How to Build Back New Jersey Communities Better

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Once in a Century Opportunity to Build Back Our Communities Better

More than COVID-19

Series of Overlapping Crises:
• Pandemic
• Economic and Fiscal Fallout
• Protests for Racial and Economic Justice

Opportunity to Build Back Better

Address Long Standing Challenges of
• Large and Small Cities, Suburbs and Rural Areas

Substantial Opportunity for New Jersey Communities
Time to Act Is Now

• Our Communities Will Survive

• Urbanization > than Pandemics

• Crisis Creates Opportunity for Communities of all Shapes and Sizes

• Sets the Stage to Build Better, More Inclusive and Resilient Communities

• Time to Act with Intentionality Is Now
Hotspots for the Virus Have Shifted

From Global Cities
• New York Metro Area, including New Jersey

And Industrial Centers, Jet Set Places
• Wuhan and Detroit, Aspen and the Alps

To the Sunbelt
• Miami/Florida, Phoenix/Arizona, Houston/Texas

And Suburbs and Rural Communities
• 40% of suburbs of large metro areas have higher COVID per capita rates than central cities
• Rural rate of COVID-19 exceeds national average
• Late August, 70% of new COVID-19 cases coming from Red States

Developing Countries and Cities
• Brazil, India, Russia/Moscow, Mexico/Mexico City and others
Crisis Reflects and Reinforces Divides of Race and Class

Racial Divide
(COVID-19 Rates Compared to Whites)

African-Americans:
• 2.6 times cases
• 4.7 times hospitalizations
• 2 times deaths

Hispanic/Latino:
• 2.8 times cases
• 4.6 times hospitalizations
• 1.1 times deaths

• People of color account for 6 in 10 COVID-19 cases in NJ

Workplace Divide

• Remote workers can shelter in place
• But 50 million workers perform high-risk frontline jobs
• Three-quarters of front-line workers in NYC are minority
Density Debate and COVID-19

• **Density blamed early** in the COVID-19 outbreak, as virus ravaged big cities like New York, London, Madrid, and others
  
  • But virus hit denser places first
  
  • Not density per se but global connectivity

Recent Research:

• No evidence that denser places have been more susceptible to COVID-19 than small towns or rural places
  
  • Density has been key offsetting factor
  
  • **Denser places have been more effective** at mitigation, social distancing, and providing effective health care
More Than Density
Not people per square mile, but people per square foot

Overcrowding
Poverty
Work
Race
How the Crisis Will Reshape Our Communities

• Not a Disruption

• Crisis Accelerates Trends Already in Place

• Pull Factors: To the Suburbs, Smaller Metros, and Rural Areas

• Push Factors: To Bigger Cities
Pull Factors: Remote Work

**Big Shift**

*Before Pandemic:*
- 10-12% of American workforce 2% full-time

*Early Pandemic:*
- Half to two-thirds of U.S. workers

*Now:*
- 50% of educated professionals now in April, down from 68% high

**Post-Pandemic**

- 20% of workforce continuing to work remote full-time
- Another 30% will work part-time

**Opportunity**

- Could shift some talent to rural and suburban communities
- Smaller cities
- Initiatives like Tulsa Remote
Pull Factors: Out to Suburbs and Rural Areas

- Families to suburbs
  - Accelerates and compresses family formation moves
- Remote work
- Fear of transit
- Desire for private amenities like backyards/play areas
- Rural gentrification
Push Factors: In Towards Cities and Urban Cores

• Young people to cities.

• Young people 25-34 accounted for 50% of population increase in closed-in urban neighborhoods since 2010.

• Clusters like high-tech, finance, media and entertainment require proximity.

• Walkable/bikeable areas close to leading industry clusters may become more desirable.
Current Crisis as a Resetting Moment:

Creates the Possibility to Rebuild Our Communities Better
Time to Focus on Economic Recovery

Our Communities Have Been Playing Catch Up
Time to be Proactive

**Initial Phase**
- Emphasis on Public Health
- Lockdowns
- Social Distancing

**Reopening**
- Stop and Start

**Economic Recovery**
- Time to focus is now
- Natural disaster at mass scale
- Recovery planning
New Jersey’s Opportunity

• Remote work and pull factors create opportunity to \textit{remake older cities and suburban} communities.

• Opportunity to \textit{reinvigorate NJ cities} – Newark, New Brunswick, Trenton, Paterson, Camden and more - as regional office centers.

• \textbf{Recast abandoned malls} and old suburban office parks.

• \textbf{Regional Rebalancing} – Shift to Hub and Spoke corporate systems.

• Create 15-Minute Neighborhoods and \textit{Complete Communities}. 
Redesign Streets and Open Spaces

Redesign public space for health and safety

Retrofit streets bikes, walkability

Remake parking lots for needed activities
Reimagine Governance

Create new regional governance models

Forge partnerships of cities, suburbs, and rural areas

Incentivize innovative partnerships and collaborations
Upgrade Jobs for Frontline Workers

More than 1.7M NJ workers in low-wage service jobs, 45% of workers

Higher wages, benefits, and better working conditions

Embrace the Goods Jobs Strategy
Address and Close Racial Gaps and Inequalities

- Crisis hits hardest at the advantaged
- Focus on racial and economic equity
- Comprehensive community development for disadvantaged neighborhoods
Once in a Century Opportunity for New Jersey Communities

• To Build Back Better.

• Long-run strategy for prosperous, inclusive, just, and resilient communities.
Together We Can Build a Better Future

Discussion

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