WHAT IS THE URBAN ESSEX COALITION?

• Local stakeholders organizing themselves to take the lead in planning and creating their communities.

• An urban rail corridor about 12 miles west of Manhattan

• Formed in 2013 with about 20 members.

• Over 30 members today.

• Funded with annual grants from the Local Initiative Support Corporation of Greater Newark.
THE CORRIDOR IS ABOUT 12 MILES WEST OF MIDTOWN MANHATTAN
NJ TRANSIT RAIL SYSTEM

The Inner Essex Rail Corridor
Our Mission

Three cities, non-profits, businesses, institutions, arts organizations and the general public working together to shape their communities around five commuter rail stations in Essex County, NJ. The goal is smart growth communities, with mixed development, a wide range of housing choices, vital local commercial districts, vibrant public spaces, and improved pedestrian, bicycle and transit choices.
WHY A COALITION?

• A Coalition brings together the many partners - traditional and non-traditional - to join to work together – such as government, institutions, non-profits, business groups, community groups, and individuals.
• The communities have similar concerns and issues throughout the Corridor.
• Individual communities are small and often lacked skills and resources.
• Individual communities can’t always get the same attention as a group working together.
• May attract more resources as a group.
• City of Newark
• City of East Orange
• City of Orange
• Arts Council of East Orange
• Bessie Mae Health Center
• Blackstone Group
• Commons Community Development
• Newark Community Economic Development Corporation
• Newark Downtown District
• Newark Regional Business Partnership
• Community Asset Preservation Corporation
• East Orange Housing Authority
• Essex County Department of Public Works
• Greater Newark LISC

• Historic James Street Neighborhood Associating
• HANDS
• La Casa de Don Pedro
• Luna Stage
• Meadowlink
• Newark Housing Authority
• NJ Department of Transportation
• NJ Institute of Technology
• NJ TRANSIT
• North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
• Orange Housing Authority
• Rising Tide Capital
• RPM
• Rutgers University
• Rutgers Cornwall Center
• St. Michaels Medical Center
• Valley Arts District
COALITION’S ISSUES/PRIORITIES

• Identified through extensive public outreach.

• Physical division caused by interstate highway in the 1970s and elevated rail line in the 19th Century.

• Unsafe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

• Create neighborhoods that support the existing transit system though transit supportive developments and superior access from surrounding neighborhoods.

• Need for mixed affordable housing.

• Need for economic development and access to jobs.

• Continue to involve the public.
PHYSICAL DIVISION CAUSED BY ROUTE 280 AND THE NJ TRANSIT ELEVATED RAIL LINE

• Communities divided by transportation structures

• Neighborhoods never recovered from the massive construction of the highway.

• Rail stations are isolated.

• Downton Newark divided from surrounding blocks

• Main Street commercial districts in Orange and East Orange are isolated.
UNSAFE CONDITIONS FOR PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS

- Poor pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
- Poor ADA infrastructure
- Speeding traffic
- Unsafe conditions for pedestrian
- Hinders access to train stations and several local schools in the area
CREATE COMMUNITIES THAT SUPPORT TRANSIT
NEED FOR MIXED AFFORDABLE HOUSING – will it stay affordable?
ACCESS TO JOBS AND GROW THE ECONOMY
INVOLVE THE PUBLIC
THE COALITION’S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Membership is growing.
- A $250,000 planning and visioning study with a robust program for strengthening public involvement.
- A $250,000 ArtsPlace grant to conduct reverse archaeology.
- Two university studio classes have developed plans for the Broad Street station area.
- Bi-monthly newsletter.
- Forums on technical and policy issues in the corridor.
- Web site.
THE PUBLIC PROCESS - TO KEEP BUILDING SUPPORT AND TO KEEP DOING IT RIGHT

- FOCUS GROUPS
- INTERVIEWS
- PUBLIC EVENTS
- NEWSLETTER
- INTERACTIVE WEB SITE
- SCHOOLS –
  - STUDENTS
  - PARENTS
  - EMPLOYEES
- HOUSES OF WORSHIP
- SENIOR CENTERS
- BUSINESS MEETINGS
- EDUCATIONAL FORUMS
  - Transit Supportive development
  - Designing public spaces
  - Pedestrian friendly design
OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Freeway Drive East at Center Street
Before and After
FUTURE CHALLENGES:

• Strong Leadership by Members

• Sustaining the funding for Coalition operations

• Finding more resources for planning

• Implementation:
  • Local
  • State
  • Public/private