

**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY**  
*Connecting the region since 1873*

# **LONG STORY SHORT:** *South Jersey*

**A Busy Policymaker's Guide to  
Understanding a Misunderstood Region**



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# ABOUT CCSNJ

The Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey (CCSNJ) is the region's largest, most active, and influential business organization. Started in 1873 as the Camden Board of Trade, the organization and has grown to represent the seven counties of Southern New Jersey, Greater Philadelphia and Northern Delaware.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The CCSNJ is a member-driven organization that advocates for equitable economic prosperity by uniting business and community leaders.

## VISION STATEMENT

To remain the most influential business organization in the region by empowering our member companies to connect, grow, and build an inclusive community.

## DEIB STATEMENT OF INTENT

To foster an inclusive organization that helps provide equitable economic opportunity, connectivity, and education to our diverse cross-section of member companies.

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# INTRODUCTION

**“Brevity is confidence. Length is fear.”**

– *Smart Brevity: The Power of Saying More with Less* by Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen and Roy Schwartz.

**WHAT:** This research report details in a short, but not shallow format, what is unique about the seven most southern counties of New Jersey, possibilities and hurdles to economic growth and workforce development, and policies that should be assessed or could be adopted at a state level to enhance the region’s economic prosperity.

**“[New Jersey is like] a beer barrel, tapped at both ends, with all the live beer running into Philadelphia and New York.”**

– Benjamin Franklin

**WHERE:** For the purposes of this report, South Jersey is defined as the seven-most southern counties of New Jersey – Cape May, Atlantic, Cumberland, Salem, Gloucester, Camden and Burlington.

**“Be not afraid of going slowly. Be afraid only of standing still.”**

– Chinese proverb

**WHEN:** This research report took a year to develop by the CCSNJ. Research commenced in March and concluded in October of 2023. Writing began that same month and concluded in January of 2024. The report went live in February of 2024 shortly after the start of the 221st Legislative Session.





**“If you have an opportunity to use your voice you should use it.”**

– Samuel L. Jackson, American Actor

**WHY:** South Jersey is deeply misunderstood by statewide policymakers. The region’s differences make holistic legislative measures difficult to enact, and as a result, South Jersey is often neglected when well-intentioned policies are crafted and intended to have a statewide benefit. With this report, the CCSNJ aims to educate policymakers on the region with the goal of better educating elected officials on the region’s unique policy needs, so more holistic measures can be crafted.

**“The best research you can do is talk to people.”**

– Sir Terrance Pratchett, English author, humorist, and satirist.

**HOW:** The research for this report included nearly 30 interviews with economic development leaders, regional agencies, and other economic and workforce development stakeholders from across the seven most southern counties. It also involved a thorough review of many comprehensive policy reports already in circulation, including county annual reports, strategic plans, and exhaustive regional workforce development proposals. A full list of resources can be found on the “citations” page at the end of this report, and the CCSNJ is grateful that so many individuals were willing to share their time and expertise with our team.

**“The rumors are terrible and cruel but honey, most of them are true.”**

– Lyric from *New Romantics*, song by Taylor Swift, American singer and songwriter.

**WHY NOT:** What this report *does not discuss* is that the state’s high cost of living, highest in the nation property taxes, fourth highest in the nation corporation business tax, high income tax rate and confusing, overly aggressive regulatory framework all work simultaneously to stunt economic growth, not just in South Jersey, but the entire state. Although these factors are collectively making New Jersey an unfriendly place to do business that is not the purpose of this report. Instead, the CCSNJ aims to help policymakers better understand what makes South Jersey, South Jersey leading to economic development policies that consider the unique landscape and needs of the region.

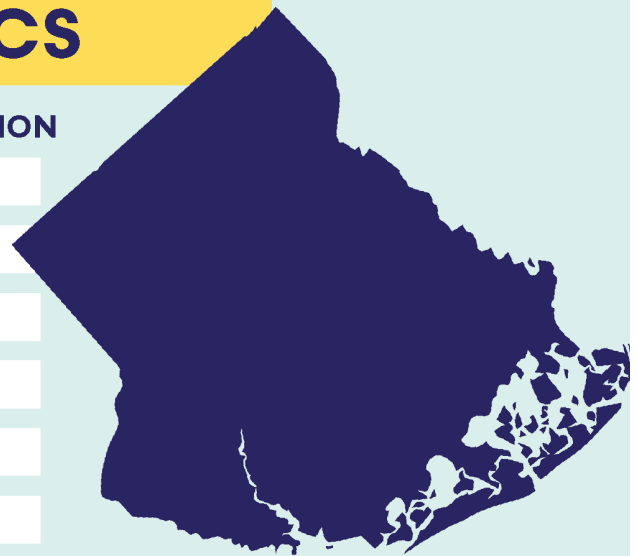
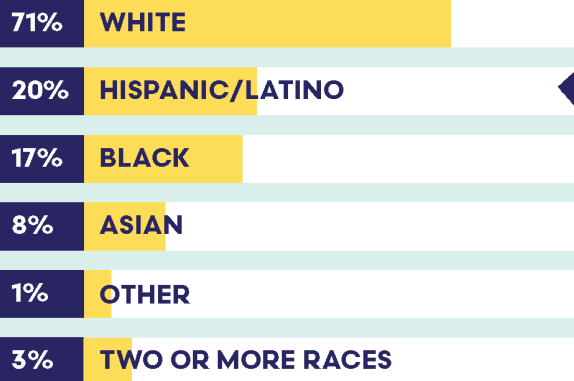
# ATLANTIC COUNTY



## COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS



### RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN OF POPULATION



### FUN FACT

Built in 1870, the Atlantic City Boardwalk is the world's first! The boardwalk's initial purpose was to prevent sand from being tracked into the hotels and railroad cars, and it was dismantled annually after the summer season concluded.

## THE TOP THREE INDUSTRIES

- 01 Gaming/Hospitality
- 02 Aviation
- 03 Agriculture

## HIGHER EDUCATION



Stockton University



Atlantic Cape Community College

## USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



4.5%

# ECONOMIC GROWTH & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## POSSIBILITIES



Continued growth of the **aviation industry**, as well as the aerospace industry across the county.



Leaning into Atlantic County's **agricultural history** to advance the food manufacturing/food processing industries.



**Esports** has become a billion-dollar industry that could bolster Atlantic City's casinos, as well as the film industry by creating jobs, bringing private investment and educational opportunities to the region.



Exploring different ways that the county can capitalize on being a **tourist destination** outside of gaming and entertainment, including bolstering historical attractions, growing agritourism opportunities and embracing the arts.

## HURDLES



**Environmental restrictions**, specifically pinelands and wetlands, limit growth opportunities for new or expanding businesses/industries.



Lack of **public transit** options, including NJ TRANSIT's limited investment in the Atlantic City Rail Line, impedes the county's ability to grow their workforce and is prohibitive to driving tourism to the area.



Any threat to Atlantic City's **gaming industry**, which employs approximately 22,000 South Jersey residents.



In Atlantic County, only 30 percent of the population has a Bachelor's Degree or higher and the county continuously has one of the highest **unemployment rates** in the state.

## TOP THREE POLICY SUGGESTIONS

01

**STABILITY OF THE GAMING INDUSTRY:** New Jersey policymakers should avoid pursuing any policies that could impact the health of Atlantic City's casinos. This includes an indoor smoking ban and allowing for casino gaming in other areas of the state.

02

**TRANSPORTATION:** Reliable rail service along the Atlantic City Rail Line corridor will spur transit-oriented/non-gaming development across the county, as well as enhance regional mobility and connectivity with PATCO and the NJ TRANSIT River Line.

03

**AVIATION INCENTIVES:** Given the untapped potential of the Atlantic City International Airport (ACY), the state should explore how to support airport adjacent development projects, assist in the exploration/funding of an air cargo terminal at the airport, and better promote STEM-related jobs for Atlantic County residents.

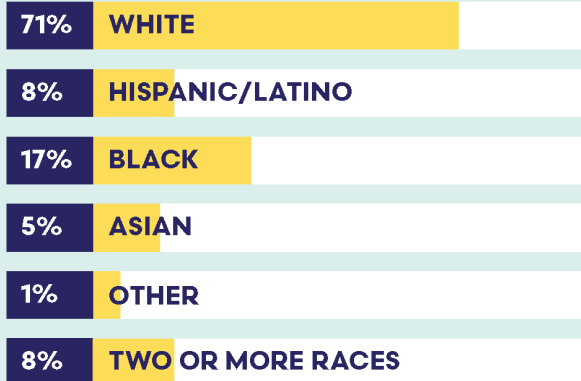
# BURLINGTON COUNTY



## COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS



### RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN OF POPULATION



## THE TOP THREE INDUSTRIES

- 01 Healthcare
- 02 Manufacturing
- 03 Automotive



### FUN FACT

Burlington County was established in 1681 and is one of the oldest counties in the United States!

## HIGHER EDUCATION



Rowan College at Burlington County

## USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



3.1%

# ECONOMIC GROWTH & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### POSSIBILITIES



NJ TRANSIT's underutilized **River Line** is a light rail line that runs between Trenton and the City of Camden, which could stimulate economic growth if better utilized.



Burlington County has been one of the most active submarkets in New Jersey with regard to leasing activity for **logistics, warehousing and distribution** due to its ideal location, which is near more than one third of the United States total population within a one-day drive.



The county sees great opportunities around the **film industry**. In 2023, the county hosted its second annual Short Film Festival, which they believe will help bring more feature film and television productions to Burlington County.



Burlington County is currently home to 13 breweries, two distilleries, and three wineries. As interest in this industry grows, the county has made it a priority to help promote existing **breweries and wineries**, as well as assist those looking to locate in the county.

### HURDLES



The **homeless population** in the county grew by nearly 60 percent in 2023. There is also a large portion of the homeless population that are employed but cannot afford housing.



Due to the county's excellent location for distribution, **warehousing** has increased. Although warehouses bring jobs, residents are concerned about the number of facilities being built due to their proximity to historical and environmental sites, and have worries about increased traffic and noise.



**Vacant office buildings** and malls stretch across the county and there is an uncertainty about how to redevelop these areas for the betterment of the community.



The county's large **agricultural lands** need more leeway to be an innovative economic industry. Further allowances for events and other commercial uses would help drive the industry forward.

## TOP THREE POLICY SUGGESTIONS

01

**NJ TRANSIT'S RIVER LINE:** The River Line is one of three light rail lines in the entire South Jersey region. The line brings with it the potential to spark economic development at each station along the line, which could lead to real estate growth, dining and entertainment development, tourism, and local economic spending. NJT should invest money in promoting public transit options in South Jersey, and state incentives should be created to encourage municipalities to invest along the rail line.

02

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** With the county's unfortunate growth in the homeless population, affordable housing options are a necessity, which will help stop this trend and keep current residents in-county to grow the economy and fuel the local workforce.

03

**WAREHOUSING POLICIES:** Statewide policymakers should continue to consider measures that strike a balance between the need for jobs with the concerns of local officials and residents across the county.

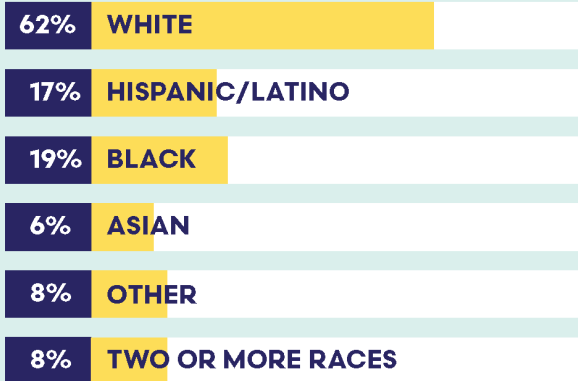
# CAMDEN COUNTY



## COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS



### RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN OF POPULATION



### FUN FACT

The first drive-in movie theater in the United States opened in Camden County in 1933. The concept of watching movies from the comfort of your car quickly caught on, and drive-ins became a popular form of entertainment across the country.

## THE TOP THREE INDUSTRIES

- 01 Healthcare
- 02 Transportation & Logistics
- 03 Manufacturing

## HIGHER EDUCATION



Rutgers University - Camden



Rowan University



Camden County College

## USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



6.6%

# ECONOMIC GROWTH & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## POSSIBILITIES



**Life sciences**, as well as **health sciences**, are poised for success between Cooper Health System's \$2 billion expansion, Cooper's Medical School at Rowan University, Virtua's Health commitment to Camden, as well as Rutgers-Camden and Camden County College's healthcare certification programs.



The county sees real potential to attract the **film industry** and is actively working with the South Jersey Film Cooperative.



The **Glassboro-Camden Rail Line (GCL)** brings enormous potential to bolster the economic competitiveness of the county by increasing the number of businesses, the pool of workforce candidates, customers, and patrons to businesses along its 18-mile stretch in South Jersey.



**Agritourism** around beer and wine production presents strong growth potential, especially in the southern portion of the county, which has a significant amount of farmland.

## HURDLES



Although in development for over 20 years, the **Glassboro-Camden Rail Line (GCL)** is facing vociferous resistance from local residents along its 18-mile pathway from the City of Camden to Glassboro in Gloucester County.



The City of Camden is the largest designated "**food deserts**" in New Jersey with little easy access to healthy food options.



**Commercial real estate** continues to lose value as office spaces remain empty since the pandemic. Additionally, housing has been at a premium in the county driving prices up and increasing the homeless population.



The county's use of **farmland to produce wines** for local establishments is limited because much is deed restricted. As a result, the land is unable to be used for grape production, which is categorized as commercial use, not agricultural development.

## TOP THREE POLICY SUGGESTIONS

01

**FOOD DESERTS:** The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) is attempting to address the food desert issue statewide, but given the unique characteristics the City of Camden, state policymakers should prioritize the City and work with the private sector to attract food retailers to the area.

02

**REPURPOSING EMPTY OFFICE SPACES:** The state should pursue initiatives that would incentivize local communities and builders to reimagine empty office spaces into housing units to grow the number of housing options, and present more affordable housing options across the county.

03

**GLASSBORO-CAMDEN RAIL LINE:** This rail line has the potential to drive economic development in many ways: it adds public transportation in an area of the state void of it, creates an "Eds and Meds" corridor between Camden and Gloucester county's economic development hubs, and encourages new economic development at each stop along the 18-mile line.

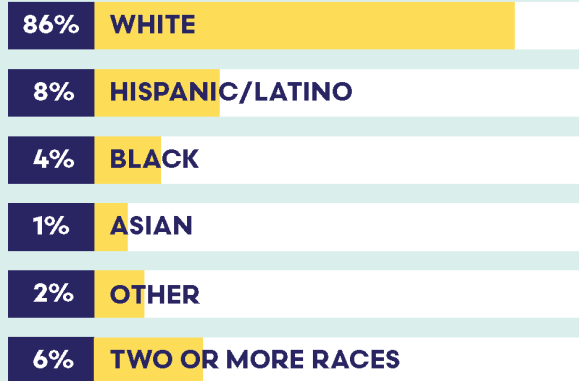
# CAPE MAY COUNTY



## COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS



### RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN OF POPULATION



### FUN FACT

Cape May, city and county, were named after a Dutch Captain, Cornelius Jacobsen Mey. Due to a misspelling on the original paperwork, Cape "Mey" became Cape "May".

## THE TOP THREE INDUSTRIES

- 01** Seasonal Tourism/Hospitality
- 02** Healthcare
- 03** Fishing and Farming



## HIGHER EDUCATION



Atlantic Cape  
Community College

## USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



1.4%

# ECONOMIC GROWTH & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

## POSSIBILITIES



The opportunities in **unmanned aircrafts/drone development** are plentiful in the county due to the Cape May County Airport's designation as one of the FAA's UAS (unmanned aircraft systems) test sites.



Continued expansion of **wineries/breweries**, and the overall agritourism industry, to elongate the traditional summer tourism season and provide more year-round job opportunities.



Targeted **economic incentive programs** to attract companies that can grow the labor pool outside of the county's dominant tourism industry.



Increase in skilled workers and **cross certifications for skilled labor** with neighboring counties, which can help bolster employment opportunities in the county.

## HURDLES



Lack of **year-round jobs** due to the county's reliance on the tourism industry.



**Environmental restrictions** that limit development and redevelopment opportunities, and therefore the diversification of the economy.



Lack of **public transit** options, specifically limited bus routes and no rail access in the county. **Route 55's incompleteness** also provides a hurdle for residents and tourists during the summer season and poses a safety hazard during weather incidents limiting access in and out of the county.



Certain areas with limited **broadband access** and broadband infrastructure impede economic growth possibilities.

## TOP THREE POLICY SUGGESTIONS

01

**INCENTIVES FOR NEW INDUSTRIES:** Working with the New Jersey Legislature and NJEDA to identify incentive programs that can help diversify the county's economy with year-round jobs, specifically in potential growth industries including aviation research and agritourism.

02

**TRANSPORTATION:** Increase public transportation options to assist county residents, grow tourism opportunities, and relieve traffic congestion in the summer months. Revisit the environmental concerns around the extension of New Jersey state highway Route 55, which was in the original design plans from the early 1960s but canceled in 1975.

03

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** Cape May County has seen the largest increase in housing prices in the state, as well as a large increase in the homeless population. Affordable housing options are needed to continue to combat homelessness and keep current residents in-county to grow the economy and fuel the local workforce.

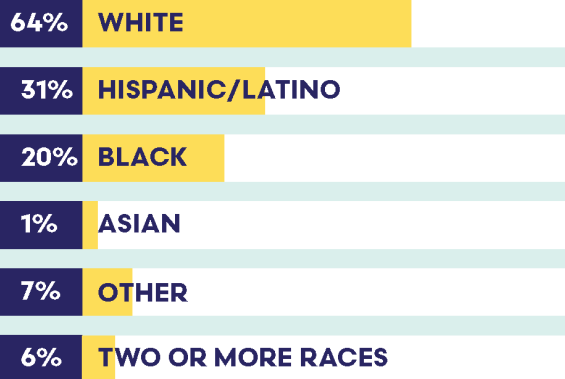
# CUMBERLAND COUNTY



## COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS



### RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN OF POPULATION



### FUN FACT

Cumberland County was a critical stop on the Underground Railroad. Notable local abolitionists such as William Still and James Still were integral in helping escaped slaves find safe passage to freedom.

## THE TOP THREE INDUSTRIES

- 01 Manufacturing
- 02 Warehousing/Distribution
- 03 Agriculture

## HIGHER EDUCATION



Rowan College  
South Jersey

## USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



1.7%

# ECONOMIC GROWTH & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### POSSIBILITIES



Cumberland County is one of the few counties with a premium of **buildable land**, along with an easily accessible location and overall low cost of living for New Jersey.



Growth in **food processing** and **food manufacturing**, due to the Cumberland County Food Specialization Center, which includes shared warehousing, processing, and cold storage space, and the Food Innovation Center at Rutgers, which supports established early-stage entrepreneurs and existing food companies.



**Warehousing, transportation** and **logistics** have growth potential, providing new employment opportunities for county residents and rising rateables, which help keep property taxes some of the lowest in the state.



**Hospitality/recreational opportunities** centered around the forthcoming Trout National – The Reserve, a collaboration between MLB star Mike Trout and golf icon Tiger Woods, which will bring a championship-level 18-hole golf course and world class amenities to Vineland.

### HURDLES



The county has the highest **year-round unemployment rate** in New Jersey with only 15 percent of the total population having a Bachelor's degree or higher.



Lack of **public transit options**, and the affordability of the options that exist, are a hurdle to revitalizing the county's economy.



The **agricultural nature of the county**, combine with its low population and large urban centers, provide a challenge to economic prosperity.



Lack of **broadband infrastructure** and availability, which hinders all aspects of residential life and business growth in the county.

## TOP THREE POLICY SUGGESTIONS

01

**MARKET DEVELOPABLE LAND:** Identify and map sites primed for new development, including state and federal development incentives for sites such as Opportunity Zones, Urban Enterprise Zones, and Empowerment Zones, so interested developers can easily grasp the county's growth potential.

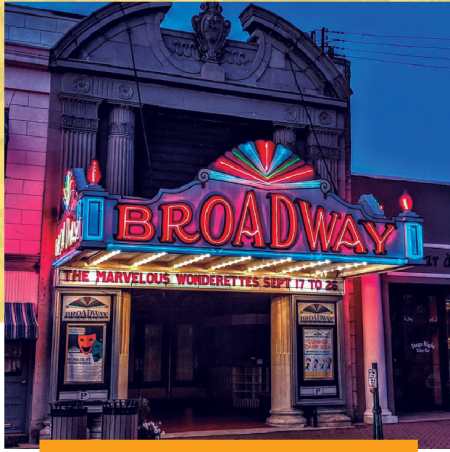
02

**BROADBAND ACCESS:** For Cumberland County to fully take advantage of its economic potential digital connectivity is crucial. The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities' newly formed Broadband Office should prioritize the county and identify solutions to expand broadband county-wide.

03

**STATE INCENTIVES:** Develop state incentives through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) that target the unique construct of Cumberland County with a small population, large urban centers and vast agricultural land, which makes innovative development harder to attract.

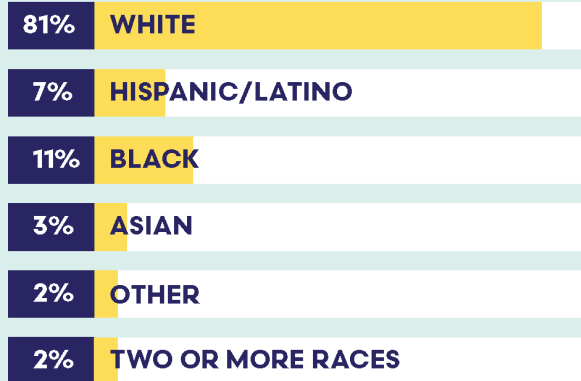
# GLOUCESTER COUNTY



## COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS



### RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN OF POPULATION



### FUN FACT

Gloucester County was the site of the first balloon flight in America, which took off from the Township of Deptford and flew to Philadelphia on June 9, 1793.

## THE TOP THREE INDUSTRIES

- 01 Manufacturing
- 02 Healthcare
- 03 Transportation & Logistics

## HIGHER EDUCATION



Rowan University



Rowan College of South Jersey

## USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



2.6%

# ECONOMIC GROWTH & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### POSSIBILITIES



Expansion of **life sciences** in the county centered primarily around Rowan University's Shreiber School of Veterinary Medicine, which will be the first veterinary school in New Jersey.



The **Glassboro-Camden Rail Line (GCL)** brings enormous potential to bolster the economic competitiveness of the county by increasing the number of businesses, pool of workforce candidates, customers, and patrons to businesses along its 18-mile stretch in South Jersey.



**Technology start-ups** flourish in Gloucester County due in large part to the *South Jersey Technology Park at Rowan University*, which provides affordable facilities for entrepreneurs and inventors to develop their products, create business plans and grow.



**Food processing** and **food manufacturing** continues to be a target growth area, which is heavily agricultural and has approximately 600 food manufacturing companies within a 50-mile radius from the county.

### HURDLES



Although in development for over 20 years, the **Glassboro-Camden Rail Line (GCL)** is facing vociferous resistance from local residents along its 18-mile pathway.



The **Port of Paulsboro** presents numerous possibilities for growth in transportation and logistics especially given the state's commitment to the wind industry.



The county has a need for a **"one stop" approach** for providing information and resources to those companies and individuals interested in pursuing the development or expansion of their businesses in emerging industries.



Although not as prevalent as in Salem and Cumberland counties, the pandemic highlighted the stark **digital divide** for those who do not have broadband access, do not have the ability to purchase devices, or are unsure how to utilize broadband technologies.

## TOP THREE POLICY SUGGESTIONS

01

**GLASSBORO-CAMDEN RAIL LINE:** Seeing this rail line become a reality hits every marker that can drive economic development; it adds public transportation in an area of the state void of it, creates an "eds and meds" corridor between Camden and Gloucester county's economic development hubs, and encourages new economic development at each stop along the 18-mile line.

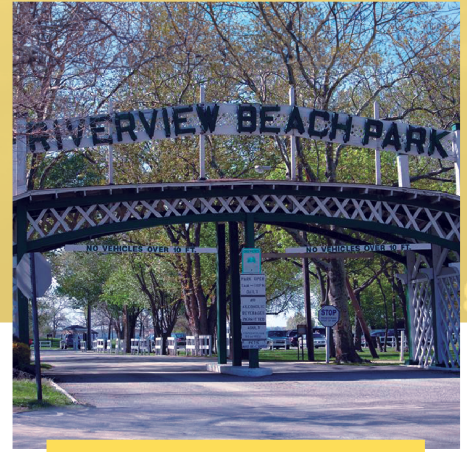
02

**PORT OF PAULSBORO:** With the recent influx of federal monies and newly announced wind energy projects, Phase II, which will be used to complete a series of upgrades, construction projects, restorations, and improve security measures should be prioritized.

03

**BROADBAND ACCESS/TECHNOLOGIES:** The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) newly formed Broadband Office should look at Gloucester County as an area which has holistic needs around internet accessibility, including the need for education for businesses and residents.

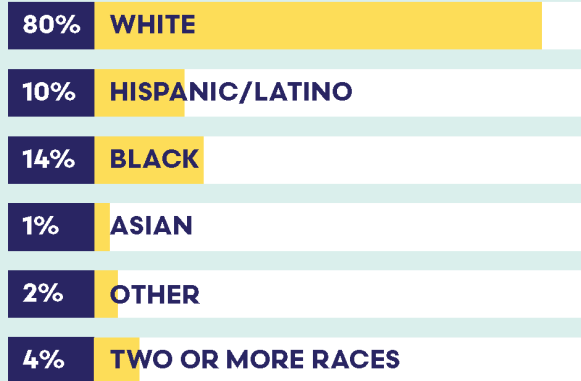
# SALEM COUNTY



## COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS



### RACE/ETHNIC ORIGIN OF POPULATION



### FUN FACT

The county's name is derived from the Hebrew word "Shalom" meaning "peace" chosen by early Quaker settlers to mark the serenity of the area.

## THE TOP THREE INDUSTRIES

- 01 Agriculture
- 02 Energy (Nuclear)
- 03 Transportation & Logistics

## HIGHER EDUCATION



Salem Community College

## USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



0.8%

# ECONOMIC GROWTH & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### POSSIBILITIES



The **offshore wind industry** presents the best opportunity for economic development and job growth in decades with the establishment of the New Jersey Wind Port.



Vacant office buildings and **available land** adjacent to the New Jersey Turnpike and Interstate 295 provide excellent opportunities for manufacturing and logistics industries to develop/relocate along the New York to Washington D.C. corridor.



With Inspira Health's recent acquisition of Salem Medical Center comes possibilities for **expanded healthcare services** and, as a result, job growth in the healthcare industry.



Salem County sees potential for the **film industry** to grow in their area. The county recently partnered with the New Jersey Motion Picture & Television Commission (NJMPTVC) to become a county certified Film Ready destination.

### HURDLES



Salem County is predicted to have the **largest population and labor force decreases** in the state through 2034.



Salem City and Penns Grove are both designated **"food deserts"** with little easy access to quality food. There are only four supermarkets in the entire county.



Lack of **public transit** options are a hurdle to revitalizing the county's economy and a main driver of high county unemployment rates.



The **agricultural nature** of the county, combine with its low population, provide a challenge to economic prosperity.

## TOP THREE POLICY SUGGESTIONS

01

**WIND ENERGY:** Although the industry, and therefore the county, saw unexpected setbacks in 2023, 2024 is off to a more optimistic start with the announcement of two new projects. The current Administration remains committed to making South Jersey the hub for wind energy and Salem County the home for wind manufacturing in the Northeast.

02

**FOOD DESERTS:** The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) is attempting to address the food desert issue statewide. But given Salem County's limited public transit options to obtain healthy food policymakers should prioritize the county and work with the private sector to attract food retailers.

03

**FILM INDUSTRY:** New Jersey is the birthplace of film and thanks to strategic state incentives, the industry is seeing a rebirth across the state. Salem County is making their communities "film ready" and have been actively working with NJMPTVC to become a viable shooting location in the state.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

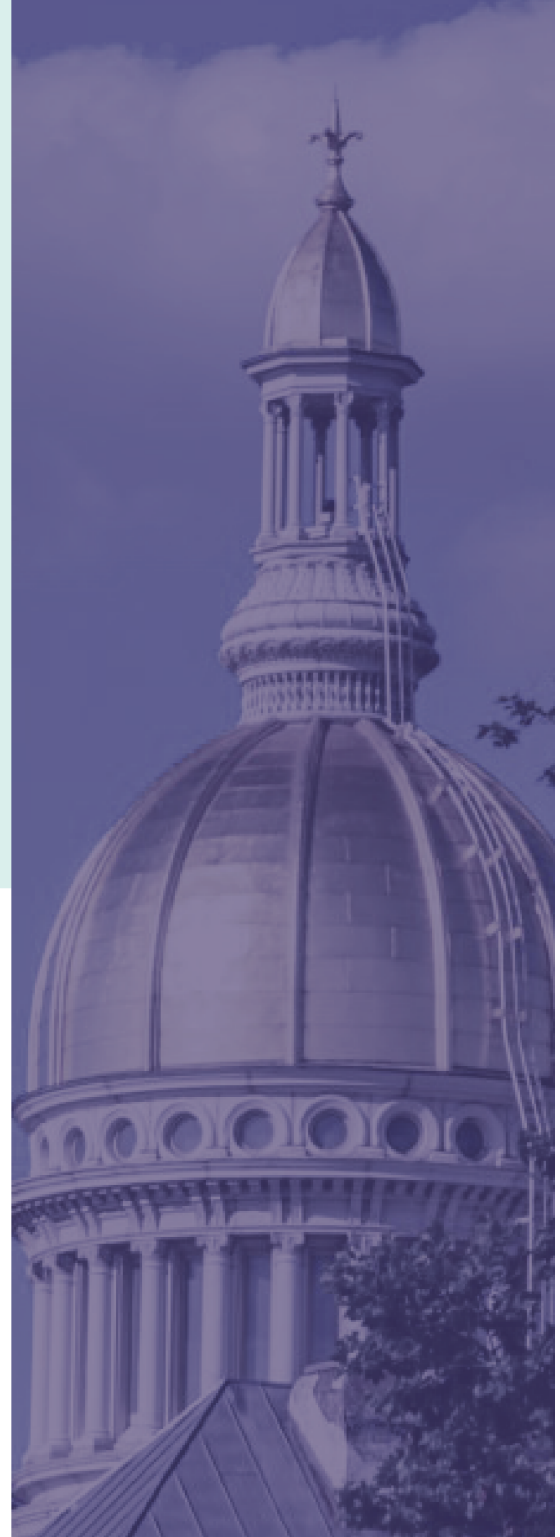
## THE TOP FOUR SOUTH JERSEY ISSUES:

- 01** Lack of Public Transportation/Transportation Infrastructure
- 02** Broadband Accessibility
- 03** Equitable Incentives Tailored to South Jersey's Unique Needs & Underserved Areas
- 04** Shortage of Housing Options

**"Success isn't about the end result, it's about what you learned along the way."**

*– Vera Wang, American Fashion Designer*

The preceding pages make one thing clear – although South Jersey is made up of seven differing counties with varying landscapes, needs, possibilities, and challenges there are just as many similarities as there are differences. The top four issues facing the region can be broken down as follows:





## Lack of Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure

Much of South Jersey is a “transit desert,” with little passenger rail service south of the City of Camden and minimal bus service. The simple fact is that the further south you go, the worse public transportation options are. It is well-known that NJ TRANSIT (NJT) is operating at a billion-dollar deficit and that the state needs to think creatively about funding options for improvements to current infrastructure, while also realizing new transportation opportunities for South Jersey. However, it should be noted that the CCSNJ does not support reinstating the 2.5 percent surcharge to the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) or the newly proposed 15 percent fare hike to fund NJT – especially since it serves so little of the region. Notably, those that NJT does serve in South Jersey are in the region’s poorest communities and would disproportionately impact people of color, all the more reason for the CCSNJ’s opposition.

- ✓ Better **marketing** of the *Atlantic City Line (ACL)*, the *River Line* and the *PATCO Speedline*.
- ✓ Completion of the **Glassboro-Camden Line (GCL)**.
- ✓ Completion of NJT’s **South Jersey Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System**.
- ✓ More **bus lines** to “transit deserts” with new economic opportunities and jobs, such as the New Jersey Wind Port in Salem County.
- ✓ The **extension of Route 55** into Cape May County.



## Broadband Accessibility

The inability to access high-speed internet in certain areas of South Jersey, specifically Cumberland and Salem counties, is a clear obstruction to economic growth and workforce development. Access aside, certain underserved areas of the seven most southern counties find themselves struggling to keep up with the necessary technologies to tap into broadband access, which trickles into all aspects of everyday life and many of the region's challenges – education, business operations, workforce growth, and unemployment rates, to name a few.

- ✓ NJBPU's newly established **Office of Broadband Connectivity** should prioritize South Jersey, studying the intricacies that have historically hindered broadband access in the region and providing innovative solutions.
- ✓ Establishment of more creative **public-private partnerships** to provide affordable internet to rural, unserved homes and businesses.
- ✓ Accessing more **federal and state funding** for broadband infrastructure and to invest in broadband technologies for underserved areas.



## Equitable Incentives for South Jersey's Unique Characteristics & Underserved Areas

Economic incentives are a fundamental part of New Jersey's business retention and attraction strategy, but they are not often tailored to the unique needs of the region. Historically, this has led to most awards going to businesses in the northern and central parts of the state, a trend that should be more thoroughly examined. Additionally, according to NJ.com's 2023 article entitled, "The 35 Poorest Towns in New Jersey, ranked," 13 of the 35, or 37 percent, are located in the seven most southern counties of New Jersey. For South Jersey to grow, the state must take into consideration how to rebuild the poorest communities that often have the highest unemployment rates and disproportionately impact people of color.

- ✓ **Better communication** about incentive programs available to attract businesses to urban areas and **more flexibility** in how these programs are designed with consideration given to each specific county's needs.
- ✓ Ensure incentive policies align with the **broader economic needs of South Jersey**, such as increased worker training programs, public transportation options, food access needs and housing opportunities.
- ✓ **Access to capital** remains a top issue for individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit, especially for people of color in urban areas. Greater diversity of investment vehicles and intermediary financial institutions can bridge the gap between money centers and entrepreneurs seeking capital.
- ✓ Consider incentive programs that focus on the **diversification of the region's economy**. Certain parts of the region are still reliant on one or two industries, and often those areas also have the highest unemployment rates.



## Shortage of Housing Options

Since the pandemic, South Jersey saw an influx of individuals moving out of Philadelphia and into the Jersey suburbs, which put a strain on the region's already limited housing options. Additionally, housing prices skyrocketed across the country, from home ownership to leasing and renting properties. As a result, the homeless population has risen 17 percent in New Jersey – with some of the most significant increases seen in South Jersey.

- ✓ Provide incentives for developers to repurpose **vacant shopping malls and office spaces** into housing options for individuals of all income levels.
- ✓ Affordable housing funding needs to be directed towards the populations most in need, and those areas that have seen the greatest spike in **homelessness**.
- ✓ Identify housing opportunities near **new business development projects** to provide opportunities for employees to live in the communities they work.
- ✓ As the **higher education** community continues to thrive across the region, housing options should be prioritized for students, as well as new graduates hoping to work in South Jersey.



## Conclusion

Although a misunderstood and sometimes overlooked region of the state, South Jersey's economic growth and workforce development possibilities are plentiful. In fact, it is one of the only areas of the state remaining with the space for major economic expansion. The CCSNJ is hopeful that this analysis of the seven-most southern counties of New Jersey can help statewide policymakers better understand the region's challenges and opportunities as they determine their legislative priorities for the next two years. As the new legislative session begins, now is the time to look towards maximizing South Jersey's strengths and enacting policies that will make the region, and therefore the entire state, a friendlier place to do business. The CCSNJ looks forward to being a partner in this process and working on both sides of the political aisle to enact real change for the residents and businesses of South Jersey.



# LONG STORY SHORT: SOUTH JERSEY

## *A Busy Policymaker's Guide to Understanding a Misunderstood Region*

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