



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *Priority Actions, Goals & Objectives*

The Meadowlands Regional Chamber (MRC), an economic development advocate for over 40 years, is pleased to present its Vision Plan for the Greater Meadowlands region: Meadowlands Vision 2040.

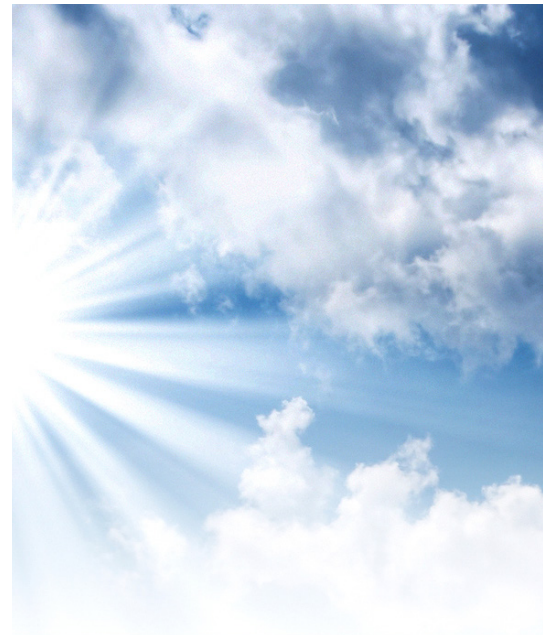
The Greater Meadowlands, with its unparalleled location adjacent to New York, the largest city in the country, and assets of infrastructure, workforce, natural resources and market area, represents a growing, diverse economy and a major economic engine for New Jersey. This unique area is home to the largest business and GDP growth in the state.

The MRC presents this Vision Plan as a guide for the Greater Meadowlands region for the next 20 to 30 years, addressing both long-term goals and short-term actions to generate growth. With targeted short-term and medium-term investments, renewed planning and regulatory modernization, the Greater Meadowlands can achieve even greater economic success and provide a financial boon for New Jersey's fiscal needs through growing income tax and sales tax revenue.

## The Greater Meadowlands Region

Why the Greater Meadowlands? Our planning takes into account not only the 14 municipalities comprising the statutory Hackensack Meadowlands District, but adjoining municipalities and nearby urban areas to which the Meadowlands is connected. We have identified 32 such communities in all, including those in our State-defined tourism district and where we see emerging business opportunities. This is a deliberate choice, to recognize that what happens inside the District affects its surroundings. Similarly, actions from outside the District, particularly those involving infrastructure, influence the investment and economics within the District. The numerous economic, population and transportation connections define a broader Northern New Jersey economic region with strong economic ties to the dominant New York City metropolitan market as well as Newark and Jersey City.

The Greater Meadowlands is an area of enormous promise for residential and commercial growth, building on its legacy of the last 40 years as a national example of regional planning. The Meadowlands is growing as a destination for sports, events and entertainment, which will be reinforced many times over with the opening of American Dream in 2019, and which is driving employment in retail and hospitality sectors. This is occurring while the area continues as a major industrial and logistics center and is seeing significant multifamily residential growth.





## The Greater Meadowlands Region

In a brief snapshot, the Greater Meadowlands has a population of over 968,000, and an employment base of 450,605 employees within over 43,000 establishments. There are 20 colleges and universities in the Greater Meadowlands, and over 40 million square feet in office and industrial space. Leading sectors by jobs include retail, manufacturing, professional and technical services and education. Tourism is growing notably as an economic sector. Impact data from 2014 present shows that visitors to the Meadowlands spent \$456 million, supported 10,700 jobs, and paid \$233 million in state taxes. Indirect income from the tourism industry was estimated at \$131 million. With American Dream, those numbers will grow exponentially. As a measure of the economic significance of the Greater Meadowlands, total private sector wages for 2015 amounted to \$26.3 billion. These 32 municipalities generated 11.5% of total wages statewide.

## The Vision Plan

The Vision Plan is not a Master Plan, with its typical host of sector analyses of existing conditions and proposals. We believe the NJSEA should reassert its regional comprehensive planning mandate, and we offer this Vision Plan as a basis for a re-examined and updated Master Plan for the Meadowlands. The Vision Plan provides a new roadmap for the development of a Master Plan. It delivers a set of goals, objectives and strategies that emerge from a comprehensive view of the region and can be used to establish and drive both short and long-term priorities.

The Vision Plan and its specific goals and objectives were informed by many meetings with stakeholders in the District: business and education leaders, NJSEA staff, local mayors, land use attorneys and others. These stakeholders articulated issues of concern that would either constrain or promote economic growth and suggested objectives and ideas to deal with challenges or capitalize on the Meadowlands' unique opportunities for growth.

The focus of our Plan is economic development, in the broadest sense: development strategies that foster business, generate jobs and improve access, but that also recognize that the quality

of life for our residents and employees and the conservation of the natural environment are essential building blocks for a successful, thriving region.

This Executive Summary focuses on Priority Actions to address the challenges of the region and support its burgeoning economic development. These initiatives, if accomplished, will serve as the foundation for longer-term strategies to achieve the potential of the region. Implementation, in most cases, will be the responsibility of governmental agencies, but the MRC, as a business organization, will continue our advocacy and support. Case studies of successful economic development initiatives around the country are predominantly driven by public private collaborative efforts. The MRC, on behalf of its membership and business stakeholder's pledges to assist in leading such a collaborative initiative to achieve the goals of this Vision Plan. The Comprehensive Vision Plan 2040 document provides further details and background, incorporating a full set of goals, objectives and implementation strategies.



# PRIORITY ACTIONS

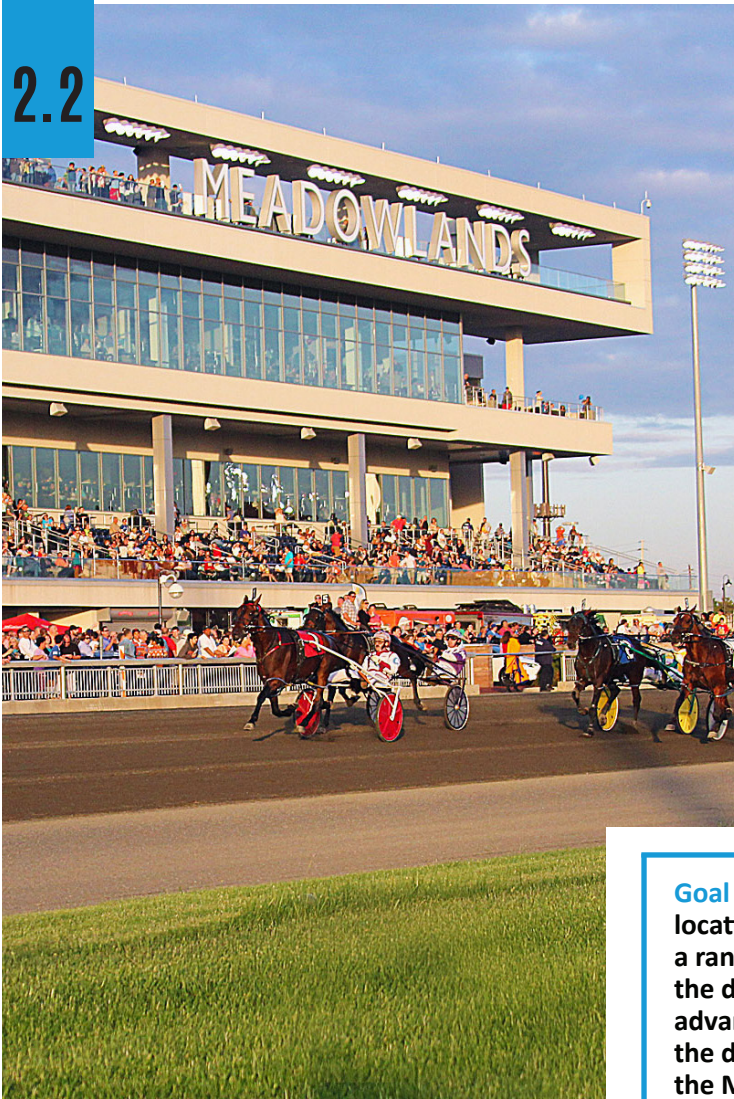
## Priority 1- Re-purpose the NJSEA as a “Next Generation” regional planning authority

Since its inception in the early 70’s, the NJ Meadowlands Commission (now the NJSEA) has many significant success stories of economic development initiatives and environmental reclamation of tainted land. It was for many years a model agency that took the lead on bold initiatives. The NJMC Master Plan of 2004 was intended to be reviewed by 2009 and updated according to economic times. That review and update never occurred. In 2015, the Legislature merged the NJ Meadowlands Commission into the NJ Sports & Exposition Authority combining the missions of both into one entity. The NJSEA also has had significant success in developing facilities that brought much notoriety to NJ. However, today, this combined entity requires a “Next Generation” mission to utilize its bonding, planning/regulatory authority and oversight to leverage and enhance both economic opportunities and quality of life issues in the Greater Meadowlands.

### Driver: Economic Development Planning

**Goal – Promote a diversified economy that capitalizes on the location and assets of the Meadowlands, providing jobs for a range of skill levels in the regional workforce that support the development of new businesses built on innovation and advanced technology as well as the traditional industries of the district. Economic development programs should leverage the Meadowlands area’s unique advantages of access to the metropolitan New York market area, global trade, ports and multimodal infrastructure and skilled labor force, to create an environment for business attraction and retention.**

- Study market trends for and feasibility of a new convention center at the Sports Complex
- Identify needs and improve access, flood control and other necessary infrastructure to support and improve older industrial areas
- Revise land use regulations to provide for flexible zoning controls to foster modernization of industrial areas
- Undertake updated studies to ascertain current trends in business markets and employment, and support emerging sectors
- Develop a Regional Economic Development Strategy in the context of an updated Master Plan in collaboration with pertinent agencies and organizations
- Identify funding sources to support continuing rebuilding, renovations and remobilization of facilities and businesses impacted by Superstorm Sandy





The predictability offered by the first Master Plan and zoning regulations fueled the growth of the Meadowlands in the initial decades following the inception of the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission. We still believe that regional planning is essential for coordinated growth balanced with environmental concerns. It is now time to take a new look at land use patterns, practices and administration almost 50 years later and determine how these systems can be updated to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. We urge the NJSEA, as the land use regulatory authority in the District, to consider the following actions.

- Recognize and revitalize the regional planning purpose of the Meadowlands District and its relationship to adjoining communities
- Review staffing levels to insure that development application demands are efficiently addressed
- Streamline the review process and create a customer service culture orientation
- Revamp zoning and redevelopment regulations to meet current market opportunities and provide flexibility for changing building and technological needs, as well as encouraging amenities and services for residential and employment clusters
- Update the affordable housing policy, recognizing recent court settlement and the need for workforce housing to support employment opportunities

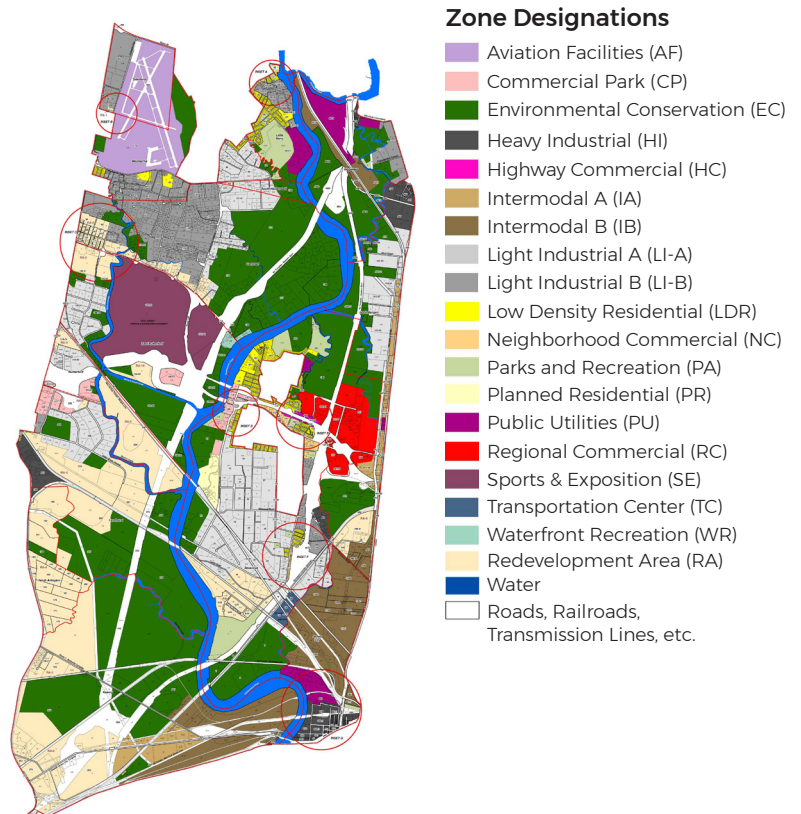
### Driver: Environmental Preservation

**Goal – Achieve and maintain a healthy estuarine environment in the District, hosting a diversity of terrestrial and aquatic species, protecting critical habitats and remediating contaminated sites.**



### Driver: Land Use/ Zoning/ Regulatory

**Goal – Provide the framework for a balance of complementary land uses that maintains fiscal stability, a high quality of life and efficient mixed uses that focus density around accessible centers and thus leverage infrastructure investments.**



Under the leadership of the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission and now the NJSEA, the natural environment of the Meadowlands has achieved a remarkable recovery from the days of solid waste dumping and unregulated discharges. Abundant wildlife and water quality have been recovering, leading to growing ecotourism and new appreciation for the marsh environment. More remains to be done, including cleanup of contaminated sites and improvement of storm water systems.

- Identify and improve infrastructure inadequacies that impact waterways
- Identify critical habitats for acquisition
- Inventory remediation needs and identify potential public and private resources for analysis and cleanup efforts

## Priority 2: Advance and Implement Key Infrastructure Projects & Quality of Life Initiatives

### Driver: Transportation & Mobility

**Goal - Provide an efficient user-friendly (parking, bike, pedestrian facilities to transit) network of bus, rail and highway facilities that provide connection within the District, to the metropolitan area and the greater region, supporting access to jobs, tourism/entertainment, residential and freight movement.**

Business and government leaders alike agree that there is no prosperity without mobility. That is why the MRC is such an ardent advocate for investment in the regional and local transportation networks. These needs are highlighted by our sorely over-capacity, aged links to New York and the need for efficient connections inside the Greater Meadowlands area. Transportation is the web that links us all, allowing goods to reach their destinations and giving our citizens access to job opportunities, retail and entertainment. Improved mobility and the mitigation of congestion will also add to the quality of life here in the region.

There are many steps on the path to achieving a truly connected regional network that provides modern, multiple commuting alternatives. The following are recommended priority actions to work toward the goal expressed above. They are directed at elected officials and governmental agencies, including the NJSEA, as well as business and citizen organizations like the MRC.

- Advocate for funding and implementation of Gateway and Bergen Loop
- Locate an Amtrak stop at Secaucus Junction
- Reconstitute the Meadowlands Transportation Planning Board and update the Transportation Plan, fee structure and allocation practices to fund a wider range of projects.
- Establish a Regional Transportation Planning Task Force that coordinates with other transportation planning agencies.
- Conduct the next phase of feasibility studies for the No. 7 subway line extension to Secaucus
- Provide sufficient funding for NJ Transit to attract experienced leadership, maintain existing systems and plan for the state's public transportation needs
- Support the Northern Branch HBLR extension
- Implement the Bergen Bus Rapid Transit Pilot route
- Identify and support new shuttle routes connecting transit stations, the Sports Complex and strategic employment hubs and create community linkages
- Advocate for the use of abandoned rail lines to enhance regional connectivity and redundancy





## Driver: Flood Control /Resiliency

**Goal – Implement a well-maintained system of flood controls protecting existing businesses, neighborhoods and redevelopment/development sites, enabled by an appropriate regulatory framework balancing economic, transportation and environmental concerns.**

Superstorm Sandy brought devastation to many families and businesses and made resilience a key planning requirement for the future. The Greater Meadowlands must combat the perception of flood hazard as a disincentive for investment in the area with a comprehensive approach that demonstrates that the risk is recognized and will be addressed.

- Clarify and strengthen statutory authority, protection from legal liability, and identify a permanent funding source for the NJSEA to manage flood control for the District, including out-of-district authority as necessary for basin planning
- Develop a comprehensive flood control plan in coordination with the Rebuild By Design pilot project, with clarification of maintenance responsibilities, considering future sea level rise

Rebuild By Design Meadowlands  
proposal for creation at Fluvial Park



## Driver: Livability

**Goal – Sustain a region that is attractive, safe and vital for families, youth and seniors, offering educational, recreational and cultural opportunities that enhance the quality of life and attracting young talent with career opportunities and vibrant places to live.**

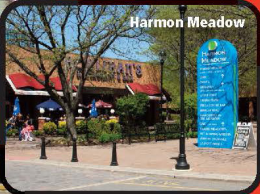
Livability assesses quality of life issues – primarily for residents, but also for those who spend their days working in the Greater Meadowlands. Livability reflects whether citizens are comfortable in their neighborhoods and have access to services, educational opportunities and recreation. Mobility is also important – to be able to get around the region efficiently and at reasonable cost. Quality of life is closely linked to economic development, and is an important consideration for businesses seeking to relocate or expand. Are there housing choices for employees? Good schools? A sense of place? Meadowlands communities need to look to the future, and explore tools to create and enhance live/work/play opportunities and redevelopment options, to keep young people in their home towns.

- Improve connectivity between communities, attractions and employment in the district, through shuttles, bus rapid transit and safe pedestrian and bike networks
- Maintain the vitality and safety of neighborhoods through downtown revitalization planning and local transportation improvements
- Foster a supply of housing for different income levels and preferences through zoning and land use policies
- Balance residential and commercial uses for walkability and convenience, while safeguarding neighborhood character
- Provide opportunities for collaboration among secondary schools, colleges and employers in the area to promote job opportunities and training
- Identify locations where environmental restoration could create or enhance local parks, walking/biking trails and recreational facilities

# MEADOWLANDS LIVE!



WHERE  
TO STAY, EAT,  
PLAY, SHOP



## Priority 3: Establish Destination & Tourism Promotion as an Economic Development Tool

### Driver: Meadowlands Identity/Branding/Marketing

**Goal** – Create a brand identity for the New Jersey Meadowlands as a unique destination for business, recreation, shopping and entertainment as well as reinforcing its unique economic significance, ecotourism opportunities, and its links to New York City and the Northeast region.

While the Meadowlands has much to offer with respect to job opportunity, entertainment and quality of life, the identification of the area as a destination can be reinforced with means both physical, such as signage and maintenance at key locations, and intellectual, including funded marketing efforts promoting its assets.

Destination and tourism promotion fuels development across the entire economic spectrum. In addition to generating jobs and tax revenues by attracting visitors, the activities of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) drive broader economic growth by sustaining air service, creating familiarity, attracting decision makers, and improving the quality of life for residents. In fact, cities and states that prioritize destination promotion, and coordinate these efforts with economic development initiatives, are better positioned to compete for new investments, corporate relocations, and a talented workforce.

- Undertake a branding program for the Meadowlands, with wayfinding and gateway identification as key components
- Identify a permanent funding source to support tourism and marketing of the Meadowlands

### Attracting Strategic Events

By securing meetings and conventions, DMOs attract the very prospects that economic development agencies target. Not only do these events create valuable exposure among business decision makers, they create direct opportunities for economic development agencies to deepen connections with attendees.

### Building Transport Networks

By developing the visitor economy, destination promotion supports transportation infrastructure, providing greater accessibility and supply logistics that are important in attracting investment in other sectors.

### Raising Quality of Life

Visitor spending helps support a broader and higher quality set of local amenities than an area could otherwise sustain. The cultural, entertainment, culinary, and retail attractions that visitors support make a place more attractive to investors.

### Raising Destination Profile

Destination promotion builds awareness, familiarity, and relationships in commercial, institutional and individual networks that are critical in attracting investment.





## REALIZING THE VISION PLAN

It is evident that many initiatives, particularly those involving infrastructure, carry considerable costs. Some may require creative funding solutions including public private partnerships. However, not acting on these improvements will carry a cost to the region in terms of lost economic opportunity.

Targeted investment in infrastructure and modernized development policy will foster growth in both traditional and emerging industries and increase property values. Industrial and warehouse growth will be supported by better access and active flood control systems. New trends, such as e-commerce and destination tourism, will benefit from trans-Hudson improvements and intra-Meadowlands connections, as well as a strong Meadowlands brand and identity. Such efforts will also leverage the profound economic impacts expected with American Dream, and enhance the demand for development sites and redevelopment areas.

**Meadowlands** | Chamber

**Meadowlands** | *Live!*

**Meadowlands** | 2040 Foundation

