**HOWARD COUNTY INTERCITY VISIT DRAFT AGENDA**

**Day 1, Sunday**

* Depart from the Howard Chamber office at 12:30 pm
* Arrive and check into hotel at 4 pm
* Meet in lobby at 5:30, depart for dinner at 5:45 pm
* ***Special guest, SCBP President and Board Chair and Chair of the Board of Freeholders***

**Day 2, Monday**

* 7 - 7:45 am, Breakfast at Hotel
* 8 am Depart hotel
* 8:30 - 11:30 am Morning Discussion- Somerville - 3 hours – SCBP Office Conference Room

8:30 – Subject – **Historic Preservation/Downtown Development**

***Revitalizing Downtown Somerville***

*The Borough Council and Planning Board have been working to revitalize the Borough for many years. Beginning in 2004, the Mayor and Council committed to developing a strategy for a planned and proactive approach for this objective. Four guiding principles were developed, and these have continuously steered the project. They are:*

* *All Redevelopment must offer tangible benefits to the Borough,*
* *Redevelopment must complement, not compete with the existing retail/commercial/residential structure of the Borough,*
* *Redevelopment must contribute to the long-term financial well-being of the Borough and its residents, and*
* *Redevelopment must be community-based, with input from as wide cross section of the community as possible.*

*Somerville is located at the center of New Jersey and its transportation network, has been called “Downtown Somerset County”. All major transportation routes pass through or near the Borough, NJT and Private buses, NJT’s Raritan Valley line trains, Vehicle traffic use State Routes 28, 202 and 206, National Route 22 forms the northern boundary of the Borough while Interstate 287 parallels Route 22 and Interstate 78 is within 2 miles of the Borough. As the seat of government for Somerset County, Somerville is home to many county facilities including the Court House and Administrative buildings, the RWJ University Hospital at Somerset.*

*The Boroughs Main Street is a destination for shopping and dining for any taste. There are five distinct Redevelopment Areas within the Borough. They are:*

* *The Station and Landfill Redevelopment Area*
* *West Main Street Redevelopment Area*
* *East Central Business District Redevelopment Area*
* *Kirby Avenue Redevelopment Area*
* *Gaston Avenue Redevelopment Area*

*This kickoff session will focus on Downtown redevelopment, how the various goals were established, current status, and key project take-aways.*

*Speakers (All Confirmed):*

* *Natalie Marino - Director of Downtown Somerville (Vision as to how to market and go to the next level),*
* *Colin Driver - Economic Development, Borough of Somerville (Redevelopment Tools), and*
* *Mike Kerwin – President, Somerset County Business Partnership & Board Member, Downtown Somerville Alliance (History)*

9:30 – Subject - **Transportation**

***Enhancing the Transportation Network: Connecting People to Jobs and Community Services***

*Transportation assets in Somerset County include an extensive network of state and federal highways and local and county roads, passenger and freight railroads, bus services, and pedestrian and bicycling amenities. Mean travel time to work for county residents has increased substantially in the past several decades. Currently, 55 percent of county residents work outside of Somerset County. Eight percent work outside of New Jersey, mainly in New York City. However, over forty percent of residents travel less than ten miles to work, and only four percent travel over fifty miles. For those with long traveling commutes, the impact is the cost of fuel and increased amount of time spent away from home.*

*At present, there appears to be a mismatch between the workers who live in the county and the types and numbers of local jobs that are available. Moreover, the primary mode of transportation to work in Somerset County is driving alone. Public transportation, walking, and other means represent only a small share of overall commuting. Public transportation, namely that of rail, would be used more but there is a deficiency between transit stops and places of employment thereby leaving passengers to fend for themselves the “last mile.”*

*Workers and economic development aside, Somerset has begun to recognize that transportation is also a public health issue. Many of the communities older and economically challenged residents have not sought access to medical care as a result of not understanding how to navigate the public transportation system. Consequently, RideWise was created with the goal of connecting people and businesses to safe and sustainable travel options that enhance quality of life and create a vibrant economy. Specifically, RideWise launched the TransitConnect program to provide real-life training on how to utilize the many transportation options available within the county.*

*Somerset County Government and RideWise will share how they are addressing the county’s transportation challenges and how they are enhancing communication efforts to ensure residents understand how the public transportation system works.*

*Speakers (All Confirmed):*

* *Donna Allison - Executive Director, RideWise and*
* *Walter Lane - Director of Planning for Somerset County Government (Walk, Hike & Bike)*

10:30 – Subject - **Affordable Housing**

***Developing Housing that is available to all***

*Housing affordability is becoming a national epidemic as many individuals are paying more than 30% of their income for housing. This situation is further exacerbated in high income communities. Workers need housing reasonably proximate to employment centers. Appropriate affordable housing strengthens the workforce, leads to better performance and higher productivity, and enhances family stability, safety, and security. Housing affordability is also a key indicator in promoting public health, community well-being, family stability, and student performance. Sound programs that provide access to affordable housing, transportation, and food security can have a positive impact on public health and welfare, as well as economic development and prosperity.*

*Downtown Somerville is experiencing a renaissance which includes mixed-income multi-family housing. This session will feature a presentation on recent developments and policies that have made them open to various income types.*

*Speakers:*

* *Sharon Clark (****Invited)*** *- Central Jersey Housing Resource Center, and*
* *Walter Lane*

11:45 am- Board bus and head to lunch at Duke Farms

12:15 pm - 1:15 pm Lunch at Duke Farms and Discussion

Subject – Environment / Sustainability

***Environmental Stewardship Meets Tourism: The Duke Farms Concept***

*James Buchanan (J.B.) Duke transformed more than 2,000 acres of farmland and woodlots into an extraordinary landscape known as Duke Farms. Consisting of nine manmade lakes, over 18 miles of roads, over 45 buildings and a bucolic landscape, Duke Farms is a testament to J.B.’s ingenuity, resourcefulness and determination.  After J.B.’s death in 1925, his fortune was inherited by his daughter, Doris Duke.*

*Doris Duke was an environmentalist long before it was fashionable. She demonstrated an especially keen interest in conservation and horticulture. In her will, she envisioned that Duke Farms should serve to protect wildlife as well as be used for agriculture, horticulture and research. Inspired by Doris Duke’s guidance, Duke Farms opened to public visitation in May 2012, with a mission to be a leader in environmental stewardship and to inspire visitors to become informed stewards of the land.*

*Duke Farms leadership will share how Duke Farms is creating a model for environmental sustainability through education and eco-tourism.*

*Speakers: Michael Catania - Executive Director, Duke Farms*

1:30 pm - Depart from Duke Farms

2:00 pm- 4:00 pm - Afternoon Discussion – Borough of Bound Brook – Borough Hall

2:00 pm– Subject – **Flood Mitigation (Green Brook Flood Control Project)**

***Flood Mitigation and Recovery in Bound Book***

*The Green Brook Flood Control Project is a flood control project in*[*Somerset County*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somerset_County%2C_New_Jersey)*first proposed in the early 1970s in the wake of two major flooding events: a 1971 flood event and a major 1973 flood which ravaged the*[*Green Brook*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Brook)*and*[*Raritan River*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raritan_River)*basins, causing millions in property damage and several deaths in central New Jersey.*

*The worst flooding in the Green Brook basin occurs in*[*Bound Brook*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bound_Brook%2C_New_Jersey)*, which partially lies on a natural flood plain of the Raritan River at the junction of the Green Brook and Raritan River. To address this flooding problem, the*[*United States Army Corps of Engineers*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Corps_of_Engineers)*has proposed the Green Brook Sub Basin Flood Control Project, which entails numerous*[*flood walls*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flood_wall)*,*[*levees*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levee)*, channel diversions, widening projects and*[*retention basins*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retention_basin)*throughout the Green Brook basin.*[*[1]*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Brook_Flood_Control_Project#cite_note-1)

*Until recently, the Green Brook Flood Control project has languished for decades due to a lack of federal funding.*[*Hurricane Floyd*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Floyd)*in 1999 caused two deaths and approximately $80 million in property damage within the Green Brook basin, especially in Bound Brook, thereby reinvigorating the flood control project. As of 2006, two levees have been built on the western and eastern sides of Bound Brook. An important levee (R2) on the southwestern side of Bound Brook, which would prevent the Raritan River from flooding the downtown and nearby residential areas, has been completed. Full 150-year protection of downtown and nearby residential areas of Bound Brook is effectively in place with final construction completed in the late 2014.*

*Flooding impacts business viability and residential quality of life. Program participants will share intimate details and insights as to how they addressed flooding, galvanized the public, secured funding, and ensured projects remained on schedule and according to plan.*

*Speakers (Confirmed):*

* *Mayor of Bound Brook and*
* *TBD*

3:00 pm – Subject - **Redevelopment of Bound Brook**

***Life after the Storm***

*For historic communities and those developed near rivers, on flood plains, or at the junction of several tributaries, the aftereffects of torrential rains and floods can prove detrimental to residents and businesses like. The Borough of Bound Brook understands what it means to recover and to be resilient. This community suffered following Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and Hurricane Irene in 2011. The Floyd flood alone caused the Raritan River to crest at 42.13 feet (28 feet is flood stage) in Bound Brook. The downtown was inundated by flood waters that sparked fires largely due to electrical systems shorting out. Some of the fires were impossible to reach due to excessive flooding, and National Guard helicopters were dropping water to keep the blazes from spreading.*

*Despite these setbacks, Bound Brook is roaring back. The borough has seen a gain in population that is young and diverse as almost half of all residents identifying as Hispanic/Latino of any race in 2014, and about 30 percent foreign-born.*

*Representatives from Bound Brook will share the plans and policies put into place to spur redevelopment. The development team will share their perspective as to what gave them confidence to proceed with developing in an area historically prone to flooding.*

*Speakers* ***(Invited):***

* *Moderator - Dr. Lawrence McCullough - Downtown Manager, Bound Brook Revitalization Partnership (BBRP).*
* *Abel Gomez - Council President, Bound Brook,*
* *George Capodagli – President, Capodagli Property Group, and*
* *Louis Reynolds – Owner, Reynolds Asset Management*

4:30 pm - Return to the hotel for free time

6:15 pm- Reconvene at the lobby for dinner

6:30 - 8:30 - Dinner, location TBD. Subject – **Public Education**

***Fostering an Environment of Academic Achievement Amongst a Diverse Student Population***

*Somerset County, NJ has several school districts that collectively have 78 schools totaling nearly 53,000 students as of the 2017 – 2018 school year. The County itself is growing at a rate faster than the State average and has very diverse population as nearly 25% of its residents are foreign born. It also has a 93% graduation rate. The Superintendents of Hillsborough Township Public School District, Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District, and Franklin Township Public School District as they share their thoughts and ideas on educating diverse populations and closing achievement gaps.*

*Speakers* ***(Invited):***

* *Somerset County Superintendent and*
* *Russell Lazovick – Superintendent, Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District or Jorden Schiff, Ed.D. – Superintendent, Hillsborough Township Public Schools,*

**Day 3, Tuesday**

7:45 am, Depart hotel

8:15 am Morning Discussion – Subject – **Township of Greenbrook and Commercial Revitalization**

***The Revitalization of Route 22 & Redevelopment of Washington Avenue***

*Sprawl, suburbanization, and changing lifestyle patterns have created opportunities for redevelopment for commercial thoroughfares that developed along state routes. Route 22 in the Township of Greenbrook is no different. As development has spread across the region, shopping centers, office development, and residential uses have followed leaving abandoned or aging neighborhood retail centers. Though it's the busiest thoroughfare in the township and the center of commerce, Route 22 does not have the friendly ambiance of a traditional Main Street. Residents do not gather on the highway for community celebrations and taking a stroll or riding a bicycle on the shoulder is risky. In 2012, the township’s Strategic Plan identified that the two most important issues facing Green Brook were the revitalization of Route 22 and the redevelopment of the Washington Avenue corridor. A walkable downtown was also envisioned in that plan. Some seven years later, Route 22 is generating interest and new proposals are under consideration.*

*Commercial revitalization can be a lengthy and frustrating process. Greenbrook representatives and members of the development team will shed light on the Route 22 redevelopment plan, its current status, and lessons learned along the way.*

*Speakers (Invited):*

* *Kelly Cupit - Administrator/Municipal, Clerk Green Brook’s Township*

9:45 am, depart for Mid-Morning Discussion – Bridgewater

10:15 am – 12:15 PM, arrive at Bridgewater (TD Bank Park) – Subjects - **Public, Private Partnership & Community Health Discussion**

10:15 am –Subject - **Public, Private Partnerships / Tourism**

***Using Public Private Partnerships to Spearhead Tourism***

*Somerset County owns the highly successful TD Bank Park, a 6,100-seat minor league baseball facility located in Bridgewater Township.  The ballpark is home to the Atlantic League's*[*Somerset Patriots*](https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/?splash=http%3a%2f%2fwww.somersetpatriots.com&____isexternal=true)*; the Patriots manage the ballpark operations.*

*Since the sell-out opening on June 7, 1999, the ballpark has continued to attract strong attendance and fan support.  The facility and team consistently draw over 5,300 fans per game and average annual attendance exceeds 370,000.  The Somerset Patriots recognized their 6 millionth fan in 2015.  Designed by Clarke Caton & Hintz and SSP Architectural Group and built by Epic Construction, Ballpark Digest named TD Bank Park*[*"The Best Independent Minor League Ballpark"*](https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/?splash=http%3a%2f%2fballparkdigest.com%2f2015%2f06%2f24%2fbest-of-the-ballparks-td-bank-ballpark%2f&____isexternal=true)*in 2015.*

*The $17.5 million facility was self-financed by the county and all costs are repaid by revenues received through the lease of the stadium to the Somerset Patriots.  The current lease continues through 2032 and provides for fixed payments by the Patriots to meet the annual debt service requirements, plus a contribution to a dedicated maintenance account for future capital costs. Besides the 70 Patriots home games, the ballpark is a multi-use facility that has been the home to several events outside events.*

*Local governments will continue to be challenged by both fiscal and knowledge constraints. As such, they much be creative in how they fund and manage public facilities. Simultaneously, private sector parties often have managerial expertise but are sometimes limited in their access to capital. Program participants will share how focusing on what each side does works to best support the public good.*

*Speaker (Invited):*

* *Patrick McVerry – President / General Manager, Somerset Patriots (Confirmed),*
* *Jacqueline Morales – Somerset County Tourism, and*
* *Michael Amorosa – Administrator / Clerk, Somerset County*

11:15 am – Subject - **Healthier Somerset**

***Improving Community Health and Well-Being Through Coalitions and Collaboration***

*Since 2010, Healthier Somerset has been working to identify health needs in the community and to create collaborative partnerships that will improve the physical and mental health of everyone who lives and works in Somerset County. Somerset Medical Center (now Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset) supported the initial research on community health needs and convened the meetings that led to the creation of Healthier Somerset.*

*In 2011, Healthier Somerset began a community health needs assessment. The findings were presented in the*[***Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Study***](https://www.healthiersomerset.org/behavioral-risk-factor-study.html)*.  In May 2012, Healthier Somerset convened a planning session focused on prioritizing the key health opportunities for Somerset County. This meeting led to the development of the 2012-2015 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).*

*In 2015, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJUH) Somerset, in partnership with Healthier Somerset, commissioned a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) of Somerset County. The data collected led to the development of the 2016-2019 CHIP.  The CHIP is the defining document for information on Somerset County’s most pressing health issues and the plan used by the hospital and Somerset County public health officials to address these issues.*

*Representatives from Healthier Somerset will discuss the initiatives undertaken to engage Somerset County in active participation in good health habits leading to improved choices that promote healthier lifestyles local policy changes.*

*Speakers (Confirmed):*

* *Serena Collado from the Hospital*
* *TBD*

12:15 pm – Lunch - Closing Remarks and Thank You’s

1:30 pm, Board bus and depart for MD