN THE INDUSTRY

According to the 2022 report, “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Cannabis Industry,” women holding executive positions in the cannabis industry grew by only a percentage point over the past year, to 23.1%. The number is also below national averages for all businesses. The primary goal of the upcoming New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) Cannabis Training Academy is to increase the number of diversely owned businesses.

Various factors have made it more difficult for women to break the “grass ceiling” in the cannabis industry. Gender bias in a traditionally white male, dominated industry makes access to funding for female entrepreneurs more difficult. According to the Harvard Business Review, companies founded solely by women receive less than 3% of all venture capital investments. In addition, regulatory hurdles are complex and constantly changing on both the state and municipal levels, making pivoting and adapting to changing circumstances imperative. Mentorship and networking opportunities are often lacking for women in the industry, though we have seen a significant uptick in women-centric conferences and events led by women-owned organizations. Add in broader barriers, such as social and cultural stigma, lack of education on the cannabis plant and legal policy, and success in the industry can be hard to achieve without proper support.

The NJBAC Cannabis Training Academy aims to help women and communities most harmed by cannabis prohibition arm themselves with tools to overcome these challenges.

My experience as a policy advocate, attorney, owner of a consulting firm and cannabis policy adjunct professor at the forefront of New Jersey’s campaign to legalize adult-use cannabis has given me insight into the challenges women, particularly women of color, face in the industry. My legal and advocacy experience, along with the resources of the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission, have been utilized to design this comprehensive technical and training program.

The Academy will walk applicants through everything they need to know to submit a complete cannabis application. The 10-week program allows applicants to learn independently. Designed as an asynchronous learning model, it accommodates different learning styles so students can learn in their own way and time. All educational content will also be available in Spanish which is something we rarely see in other technical assistance programs. Applicants will learn how to fill out complex applications, obtain municipal approvals, prepare a business plan, draft standard operating procedures, and understand how to work with other vendors and government agencies. Mentors will be available to answer specific questions and offer non-legal guidance and direction. All classes will be taught by highly vetted and trusted instructors who are in or have supported, taught or consulted about the cannabis industry.

The truth is that women in any industry have historically faced challenges. Thanks to NJBAC’s Cannabis Training Academy, a successful career in the cannabis industry is achievable, whether one wants to touch the plant or not. For information on the NJBAC’s Cannabis Training Academy and how its services can help you start a career in the cannabis industry, please visit [nj.gov/state/bac/cannabis](http://nj.gov/state/bac/cannabis) or call 1-800-JERSEY-7.



JESSICA F. GONZALEZ, ESQ., CONSULTANT,  
NJBAC CANNABIS TRAINING ACADEMY

### About the New Jersey Business Action Center

Operating under the leadership of Executive Director Melanie Willoughby, the New Jersey Business Action Center, housed within the New Jersey Department of State, is the “one-stop-shop” for businesses to access a variety of resources and support. NJBAC offers no-cost, confidential assistance to help businesses grow. The team helps companies of all sizes save time and money by getting answers from government agencies, directing businesses to appropriate officials and contacts, and facilitating meetings and follow-ups from regulatory agencies. For further information, call 1-800-JERSEY-7, visit [nj.gov/state/bac](http://nj.gov/state/bac) or follow us on Twitter @NJ\_BAC.



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code to join  
our email list**

**Submissions for our Fall 2023 are due October 15, 2023.  
To contribute to the next edition,  
contact Keisha Griffin, at [watson@kean.edu](mailto:watson@kean.edu)**

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