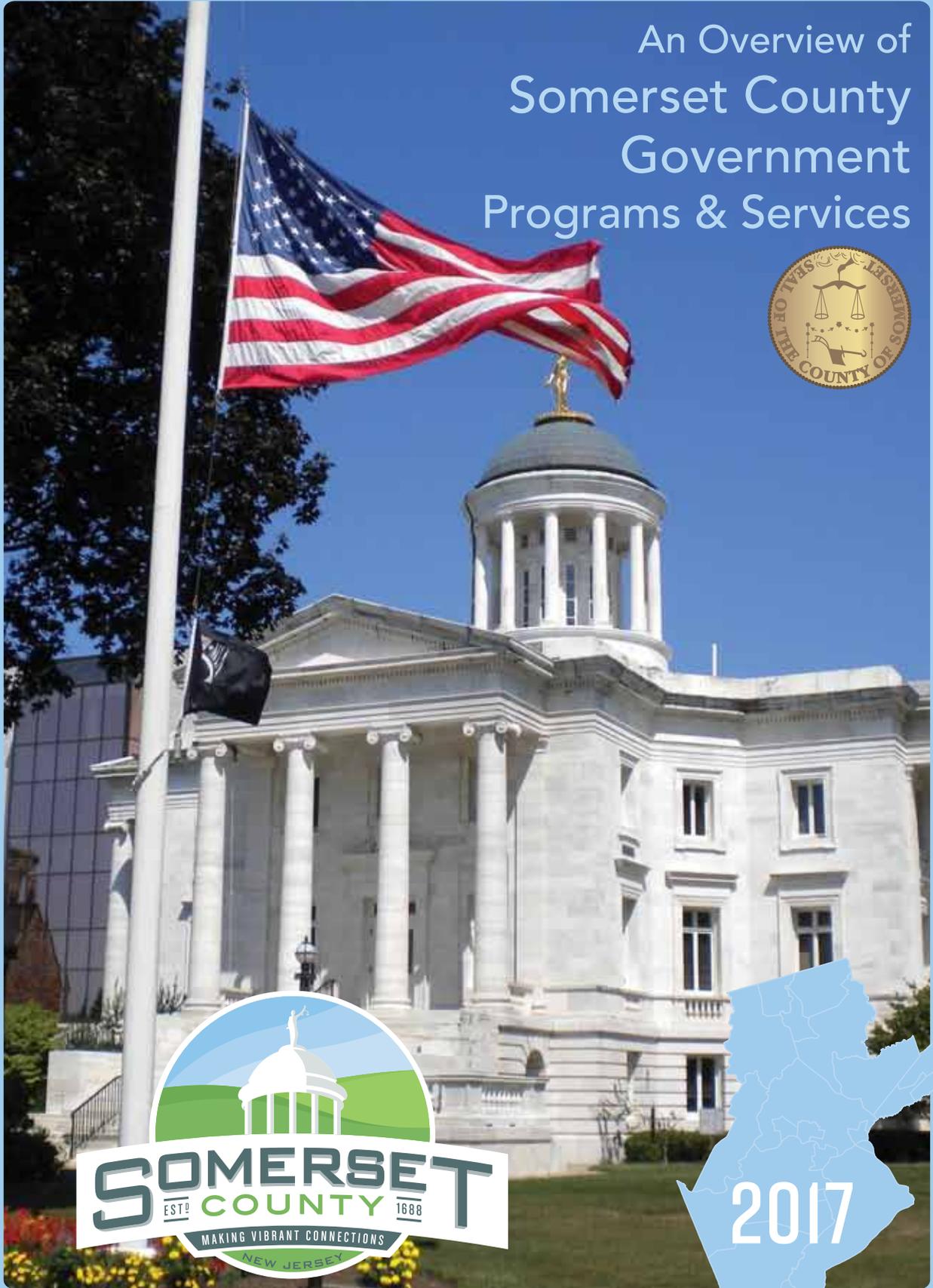


An Overview of  
Somerset County  
Government  
Programs & Services



## HISTORY

- New Jersey is the only state where elected county officials are called “freeholders” (most other states elect a county commission or county council).
- The term “freeholder” is a carryover from colonial days, when only property owners -- then known as freeholders -- were entitled to vote.
- Originally, one freeholder represented each municipality. As counties grew, this became too unwieldy. Today, Somerset County has five freeholders elected at-large for three-year terms. Each freeholder represents the entire county. Somerset County currently has about 333,750 residents.

## WHAT DOES A FREEHOLDER DO?

- Freeholders elect from among themselves a Freeholder Director (Peter S. Palmer-2017) who conducts their meetings and serves as spokesperson for the board. The Freeholder Deputy Director (Patrick Scaglione-2017) fills this role in the director’s absence. In Somerset County, the positions of Freeholder Director and Deputy Director are rotated each year.
- Each freeholder in Somerset County chairs a standing committee:
  - Human Services (Brian D. Levine-2017),
  - Finance & Administrative Services (Mark Caliguire-2017),
  - Public Works (Patrick Scaglione-2017), and
  - Public Health & Safety (Patricia L. Walsh-2017).

The Freeholder Director and County Administrator serve as ex-officio members of each committee.

- The Board of Chosen Freeholders is the policy-making body of county government. They ensure compliance with state mandates, such as recycling and the provision of facilities for the courts and the county jail.
- They also fund many human and social services programs, such as Senior Wellness Centers, Meals on Wheels, a community mental health center and the Office of Veterans Services, among others.

## SOMERSET COUNTY TODAY

- **Population:** Approximately 333,750
- **Households:** Approx. 124,940
- **Square Miles:** 305
- **Location:** Central New Jersey - one of only two “land-locked” counties in New Jersey (Morris County is the other)
- **21 Municipalities:** Bedminster, Bernards, Bernardsville, Bound Brook, Branchburg, Bridgewater, Far Hills, Franklin, Green Brook, Hillsborough, Manville, Millstone, Montgomery, North Plainfield, Peapack-Gladstone, Raritan, Rocky Hill, Somerville, South Bound Brook, Warren and Watchung
- **Congressional Districts:** **7** (Rep. Leonard Lance) and **12** (Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman)
- **Legislative Districts:** **16** (Sen. Christopher “Kip” Bateman, Assem. Jack M. Ciattarelli, Assem. Andrew Zwicker), **17** (Sen. Bob Smith, Assem. Joseph Egan, Assem. Joe Danielsen), **21** (Sen. Thomas Kean, Jr., Assem. Jon Bramnick, Assem. Nancy F. Munoz), **22** (Sen. Nicholas P. Scutari, Assem. Gerald Green, Assem. James J. Kennedy), **23** (Sen. Michael J. Doherty, Assem. John DiMaio, Assem. Erik Peterson) and **25** (Sen. Anthony R. Bucco, Assem. Anthony M. Bucco, Assem. Michael Patrick Carroll)

## PRESERVED OPEN SPACE

- **Parkland:** **14,757 acres**
- **Greenways:** **3,253 acres** through the County/Municipal Open Space Partnership
- **Farmland:** **8,381 acres**

## COUNTY PROGRAMS & SERVICES

The Somerset County Board of Freeholders is responsible for a wide variety of services. For example, Somerset County:

- maintains and repairs approximately 262 miles of county roads and 752 county-owned bridges.
- handles close to 28,300 tons of recyclables a year from about 124,940 households via curbside pickups, as well as from public facilities and schools. Estimated income from the sale of recyclable materials in 2016 was \$1,905,641, which was used to fund the program. Effective June 2013, the curbside recycling program was expanded to include businesses that have been unable to develop a program. The program is available at a cost to businesses that sign up for pick up.
- provides approximately 160,000 meals to senior citizens – more than half of whom are homebound, residents with disabilities who are age 60 and above and residents who visit our six senior wellness centers around the county.
- provides close to 306,264 trips a year to senior citizens and persons with disabilities, through our para-transit operation within the Transportation Division. Our Transportation Division also operates three bus shuttles: SCOOT, DASH and CAT (for the general public), which provide approximately 82,907 additional public transit trips, including access to Raritan Valley Community College.
- holds five Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off programs each year that draw thousands of residents; in 2016, 3,894 residents participated. We collected more than 136.77 tons of potentially hazardous materials for safe disposal.
- holds First Saturday of the Month programs and properly disposes of tires, textiles, scrap metal, antifreeze and more. In 2016, 293.75 tons of tires were collected.
- holds free-of-charge consumer electronic waste drop-off programs on a designated Saturday each month throughout the year. Also provides drop-off opportunities weekdays in Bridgewater and Hillsborough for the convenience of residents.
- sponsors or co-sponsors special events, such as the annual 4-H Fair (county government has over 30 displays at the Fair each year); the annual Somerset County Teen Arts Festival (an arts education program benefitting 1,200-plus teens countywide, providing 65 hands-on-master classes/workshops in 7 different art disciplines led by 35+ professionals in their areas of expertise); "Weekend Journey Through the Past," a free collaborative heritage tourism event, which interprets up to 30 historic sites countywide, attracting 5,000-6,000 visitors annually; Gallery 24/7: Art on Traffic Control Boxes, a continuing public art project showcasing the artistic talents of New Jersey artists and making art more accessible to all throughout Somerset County.

- provides assistance during disasters:
  - In the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks, Hurricane Floyd in 1999, the April 2007 and March 2010 nor'easters, Hurricane Irene in 2011 and Superstorm Sandy in 2012, our Office of Emergency Management provided rescue efforts.
  - Also, our human and social services staffs provided free counseling to any county resident affected directly or indirectly by these disasters.

The County also funds **other special programs** that benefit communities throughout the County. For example:

- **Raritan Valley Community College** and the **Vocational & Technical Schools**
- **Somerset County Business Partnership** (founded in January 2001) to enhance the county's attraction and retention of business
- **Regional Center Partnership** to focus on revitalizing the Somerville-Raritan-Bridgewater area (a state-designated Regional Center as of 1996)
- **TD Bank Ballpark** has drawn visitors to central Somerset County for the ballgames and for shopping, restaurants, etc. The ballpark also is a good example of appropriate redevelopment of a brownfields site (the former American Cyanamid property)
- An **energy-conservation initiative** which includes the Somerset County Energy Council (<https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/energy-council>)

## COUNTY DEPARTMENTS & DIVISIONS

Somerset County Government has four main "umbrella" departments that oversee a number of divisions:

- **Finance & Administrative Services**  
Adjuster, Finance, Human Resources, IT, Purchasing, Records Management, Telephone Services and Weights & Measures
- **Human Services**  
Aging and Disability Services, Community Development, Greater Raritan/One Stop Career Center, Juvenile Institutional Services, Mental Health, Operations and Planning, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Veterans Services, Volunteer Services and Youth Services

- **Public Works**  
Cultural & Heritage Commission, Engineering, Facilities & Services, Planning, Recycling, Roads and Bridges, Transportation, Vehicle & Equipment Maintenance, and Solid Waste
- **Public Health & Safety**  
Health Department, Emergency Management, Emergency Services Training Academy and 911 Communications

Economic Development, Police Academy, Public Information and the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board report to the **County Administrator**.

The **County Administrator/Clerk of the Board** and **County Counsel** report directly to the Board of Freeholders.

There also are a number of **affiliated agencies** that receive support from the Freeholders: Library, Vocational & Technical Schools, Raritan Valley Community College, Board of Elections, Park Commission, Superintendent of Schools, Prosecutor’s Office and Board of Social Services.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS**

Somerset County has three elected constitutional officers who provide their own specialized services to residents:

- **COUNTY CLERK** - records property records, takes passport applications, administers notary oaths, issues veteran’s honorable discharge IDs, receives petitions, designs ballots, issues mail-in ballots, tabulates election returns and certifies election results
- **SHERIFF** - operates the county jail; serves warrants and summonses; provides security for the county courthouse and complex; assists municipal police departments; provides K-9 support to local law enforcement, Project Lifesaver and school resource officers; and conducts safety programs for schools and county residents. The Sheriff’s Office is an official year-round medicine drop-off location for unwanted, unused and expired medications.
- **SURROGATE** - Probates wills, appoints administrators to estates, appoints guardians of adults and minors, handles trusts for minors and acts as Deputy Clerk to the Superior Court for the processing of adoptions and other matters

## SHARED SERVICES

The County has joined with various municipalities and counties to provide **shared services** that **save tax dollars**. Examples include:

- the **911** emergency communications system
- regional land use **planning**, through the County Planning Board
- cooperative **purchasing**
- a countywide **recycling collection** program
- **engineering** services
- free countywide **document shredding** events
- **fuel** and **vehicle repairs**
- **traffic signal** maintenance and road striping
- **computer services** to various municipalities
- **records-management** assistance for all 21 municipalities under the Public Archives and Records Infrastructure Support (PARIS) Grants Program
- **Road** paving, plowing, snow and ice removal, manhole-cover repairs, salt domes, sweeping and guiderails
- Court-ordered Home Detention Program Services for Hunterdon County through **Juvenile Institutional Services**
- employee **training** programs through Human Resources
- **Youth Services** Commissions and Municipal Alliances
- facility **maintenance** and **repairs**, infrastructure maintenance & repairs
- **printing services** for municipalities
- **County Jail** inmate housing agreement with Hunterdon County
- **Health Department** services for Bedminster, Far Hills, Franklin, Manville, North Plainfield, Raritan and Somerville
- **Improvement Authority** provides a mechanism to municipalities and school districts to access financing for specific projects or equipment at the lowest possible cost
- **Prosecutor's Office** provides Police Academy training, cooperative investigations with federal law enforcement agencies and cost of discovery to NJ Public Defender's Office
- **Bridge Division** provides grass cutting, pump maintenance and alarm repairs for the Green Brook Flood Control Program

## CENSUS FACTS

- Somerset County was the 7th fastest-growing county in New Jersey in 2016. From 1990 to 2010, the population growth rate was 8.72 percent, with a population gain of 25,954 new residents. The population growth rate from 2000 to 2016 was 12.2 percent, with a population gain of 36,207 new residents.
- Seniors age 65 and older accounted for 14.89 percent of our population in 2016 . This number is expected to increase dramatically in the upcoming two decades, as baby boomers begin to retire and move into their senior years.
- The projected population for Somerset County in 2034 is 378,700 or a 14.59 percent increase from 2010.
- The recent and projected population increases translate to increased demand for governmental facilities and services, many of which Somerset County already provides.

## SOMERSET COUNTY IS ...

- Proud of its triple-A bond rating, which ensures we get the best possible interest rates on money we borrow for major projects that benefit all county citizens.
- One of the wealthiest counties in the state and nation. It was the 9th wealthiest county nationwide in 2016 in median household income at \$99,020.
- Ranked 10th of 21 counties in New Jersey in terms of both population and land area in 2016.
- Consistently ranked among counties with the highest employment rate in the State. Somerset County had an unemployment rate of 4.1 percent in 2016 compared to 5.0 percent in New Jersey and 4.85 percent nationally.
- Ranked among the highest of New Jersey's 21 counties with an equalized value per capita of \$182,140 in 2016.



### 2017 Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Peter S. Palmer, Freeholder Director  
Patrick Scaglione, Freeholder Deputy Director  
Patricia L. Walsh • Mark Caliguire • Brian D. Levine



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**Learn more by visiting the Somerset County website:**  
**[www.co.somerset.nj.us](http://www.co.somerset.nj.us)**

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