



SALEM COUNTY, NEW JERSEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION AND ACTION PLAN



Facilitated by the
**Salem County Economic Development
Advisory Council**

FINAL PLAN

August 31, 2021

Assisted and Assembled by



SALEM COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION AND ACTION PLAN



Facilitated by the

Salem County Economic Development

Advisory Council

With U.S. Economic Development Administration Funding through

The South Jersey Economic Development District



With Assistance from

Triad Associates in collaboration with

SarahBirdsall, Planning Consulting

August 2021



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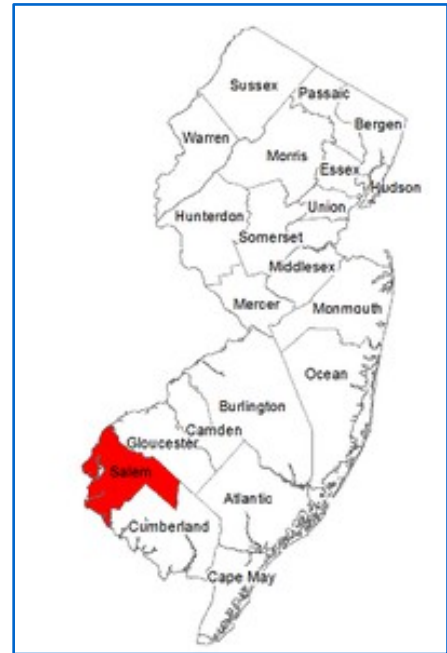
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SALEM COUNTY NEW JERSEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION AND ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Salem County, New Jersey does not have a full-time office responsible for the overall economic development of the County. These responsibilities have been guided recently by the County Economic Development Advisory Council and shared by multiple offices and agencies including the County Improvement Authority, the County Tourism Department, the South Jersey Economic Development District, and the County's member municipalities. Planning for economic development was also fragmented among a similar group of organizations.

The Economic Development Advisory Council, which is the principal policy group facilitating this Economic Development Action Strategy, is comprised of 20 business leaders, educators, government officials, and agriculturalists as well as two County Commissioners, who are committed to advancing the County's development. In the early winter of 2021, the Advisory Council, through its partner the South Jersey Economic Development District, engaged Triad Associates of Vineland, New Jersey to prepare the Economic Development Action Strategy for the County. The Action Strategy has two principal missions. The first one centers on exploring the creation of a full-time economic development entity for Salem County and the second component focuses on the development of a framework for expanding and improving the County economy. This document is the product of that engagement.



The Action Strategy is broken into five (5) sections. The first section provides an overview of Salem County and includes various demographic, economic, and other background information that provide a context for future actions and initiatives.

Section 2 provides four case studies of counties similar in population to Salem County. These case studies examine how each of the four counties manages economic development. Characteristics such as budget, personnel, facility location and other information are provided. Section 3 outlines a vision for an office of economic development and is followed by a series of proposed policies in Section 4, based on the responses from community surveys and input from the Economic Development Advisory Council. The final section focuses on

the resiliency and sustainability issues facing the County economy, particularly in response to the COVID19 Pandemic.

This Economic Development Strategy was developed in close collaboration with the Salem County Economic Development Advisory Council, the South Jersey Economic Development District, and other county, business, and local government stakeholders. There has been public outreach and community engagement as part of the planning process.

This Strategy also has an overriding goal, which is to advance economic recovery and promote redevelopment and resilience in light of the challenges that have impacted the County and the local economy. In particular, the intent is to outline proposals that can foster a Post-COVID recovery and sustain the County economy for the long-term.

Recommendations are presented as near and longer-term actions. The resulting strategies and initiatives provide a guide that the County government and its partners can begin to implement to enhance the Salem County economy and plan for the future prosperity and resiliency of the community.

The following pages provide an Executive Summary of the major findings and recommendations of the study.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The background narrative of this Economic Development Strategy sets the stage for framing the Action Agenda. The Action Agenda establishes a recommendation for the creation of an economic development office and outlines a framework for next steps.

The following pages describe how the recommendations and policies of the Action Agenda were developed. There were a series of meetings of the Economic Development Advisory Council Subcommittee, which shared its findings with the full Advisory Council and partners. Two e-surveys were conducted with municipal mayors and business officials. Based on the responses from these surveys and feedback from the subcommittee, drafts of various scenarios were presented. These include a description of the proposed Office of Economic Development, the responsibilities of an Economic Development Director, a proposed budget, and a series of goals and action items.

THE INITIAL PLANNING PROCESS

Over the course of this planning effort, there were six (6) meetings of the planning Subcommittee. These meetings provided an opportunity for comment and feedback on all elements of the Economic Development Strategy. Subcommittee members help to draft the background narrative, and contributed to the concepts posed for the Economic Development

Office, its responsibilities, staff, and budget. Ultimately, it was recommended that there be an Office of Economic Development established in Salem County.

Advisory Committee and Partners Summary

Throughout the process, information was shared with the full Economic Development Advisory Council and its members. These members in turn, shared information with their affiliate organizations which included county government administration, the County College, the County Improvement Authority, the Salem County Chamber of Commerce, the South Jersey Economic Development District, and various business and agency representatives.

On three occasions throughout the planning process summary documents were shared with the full Advisory Council. The first provided an update following the drafting of the background report and offered suggestions on community surveys. The second time was following the compilation of e-survey responses and the third occasion was upon completion of the draft strategy.

E-Survey of Businesses Representatives and Municipal Mayors

It was important in developing this Economic Development Strategy, that opinions were solicited from key stakeholders. One of the tools used to obtain comments was an e-survey developed through SurveyMonkey. There were two surveys prepared. One was directed at businesses and members of the Salem County Chamber of Commerce. The second was sent to municipal mayors. Findings from those surveys are outlined as follows.

Salem County Business and Industry Survey

The Salem County Business and Industry Survey posed an initial question which was: *Consideration is being given to the creation of an Economic Development Office in Salem County. If such an office was created, what would you see as the functions of that office that would be most beneficial in promoting economic development?* A series of choices were offered to the respondents. (A complete copy of the survey and responses are found in the Appendix of this document.) As can be seen from the responses, there were five responses which exceeded 50% of total responses. They are:

- New Business Recruitment
- Marketing the County
- Downtown Revitalization
- Support for Small Business, and
- Business Retention

When survey results were broken down by the location of the responding firm, the results followed the pattern of total response; however, there were businesses in a few of the municipalities that broke the mold.

In addition to New Business Recruitment, the top two responses in **Elmer Borough** were **Tourism Development** and **Fostering Niche Industries**. **Elsinboro Township** and **Pittsgrove Township** also saw high response rates of **Tourism Development**. Another interesting response from **Pittsgrove Township** was **Regulatory Assistance** – all three business respondents indicated this priority.

The Mayoral Survey

The survey results from twelve of the fifteen municipal mayors responding show a similar but not identical pattern. The mayors identified business recruitment as the most important responsibility of a County Economic Development Office. Marketing the County and Small Business Assistance also made the list of the top five responses. Eleven of the fourteen mayors responded. Where the mayors deviated from the responses of business was in the addition of Grant Writing and Regulatory Assistance to what they saw as top five priorities.

Survey Results for Business & Industry and Mayors

| SURVEY CHOICE | BUSINESS RESULTS | MAYORAL RESULTS | PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Grant Writing | 40% (26) | 55% (6) | 42% (32) |
| Marketing the County | 69% (45) | 45% (5) | 66% (50) |
| Small Business Support | 66% (43) | 55% (6) | 64% (49) |
| Tourism Development | 49% (32) | 9% (1) | 43% (33) |
| New Business Recruitment | 89% (58) | 82% (9) | 88% (67) |
| Downtown Revitalization | 69% (45) | 36% (4) | 64% (49) |
| New Housing | 22% (14) | 0% (0) | 18% (14) |
| Fostering Niche Industry | 42% (27) | 18% (2) | 38% (29) |
| Regulatory Assistance | 46% (30) | 45% (5) | 46% (35) |
| Business Retention | 60% (39) | 27% (3) | 55% (42) |
| | | | |
| Responses | 65 Responses | 12 Responses | 76 Responses |

STRATEGIES AND NEXT STEPS

Based on the results of the surveys and discussion with the subcommittee and the Economic Development Advisory Council, a series of goals and strategies was developed that will provide initial guidance and tasks for the new economic development office and director. These goals and strategies can be modified as the office evolves and the director gains a foothold in the County, but they represent a good place to start.

GOAL 1: Recruit New Business and Industry

Strategy 1: Identify Marketable, Ready-to-Build Sites

Strategy 2: Build on the Potential of the Wind Port Development

Strategy 3: Prepare Tear Sheets on Each Site

Strategy 4: Develop Webpage Outlining Targeted Sites

Strategy 5: Design Social Media Outreach to Targeted Businesses and Industries

Strategy 6: Sponsor and Host Familiarization Tour for Commercial Brokers and Economic Development Agencies

GOAL 2: Revitalize Downtown Business Districts

Strategy 1: Meet with Municipal Officials to Discuss Needs and Priorities

Strategy 2: Sponsor a County Workshop to Outline Downtown Programs and Redevelopment Strategies

Strategy 3: Develop a Timeline and Strategic Partnerships to Implement Key Projects

GOAL 3: Develop Ways to Support Small Business and Business Retention

Strategy 1: Outline All Funding Opportunities through COVID and other New Federal and State Funding Programs

Strategy 2: Prepare a Business Retention Handbook

GOAL 4: Market the County

Strategy 1: Develop a Salem County Marketing Consortium

Strategy 2: Brand the County

Strategy 3: Assemble a Multi-Year Marketing Budget and Program

GOAL 5: Secure Funding and Financial Support for Business and Industry

Strategy 1: Prepare an Inventory of State, Federal and Other Funding Programs

Strategy 2: Explore Ways the Public Sector can help with Business Expansion through Infrastructure Extension, Brownfield Clean up, Redevelopment Designations, and other Public Actions

The complete document also provides recommendations on potential partnerships and funding sources that will aid in the creation and evolution of the economic development strategy.

PROMOTING ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

In addition to recommending actions for enhancing and investing in the Salem County economy, this strategy also suggests ways to ensure the resiliency of the economy and address the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic. These recommendations tie some of the

principal goals and strategies directly to the COVID recovery, but also look at various other aspects of health and quality of life.

Salem County is a diverse community. Economic development challenges differ throughout the County. Each of the County's municipalities has different interests. Some seek new industry and the redevelopment of existing industrial and commercial sites. Others are very rural in nature and wish to remain so.

The Salem County Office of Economic Development and the director of that office will have to be sensitive to meeting those diverse needs and interests. This economic development strategy is a starting point for advancing those actions and capitalizing on existing opportunities.

SECTION 1

BACKGROUND ON SALEM COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

Salem County, located in the southwestern corner of New Jersey, has a multifaceted geographic profile. It is the first engagement in New Jersey for all traffic coming from the South over the Delaware Memorial Bridge via Interstate 295. The New Jersey Turnpike, the major interstate through New Jersey, begins in Salem County as does U.S. Route 40. Both offer easy access to Philadelphia and the New York metropolitan area. A daily one-way traffic volume of 40,000 vehicles travels through Salem County across the Delaware Bridge, making it a major access point for freight and traveling vacationers. At the same time, the County is deeply rural with 60% of its land in farmland assessment and an additional 16% forested or wetlands use.



DEMOGRAPHICS

As shown on Map 1, Salem County has fifteen municipalities spread over 332 square miles. Over one-half of the County's total population is concentrated along the Delaware River within the five 'river' municipalities of Salem, Pennsville, Carneys Point, Penns Grove and Oldman's Township. The County, the least populous in New Jersey, has seen a 1.9% decrease in population in the last decade, going from 65,294 in the 2010 census to 64,837 persons in 2020.¹ Salem County's population loss is the third largest percentage decline of the twenty-one New Jersey counties. Only Cape May County and Sussex County had larger percentages of population loss.

This population decrease has repercussions in terms of work force and aging. The chart on page 9 compares Salem County to New Jersey and to Gloucester and Cumberland Counties, its more developed neighbors. The highlighted data indicate the significantly higher median age in Salem than in the State or in Gloucester County, and a significantly higher percentage of population over 70 years. (Note: Beyond population figures, other 2020 demographic statistics were not available at press time.)

A lower percentage of working age cohorts signals economic challenges. An aging population and slower labor force growth affect economies in many ways—the growth of GDP slows, working-age people pay more to support the elderly, and public budgets strain under the burden of the higher total cost of health and retirement programs. Many empirical studies have found that GDP growth slows roughly one to one with declines in labor force and population growth.²

¹ 2020 U.S. Census.

² [Ronald Lee and Andrew Mason](https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2017/03/lee.htm), *Cost of Aging*, Finance & Development, March 2017, Vol. 54, No. 1 (<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2017/03/lee.htm>).

Map 1
Base Map of Salem County and its Municipalities

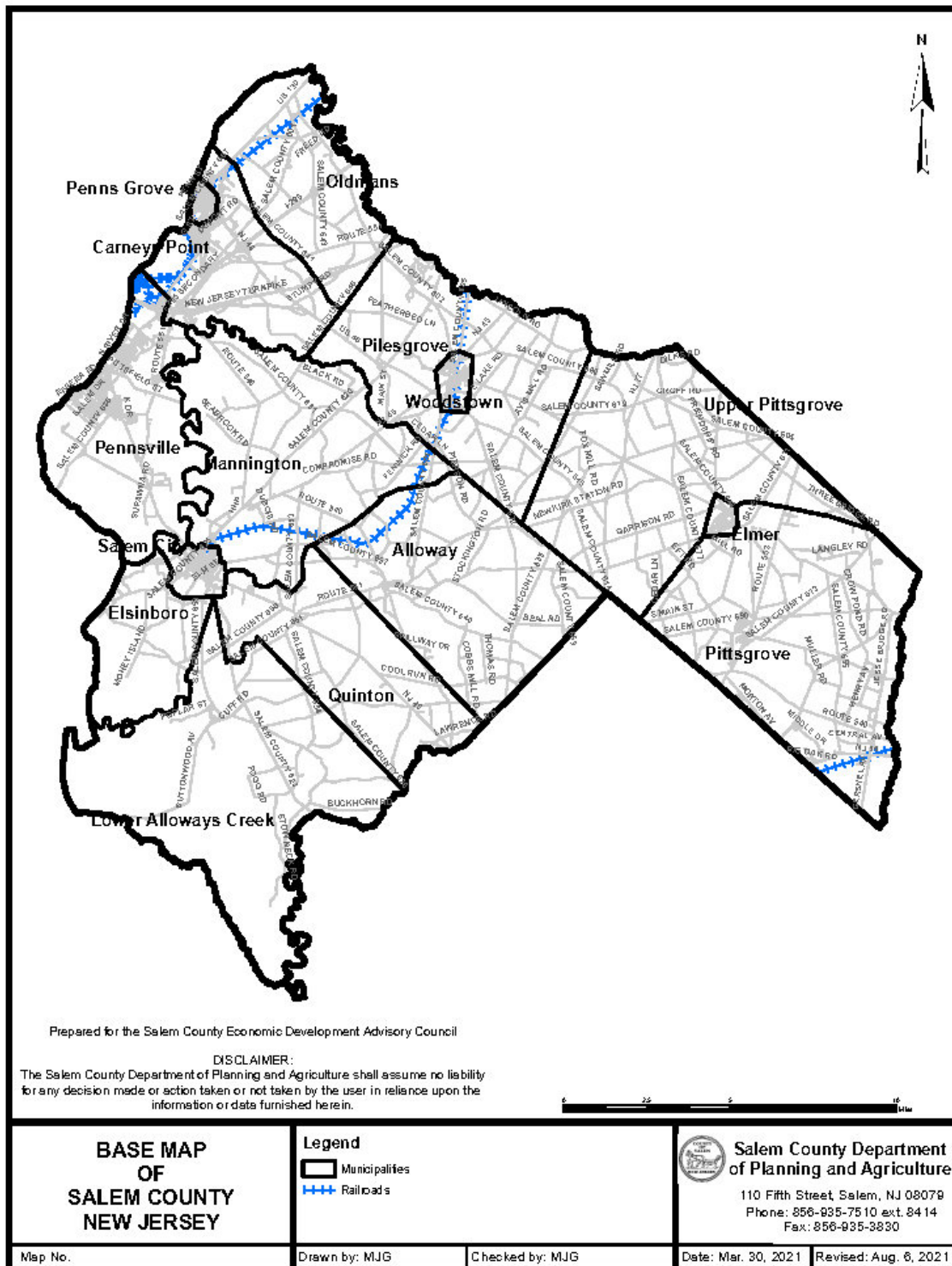


Table 1
Age Cohorts Comparison

| Demographics | Salem | Gloucester County | Cumberland County | New Jersey |
|--|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Total | 64,837 | 302,294 | 154,152 | 9,288,994 |
| AGE | | | | |
| 0-9 | 11.2% | 11.4% | 11.9% | 11.7% |
| 10-19 | 11.7% | 12.7% | 14.7% | 12.6% |
| 20-39 | 23.2% | 24.9% | 27.2% | 25.4% |
| 40-59 | 26.2% | 27% | 24.5% | 26.9% |
| 60-69 | 13.2% | 13.2% | 12.0% | 12% |
| 70+ | 14.6% | 10.8% | 9.9% | 11.4% |
| % Institutionalized Population | 2.0% | 1.4% | 8.1% | 2.1% |
| Median Age | 43.1 | 40.7% | 38.1 | 40.2% |
| Per Capita Income ³ | \$36,066 | \$40,617 | \$29,711 | \$44,888 |
| Median Household Income | \$68,531 | \$89,447 | \$54,587 | \$85,751 |
| Median Housing value | \$183,800 | \$222,800 | \$164,900 | \$348,800 |
| At least a High School degree/certificate | 87.7 | 93% | 82.9% | 90.3% |
| Associate's Degree | 10.8% | 8.8% | 7.1% | 6.4% |
| Bachelor's Degree | 20.1% | 22.2% | 10.4% | 25.1% |
| % Worked Outside County of Residence | 38.2% | 34.6% | 26.5% | 34.5% |
| Households with Internet subscription ⁴ | 86.2% | 89.5% | 87.0% | 88.5% |

Approximately half of Salem County's institutional population resides in nursing facilities. Other institutionalized Populations include colleges and universities, group homes, and medical and correctional facilities. Population totals are from the 2020 U.S. Census. Other demographics are 2019 ACS estimates.

Salem County's population is on the lower end of educational preparedness compared to more urbanized areas of New Jersey and its median age is older. 90.3% of New Jersey's population over 25 has a high school degree or equivalency. Salem County, with 87.7% of the population is significantly lower. At the higher educational level, Salem falls even further below the state average with only 20.1% of the population possessing a bachelor's degree or higher compared to over 41.2% for the state as a whole. Since educational attainment generally translates into higher incomes, it is not surprising that Salem County's income data lags behind New Jersey as a whole. Salem's per capita income of \$36,066 is 80% of New Jersey's. The median household income in Salem of \$68,531 is also 80% of the state's median.

Another measure of a place's overall economic state is the value of housing. New Jersey has a notoriously unaffordable housing market and, in some ways, it is an advantage to Salem County that its median value of housing is only about one-half of New Jersey's \$348,800 at \$183,800. But house value is often a worker's primary financial asset, particularly for working class incomes. In Salem County, the lack of value in one's house looms large in terms of economic stability and the ability for the aging cohorts to have retirement security.

³ US Dept of Economic Analysis, NJ DOL Workforce Development Division, US Census Bureau 2019 5-year Estimate and US Census Bureau Manufacturing and Construction Division

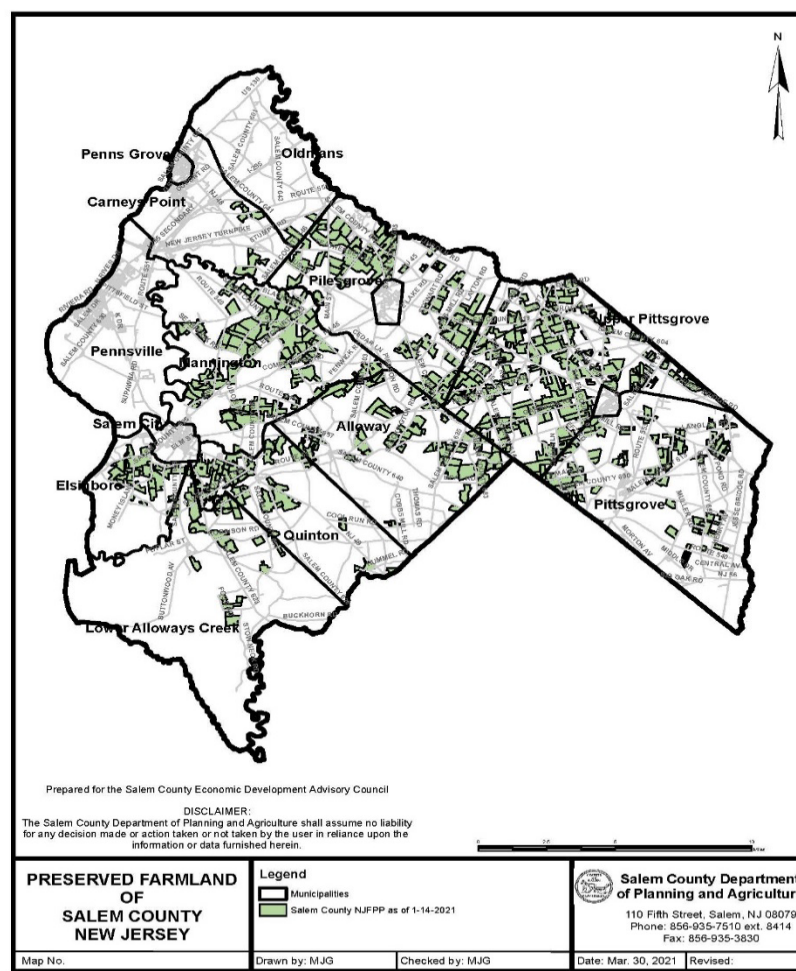
⁴ U.S. Census, ACS

A very basic assessment of housing affordability can be made by contrasting median household income and median mortgage and rental payments. With a median household income of \$68,531, the median mortgage payment for Salem County households is \$1,885 or \$22,620 per year. This is just above the suggested 30% threshold for annual mortgage payments for a median family income and a median home value.⁵ A greater disparity is found in rental affordability. The U.S. Census American Community Survey indicates that 67% of all renters in the County pay at or greater than 30% of their median incomes in rent, despite the State mandated affordable housing obligation that all municipalities must meet.

Geography and Land Use

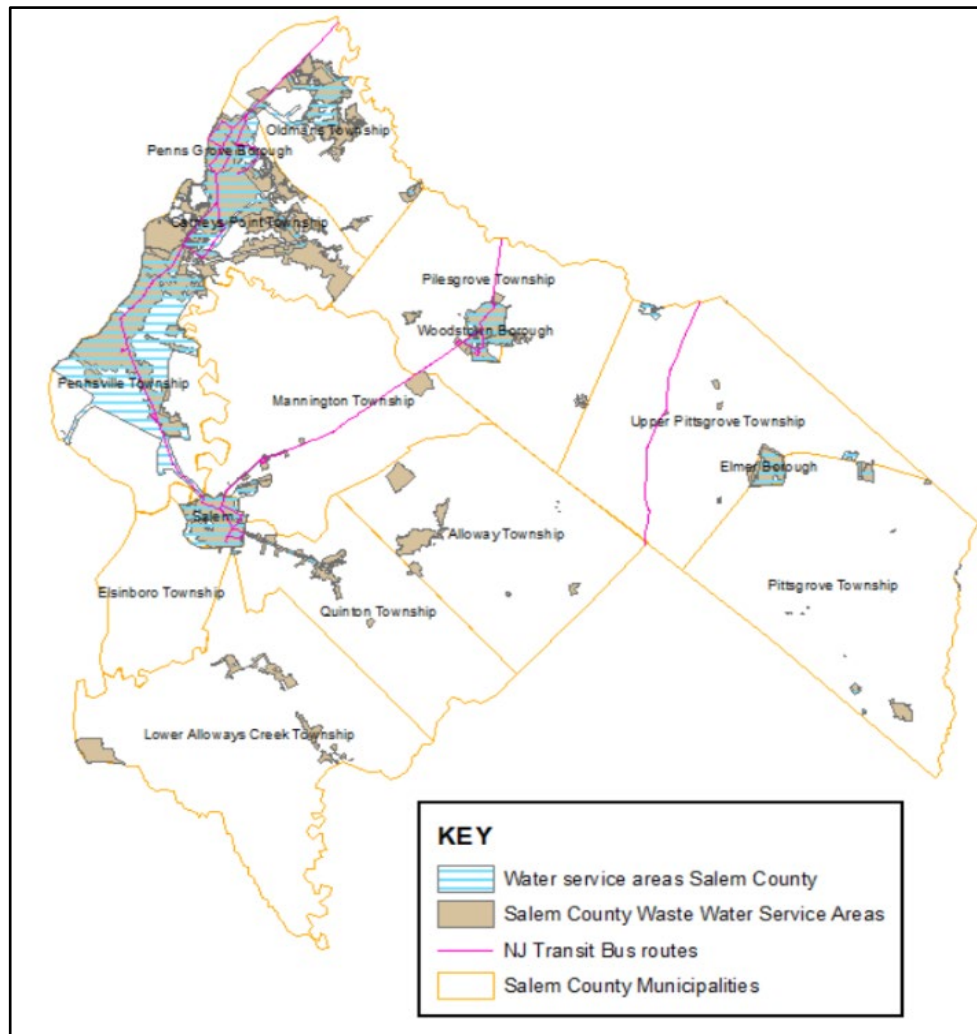
The eastern portion of Salem County is largely rural, dominated by farmland and woodlands. The largely flat landscape is conducive to farming and inviting to housing developers. A late twentieth century surge in housing developments on farmland generated an active farmland preservation program in Salem County. Consequently, the County has the highest percentage of preserved farmland in New Jersey.

Map 2
Farmland Preservation Areas in Salem County, NJ



⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census 2019 American Community Survey

Map 3
Areas of Public Infrastructure in Salem County, NJ



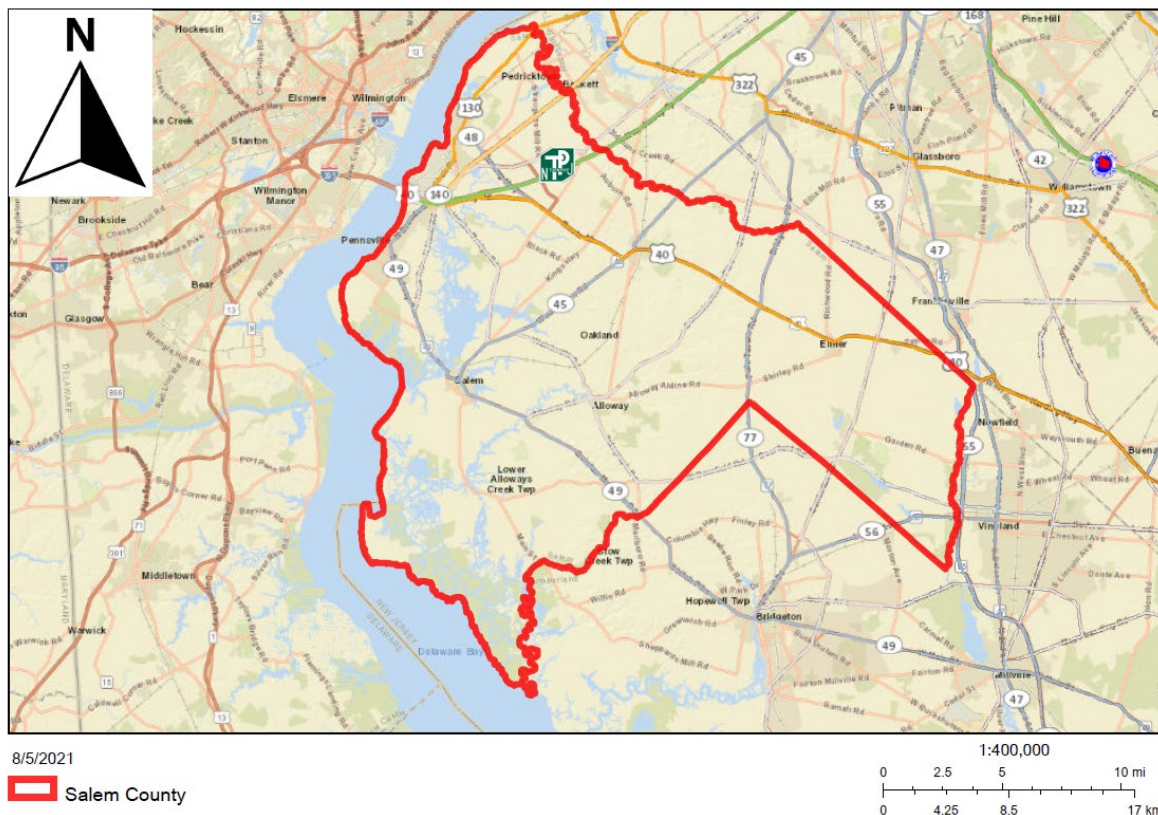
As can be seen on Map 3, the western part of Salem County as it borders the Delaware River and its tributaries is historically more developed due to the ease of marine transportation in the earlier history of New Jersey. From the Delaware Memorial Bridge north, the County is mostly urban along the Delaware River. South of the Delaware Memorial Bridge, the western municipalities contain significant wetlands, inhibiting large scale development, except for the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear power plants which is located south of the bridge in Lower Alloway Creek Township. This remote location will also be the site for the planned New Jersey Wind Port manufacturing site. The PSEG Nuclear Power Station in addition to being a major industrial presence in the southwestern portion of the County has also been a dominant employer of technical and skilled labor.

Salem County's major roads are located in the western part of the County. The NJ Turnpike, Route 295, and state Routes 130 and 49, offer easy access to Wilmington, DE (15 minutes)

and to Philadelphia (30 minutes). Routes 49 and 40, both state highways, run east-west through Salem, connecting the more rural eastern area to the major interstates in the west.

The County is located in the southwestern corner of the State. To the east lies Cumberland County, another largely rural area with little development and to the south is the Delaware Bay. The major roads in Salem County basically follow the Delaware River which has historically been a link for transportation and economic health.

Map 4
Regional Road and Highway Network in Salem County, NJ



Roads are the main source of transportation in Salem County. Private vehicles predominate movement as public transportation is limited. There are three NJ Transit routes connecting Salem to Philadelphia through Camden. Two are located in the western part of the County and terminate in Salem and the third travels through the more rural eastern area from Bridgeton in Cumberland County to Philadelphia via Camden.

There is no passenger rail serving Salem County. The Salem Short Line is a newly renovated freight line that connects Swedesboro in Gloucester County to Salem City's Port. At Swedesboro, the railroad connects to Woodbury Junction and eventually to the Pavonia Yard in Camden. The Swedesboro to Salem section is owned by Salem County. The northern section, connecting to Camden, is owned by Conrail. The Salem Short Line connection to the Salem Port gives the area a multi-modal terminal at the Port with rail and truck freight access. The Port is a designated foreign trade zone with customs and duty advantages.

Presently, the Salem Port's major trade items are sand and gravel, followed by various dry bulk, motor vehicles and apparel. International Shipping, Ltd. also operates out of the Port of Salem, with weekly shipments to Bermuda.

Public water and wastewater infrastructure in Salem County are predominantly located on the western edge of the County as shown. Most of the county is serviced by wells and septic systems.

The County Wastewater Management Plan does not intend extensions of sewer system to the eastern side of the County which is predominantly agricultural and environmentally sensitive land. Internet service is available but costly for lower income households. Although 86% of households have internet service, there is a wide discrepancy in band width available across the County and it is one of the lowest access counties in New Jersey⁶

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

In 2018, Salem County contributed .9% to the statewide GDP, but it does outperform itself as it includes only .7% of the state's population. Although unemployment remained higher than the state average, even in the post-recession years, Salem was showing job growth over the last several years until the pandemic. The County was at about 5% unemployment in March 2020 before soaring to 14% in April 2020 but declined to 9.0% as of June 2021.

Traditionally (pre-Covid), the major sectors for employment in the County have been services (education and health care), manufacturing and utilities. PSE&G is the largest single private employer in the County with an average of 1,300 workers.⁷ A 2020 study⁸ on the economic impacts of the pandemic commissioned by the South Jersey Economic Development District, found that 50% of all workers in Salem were employed in manufacturing, retail and services.

But a dominant 55% of the GDP of the county can be accounted for by the purchases, wages and products of the utility industry alone. This is principally due to the higher wages in the utility industry. In addition, as seen in the graphic on the graphic below, this particularly lucrative sector is clustered in the western part of the County.

⁶ ACS 2019 1-year (Table B28011)

⁷ <https://wrand.rutgers.edu/files/salem-county-profile.pdf> (undated but indicators are c.2013) (The number of workers may be fewer now but cannot be documented.)

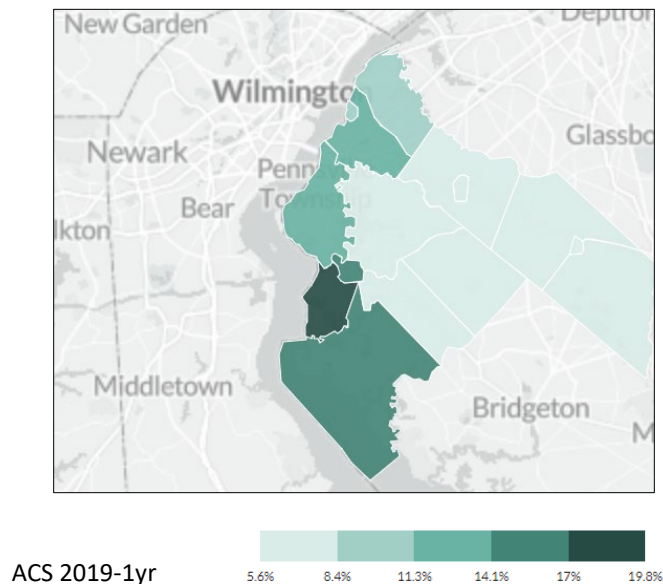
⁸Richard Perniciaro, Ph.D., *Assessing the Economic Impacts of the Covid19 Pandemic on the Economy of Salem County, NJ*, August, 2020.

Table 2
Employment by Sector in Salem County

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Total: | 100.00% |
| Educational services, and health care and social assistance | 25.35% |
| Manufacturing | 11.43% |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities | 10.32% |
| Retail trade | 10.01% |
| Construction | 8.21% |
| Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative, and waste management services | 7.40% |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services | 6.51% |
| Public administration | 4.77% |
| Other services, except public administration | 4.57% |
| Finance and insurance, and real estate, and rental and leasing | 4.49% |
| Wholesale trade | 3.94% |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining | 1.98% |
| Information | 1.02% |

ACS 2019-1yr

Transportation Warehousing and Utilities Sectors



Since PSEG hosts many of the region's high technology jobs, any loss or downsizing of the power industry will leave a significant gap in high wage employment. Besides the direct loss of 1,600 jobs at the Salem-Hope Creek nuclear plants, a 2017 report on PSE&G power plant

closings estimates the statewide impact of any closing of the nuclear plants as shown in the chart below.

Table 3
Statewide Employment Impacts from Nuclear Power Generation

| Category | Estimate of Employment Impact |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Sales and Related Office and Administrative Support | 1,220 |
| Construction and Extraction | 780 |
| Management, Business & Financial Occupations | 510 |
| Installation, Maintenance and Repair Occupations | 350 |
| Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations | 330 |
| Building and Grounds and Personal Care Occupations | 280 |
| Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations | 270 |
| Production Occupations | 260 |
| Healthcare Occupations | 250 |
| Computer, Mathematical, Architectural and Engineering Jobs | 240 |
| Other | 1,310 |
| TOTAL IMPACT | 5,800 |

Source: Brattle Report, 2017.

The most recent (2019) U.S. Census American Community Survey data show only 44.5% of the County's workforce works within the County with the remainder commuting to jobs out of state (17.4%) as well as to other NJ counties, (38.1%). A comparison of employed persons and jobs in Salem County suggests that those individuals commuting out of the County are doing so for higher waged and skilled jobs. The largest number of out-commuters by industry is in the professional services sector. Other sizeable numbers are in manufacturing, wholesale trade, and finance – sectors of the economy which typically have higher paying, family wage jobs.⁹

While the largest number of jobs across New Jersey are in lower paying service and hospitality positions, primarily home health aides and retail food service, the highest job growth in the last years has been in jobs requiring a bachelor's degree or highly skilled craft. The Covid pandemic has added a new growth category of warehouse worker to the low-end job market as internet sales companies vie to build and obtain multiple staging operations.

While there has been an increase in warehouse job opportunities due to the pandemic in the Salem region, the county's staple retail and service low-end jobs were hard hit by the quarantine measures. The Perniciaro paper points out that 2,500 jobs disappeared in Salem County in March 2020 and they were primarily low-income workers. The same report estimates that the County GDP suffered a \$685 million loss from the expectations for 2019 into 2020. The table below illustrates the sudden crash in employment in April 2020 but it also shows the relatively strong comeback that Salem County made to end up with a yearly unemployment similar to New Jersey as a whole. As can be seen in the first three months of 2020, Salem County tended to be close to 2 percentage points higher than the state as a whole.

⁹ 2019 ACS employed persons by industry sector compared with ESRI estimates of jobs in Salem County.

Table 4
12 Month Labor Force and Unemployment Figures for Salem County and New Jersey

| COUNTY LABOR AREA | July 20 | Aug 20 | Sept 20 | Oct 20 | Nov 20 | Dec 20 | Jan 21 | Feb 21 | Mar 21 | April 21 | May 21 | June 21 | 12 Mo. Avg. |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| SALEM COUNTY, NJ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Persons in the Labor Force | 30,700 | 30,200 | 28,600 | 29,300 | 29,700 | 29,000 | 29,200 | 29,400 | 29,400 | 29,400 | 29,700 | 29,800 | 29,533 |
| Employed Persons | 26,800 | 27,200 | 26,500 | 27,400 | 26,900 | 26,800 | 26,700 | 26,700 | 26,900 | 27,200 | 27,400 | 27,100 | 26,967 |
| Unemployed Persons | 3,900 | 3,100 | 2,000 | 1,900 | 2,800 | 2,200 | 2,500 | 2,700 | 2,500 | 2,200 | 2,300 | 2,700 | 2,567 |
| Unemployment Rate | 12.6% | 10.2% | 7.1% | 6.6% | 9.5% | 7.5% | 8.6% | 9.1% | 8.6% | 7.5% | 7.7% | 9.0% | 8.7% |
| NEW JERSEY | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Persons in the Labor Force | 4,657,000 | 4,548,000 | 4,348,300 | 4,370,900 | 4,492,700 | 4,372,800 | 4,373,300 | 4,403,200 | 4,439,200 | 4,391,800 | 4,396,200 | 4,478,000 | 4,439,283 |
| Employed Persons | 4,025,600 | 4,053,400 | 4,015,300 | 4,060,100 | 4,059,300 | 4,056,500 | 4,023,900 | 4,040,100 | 4,092,300 | 4,081,300 | 4,089,000 | 4,126,600 | 4,060,283 |
| Unemployed Persons | 631,400 | 494,600 | 333,000 | 310,700 | 433,400 | 316,400 | 349,300 | 363,100 | 346,800 | 310,500 | 307,100 | 351,400 | 378,975 |
| Unemployment Rate | 13.6% | 10.9% | 7.7% | 7.1% | 9.6% | 7.2% | 8.0% | 8.2% | 7.8% | 7.1% | 7.0% | 7.8% | 8.5% |

In general, both the Perniciaro report and the Federal Reserve District 3 South Jersey Business outlook indicate that the recovery from the pandemic should be strong. The Federal Reserve outlook pointed out that indicators for the fourth quarter of 2020 were positive with 45% of businesses reporting increases in activity in that quarter.¹⁰

In addition, Salem County is to be the locale of a planned port manufacturing center for renewable wind energy parts destined for the Atlantic Coast. This massive investment in a new facility in Lower Alloway Creek Township bodes well for an array of diverse economic opportunities, both in business and job growth, within the county. Managing this anticipated economic expansion will be a key part of any economic development strategy for the county in the immediate future.

The Salem County Market and Market Trends

Market conditions and trends in Salem County have obviously been impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. As such, indicators are mixed and the most recent data which would reflect changes as the County and nation emerge from the COVID Crisis are not yet available.

Trends over the past two years in the numbers of businesses and employment in the various economic sectors of the County have declined and, in many cases, significantly. The service and government sectors show the largest numbers of employment loss with manufacturing and transportation also indicating losses of more than 300 jobs.

In addition to the nuclear power industry, Mannington Mills, DuPont, Ardagh, J.E. Berkowitz, and other firms which were long-time anchors of the County's manufacturing sector have closed or downsized.

¹⁰ Federal Reserve District 3 'South Jersey Business Survey for Fourth Q 2020) <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/frbp/assets/surveys-and-data/sjbs/2020/sjq420.pdf>

Table 5
Economic Trends by Industry Sector, 2018-2020

| INDUSTRY SECTOR | Numbers of Businesses | | Numbers of Employees | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | 2018 | 2020 | 2018 | 2020 |
| Agriculture & Mining | 101 | 93 | 619 | 467 |
| Construction | 159 | 146 | 1,503 | 1,477 |
| Manufacturing | 55 | 46 | 2,320 | 1,959 |
| Transportation | 72 | 48 | 1,303 | 993 |
| Communication | 14 | 8 | 66 | 28 |
| Utilities | 13 | 10 | 75 | 58 |
| Wholesale Trade | 67 | 51 | 440 | 382 |
| Retail Trade | 401 | 390 | 5,073 | 4,896 |
| Finance, Insurance & Real Estate | 149 | 135 | 1,070 | 986 |
| Services | 804 | 729 | 9,011 | 8,314 |
| Government | 200 | 150 | 2,108 | 1,601 |
| Other/Unclassified | 60 | 63 | 37 | 104 |
| TOTALS | 2,095 | 1,869 | 23,625 | 21,265 |

Source: ESRI, 2018 and 2020. Some underreporting of businesses and employment is likely in sectors such as manufacturing and utilities, where employment figures may be reported at corporate headquarters in the home county of the corporation.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Gross Domestic Product was beginning to tick upward just prior to the COVID-induced recession.¹¹ From 2018 to 2019, Salem County's GDP increased from \$4,723,996,000 to \$4,729,720,000 – a modest increase of approximately \$7 million dollars.

There have also been other potentially positive trends. The median sale price of Salem County homes has increased by 61.4% in the past year with the average price per square foot (\$122) increasing by 69.4%. The average sale price of a home in Salem County was \$180K last month, up 61.4% since last year.¹² The number of days that properties have remained on the market has fallen, which is also a sign that real estate activity is picking up and market trends are improving.

LoopNet.com which reports on the availability of commercial real estate indicates a limited number (10) of commercial listing presently in the County and a generally soft commercial real estate market.¹³ The sale prices for these properties ranged from a couple hundred thousand dollars to \$2.5 million dollars. Many of the properties were concentrated along the Harding Highway (U.S. Route 40) Corridor.

¹¹ [GDP by County, Metro, and Other Areas | U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis \(BEA\)](#). Gross Domestic Product is defined by the BEA as GDP measures the value of the final goods and services produced in a given jurisdiction (without double counting the intermediate goods and services used up to produce them).

¹² [Salem County, NJ Housing Market: House Prices & Trends | Redfin](#)

¹³ <https://www.loopnet.com/search/commercial-real-estate/salem-county-nj/for-sale/?sk=17b4c521da4d9b705ca69e601ebf4a7e>

Employment and Unemployment Rates

The New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development provides employment data and unemployment rates annually and, in some cases, monthly for counties and municipalities across the State. As of June 2021, the County had an 9.0% unemployment rate with approximately 2,700 people unemployed. Employed persons rose slightly from the 2020 figure to 27,200. The following table illustrates Salem County's labor force participation and unemployment rates for the past five years from 2016 to 2020.

Table 6
Labor Force Characteristics

| Labor Force Characteristic | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | June 2021 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Number of Employed Persons | 28,100 | 27,400 | 27,200 | 27,800 | 26,500 | 27,200 |
| Number of Unemployed Persons | 1,900 | 1,800 | 1,600 | 1,400 | 2,300 | 2,700 |
| Annualized Unemployment Rate | 6.4% | 6.2% | 5.4% | 4.8% | 8.1% | 9.0% |

Source: NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development

Salem County has weathered past recessions with reliance on its strong utility sector and proximity to urban areas of greater employment. The need to diversify its economy especially by attracting and/or establishing more high wage opportunities has been a persistent theme in past studies and strategic plans. The next section will briefly describe relevant past studies and plans in order to comprehend their relevance and usefulness for future strategic planning

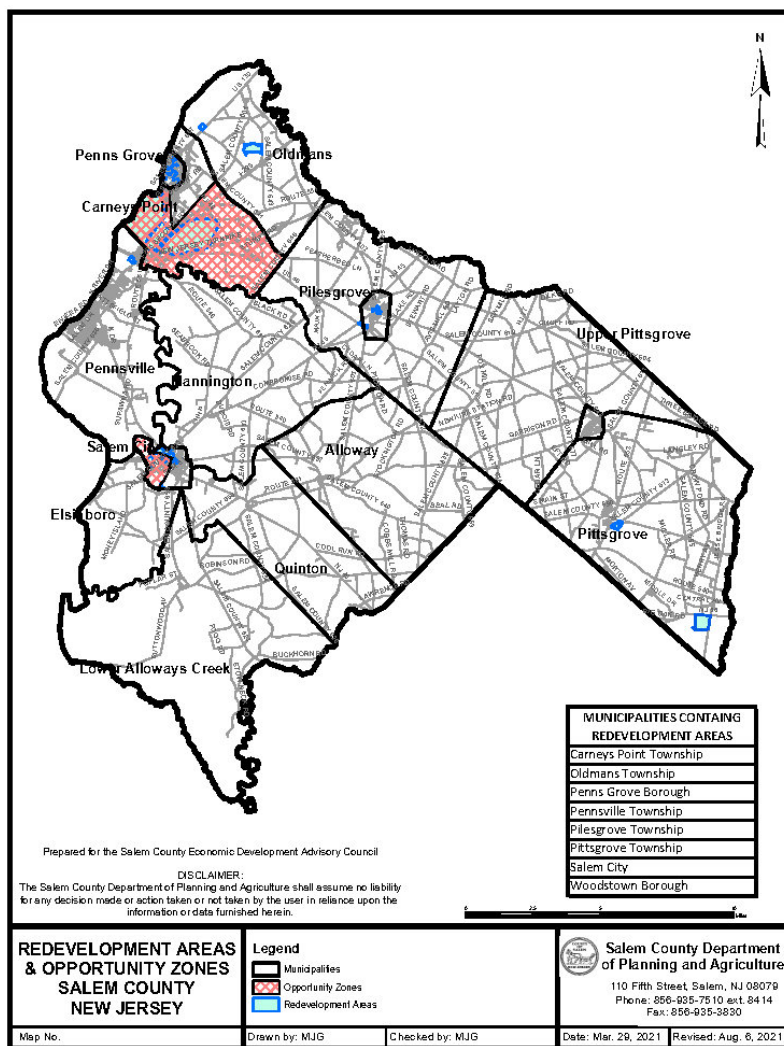
SUMMARY OF EXISTING PLANS AND STRATEGIES

The County has several older existing plans that have some relevance to evolving an economic development strategy, if not in their data (generally outdated) then in their viewpoints, goals and in the lessons that can be reached from their eventual usefulness. The Salem County Improvement Authority, while operating from 2006 to 2015 as the chief arm for economic development in the county, produced several promotional brochures to distribute to interested developers. These were the principal means of outreach for a large part of the last few years by the county and are no longer current. Brochures and promotional videos rapidly become outdated and require continual updating to be effective. In formulating the county-wide strategy for economic development, the municipal master plans and any economic development sections within them were examined. In general, the municipalities do not have an entire section of their Master Plans for Economic Development Municipal Plans. All of the Master Plans of the rural Townships express the desire for economic development that suits their lack of infrastructure and rural quality of life. The western municipalities have traditionally relied on the county, the Improvement Authority and state and federal services to provide economic development support. A few of the

municipalities have an Economic Development Committee or Commission that reports to the governing body.

Nine of the fifteen Salem County municipalities have one or more Redevelopment Areas and/or Brownfields Development Areas. Penns Grove, Mannington, Carneys Point, Oldmans, Pennsville, Woodstown/Pilesgrove and Pittsgrove have Redevelopment Areas. Salem City has both Redevelopment Areas and a Brownfields Development Area. Any economic development strategy should focus on these already established areas for development and redevelopment within the individual municipalities. Map 5 shows the locations of the Redevelopment Areas in the County.

Map 5
Redevelopment Areas in Salem County, NJ



The following plans retain some ideas and strategies that have applicability today, ordered from oldest to more recent. IN 2011, DVRPC conducted a study titled, ***Assessing the Potential for a regional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program in Salem County.*** The vision for Salem County in this plan is to accommodate future growth while capitalizing on the existing assets within the county, large amounts of prime agricultural and

historic urban settlements with existing public service infrastructure. The goals and policy recommendations within this plan include:

- improved availability of county-wide information;
- increased capacity and support for regional decision-making and implementation;
- protection of identified environmental resources;
- sustainable economic development through redevelopment of urbanized areas and rural centers;
- provision of a wide range of housing options;
- improved educational attainment;
- augmentation of workforce training;
- upgrades of a safe and efficient transportation system; and
- regionalization of infrastructure systems and resources.

Plans which were formulated within the last five years are more relevant and have a greater pertinence to instituting economic development strategies for the future. In 2016, the County produced a ***Growth Management Element for its Master Plan*** that incorporated, to a large extent, a previous 2004 *Smart Growth Plan for Delaware River and I-295 Corridor* with updates. The 2016 Plan is based on the Center based principles advocated in the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan with its emphasis on growth within the bounds of established infrastructure.

One of the interesting parts of the plan's Implementation Strategy is that it puts the onus for economic development squarely on the municipalities with Strategy #11 highlighted below:

'Municipal Economic Development Plans: An economic plan element considering all aspects of economic development and sustained economic vitality, including (a) a comparison of the types of employment expected to be provided by the economic development to be promoted with the characteristics of the labor pool resident in the municipality and nearby areas and (b) an analysis of the stability and diversity of the economic development to be promoted.'

The County and the Improvement Authority produced an Economic Development Strategic Plan 2014-2017 that was based on key strategic principles for the county's economic development:

1. Energy efficiency and diversification, making Salem County "*The Powerhouse of the East*"
2. *Grow What We Have* – expand current businesses and help them thrive.
3. Sustainability of business and industry
4. Continue expansion of the County's highly successful preservation of farmland and open space which strengthens the County's agriculture's profitability and viability while channeling development into targeted growth corridors and redevelopment areas
5. Regional cooperation with bordering states and counties

6. Creation of a wide array of employment opportunities which will provide life cycle jobs for first job seekers, prime earners and retirees
7. Stabilize property taxes for County property owners
8. County support for expanded employment, education and job training
9. Transparency and civic involvement
10. Continue to foster opportunity for cost effective shared services among the County, municipalities, schools, fire districts, authorities, commissions and other public entities.

These general principles were applied to produce a list of priority projects (divided into government and private actions). The projects were selected based on a SWOT analysis that compiled by business and community leaders. The conclusion from the SWOT analysis was that the County should focus its economic development resources on key projects that take advantage of its strength of abundant and low-cost land, superior highway network and its available and trainable workforce.

The 2014-2017 Plan listed six Priority Projects and nine private development projects with a timeline and possible funding sources. The Matrix below shows the priority projects and the private development projects and their current status.

2014-2017 Economic Development Strategic Plan Projects with Current Status

| PROJECT | STATUS | COMMENT |
|---|--------|--|
| New Nuclear Unit at Artificial Island (Salem 4) | T | Application withdrawn for plant; |
| Rehabilitation of the Salem County Short Line from Swedesboro to the City of Salem | C | County has contract with new operator and line in service |
| Construction of a New Sewer Line from Southern Gloucester County to the DuPont Wastewater Treatment Plant | T | Project has not proceeded. |
| Development of a Deep-Water Port on the Delaware River, Carneys Point or Pennsville | T | Discussed but no plan produced |
| Construction of an Alternative Energy Facility within Salem County | P | Development of Solar Field Facility |
| Innovative Recycling and Energy Generation Projects at County Solid Waste Complex | T | Methane Gas Recovery installation underway |
| Continuation of the Redevelopment of The Industrial Park at Pedricktown | P | Ongoing rehabilitation of a former Department of Defense Base |
| Ardagh Group (former Anchor Glass) Modernization | T | Ardagh property sold |
| Penns Grove Waterfront & Central Business District Redevelopment Priority Projects | T | In legal dispute over tax assessments |
| Route 45 Salem Business Center | C | Sold at loss in 2018 to new owner. Facility is being marketed for full occupancy |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Calpine (Deepwater Generating Station) | P | Calpine abandoned project. Site is part of 2019 Redevelopment Plan Area. |
| City of Salem Revitalization | P | New state building, downtown improvements |
| DuPont Chamber's Works Industrial Redevelopment | T | Chemours is pursuing new tenants |
| Expansion of the Gateway Business Park | P | Very active with continued expansion |
| Promotion of Tourism Throughout the County | P | Active tourism department in County government (does some economic development) |

Key: (T) Terminated; (P) In Progress; (C) Completed

The Strategic Plan did not have a detailed approach for implementation for these initiatives beyond some funding suggestions and did not specify players to enact the projects. In addition, the projects' relationships to the key principles are tenuous and deserve examination in terms of what the true goals and objectives of the strategic plan were. Nevertheless, this update showing the current progress or status of these projects is useful for future economic development strategizing because they demonstrate what can be done, what might be more difficult and the changes that can and do happen to the economic geography in less than ten years.

To provide some additional project prioritization and policy guidance, the Salem County Economic Development Advisory Council held a retreat for county business leaders and institutional leaders in November 2017 that resulted in a values statement and, more tellingly, a ten-year vision of Salem County. The values were:

- Reputation as affordable safe, secure, friendly, charming, naturally beautiful open space
- Location, access (road, rail, port), resources,
- Tax incentives (outlier)
- Built on relationships, customer loyalty, and sense of community and involvement
- Workforce
- Small schools and education
- Under serviced (outlier)

The Salem County of 2027 would have, according to the summation of the Council retreat findings:

- Increased agri-business and tourism
- Modest (aging) population growth, business development and redevelopment (West to East of commercial and residential areas).
- Providing increased opportunities in healthcare.

- Independence, yet a sense of community
- Diverse economy in West Salem County focused on logistics, manufacturing, and healthcare.

These are of note because of the expectation for and lack of impetus for widespread and substantial economic growth. Two contemporaneous studies should be considered for their timeliness and for the inclusion of the impacts of the COVID pandemic which will reverberate economically for several years.

The South Jersey Economic Development District (SJEDD) commissioned a study to examine resiliency among key industry sectors, particularly the influential utility sector, in south Jersey. The report, **Estimating the Economic Contribution and Impact of the Power Generating Industry and other Key Industry Sectors on the Economy of Southern New Jersey: An Analysis of the Regional Economy and An Assessment of Resiliency Opportunity** was issued in February 2020, ten months into the pandemic. This report delves deeply, with current data by county, into the labor force and income by sector. This information is vital in considering how best to proceed with Salem County's economic strategy. The study concludes that there is "a need to explore further the sectors of the regional economy where additional investment may be needed." It particularly recommends investment in:

- identifying new development sites;
- targeting new technologies and promoting economic diversification;
- expanding infrastructure;
- repositioning the workforce.

Several months after the Regional Study, the SJEDD commissioned Assessing the Economic Impacts of the Covid19 Pandemic on the Economy of Salem County, NJ which was delivered in August 2020.¹⁴ This study looked at the near term Covid pandemic loss of economic activity and the industries most affected. Its assessment of key risks with this event concludes that Salem County was sheltered by its dependence on the utility and manufacturing sectors but that could have long term consequences with a different type of disaster. The study warns of lagging consequences that should be identified and spotlights the industries that may not recover fully. The workforce attached to those industries, healthcare services and education, may require new training to fit into the changing economy. These findings should enter into any new economic development strategy planning.

The prior studies have relevance for their determination of ongoing impediments to economic achievement in Salem County. All the studies demonstrate the difficulty that the individual municipalities have in carrying out a local economic development strategy. Few municipal master plans include an economic development strategy although all the municipalities indicate they would welcome appropriate commercial and industrial

¹⁴ Richard Perniciaro, Ph.D., Addressing the Economic Impacts of the COVID19 Pandemic on the Economy of Salem County, NJ, August 2020

development. The oldest plan, the TDR study cited above, offers several valuable insights for contemporary strategy planning in its list of policy recommendations. These goals indicate the continuing need for a strong county-wide presence:

- Improved availability of county-wide information;
- Increased capacity and support for regional decision-making and implementation;
- Sustainable economic development through redevelopment of urbanized areas and rural centers;
- Regionalization of infrastructure systems and resources.

The 2014-17 Strategic Plan's priority projects and the 2017 retreat for county business leaders and institutional leaders deserve attention and examination to consider whether these projects and key principles are still pertinent to current conditions and objectives. The two latest studies offer contemporary views on economic sectors in which the county should concentrate attention and investment. Comparing the current data with past aspirations and objectives is a method to determine the practicality of present strategizing.

Ongoing Initiatives

Several of the major initiatives outlined in the inventory of projects on the previous pages remain very relevant today. The Salem Shortline Railroad has been rehabilitated and the County has secured a new shortline operator. Various projects along the Delaware River Waterfront remain active including interest in a Deep-Water Port, sewage extensions, and alternative energy investments and redevelopment of the Chemours facility.

Two projects which will have a significant bearing on the future of the County are the proposed Wind Port Project in Lower Alloways Creek Township and the rehabilitation of the Port of Salem. The Wind Port Project is being developed to service the construction needs of the offshore Wind Farm being constructed by Ørsted, in partnership with PSEG, which has a significant presence in Salem County. When completed in 2024 it is estimated that the wind farm will generate 1,100 megawatts, enough to power 500,000 homes and will be one of the largest facilities of its kind in the United States. The New Jersey EDA estimates up to \$100 billion dollars will be invested in this project over the next 15 years and many smaller businesses and service organizations will be needed to service this project.

As of July 2021, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) had approved a combined 2,658 megawatts of offshore wind capacity – Ørsted's 1,148 MW Ocean Wind II and EDF and Shell's 1,510 MW Atlantic Shores. Both will be around 15 miles off the Atlantic City coast. Ocean Wind II joins Ørsted's 1,100 MW Ocean Wind I, which is expected to provide first power in late 2024.

The rehabilitation of the Port of Salem is also an ongoing initiative that can help to revitalize the Salem Shortline Railroad and provide an alternative port facility to the Deep-Water Ports on the Delaware River. The channel of the Salem River is in need of constant maintenance and future deepening from the current 16' depth to a possible 26' depth to accommodate

larger vessels. The South Jersey Port Corporation, owner and operator of the Port of Salem, recently applied to the U.S. Department of Transportation for a Federal Grant and was awarded \$9,000,000 in funding which will be part of a proposed \$24,500,000 investment in the port. This will increase the capacity of the facility, spur the need for additional warehousing, provide many more jobs both on site and in the logistics industries, and be a catalyst for secondary growth and development.

SWOT: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

To provide another manner by which the Advisory Council can consider the county's economic development trajectory, a SWOT analysis was developed based on past plans and current data.

STRENGTHS

- Broadly shared appreciation for existing rural quality of life
- Proximity to major job centers
- Good regional highway access and freight network
- Significant base of agricultural activities.
- Potential for expansion of agri and eco-tourism sectors
- Low crime with a few isolated geographic exceptions
- Low housing cost
- Strong community college
- Good collaboration among economic development partners (Econ Advisory Council)
- Waterfront development and redevelopment opportunities along the Delaware River
- Foreign Trade Zone at the Port of Salem

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of training for 21st Century businesses and advanced manufacturing
- Lack of inter-municipal and regional cooperation in economic planning
- Lengthy commutes and potentially costly commutes into the Wilmington job market
- Blighted/underdeveloped urban areas
- High percentage of low wage jobs
- Rapidly aging population
- Lack of sufficient water and sewer infrastructure in certain otherwise developable areas.
- Lack of widespread high-speed internet
- Large no-growth contingent
- Reluctance to embrace outside interests or investors
- Lack of activities for young professionals.
- Under-funded and unfocused Economic Development Strategy

OPPORTUNITIES

- Wind port development in LAC
- Untapped possibilities for agri-tourism
- Salem City multi-modal port
- A chance to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on one or more economic sectors
- Expansion of food processing and agri-business

Opportunities for new investment through the American Recovery Act and new infrastructure grant programs

THREATS

Over-dependence on energy sector for high wage jobs

Boom and bust cycle potential

Climate change and sea level rise along Delaware Bay and River

Population loss

SUMMARY

This overview of Salem County, its demographics, trends in the economy, geography, strengths and weaknesses all set the stage for the Economic Development Action Agenda that will be the subject of Section 3 of this Strategy. These characteristics will also help to define the type of economic development office that the County Economic Advisory Council may wish to recommend.

Toward that end, the next section of this document presents examples of counties of similar size and the types of economic development offices that they operate. While there are obvious differences between Salem County and the four case studies presented, there are also similarities which make them relevant in scoping a profile and formulating a prototype for the economic development office that might be considered for Salem County.

SECTION 2

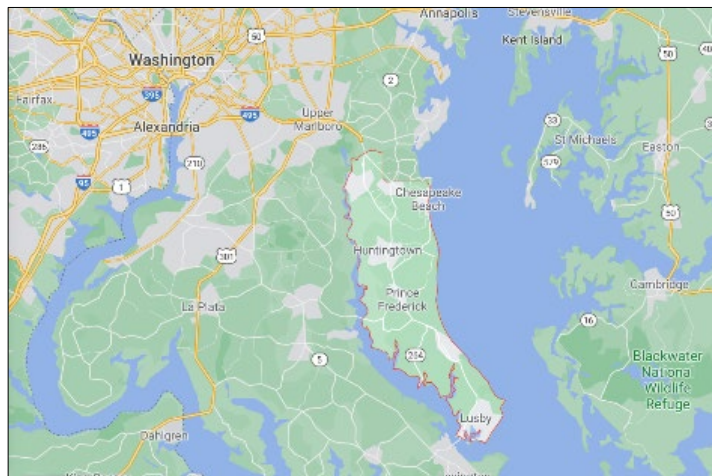
CASE STUDIES FROM OTHER COUNTIES' ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

In order to better evaluate possible Economic Development constructs for Salem County, this study examined four other counties that had several similarities to Salem County. None of the four counties are identical. The most common similarity is a relatively small population base. In some instances, the counties share in a natural resource heritage. Others tell stories of a similar evolution in their economic development programs. Each of the County's economic development efforts is different and each can lend ideas and suggestions to the Salem County discussion about creating a full-time and staffed economic development organization.

CALVERT COUNTY, MD

Calvert County offers several similarities to Salem County as well as some distinct differences. Calvert County is located on a peninsula at the southern end of Maryland. It is about 36 miles to Washington, DC and 28 miles to Annapolis, MD from Chesapeake Beach, Calvert County's largest town. Like Salem, there are no large urban areas within the county and, like Salem, Calvert County is home to a nuclear power plant, located on the Southern Chesapeake Bay coast. Largely rural, Calvert County benefits from its proximity to employment centers outside the County. Sixty percent of Calvert County's workforce commutes to work outside the County, primarily to Washington and to the naval base across the Patuxent River in St. Mary's County. Both destinations offer well paying, secure federal employment. While Salem's unemployment rate doubled from 4% in 2019 to 8.1% in December 2020, Calvert County's rose less than one percentage point from 3.7% in 2019 to 4.6% in December 2020.



Although geographically comparable and notable for both containing a nuclear power facility, Calvert and Salem differ in fundamental ways that can be seen in the matrix below. Calvert ranks as one of the higher median household income counties in the United States. It has a highly educated population which is growing. The median age of 40.1 (compared to Salem's 43.1) indicates a large cohort in the workforce. Some of these factors are immutable, but there is an abundance of actions that Calvert County took 50 years ago with the advent of the nuclear power plant that differ from actions in Salem County.

Because the state government structure is different in Maryland than in New Jersey, the arrival of the Calvert Cliff Nuclear Power Plant significantly enriched the county tax base in

Calvert and transformed Calvert's County government and economy. According to the current County Assistant Director of Economic Development, prior to the 1970s and nuclear power, the County had no economic development arm per se. With the more robust tax base, the County had the money to establish a dedicated Office of Economic Development. The current staff of nine operates under a Department Director who reports directly to the County Board of Commissioners.

The staff of nine divides responsibility for tourism development, agricultural development, business development and business retention. The Economic Development Department works closely with other departments such as Planning, Community Development, Housing and Communications and Media to synergize its efforts and further County goals. The Assistant Director of the Department notes that this cross-department cooperation and communication are vital to their efforts.

The most pressing issues and goals for Economic Development revolve around County wide concerns to create businesses and jobs within the County, to keep unemployment as low as possible and to utilize existing commercial space to its fullest.

The Assistant Director estimates their budget at about 1 to 1.3 million dollars per year. It is the smallest budget and department in Calvert County. Most of the budget goes to for salaries and marketing-support efforts.

The staff (pre-Covid) utilizes about 2,000 square feet of space in the County Administration building. A new building was under construction at the beginning of COVID which brought about a re-evaluation of office use. As a result, the building size has been reduced to accommodate tele-commuting. The Economic Development Office intends to have limited office space but retain a conference room for meetings and presentations that involve potential developers, stakeholders and others.

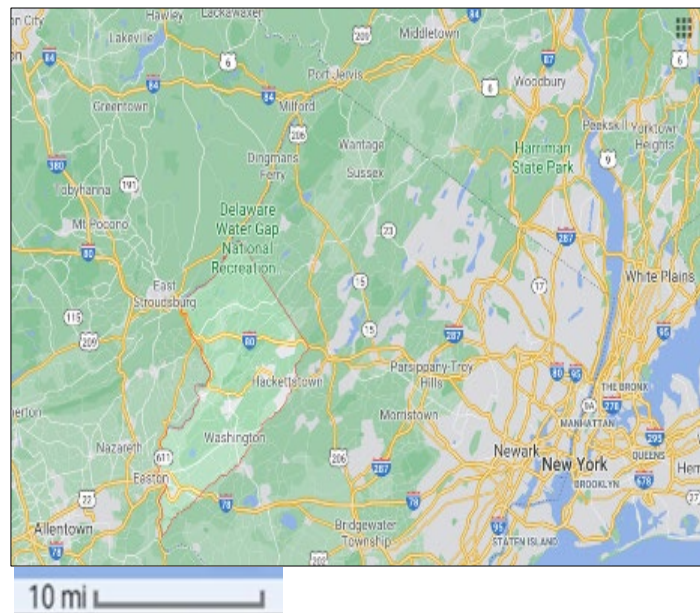
The County Department is supplemented by an Economic Development Advisory Committee, made up of local business and industry stakeholders which is appointed by the County Commissioners. The County Department and the Advisory Committee work closely to ensure that local interests are conveyed to the County Department. The County Department benefits from and utilizes the International Economic Development Council (EIDC) located in Washington, DC as a major resource and support. The EIDC has on-line resources for economic development as well as a staff and volunteers who will perform an assessment of a county's economic development structure, coming to the site and evaluating the entire program from website to marketing.

Like Salem County, Calvert County is a predominantly rural area. Its largest town is Chesapeake Beach with a population of 6,253. Its county seat is Prince Frederick with a 2020 population of 3,167. In spite of its small population, the County has a robust government administration with an active and engaged Economic Development Department. The County benefits from its large federal workforce as well as the nuclear plant and the LNG port and liquification plant, both sources of considerable tax revenue. Salem, with its potential wind farm port for the assembly, storage, and shipment of wind turbines and, perhaps,

manufacturing of turbine components, is poised for economic growth and vitality. Examination of, and the lessons from, how Calvert County used a similar scenario to synergize economic development is useful in developing an economic development strategy. The County receives \$20 million per year from the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear facility as a PILOT and the Dominion Cover LNG facility is expected to contribute an additional average of \$40 million in tax revenue to the county.

[WARREN COUNTY, NJ](#)

Warren County, NJ, located in the state's northwestern corner, is a rural area with a relatively small county population of 105,000. Like Salem, Warren has no large urban area within its borders, but it benefits from easy access to the Lehigh Valley/Poconos area to the west in Pennsylvania and to the NY metropolitan area directly east via both Interstate Routes 76 and 80 which traverse the County east to west in the southern and northern sections of the County. Like Salem County, higher wage urban jobs are accessible with a 30-40 minute commute. And, like Salem County, there is limited public bus service to Warren County from the commutable urban area of the State and region.



Warren County's population grew a good deal after Routes US-76 and US-80 were constructed. The County population went from 63,000 in 1960 to 108,000 in 2010. In the last ten years, though, the County has lost population with a 2019 estimate of 105,267. Unlike Salem, Warren has several relatively substantial population centers in Phillipsburg (2019 pop 14,344) and Hackettstown with a 2019 population of 9500. Both have large downtown commercial centers. Hackettstown is home to the Mars Chocolate plant which is the County's largest employer. Nonetheless, Warren considers itself primarily a rural area with a strong anti-economic development contingent within the population. This can be attributed to the substantial portion of the population that migrated to the area seeking cheaper housing and a rural lifestyle after the interstates were built.

In an interview with the County's Information Director, the similarities to Salem in Warren's quest to find the correct economic development structure were evident. Since 2016, the County has had an all-volunteer Economic Development Advisory Committee which replaced an earlier Economic Development Advisory Council that operated from 2011. Prior to that time, the local Chambers of Commerce had filled in for economic development after the Planning Department was re-organized to eliminate economic development in the 1980s.

County employees from the Public Information Department attend the meetings of the current Economic Development Committee in order to convey information on Committee initiatives to other County departments. This system has outcome issues due to a lack of follow up at the County staff level.

The current system for economic development in Warren County has no permanent staff and no dedicated office space. The webpage directs interested parties to the public information website and continues with the advice as follows: “Meanwhile, economic development and business assistance is available through many agencies and organizations active in Warren County, including chambers of commerce, municipal business improvement districts, and state agencies. [Visit this page](#) for more information about the resources available to you.”

There is a lack of county-wide agreement over the purpose and goal of economic development, but there is universal push for downtown development in the commercial centers. The Economic Development Advisory Committee relies on business associations. The County has two Business Improvement Districts, one each in Phillipsburg and Washington. The Greater Warren Chamber of Commerce which was centered around Phillipsburg was absorbed by the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce in Easton, PA, leaving small Hope Township as the only municipality in Warren with a Chamber of Commerce.

The warehouse development trend that the pandemic greatly amplified is an issue in Warren County, just as it is becoming one in Salem County. Increasingly, there is awareness of the need for a regional strategy for warehouse development due to the burden it can put on roads and the loss of value to the agriculture industry when farmland is developed.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Northumberland County, Pennsylvania is a small, generally rural county located about 60 miles north of Harrisburg with a population of about 91,000 residents. It was incorporated in 1772 from portions of Lancaster, Berks, Bedford, Cumberland and Northampton Counties. The County has a total land area of 478 square miles and borders the Susquehanna River which at one time was envisioned as part of the longest stretch of navigable barge canals in the world uniting the Chesapeake Bay with Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Lake Champlain, and the Hudson River. The County’s industrial heritage is natural resource based with agriculture, apparel, textiles,



and anthracite coal mining as principal industries. The county seat of Sunbury is a small town with a population just over 9,400 residents.

Economic Development in Northumberland County

Economic Development responsibilities for Northumberland County are coordinated through the County's Planning & Economic Development Office. This office has one person who acts as the Planning & Economic Development Coordinator with one, part time assistant. The office also staffs the Northumberland Industrial Development Authority which provides low interest loans to business and industry.

The economic development office is located in the County government complex and occupies approximately 800 s.f. of space. The operating budget for the office (including the planning function) is approximately \$125,000/year which does not include the cost of overhead and utilities since those costs are covered by Northumberland County government.

The office's economic development work is augmented however by two other organizations which promote new economic activity in a multi-county region of central Pennsylvania. One is DRIVE and the other is FOCUS Central PA.

"DRIVE"

DRIVE is a "Council of Governments"¹⁵ created to be the economic development team for the region. The commissioners of Montour and Columbia Counties formed DRIVE as a council of governments to serve as a regional spokesperson on economic development, a project management group, and to be a single point of contact for business looking to locate or expand within the Susquehanna Valley. DRIVE provides professional and market driven economic development services to create and retain family sustaining jobs. It has a four person staff which promotes new investment in a five-county jurisdiction including Columbia, Montour, Snyder, Union, and Northumberland Counties. The organization has a 15-member board of directors representing various county and stakeholder interests in the greater Susquehanna Valley. Funding is derived primarily from contributions by the member counties and a hotel tax, although the organization owns about 500,000 s.f. of real estate from which revenue is derived from sales and property rentals.¹⁶ The organization's budget is approximately \$300,000/year. DRIVE works closely in collaboration with FOCUS

¹⁵ *Councils of Governments (COGs) are voluntary associations that represent member local governments, mainly cities and counties, that seek to provide cooperative planning, coordination, and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern that cross jurisdictional lines. They are established by ordinance and subsequent Memoranda of Understanding.*

¹⁶ *Montour and Columbia Counties contributed a five-year pledge of \$50,000/year to get the organization started. Each county then contributed another \$50,000 through CARES Act funding for a one-time donation of \$250,000.*

Central PA and Northumberland County in coordinating economic development work in the community.

“FOCUS Central PA

FOCUS is a seven-county organization serving counties in the Central Pennsylvania region. It is a single person office and the primary marketing entity for the area which includes Northumberland County as a participating partner. FOCUS generates project leads for both the County Economic Development Office and DRIVE, which then handle the detailed work of securing a prospective site, working through the zoning, site planning and land use issues as well as addressing the infrastructure needs of the prospective company. Northumberland County contributes \$7,500 annually towards membership with FOCUS. The FOCUS annual operating budget is comparable in size to that of the County Planning & Economic Development Office. The dues from the participating counties are supplemented with funding from some of the region’s large corporate sponsors such as the regional utility company (PPL), railroads, banks and other institutions.

FOCUS staff concentrate on readily marketable and available sites. Central to its mission is ensuring that prospective industries are directed to locations where they will be able to move quickly to project development. The organization was the recent catalyst for a 300,000 s.f., \$30,000,000 hydroponic project which is the type of project that might be attractive for Salem County. This project has generated 60 family wage jobs in an economic sector that complements the agricultural heritage of the region.

SWEETWATER COUNTY, WY

Sweetwater County is the largest county in Wyoming with a land area of 10,491 square miles. It is located in the southwestern quadrant of the State and has a population estimated at just over 43,000 persons.

The County has a natural resource-based heritage. It is the largest producer of trona which is the primary source of sodium carbonate in the United States. Trona is used in glass production, solar panels, and other products. Agriculture is part of the County economy, with ranching, wheat and cotton as the primary agricultural industries. The County also has significant oil and gas production; coal extraction; and a sizeable tourism economy. The Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area is located in the southwestern part of Sweetwater County, which makes the County the third



most popular tourism destination in Wyoming, behind only Teton and Park Counties. The County has a very active and highly rated community college, the Western Wyoming Community College, located in Rock Springs.

Economic Development in Sweetwater County

The Sweetwater County Economic Development Coalition is a partnership between the cities of Green River, Rock Springs, and the County government. The economic development effort in Sweetwater County has undergone a transition over the past 20 years from what was the Sweetwater Economic Development Association to the more formal coalition that exists today.

The Sweetwater County Economic Development Coalition was established formally in 2016. The office is housed in the County government building in the Land Use Department and occupies approximately 150 square feet of space. The Executive Director for the SCEDC is supported by the Department Director when needed, but essentially the organization relies on the Director as the sole staff member. The SCEDC has a six-member advisory board

The annual budget for the SCEDC is approximately \$100,000 with equal contributions from the two cities and the County. The County government also assumes responsibility for the office, insurance and other overhead costs. All of the SCEDC budget is for economic development and does not fund other activities in the land use department.

Marketing, which is limited currently due to the COVID pandemic, is funded through the annual budget. The Wyoming Business Council, a state organization based in Cheyenne, provides marketing support as well as a range of business incentive programs. The SCEDC did participate in trade shows in the pre-COVID era and hopes again to be able to recruit from International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), aeronautic associations and other national trade shows and events.

The SCEDC does not own any land or industrial sites, but the organization hopes to evolve into a 501(c)3 organization over the next five years so that it can acquire property and own ready-to-build industrial sites. The Sweetwater County Airport, located in Rock Springs and served by United Airlines, is a regional facility with connections to Denver and other regional hubs. It is the area around the Airport which the SCEDC views as potential industrial and commercial property, which it hopes to market in the future. The organization is also considering a quarter penny tax that would be dedicated to economic development activity.

COUNTY COMPARISONS

In order to better evaluate possible Economic Development constructs for Salem County and offer a simple comparison of the four counties examined a comparison chart was prepared. Each county's economic development entity was researched and, at least, one interview was

conducted with each. The matrix below summarizes the basic details for each of the four counties, highlighting the areas of similarity and basic differences that might affect economic development in each.

Table 7
Generalized Demographics and Characteristics for the Four Case Study Counties

| DEMOGRAPHIC | SALEM | WARREN | CALVERT | SWEETWATER | NORTHUMBERLAND |
|--|----------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Size in Square Miles | 331.9 | 356.5 | 213.2 | 10,427 | 458.7 |
| Population | 68,531 | 105,267 | 95,525 | 43,521 | 90,483 |
| Density | 188 | 295.2 | 434 | 4.2 | 197.3 |
| Median Age | 43.1 | 44.5 | 40.1 | 35.3 | 44.1 |
| Over 60 Years | 27.8% | 26.7% | 22.7% | 17.7% | 30.0% |
| Under 10 Years | 11.2% | 9.5% | 11.8% | 15.2% | 10.0% |
| Median Household Income | \$68,531 | \$84,437 | \$112,380 | \$74,843 | \$48,671 |
| Poverty Rate | 12.1% | 6.8% | 6% | 11.5% | 13.3% |
| 2019 Unemployment | 4.8% | 4.5% | 3.7% | 3.7% | 5.6% |
| December 2020 unemployment rate | 8.1% | 6.3% | 4.6% | 6.0% | 6.2% |
| High School grad % | 87.7% | 93.4% | 95.8% | 92.8% | 88.0% |
| Associate Degree % | 10.8% | 8.0% | 9.0% | 12.1% | 6.4% |
| Bachelors Degree % | 20.1% | 33.9% | 31.7% | 22.5% | 16.6% |
| Mean Commute Time in minutes ¹⁷ | 26 | 36 | 42 | 20 | 24 |
| % of Workforce Commuting Out of County | 38.2% | 50.5% | 46.9% | 1.6% | 49.3% |
| Office Logistics | | | | | |
| Type of Office | TBD | Advisory Committee | County Gov't Dept | County Gov't Department | County Department with Regional Support |
| Staff # | TBD | 0 | 9 | 1 | 1 full and 1 part-time |
| Budget ¹⁸ | TBD | \$50,000 | \$1-1.3 M | \$150,000 | \$125,000 plus regional support |

Demographics: (ACS 2019 1 yr.) U.S. Census Bureau (2019). *American Community Survey 1- year estimates; and various state databases*

SUMMARY

From this background analysis, several key findings emerge. Salem County has the location and other assets to take advantage of a more aggressive economic development agenda. It has a strong highway and transportation network. The advent of a Wind Port and revitalized

¹⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Quickfacts

¹⁸ The budget estimates are inclusive of overhead costs that in some cases are paid for as part of the home agency's in-kind service. For example, both Sweetwater County and Northumberland County governments pay for insurance, office space, utilities, and so forth.

Port of Salem will contribute significantly to the economic base of the County. The predominantly rural geography and small-town lifestyle is appealing, while at the same time within an easy commute of large, urbanized areas.

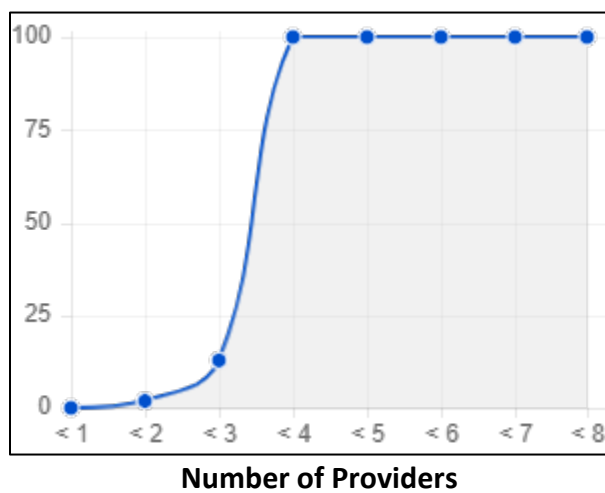
Challenges exist, however. One of the most significant is the fact that areas of the County with the infrastructure necessary to support large, commercial or industrial development are located in western Salem County where redevelopment issues are dominant. There are few locations where ready-to-build tracts of land exist. While some municipalities such as Carneys Point are extending sewer and water capacity, readily developable land remains limited.

As implied by this study, there is no cohesive economic development strategy or coordinated approach to economic development in Salem County. No central office exists and development goals are fragmented among many agencies and levels of government. The type and mix of new development desired, along with the location of such development will need to be examined.

The Post COVID economic environment will be greatly different from that of past years, which in some ways will shape the County's development. More people will have the option to work from home. That may mean that living in Salem County, while working for a corporate headquarters located well beyond the County becomes increasingly possible. This will depend, however, on the telecommunications and broadband infrastructure being in place to accommodate such a lifestyle.

BROADBAND ACCESS IN SALEM COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Number of Providers :4
Fixed Broadband :96%
Fixed Download :96%
Fixed Upload :96%
Most Common Download :100 - 1,000 mbps
Most Common Upload :10 - 15 mbps



Source: Federal Communications Commission. [Connect2HealthFCC - Mapping Broadband Health in America 2017](#)

There is an opportunity now to take advantage of the significant influx of new Federal and State funding opportunities stemming from the COVID19 stimulus programs. These programs may be able to fund or match some of the economic development priorities that stem from this study.

Regarding the creation of an economic development office or entity, there are a number of issues and questions that will need to be addressed. As is evident from the case studies offered, other small counties similar in population to Salem have established and sustained economic development offices. At a minimum, and based on these case studies, a prototypical concept for a Salem County Economic Development Department might look something like this:

- **Office Size and Location:** A minimum of 300 to 400 square feet, located in an existing facility to be determined.
- **Staffing:** 1 Director and 1 Administrative or Programmatic Assistant
- **Management and Oversight:** Questions need to be addressed about the independence of any Economic Development Entity. Should the entity operate on its own, or should it be part of a larger management structure, either as part of a County government agency or the County College or other organization.
- **Mission.** The function of the entity must be clearly defined. Will it encompass all aspects of economic development, or will it be limited to industrial and commercial development? How will any new entity be linked to other economic development issues such as tourism, or retail development and downtown redevelopment?
- **Budget:** \$325,000 - \$350,000 annually with in-kind support for overhead costs and partnerships for marketing and outreach.
- **Partnerships:** Most of the counties examined benefitted from close relationships with other organizations that helped to market the county, assist in site location, and promote financing opportunities and incentives.
- **Close Collaboration and Communication.** Several of the counties contacted stressed the need for close collaboration among the agencies and organizations that might be tasked with some aspect of planning for and ultimately implementing economic development projects and programs. This united effort is essential in achieving tangible results and in sustaining the economic development agenda.

The following section of this study examines these issues in more detail, based on the guidance provided by the Economic Development Advisory Council and the feedback obtained by County stakeholders. In addition, Section 3 also establishes a policy framework and actions that will advance and sustain the County economy.

SECTION 3

ENVISIONING THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

One of the objectives of this planning process is to engage key stakeholders about the mission of a Salem County Economic Development Office, and the key issues with which it should be involved.

To aid in accomplishing this, the subcommittee of the Salem County Economic Development Advisory Council distributed two surveys to groups outside of the Advisory Council. The first was to the Salem County Chamber of Commerce. The second was to the fifteen mayors of Salem County's municipalities. The surveys were sent on Thursday, May 13, 2021 with a request for responses on or before Monday, May 17, 2021. The Salem County Chamber of Commerce posted a reminder in its E-News on Wednesday, May 19th, so survey results were accepted on that date.

The intent of the surveys was to assess stakeholder opinions about the potential role of a Salem County Economic Development Office. Responses to the survey helped the Advisory Council and the consultant team determine the priorities for such an agency, as well as the tasks for which an Economic Development Director would be involved.

OVERVIEW

The results of the surveys indicate a significant degree of agreement in two areas among both business officials and mayoral responses to Question 1, as shown in Table 1 on the following page. (A complete survey and response document is found in the appendix of this strategy.)

Question 1 asked: Consideration is being given to the creation of an Economic Development Office in Salem County. If such an office was created, what would you see as the functions of that office that would be most beneficial in promoting economic development? (Please check all that apply.)

As can be seen from the survey results, recruiting new business and industry and helping small businesses in the County were the areas where a majority of the business community and the mayoral leadership agreed were important priorities. Grant writing and financing were of concern to a majority of the mayors. Marketing the County, downtown revitalization, and business retention were of greater interest to majorities in the business community.

Of the business responses, the overwhelming majority (95%) were from businesses located in the County. Responses were evenly distributed throughout the County, with the largest number of responses coming from Salem City. Responses were also representative of small business, with only 19.6% of responses coming from businesses or organizations with more than 100 employees.

Table 8
Top Priorities for an Economic Development Office in Salem County

| SURVEY REPOSSES | % OF ALL RESPONSES - BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY SURVEY | % OF ALL RESPONSES - SALEM COUNTY MAYORAL SURVEY |
|---|--|---|
| Helping your business write and obtain grants and other financing | 37.9 | 54.6 |
| Marketing the County as a good place to live and conduct business | 67.2 | 45.5 |
| Supporting small businesses | 67.2 | 54.6 |
| Developing the tourism, agritourism, and ecotourism industries | 46.6 | 9.1 |
| Recruiting new businesses and industries | 87.9 | 81.8 |
| Helping to revitalize downtown business district | 70.7 | 36.4 |
| Promoting the construction of new housing development | 20.7 | 0.0 |
| Fostering special events that promote niche industries such as wineries, breweries, ethnic festivals, and heritage businesses | 41.4 | 18.2 |
| Helping investors work through the regulatory process | 43.1 | 45.5 |
| Promoting business retention | 58.6 | 27.3 |

Note: there were 58 responses from the business community and 12 of the 15 mayors responded as of Wednesday, May 19, 2021.

There were also “other” written responses provided by several respondents. They included the following:

- Teach businesses how to market their business. and the area by cleaning up the streets and fronts of their places. If their appearance is unkempt, it affects the town as a whole. The "broken window" syndrome.
- Provide programs for underserved and poor; environmental justice.
- Work with the different towns to reduce crime. Make sure the businesses that are near residential areas don't adversely affect those residents because those residents will tell people don't come to Salem County.
- Promoting partnerships with businesses to share services to attract people/businesses to the area.
- Deal with the crime problems in Salem and Pennsgrove. Upgrade the quality of elementary education.
- Find out why businesses are leaving or closing. Help to retain them.

- Assist new and existing businesses navigate approval processes. Gather community interest in what types of business would be welcomed and solicit same to locate to our area.
- Recruiting new business yes - not so much industries. We are not going to get another Dupont.
- Marketing existing available locations for industry (manufacturing) and housing.

FRAMING DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Using the feedback from the two surveys, drafts of duties and responsibilities for a possible Salem County Economic Development Office and a Director's position were prepared. These drafts were reviewed with the Economic Development Advisory Council with agreement reached on both of the documents.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Salem County Economic Development Office

The following insert summarizes the duties and responsibilities of a prospective economic development office based in part on the responses received from the business community and municipal mayors. A complete copy of the document is found in the Appendix.

Principal Duties and Responsibilities of a Salem County Economic Development Office

The Mission of the Office

The mission of the Salem County Office of Economic Development is to attract, retain and grow businesses; pursue opportunities for economic diversification; market the development and redevelopment potential in Salem County; build a strong entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem; help reposition the County as it emerges from the COVID19 Crisis; work with various business executives, entrepreneurs, agencies and organizations to provide state-of-the-art services and support to the business community; and enhance the Quality of Life for County citizens.

Services of the Office

The Office of Economic Development is a first point of contact for site selection consultants, commercial real estate professionals, prospective investors, new businesses, entrepreneurs, and business executives: The services provided by the office include: • Aggressively marketing Salem County, including conducting familiarization tours to acquaint clients with the area; • Supporting business recruitment by identifying potential development sites and the available commercial inventory; • Assisting clients in reviewing the local permitting requirements and facilitating the approval process; • Scheduling meetings with key elected officials and regulatory agency representatives on a regular basis; • Exploring funding opportunities, including available tax credits and incentives to support small businesses, downtown revitalization, and redevelopment opportunities.

Marketing Salem County for New Business Investment

Promoting the benefits of establishing, expanding, and relocating businesses in Salem County, New Jersey is the principal objective of the office. Targeting business development efforts that focus on the County's primary industry clusters, development sites, and redevelopment opportunities is paramount. This involves developing and coordinating a widespread marketing campaign, informing businesses of available tax incentives and

financing, and building awareness of Salem County as a destination for investment among business executives, local, regional and state agencies, site selection consultants and real estate brokers. The goal is to ensure that prospective investors see Salem County as an advantageous development opportunity.

Business retention and attraction provide many benefits to the economy and enhances the quality of life for County residents. Industrial and commercial businesses, both large and small, provide stable employment with good wages and benefits, invest in buildings and equipment, and purchase local goods and services. This helps the County and Regional economies grow and expand.

Retaining Jobs and Promoting Local Entrepreneurship

Bringing new business to Salem County is an important priority, but that is just one facet of the economic development mission. Existing businesses often need help to grow and expand their product line. That might include exploring grants or loan programs to help finance expansion or working with job training programs to ensure access to a skilled labor pool. Supporting local entrepreneurs in new business startups and finding ways to develop new product lines can enhance economic sustainability, diversity, and innovation.

Being a Responsible Partner

The staff of the Economic Development Office recognizes that promoting Salem County as a great place to work and do business involves a professional collaboration among multiple agencies and organizations. Partners in economic development extend beyond the business community. The Office of Economic Development is committed to work with multiple local, regional, and state agencies to ensure a high level of service and support for business prospects and existing business and industry.

As was outlined in the background section of this strategy, three of the four prototypical counties contacted had an economic development director. A few had staff assistants. Based on the examples of base expenditures for the economic development offices and again, the priorities outlined by the survey responses, a summary of the primary responsibilities for the economic development director are as follows.

Principal Duties and Responsibilities of a Salem County Economic Development Director

Nature of Work: The Economic Development Director will be expected to perform a variety of administrative, technical and professional services including preparation and implementation of economic and community development plans, programs, and projects. This is a new, full-time position and one that will require the establishment of a new Salem County Office of Economic Development. The Economic Development Director is responsible for marketing the distinct competitive advantages of Salem County to retain, expand and attract businesses; work closely with business, educational and institutional partners to maintain a dynamic environment that positions businesses to excel and prosper; balancing the interests of real estate developers, businesses and others desiring to invest in the County while upholding the community's vision for sustainable growth and development. This position is multifaceted. The Economic Development Director should be creative and organized and able to build on the community's shared vision for the future. The Director is also expected to cultivate, nurture, and sustain strong relationships with appointed officials, business owners, elected officials, and other stakeholders of the community that are framed by the County's vision, values, and interests. The position is responsible for working closely with the Salem County Economic Development Advisory Council, other County agencies and municipalities in promoting the business and economic development interests of the community. The position will include assistance in the planning and coordination of County economic development projects, marketing the County's economic development opportunities, assisting businesses with local and State permitting

processes, and providing necessary research and support for economic development projects, including grant and possible financing options. The position will also be responsible for devising strategies for sustaining the office and overseeing its administration and support.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities: At a minimum, the Economic Development Director will be expected to manage the following duties and responsibilities:

- Direct economic development initiatives to achieve the goals and objectives outlined by the Salem County Economic Development Strategy and guided by the Economic Development Advisory Council;
- Prepare reports and administer budgets for the Office of Economic Development;
- Plan and execute cooperative agreements or MOUs between the community organizations involved in the economic development program where joint initiatives among agencies is needed to advance projects or programs;
- Delegate and direct assignments and establish and maintain cooperative working relationships with coworkers and other individuals in the Economic Development Office and affiliated agencies;
- Speak before community and civic organizations, government agencies and other public gatherings and events;
- Build on new trends and opportunities such as maximizing the potential of the planned wind port in Lower Alloway's Creek Township;
- Market and promote the County and its economic development opportunities through traditional as well as multi-media platforms;
- Collaborate with County, Regional and State Economic Development Agencies to recruit new business and industry;
- Work closely with businesses to formulate strategies for business retention and redevelopment;
- Serve as an advocate for economic development in coordination with County and municipal interests;
- Provide guidance as needed to existing and new business prospects to help them obtain the technical and programmatic support necessary;
- Provide information and/or make presentations to County boards and agencies, municipal officials, chambers of commerce, civic groups, businesses, individuals, and the general public on economic development issues, programs, services, and plans.
- Create an updatable inventory of available sites, buildings and properties in the County for development and redevelopment;
- Lead the development of grant applications, funding proposals, contracts and other necessary documents as may be required for business and industrial promotion and investment.
- Monitor legislation and regulations relating to economic development, programs, and promotional opportunities;
- Maintains strong working relationships with the general public, area businesses, clients, the media, and others;
- Keep appropriate statistics and data to indicate trends in economic development and make evaluations and recommendations concerning the same which may serve as the basis for recommendations for annual updates of the Economic Development Action Strategy as applicable;
- Serve as a member of various staff committees, and implement other tasks as assigned.

Training and Experience Required: The position of Economic Development Director will require an individual to be first and foremost a self-starter and a generalist capable of assuming a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities. The applicant must demonstrate managerial, technical, marketing and recruitment experience and provide documentation as follows:

Educational Credentials. Graduation from a four-year college or university, preferably with specialization in economic and community development or a related field; or any equivalent combination of experience and training.

Background and Experience. Considerable knowledge of business development, community, and economic development. Working knowledge of municipal zoning and infrastructure, and planning programs and processes. A minimum of five (5) years of experience in the public or private sectors as an agency or departmental manager. Knowledge of county government and Southern New Jersey is desirable but not a prerequisite. Ability to establish working relationships with other organizations and economic development practitioners.

Communication Skills. Ability to communicate effectively to groups and individuals, engineers, architects, contractors, developers, businesses, supervisors, employees, and the general public.

Technical Skills. Ability to prepare and analyze reports and data, and have skill in the operation and supervision of necessary tools and equipment, i.e. computer, social media platforms, word processing, spreadsheet software, and general office equipment (telephone, fax, copier, calculator, etc).

ESTIMATING AN OPERATING BUDGET

In the analysis of four similarly populated, rural counties, the average expense for economic development office operations was approximately \$150,000. This is the bare minimum. Expenses in this case did not include many of the overhead costs associated with personnel benefits and office space. In most instances, the county government provided office space and benefits for the economic development director and any additional staff.

Assumptions

The pro-forma provides explanations of the assumptions made for many of the line item estimates of costs. In most instances, average national costs were used. While these estimates can be increased significantly for almost all of the line items, the intent is to provide a reasonable, minimal cost for creating an Office of Economic Development. Where an existing agency or organization is willing to serve as the host location for the Economic Development Office, many of the overhead costs can be eliminated from this estimate.

A modestly sized, 300 s.f. office was used as an estimate for many of the overhead costs. An office of this size can easily accommodate a director work station, an assistant's work station, and chairs for any visitors. If a government sponsor provides the work space, it is assumed that there will be other space in the building to accommodate rest rooms, conference rooms, and production space. For rented space, independent of a government or other agency sponsor, it is assumed that restrooms and meeting room space will be provided elsewhere in the building.

With regard to travel, it is assumed that the director and assistant will use their own vehicles and be reimbursed at the Federal rate for any mileage. It is also assumed that parking at no cost to the employees will be available on site or in proximity at no additional cost.

There are many different combinations of cost sharing that can be part of a funding solution. If for example, the Economic Development office can utilize government services for GIS mapping and data retrieval, mailings and so forth, and some other entity for marketing, media, etc., this represents a hybrid entity that might still be considered a stand-alone enterprise.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The Economic Development Subcommittee met on July 8, 2021 to discuss the status of the planning process to date. The committee members felt that a budget, inclusive of operating, personnel and overhead costs in the range of \$300,000 - \$350,000 annually is what is needed in order for an Office of Economic Development to function effectively.

A generalized breakdown of such a budget is suggested on the following page.

Proposed Operating Budget for a Salem County Office of Economic Development

| LINE ITEM | ESTIMATE OF COSTS |
|---|--------------------------|
| Personnel Costs for a Director and Assistant (including benefits) | \$160,000 |
| Office Space (Rental), Equipment and Furnishings | \$40,000 |
| Materials and Supplies | \$25,000 |
| Travel, Training and Hospitality | \$20,000 |
| Marketing and Promotion | \$50,000 |
| Consultant Services | \$30,000 |
| TOTAL | \$325,000 |

ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Possible Office Locations

There are several options that were discussed for the location of the Economic Development Office. These include the Salem Community College, the Salem County Improvement Authority, the Salem County government complex, and a site in downtown Salem owned by Salem County Improvement Authority.

At a minimum, the office space chosen should be approximately 500 square feet, or large enough to accommodate the director, assistant and the necessary space for visitors, furniture and equipment. If public space is provided this would reduce the cost of operation, assuming that such space is provided rent-free.

Overall Management and Supervision

There are multiple scenarios that would work for the management and supervision of the Office of Economic Development. The Salem County Economic Development Advisory Council would serve as the advisory arm of the office. The Director would report to the management structure on a regular basis, as prescribed by the host entity's leadership. Management and oversight of the physical space and any technical assistance would come from the host entity if it is one of the public agencies offering space.

Ultimately, it will be the decision of the County partners to decide where best to locate the office and how to structure the policy and reporting responsibilities.

Funding and Sustaining the Office of Economic Development

The Economic Development Subcommittee envisions the Office being funded as an initial start-up for a three-year (3 year) period and then sustained through the ongoing work of the Economic Development Director and staff. Potential funding sources for the initial three-year period include:

- Public Funding – NJ EDA: \$425,000

- Private Sector Funding – Corporate and Business Contributions - \$425,000
- County Government Partners - \$125,000

The objective would be for the ongoing funding, beyond the third year, to come from grants, fund raising, technical services provided by the office, and future contributions by public/private partners.

SECTION 4

OUTLINING POLICY AND AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

THE TIME IS RIGHT!



The Economic Development Advisory Council believes the time is right to create the Office of Economic Development. There are several reasons why.

Wind Port Development. This port project, estimated to cost up to \$400,000,000 will be home to multiple factories that will build the necessary components for offshore wind turbines. It is also strategically situated for component staging, final assembly, and

transport (collectively known as marshalling). At full build-out, the Port will support up to 1,500 permanent, high-quality manufacturing, assembly, and operations jobs. Overall, the Port is expected to support up to \$500 million of new economic activity within the State and the region each year. The development of the port will have a transformational impact on both Salem County and the greater southern New Jersey Region. An office of economic development will help to guide and target those impacts to create new opportunities for industry and jobs throughout the County.

Rail Line Infrastructure. Over the past decade, the NJ DOT and the U.S. DOT through TIGER Grants and Rail Freight Assistance grants have led to the complete rehabilitation of the Salem Short Line Railroad. Connecting Salem County's existing and future rail traffic with Philadelphia and other markets is necessary to ensure the viability of the short line operator. That means bringing new users to the rail line and increasing the potential for new traffic.

Revitalizing the Port of Salem. Through the South Jersey Port Corporation, a U.S. DOT INFRA grant was just received for \$9,000,000 to help redevelop deteriorated infrastructure and make the port accessible for the potential wind energy business that will come from the large, \$400,000,000 Wind Port facility being planned for Lower Alloways Creek Township. New shipments through the port will also enhance the potential for expanding rail freight traffic and intermodal shipments of various kinds.

The Proposed Implementation Timeline

July 2021. The Salem County Economic Development Advisory Council considers support for the creation of an Office of Economic Development.

August 2021. Support for the Office, pending endorsement by the Advisory Council is presented to the New Jersey EDA for its consideration as a partner in funding the office.

August/September 2021. Additional outreach to the business community and public partners to support implementation of the proposal concept.

September 2021. The Negotiating Team is appointed, a scenario for public sector involvement and funding is established, and a protocol for approaching private industry is outlined.

October 2021. Commitments for private sector funding are secured and public sector funding is committed for the FY 2022 budget.

November 2021. Recruitment begins for an Economic Development Director and assistant.

December 2021. Staff commitments are made and office space and supplies are established for a January 2022 start date.

FRAMING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Based on the findings from the Business & Industry Survey and the Survey Responses from Municipal Mayors, the following economic development goals and strategies for Salem County are those for which there appear to be significant agreement. Each of these principal goals has one or more near term strategies associated with it that would be implemented by the new Economic Development Director. This recommended framework for an Action Agenda follows.

GOAL 1: Recruit New Business and Industry

Strategy 1: Identify Marketable, Ready-to-Build Sites

Strategy 2: Build on the Potential of the Wind Port Development

Strategy 3: Prepare Tear Sheets on Each Site

Strategy 4: Develop Webpage Outlining Targeted Sites

Strategy 5: Design Social Media Outreach to Targeted Businesses and Industries

Strategy 6: Sponsor and Host Familiarization Tour for Commercial Brokers and Economic Development Agencies

Prospective Partners

- New Jersey Business Action Center
- Salem County Community College
- South Jersey Economic Development District
- Salem County Chamber of Commerce
- Gloucester and Salem County Board of Realtors
- Ørsted
- PSEG
- South Jersey Port Corporation

Prospective Funding Sources

1. U.S. EDA American Recovery Act Programs, including:
 - Good Jobs Challenge
 - Economic Adjustment Assistance
 - Travel Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

- Build Back Better Regional Challenge
- Statewide Planning, Research and Networks
- Good Jobs Challenge
- Traditional U.S. EDA funding sources
- 2. N.J. EDA/Economic Recovery and Growth (ERG) Grant and other Programs
- 3. N.J. BPU
- 4. COVID Programs
- 5. U.S.D.A. Rural Development Programs (Rural Business Development Grant and Infrastructure funding)
- 6. U.S.D.A. ReConnect Grant Program

GOAL 2: Revitalize Downtown Business Districts

Strategy 1: *Meet with Municipal Officials to Discuss Needs and Priorities*

Strategy 2: *Sponsor a County Workshop to Outline Downtown Programs and Redevelopment Strategies*

Strategy 3: *Develop a Timeline and Strategic Partnerships to Implement Key Projects*

Prospective Partners

- Salem County Municipal Governments
- Cumberland-Salem-Cape May Workforce Development Board
- N.J. Travel & Tourism
- Previously Listed Partners
- N.J. DCA

Prospective Funding Sources

1. N.J. Travel and tourism
2. Bank Foundations
3. N.J. Department of Community Affairs, Small Cities Program
4. N.J. DOT Safe Routes to Schools, Safe Routes to Transit and other Programs
5. N.J. DCA Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program

GOAL 3: Develop Ways to Support Small Business and Business Retention

Strategy 1: *Outline All Funding Opportunities through COVID and other New Federal and State Funding Programs*

Strategy 2: *Prepare a Business Retention Handbook*

Prospective Partners

N.J. Small Business Development Centers

- N.J. Business Action Center
- Salem County Chamber of Commerce

- Bank Foundations
- Cumberland-Salem-Cape May Workforce Development Board
- N.J. DCA Small Cities Program
- N.J. DCA Local Planning Assistance Division

Prospective Funding Sources

1. Retail and Downtown Companies/Organizations
2. N.J. Business Action Center/N.J. EDA
3. U.S.D.A. Rural Business Development Grant Program

GOAL 4: Market the County

Strategy 1: Develop a Salem County Marketing Consortium

Strategy 2: Brand the County

Strategy 3: Assemble a Multi-Year Marketing Budget and Program

Prospective Partners

- Salem County Department of Tourism
- Industry Consortium/Salem County
- N.J. Division of Travel & Tourism/Delaware River Region
- Salem County Hospitality and Tourism Venues
- South Jersey Economic Development District
- State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC)
- Municipal Governments

Prospective Funding Sources

1. N.J. Division of Travel and Tourism Grant Program
2. Salem County Department of Tourism
3. Industry Consortium/Salem County
4. Salem County Hospitality and Tourism Venues

GOAL 5: Secure Funding and Financial Support for Business and Industry

Strategy 1: Prepare an Inventory of State, Federal and Other Funding Programs

Strategy 2: Explore Ways the Public Sector can help with Business Expansion through Infrastructure Extension, Brownfield Clean up, Redevelopment Designations, and other Public Actions

Prospective Partners

- New Jersey Business Action Center
- Salem County Community College

- South Jersey Economic Development District
- Salem County Chamber of Commerce
- Gloucester and Salem County Board of Realtors
- South Jersey Port Corporation
- Verizon Corporation
- Comcast Corporation
- N.J. DEP

Prospective Funding Sources

1. American Recovery Act Infrastructure Grant Program
2. U.S. EDA Public Facilities and Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant Programs
3. N.J. EDA Economic Redevelopment & Growth (ERG) and other Programs
4. U.S. DOT INFRA or BUILD Program
5. N.J. DOT Freight Impact Grant Program
6. NTIA Broadband Grant Program
7. U.S.D.A. ReConnect Grant Program
8. Private Corporations

SUMMARY

The concept for an Office of Economic Development is based on multiple discussions by the Economic Development Advisory Council as well as public survey responses. The establishment of an Economic Development Office in Salem County, as envisioned, will be driven by local community requests and aspirations.

There are many initiatives underway that will impact the County's future and how development and redevelopment occur. In order to have a voice in these impacts and help to direct new investment to areas of the County where it is wanted and needed, an Office of Economic Development is critical in shaping development decisions that benefit Salem County's economy.

In order to be successful, this initiative will require the commitments of many partners both public and private. It will also involve bringing on board an economic development professional with the vision, drive, and enthusiasm needed to build and sustain the operation.

The current environment offers an excellent opportunity to create this Office of Economic Development and forge a positive economic future for Salem County. The benefits from this effort and the increased ability to harness the impacts from the infrastructure investments that have been and will be made, will be transformational, both for the County and those municipalities seeking to share in new development and redevelopment investments.

SECTION 5

FOSTERING A STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC RESILIENCY AND COVID RECOVERY

The analysis in this section of the Economic Development Strategy is based in part on the findings and recommendations in the previous sections. A report on the impacts of the COVID pandemic was prepared by Dr. Richard Perniciaro and presented to the South Jersey Economic Development District in 2020. The full report is appendicized to this Economic Development Strategy. A summary of the impacts on the economic sectors of the County economy is described as follows.

CURRENT IMPACTS

There are three industry sectors identified as ‘at-risk’ from the pandemic’s disruptions to the economy. They are 1. Manufacturing, 2) Retail Trade, and 3) Education, Health Care and Social Assistance. However, these sectors represent just over 10% of the County’s economy which is dominated by the utility sector, agriculture, logistics, government, and other services.

While the information available does not allow an accounting of the pandemic’s impact on individual businesses operating in the county, it does allow the identification of industries that pose the biggest threat, given their exposure to business disruptions from COVID19 and the policies adopted to control the pandemic. In addition, the information available helps to identify the reasons that Salem County is in many ways shielded from the impacts of the economic disruptions but caution still is needed going forward:

- The Utility sector has not been significantly impacted by the overall economic disruptions. It is the epitome of the “essential industry”.
- The county is not overly reliant on residents employed in the industries most impacted at the national level from the pandemic, especially the tourism sector. While the industries in the county may not be as large or diverse as those in larger counties, the residents work in a wide range of industries providing a buffer to the loss of earnings and income.
- The Educational Services and Healthcare sectors provide the largest risk according to the Perniciaro Report. While the pandemic has provided increased demands on some parts of the healthcare industries, other sectors have seen a fall in demand. A recent U.S. News Survey of community health indicates that Salem County lags behind the

State.¹⁹ As of August 2021, new Covid 19 cases per capita are running at a rate among the highest of New Jersey counties and vaccination rates are among the lowest. Only Cumberland County has a lower vaccination rate.²⁰ Clearly, the health care industry continues to be stressed and has challenges moving forward.

In summary, three points from the Perniciaro Report need to be emphasized:

1. The latest evidence from national surveys indicates that many workers may not return to their previous jobs even if they become available. This is particularly true in education and social services. The at-risk industry sectors have been identified so that training in these areas may be given a priority as the economy becomes more active.
2. While this study deals with a broad measure of economic activity, GDP, there are many sectors of the economy that need attention in terms of study and strategies. These include public as well as private concerns, any that rely on timely and consistent revenues and incomes. There will be a host of unexpected and lagging economic consequences.

As residents in this region know from the recession of 2007, the retail industry, the housing and construction industries and a host of other sectors are at risk of long-term damage from the current economic disruptions. They need to be monitored, assisted and supported to survive.

3. Salem County's economy is shielded by the essential nature of the Utility sector. While this study is focused on a two-year horizon, discussions about centralized power generation plants and their fuels are central to the plans for the expanded role of sustainable energy. However, changes to the present structure are not anticipated in the timeframe of this study.

INNOVATION AND RECOVERY ISSUES: ACTIONS TO CHART A PATH FORWARD

From the data and trends that were identified above and other places in the background section of this Action Strategy, and from the feedback received from community stakeholders, innovation and economic recovery in Salem County will center on four (4) key issues: 1) The Vulnerable Sectors of the Economy Impacted by COVID; 2) The Emerging Clean

¹⁹ <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/new-jersey/salem-county>

²⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/new-jersey-covid-cases.html>

Energy Economy; 3) The Expanding Logistics Industry; and 4) Redevelopment Opportunities. These three issues are outlined in more detail as follows.

The Vulnerable Sectors of the Economy

The weakest of the municipal economies can have significant impacts on the County as a whole. As the three vulnerable sectors of the economy are examined: Manufacturing, Retail Trade, and Education, Healthcare and Social Services, it is evident that these industry sectors are concentrated in Salem City and the municipalities along the western end of the NJ Route 49 corridor. As the County moves through its business and industry recruitment strategy, this area should be prioritized for new industrial development. Funding for brownfield revitalization will be key in reinvesting in and repurposing commercial and industrial properties.

The Cumberland-Salem-Cape May Workforce Development Board can assist in retraining workers and helping to promote opportunities for existing businesses and industries to expand their product and service lines to increase resiliency and sustain their operations. The newly initiated WIN Program offers an opportunity for the WDB to take a close look at struggling industrial sectors geographically and to work with the County in creating a strategy for revitalization.

The one trillion-dollar U.S. infrastructure legislation provides an opportunity to expand industrial and commercial sites by investing in the highway improvements, sewer, water and other utilities needed to attract new industries.

Business retention in these communities is also a critical issue. Bringing experts from the New Jersey Business Action Center, the NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development to talk about ways to retain business in the downtowns and distressed manufacturing and retail centers of the County will also help to promote economic sustainability.

Recruiting New Business and Industry: The Emerging Clean Energy Economy

The pending development of the Wind Port in Lower Alloways Creek Township, the construction of the Ørsted “Ocean Wind II” and EDF/Shell’s 1,510 MW Atlantic Shores Project off the Atlantic County coast have the potential to drive considerable new business and industry opportunities in Salem County.²¹

According to the 2020 New Jersey Offshore Wind Strategic Plan, Energy Supply chain sectors impacted include the following opportunities.²²

²¹ <https://www.energy.gov/eere/wind/wind-manufacturing-and-supply-chain>

²² https://www.nj.gov/bpu/pdf/Final_NJ_OWSP_9-9-20.pdf

- **Developers:** Typically, offshore wind development companies are responsible for developing wind farms within designated lease areas. The developers lead the development, construction, and operation phases of offshore wind projects.
- **Original equipment manufacturers:** Original equipment manufacturers provide the major components to developers; these components include nacelles, blades, towers, foundation elements, transition pieces, substation, and cables.
- **Primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary manufacturers and suppliers:** These firms typically provide materials and/or manufactured components to the original equipment manufacturers for manufacturing of the main offshore wind farm components.
- **Service and support providers:** There are a wide variety of service and support positions associated with offshore wind, and jobs include those in the areas of production, management, installation, maintenance and repair, science, engineering and architecture, business and finance operations, transportation and logistics, office and administrative support, and sales and related occupations.
- **Marine, port and harbor service providers:** These firms typically provide the facilities, vessels, equipment, and labor associated with the ports and marine industries. They may provide barges to transport materials between manufacturing facilities, installation vessels, and operations and maintenance (O&M) vessels. The related port facilities require cranes, stevedores, warehouses, logistics systems, and security.
- **Educational institutions:** Colleges and universities train workers and conduct relevant research to support offshore wind development.
- **Labor unions:** Labor unions provide and support workers that are essential to the development, construction, and operation of offshore wind projects.
- **Other entities:** Many other entities make up the offshore wind supply chain. Examples include utilities, state agencies, and non-government agencies which provide a range of technical and other services.

Solar Energy Development

Wind Energy is not the only clean energy sector that has growth potential. Solar technologies are also key elements of this sector. Solar arrays can be constructed as cover on municipal and other landfills, provide cover for commercial or institutional parking lots, and be installed on roof tops of all types of buildings. This expanding industry is currently hampered by logistics and supply chain issues, but is integral to any state or national clean energy goal. Jobs and business in this sector will involve assembly, distribution and installation. Much of the manufacturing of solar voltaic film and panel manufacturing is done

outside of the United States but there are a number of companies that are domestic manufacturers.²³

The Expanding Logistics Industry

With the fully rehabilitated Salem County Railroad, the County is in a strong position to target sites along the rail line for new industrial development. Recent trends indicate that Salem County is increasingly being targeted for warehousing and distribution facilities. Where sites along the rail line can be repurposed, rail distribution will help eliminate trucks on the County's highways and reduce traffic congestion.

As was shown on Map 5, page 19, there are a number of Redevelopment Areas formally designated throughout the County. Redevelopment Opportunities exist in these areas, but there may be a need to focus on brownfield clean up before these sites can be fully utilized. The NJ Brownfield Program inventory includes:

- The Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund grant program was created July 1993 to fund investigation of brownfield sites. This fund includes a municipal grant program and a low interest loan program. This funding has been used to conduct environmental assessments and remedial actions prior to development.
- The New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust is another public funding source available for brownfield remediation and redevelopment if the end use will, in some way, improve water quality. Brownfield remediation projects are eligible for loans at one-quarter or one-half of the market rate. The Environmental Infrastructure Trust does permit the developer to participate in the loan process.
- The New Jersey Economic Development Authority administers several funding programs that may be used for brownfield redevelopment projects, including the Economic Redevelopment and Growth (ERG) Program. Other programs include funding for building construction, business attraction and start-up, business growth, commercial real estate development, clean energy solutions, business growth, employment incentives, business retention and relocation, landfill closure and remediation and other economic activities.

²³ <https://news.energysage.com/best-solar-panel-manufacturers-usa/>. Top U.S. manufacturers include Auxin Solar, Certainteed Solar, First Solar, Global Solar, GreenBrilliance, Lumos Solar, Prism Solar, Seraphim Solar, Solar Electric America, Solaria, SolarTech Universal, SolSuntech, SunPower, SunSpark, and Tesla/Panasonic

Overcoming COVID Impacts and Addressing Future Health and Wellness

Remote work opportunities which prior to the pandemic were unusual have now become a part of almost all public and private sector employment. This possibility expands the ability to recruit both new businesses to the County and solicit interest from prospective employees who may not have to live within an easy commuting distance of employment.



Another outcome of the pandemic has been a need to focus on enhancing access to healthcare for residents living in more rural locations, both in the southern New Jersey region and nationally. Expanding Access to Broadband and Telecommunication Service is important for businesses and for marketing Salem County as a business destination, but also for residents of the County who may need access to healthcare now

or as the result of an ongoing or future pandemic. A healthy community is one that is built around a number of social determinants, only one of which is the economy itself. Education, workforce training, quality housing and other aspects of community development are important considerations in ensuring sustainable growth and opportunity.

Infrastructure and Broadband

The American Recovery Act and the National Infrastructure Legislation provides a rarely seen opportunity for the County to secure funding for broadband investment that can promote telemedicine, expand business investment, and connect entrepreneurs, workers, government offices and other employers with needed high speed internet access. Such access will be essential in advancing the many economic development goals and strategies outlined in this document.

Sustaining Future Growth and Development

Sustaining the development of the County will require an ongoing effort to diversify and expand economic opportunity. Strategies for achieving those aims have been defined. But it will also require Economic Development Coordination among partners and programs.

The importance of such coordination was referenced by one of the comparison counties presented in Section 2 of this strategy. Such coordination is important for many reasons. No one entity can promote the county, recruit new business, provide technical services to existing companies, and develop the resource base needed to expand economic opportunity.

Maximizing the Engagement of State and Federal Resources will be a critical component of this effort. The many infrastructure investments, downtown development, industrial park

expansion, quality of life improvements and other projects needed over the coming years to help the county advance its economy and develop the resiliency needed to sustain it will require an ongoing coordination among business, industry and government partners.

Prioritizing projects and initiatives. Some projects and program concepts will be ready to be funded in the near term. Others will take time to generate cost estimates, assemble design parameters, overcome permitting hurdles or secure site control. Through a newly created office of economic development, this process can be facilitated so that county projects are not competing for the same sources of funding at the same time.

Assigning different projects and program responsibilities to a mix of partners will also help advance a broad economic development agenda. Such a collaborative effort takes the onus off of one agency or organization to be solely responsible for the county's development.

Reversing Population Decline/Poverty Elimination/Housing

Building a market for business and industry in Salem County will also require reversing the decline in the County's population. This will require focusing attention on the most distressed of the County's municipalities and targeting funding for housing rehabilitation and new housing opportunities. Working with those communities seeking such development can help to revitalize downtowns by expanding the universe of consumers for retail and service businesses.

STRATEGIC SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

This strategy has outlined a number of opportunities open to Salem County through the creation of an Office of Economic Development. That is just the first step in advancing a comprehensive approach to economic development. There are a number of other steps that the director of such an office will need to pursue.

1. Creating the Office of Economic Development and providing a budget for its near-term operation is the first step in advancing this economic development strategy.
2. Hiring the director and providing for administrative support is the next step. A description of suggested duties and responsibilities for such a position has been prepared as part of this study effort.
3. Organizing an Economic Development Consortium and Partnerships. The current Economic Development Advisory Council has played an outstanding role in advancing this agenda. The Council would be an excellent advisory body to help the new director assemble the partnerships and assign agency responsibilities for the various tasks and initiatives that are part of this strategy.

4. **Prioritization of Goals and Strategies with Consortium Partners.** Collective discussion among partners about which goals and initiatives take priority is needed in order to ensure a logical and sequential advancement of the many initiatives suggested by this strategy. The availability of grant and other funding opportunities will help to define the prioritization since the calendar for grant funding and financing differs from one prospective project to the next.
5. **Implementation of Near-Term Strategies and Projects.** Successful plans are advanced one step at a time, consistently and over time. This means that there must be a longer-term commitment, pending the successful expansion of funding, for the ongoing work to diversify and expand the economy. This commitment must be borne by the economic development partners, the newly created office of economic development, municipal governments and the business community.
6. **Assignments for Longer-Term Initiatives.** Ensuring this longer-term commitment will necessitate making assignments to a broad base of partners and interests. While this effort can be coordinated through the economic development office, there must be a willingness of the principal partners to take on new responsibilities to advance a coordinated economic development agenda.
7. **Marketing and Branding.** Marketing and branding the County means working with grant funding, private donations and a coordinated consortium of interests including tourism venues to develop a singular story of Salem County and its desirability as a place to live, work and recreate. No such singular branding effort exists currently, but one will be needed to attract the range of investment desired by the County and its development partners.
8. **Industry and Business Recruitment.** Recruiting new industry and business will be a priority one task for a new economic development director. This can precede a formal marketing and branding effort, but a collaborative marketing and branding initiative can only enhance this work.
9. **Expanding the Resource Base.** Funding, funding, funding! Through grant funds, in-kind support, revenue raising events, the work of the economic development director and project partners, new revenue must be secured to advance the ongoing efforts of an economic development office.

Salem County is a diverse community. Economic development challenges differ throughout the County. Each of the County's municipalities has different interests. Some seek new industry and the redevelopment of existing industrial and commercial sites. Others are very

rural in nature and wish to remain so. This means that the office of economic development will need to operate on a couple important tracks.

1. There will need to be emphasis on industrial and business attraction as well as redevelopment particularly in the urban corridor from the City of Salem, along N.J. Route 49 to Pennsville and along the County's Delaware River Corridor.
2. Efforts to provide economic development opportunities in some of the County's more rural communities will mean working with those municipalities to secure the range of services desired. Based on the survey of municipal mayors, this might include:
 - Ecotourism support
 - Agri-tourism including farm markets, pick your own establishments, businesses ancillary to the opportunities provided by Cowtown
 - Grant funding and technical services
 - Business retention and revitalization in municipal downtowns

The Salem County Office of Economic Development and the director of that office will have to be sensitive to meeting those diverse needs and interests. This economic development strategy is a starting point for advancing those actions and capitalizing on existing opportunities.



**SALEM COUNTY NEW JERSEY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION AND ACTION PLAN**

APPENDICES

Summary of Business and Mayoral Surveys

References to Other Plans and Documents

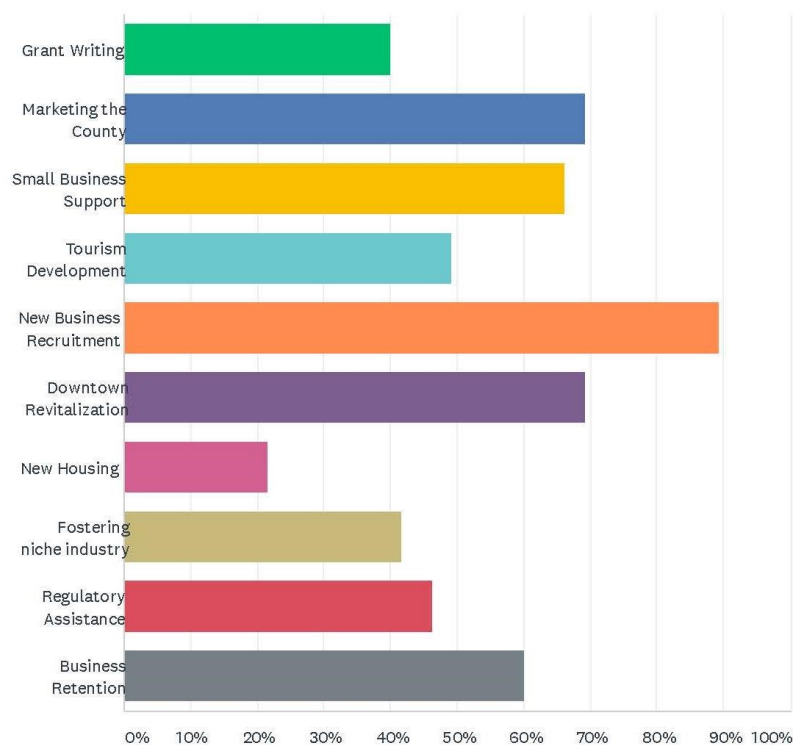
SURVEY SUMMARY FOR THE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY SURVEY

A business and industry survey was distributed through the Salem County Chamber of Commerce. There were 66 responses to the survey, which asked three questions. The first question, shown below, inquired about possible functions of an economic development office.

Salem County Business and Industry Survey
ALL MUNICIPALITIES

Q1 Consideration is being given to the creation of an Economic Development Office in Salem County. If such an office was created, what would you see as the functions of that office that would be most beneficial in promoting economic development? (Please check all that apply)

Answered: 65 Skipped: 1



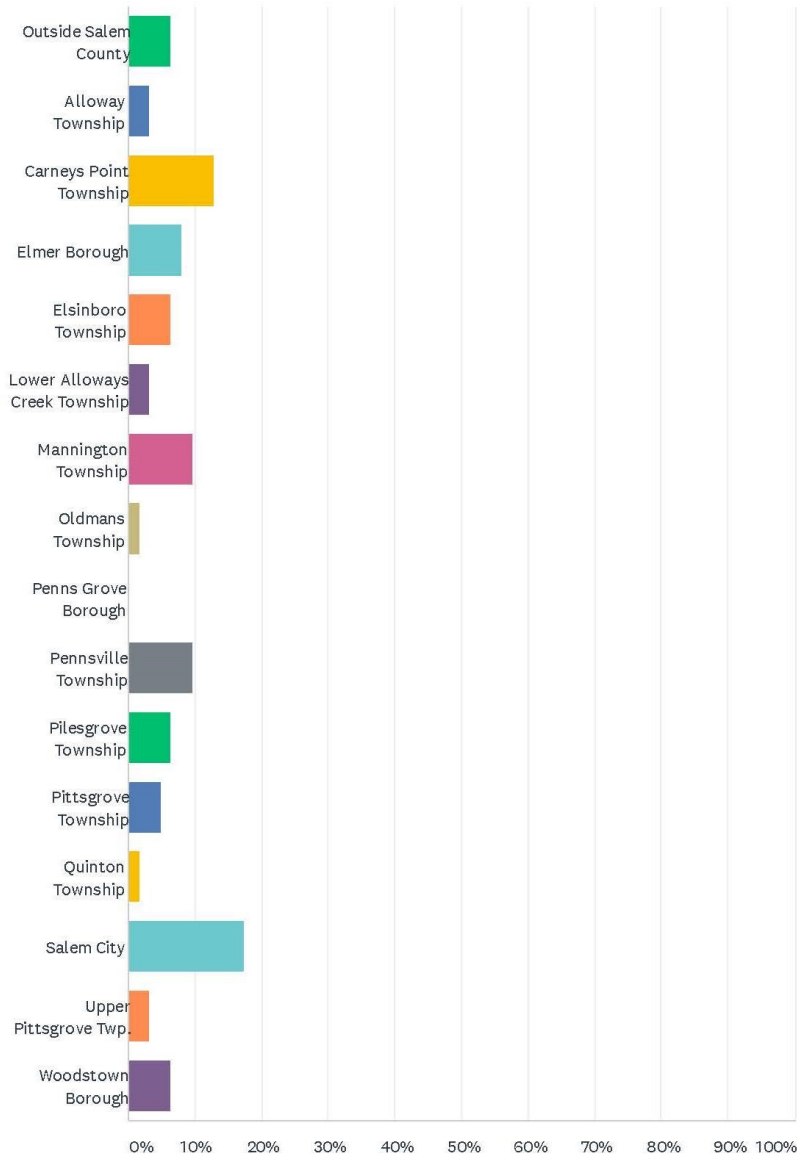
The second question asked respondents about the size of the business. The plurality of respondents were small business owners. 20.6% of respondents were with companies with 100 employees or more, and 36.5% of respondents were with non-profit organizations.

Question 3 asked respondents to identify the location of their business. Results were well disbursed among 14 of the County’s 15 municipalities. 93.7% of respondents represented Salem County businesses. Only Penns Grove Borough did not register any response. The table on page 3 of this appendix section provides a percentage breakdown of responses.

Salem County Business and Industry Survey

Q3 Where is your business located?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 3



Geographic Distribution Table

Salem County Business and Industry Survey

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----|
| Outside Salem County | 6.35% | 4 |
| Alloway Township | 3.17% | 2 |
| Carneys Point Township | 12.70% | 8 |
| Elmer Borough | 7.94% | 5 |
| Elsinboro Township | 6.35% | 4 |
| Lower Alloways Creek Township | 3.17% | 2 |
| Mannington Township | 9.52% | 6 |
| Oldmans Township | 1.59% | 1 |
| Penns Grove Borough | 0.00% | 0 |
| Pennsville Township | 9.52% | 6 |
| Piles Grove Township | 6.35% | 4 |
| Pittsgrove Township | 4.76% | 3 |
| Quinton Township | 1.59% | 1 |
| Salem City | 17.46% | 11 |
| Upper Pittsgrove Twp. | 3.17% | 2 |
| Woodstown Borough | 6.35% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 63 |

SURVEY SUMMARY FOR THE MAYORAL SURVEY

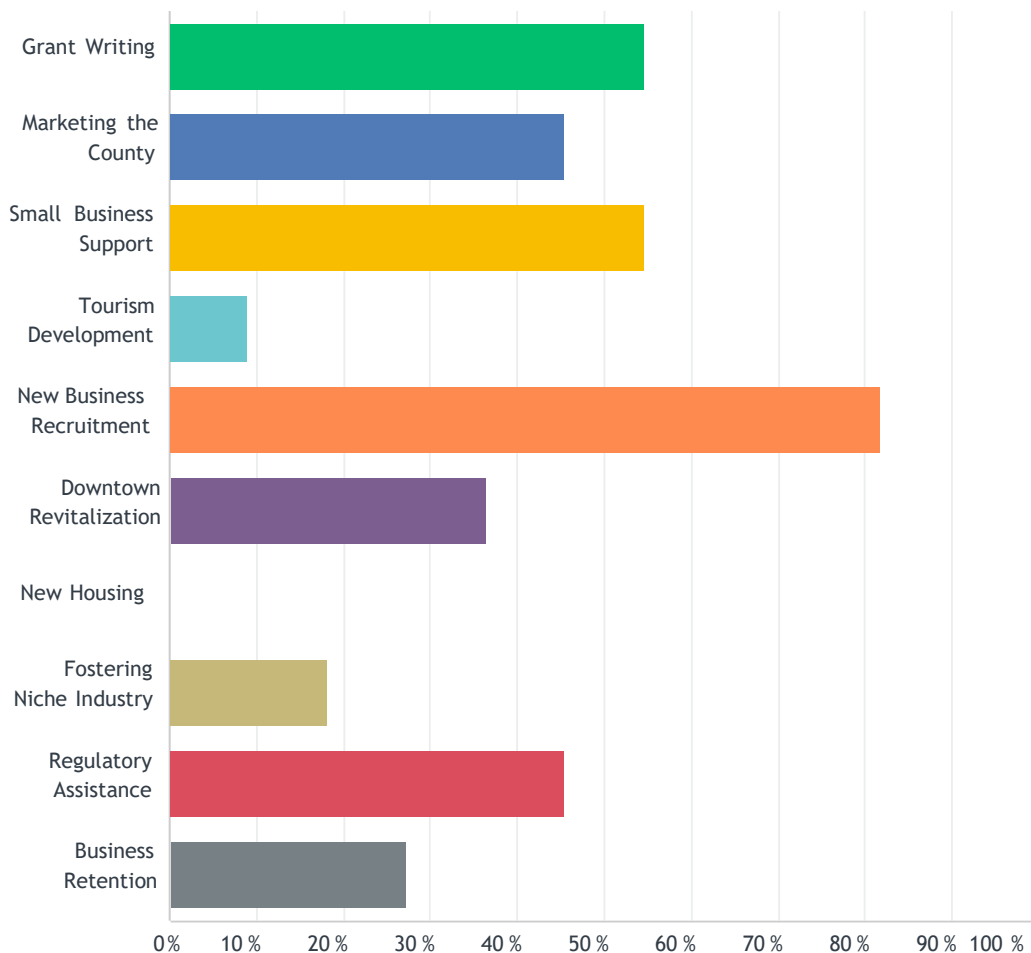
In addition to the business community, a similar survey was sent out to mayors of the County's 15 municipalities. 12 of 15 mayors responded, (there were two responses from Carney's Point.) There were similarities with the responses received from the business community, but mayors also wanted to see an economic development office help with grant writing, which in many cases is important to local municipalities in getting them the resources they need to advance their economies.

The results of the mayoral survey are outlined on the following three pages.

ALL MAYORAL RESPONSES

Q1 Consideration is being given to the creation of an Economic Development Office in Salem County. If such an office was created, what would you see as the functions of that office that would be most beneficial to your municipality? (Please check all that apply)

Answered: 11 Skipped: 2



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|--------------------------|-----------|---|
| Grant Writing | 54.55% | 6 |
| Marketing the County | 45.45% | 5 |
| Small Business Support | 54.55% | 6 |
| Tourism Development | 9.09% | 1 |
| New Business Recruitment | 81.82% | 9 |
| Downtown Revitalization | 36.36% | 4 |
| New Housing | 0.00% | 0 |
| Fostering Niche Industry | 18.18% | 2 |
| Regulatory Assistance | 45.45% | 5 |
| Business Retention | 27.27% | 3 |
| Total Respondents: 11 | | |

Q2 Which Salem County municipality do you represent?

Answered: 13 Skipped: 0



REFERENCES TO OTHER RELEVANT PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

SOUTH JERSEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, CEDS. This is a summary of the goals and objectives for economic growth and development within the four-county southern New Jersey Region, which is inclusive of Salem County. The document can be found on the South Jersey Economic Development District Website at: <http://www.sjedd.com/economy/ceds-plan.asp>

ESTIMATING THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION AND IMPACT OF THE POWER GENERATING INDUSTRY AND OTHER KEY INDUSTRY SECTORS ON THE ECONOMY OF SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY. This document focuses on resiliency issues in the southern New Jersey economy in light of the proposed clean energy initiatives and the prospective decline in nuclear and other sources of energy. This document can also be found on the SJEDD website at: <http://www.sjedd.com/economy/ceds-plan.asp>

ASSESSING THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC ON THE ECONOMY OF SALEM COUNTY, NJ. This report, available through the offices of the South Jersey Economic Development District, tracks the impacts of COVID and some suggestions for promoting economic recovery and resiliency following the pandemic.

2014-2017 SALEM COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN. This plan was prepared by the Salem County Improvement Authority and is the most recent strategic plan, prior to the current document. It can be accessed by Googling [*Salem County Economic Development Strategic Plan*](#).

SALEM COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
Economic Development Vision and Action Plan



Disclaimer

This is an Economic Development Vision and Action Plan prepared for Salem County, New Jersey. The report makes assumptions based on various economic trends and representations in the County today. Any recipient, reader or other user (collectively, "User") of this work product ("Work") accepts the Work without any representation or warranty, expressed or implied, and any use of or reliance on the Work is entirely at User's own risk, and that, by acquiring, using or relying on the Work, User releases, acquits and forever discharges the South Jersey Economic Development District, the County of Salem, the Salem County Economic Development Advisory Council, Triad Associates, SarahBirdsall, Planning Consulting and any and all contributors to this Work from any and all claims, whatsoever, including but not limited to, any actions, causes of action, demands, rights, punitive damages, costs, loss of use, property damage, bodily injury claims, expenses and liens which it has had, may now have, may claim to have or may hereafter have or claim to have, which in any way result from, arise from, or grow out of the Work.

SALEM COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION AND ACTION PLAN



Facilitated by the

Salem County Economic Development

Advisory Council

FINAL PLAN

August 2021

