

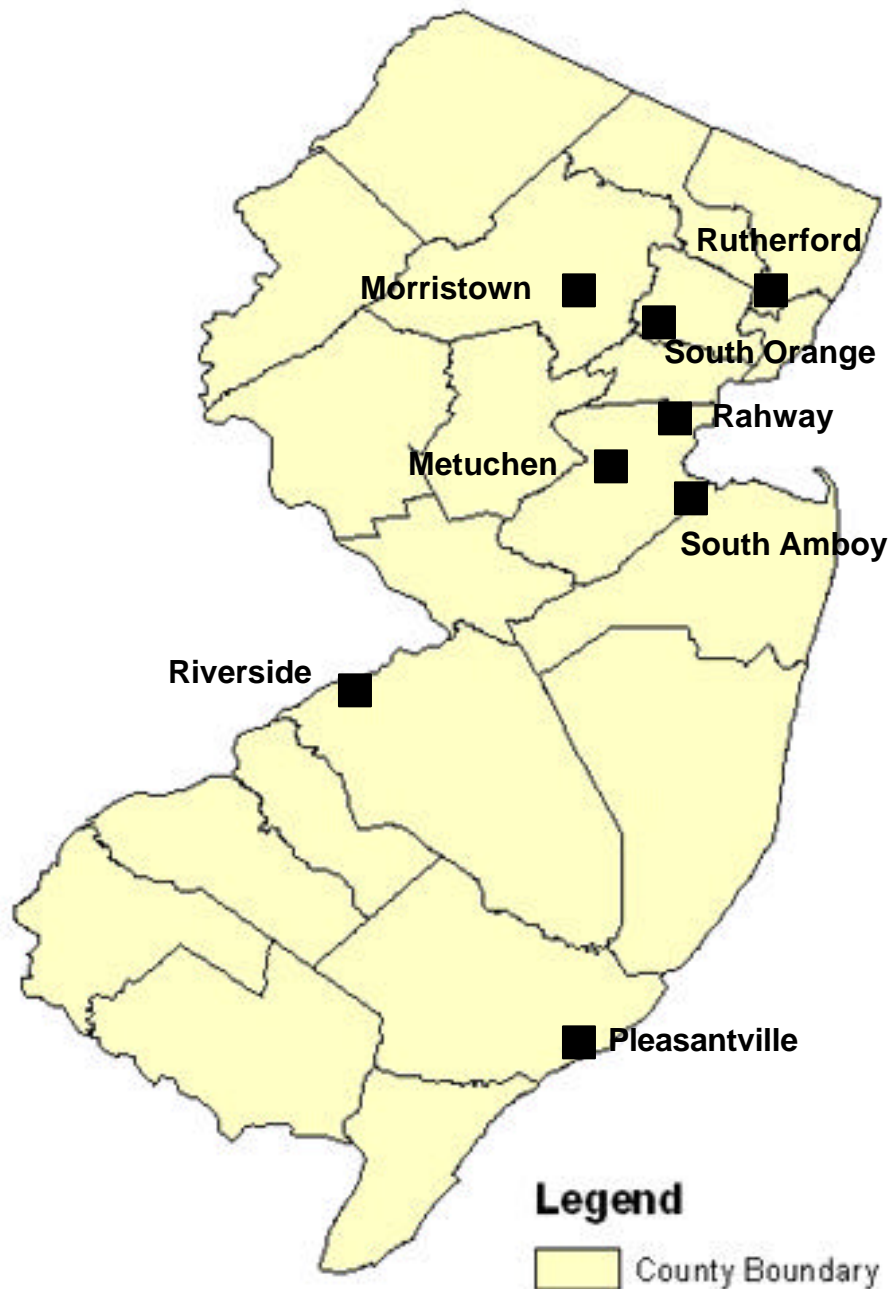
# **New Jersey Transit Villages – A Winning Strategy for Smart Growth**

**Martin Robins  
Director**

**Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**

**Conference on Housing and Community Development  
Atlantic City, New Jersey  
Tuesday, September 23, 2003  
11:00 am**

# Assessment of the New Jersey Transit Villages Initiative



- **Demographic comparison of the municipalities and the Transit Villages**
- **Interviews with Stakeholders**
  - State agencies
  - Municipal officials
  - Private developers
  - Surveys of households and businesses

- **Traditional bedroom communities**
  - Metuchen, Morristown, Rutherford, South Orange





- **Urban, industrial-based communities**
  - **Rahway and South Amboy**





- **South Jersey**
  - **Pleasantville (bus) and Riverside (light rail)**



# **The Task Force: A Unique Intergovernmental Steering Structure**

## **Members**

- NJ Department of Transportation**
- NJ Department of Environmental Protection**
- NJ Redevelopment Authority**
- NJ Transit**
- NJ Department of Community Affairs**
  - Office of Smart Growth**
  - Main Street New Jersey**
- NJ Economic Development Authority**
- NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency**
- NJ Commerce & Economic Growth Commission**

# **Demographic Characteristics of Transit Villages**

**Currently, older town centers marked by:**

- younger, single population**
- racial and ethnic diversity with immigrants**
- lower household incomes**
- higher transit use, less cars, more walking to work**

# **Demographic Characteristics of Transit Villages**

## **Evolving with:**

- attractive townscapes**
- more upscale shopping/first class restaurants**
- expensive residential units with low bedroom count**
- regional cultural facilities**



# **Success Factors**

## **State Agencies**

- Task Force: regular meetings; available to cut “red tape”**
- Effective program administrator**
- State leadership in support of program**
- Active NJ Transit support of TOD**

# Success Factors

## Municipal Government

- Strong leadership
- History of planning
- Sustained vision of redevelopment
- Entrepreneurial attitude
- Willingness to foster pedestrian and bike access to the downtown and station areas
- Support of the commercial area through downtown partnerships, Main Street programs, or enterprise zones
- Sensitive to “quality of life” issues by including parks, recreation areas, and cultural assets in redevelopment goals

# Success Factors

## Private Sector

- Major regional or national development companies that have the capacity and experience to deal with difficult site issues
- Willingness to work with towns to achieve a shared vision
- High market value on good transportation connections
- Creative with respect to design of product and utilization of land



# Obstacles

## Land Issues

- Contaminated land or brownfields
- Acquisition of properties
- Resulting higher cost of land preparation

## Zoning and Code Issues

- Parking requirements not appropriate for infill development
- Resistance to mixed use

## Policy Issues

- Concern about property tax issues and school funding
- Persistent bureaucracy of state agencies

# Conclusions

## A new role for state government

- A team approach among state agencies
- A partnership with municipalities

## Impressive gains in Transit Villages

- New housing
- More pedestrian/bike – friendly environments
- Increased transit-oriented attitudes
- Active revitalization of downtown areas

# Conclusions

## Concerns about gentrification

- less diversity of population
- less diversity of retailers
- less diversity of housing units
- less median income housing