

nj

February 2025

municipalities

Official Publication of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities

2025
Legislative
Guide

Inclusive Park Designs

The future of community recreation



**Direct
Flooring**

NJ STATE CONTRACT
ALL 21 COUNTIES

LIBRARIES • BATHROOMS
SPORT FLOORS • ASBESTOS ABATEMENT

HCESC • ESCNJ • ED DATA

Does This Look Familiar?



We Can Help!

Frustrated with not finding the file or record you need?

NJ DORES requires certain municipal records to be kept permanently unless scanned. AccuScan will get your municipality registered and compliant with all NJ DORES and SRC requirements.

This permits destruction of the paper records. Microfilm is no longer required as a backup to scanning. This will reduce the cost of your project.

Benefits of Using AccuScan

- Instant retrieval, no more lost or misfiled documents
- Access control to all records based on user rights
- Compliance with state and federal regulations
- Cloud based storage available or store on your computer

ACCU SCAN

digital archival solutions

Experts in Scanning & Document Management

Council Minutes • Building Permits • Ordinances • Resolutions • Tax Records
• Tax Maps • Blueprints • Police Records • Payroll • Personnel

609-386-6795 • www.GetAccuScan.com



ESCNJ NJ State Approved Co-op # 65MCESCCPS
Document Management for Records Retention & Disposal RFP# ESCNJ 22/23-11
Bid Term: 7/1/2022-6/30/2024 Extended to: 6/30/2025

For information about the ESCNJ coop or how to join, visit www.ESCNJ.us



New Jersey Municipalities Magazine

Volume 102 | Issue 2

EDITOR

Michael F. Cerra

MANAGING EDITOR

Amy Spiezio aspiezio@njlm.org

DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, & TECHNOLOGY

Taran B. Samhammer tsamhammer@njlm.org

ADVERTISING MANAGER

Tasneem Kapadia tkapadia@njlm.org

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Lori Buckelew

Benjamin Dworkin, Ph.D.

Joseph Hannon

Frank Marshall, Esq.

Paul A. Penna

Marc Pfeiffer

Matthew U. Watkins

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Dawn Becan, White Eagle Printing Company

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER

Thomas Fratticcioli tfratticcioli@njlm.org

Have an idea, project or opinion to share?

NJ Municipalities welcomes member articles, information, and op-eds. Contact Managing Editor Amy Spiezio or go to www.njlm.org/magazine.

Want to reach local decision makers?

NJ Municipalities can help you get your message out to New Jersey's 6,000+ municipal officials. Contact Advertising Manager Tasneem Kapadia or go to www.njlm.org/advertise.



@njleague



@nj_league



@New Jersey League of Municipalities



www.njlm.org/youtube

NEW JERSEY MUNICIPALITIES (ISSN 0028-5846) is published monthly (except July, August and September) by the **New Jersey State League of Municipalities, 222 West State St., Trenton, NJ 08608. PHONE: 609-695-3481, FAX: 609-695-0151, WEBSITE: www.njlm.org, EMAIL: njm@njlm.org.** Periodicals postage paid at Trenton, NJ 08608. Postmaster send address changes to NEW JERSEY MUNICIPALITIES, 222 West State St., Trenton, NJ 08608. Print subscription rates (nine months) \$30.00; League members \$25.00; foreign \$46.00. Single copies: League member officials, \$6.00; others, \$8.00; foreign, \$27.00. For additional subscription information visit www.njlm.org/subscriptions. Publication No. 380460. © 2025.

NEW JERSEY MUNICIPALITIES serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information on municipal affairs for the public officials of New Jersey. The views expressed and the data presented by contributors and advertisers are theirs and are not shared by the League, unless specifically stated.

The New Jersey State League of Municipalities is dedicated to environmentally and socially responsible operations. We are proud to print this magazine on Sappi McCoy Gloss 100lb Text (cover) and Sappi Flo Gloss 70lb Text, industry leading environmentally responsible papers. The wood fiber used to make this paper is independently certified to come from responsibly managed forests. Proudly printed in the state of New Jersey, USA.



Officers



PAUL H. TOMASKO

President
Mayor, Alpine



SEAN ELWELL

1st Vice President
Mayor, Elsinboro



SHELLEY BRINDLE

2nd Vice President
Mayor, Westfield



GUY PISERCHIA

3rd Vice President
Deputy Mayor, Long Hill

Executive Board

RAS BARAKA Mayor, Newark

TOM BIANCO Mayor, Clayton

MARY JANE CANOSE Mayor, Bernardsville

WILLIAM CHEGWIDDEN Mayor, Wharton;
Immediate Past President, NJLM

BRAD COHEN Mayor, East Brunswick

SHEENA COLLUM Mayor, South Orange

RUBY COTTON Council Member, Paterson

WILLIAM CURTIS Mayor, Bay Head

DAVID DeGIRALAMO Mayor, Union Township (Hunterdon)

ANTHONY FANUCCI Mayor, Vineland

ELSIE FOSTER Mayor, Highland Park

STEVEN FULOP Mayor, Jersey City

JOHN C. GLIDDEN JR. Mayor, Closter

DINA M. GRILO Mayor, East Newark

BARBARA JUZAITIS Councilwoman, Avalon

NICK KAPPATOS Mayor, Runnemede

M. JAMES MALEY JR. Mayor, Collingswood

ADRIAN O. MAPP Mayor, Plainfield

JEFFREY MARTIN Mayor, Hamilton

JOHN PALLONE Mayor, Long Branch

JANET W. TUCCI Mayor, West Long Branch

ROSEMARY TUOHY Mayor, Allamuchy Township

JACLYN VEASY Mayor, Evesham

Executive Staff

MICHAEL F. CERRA Executive Director

LORI BUCKELEW Deputy Executive Director

TRISHKA WATERBURY CECIL, ESQ. League General Counsel

Focus:



Parks & Recreation



A New Design Standard for Parks

6

Features

6 UpFront Feature Inclusivity

A new design standard for parks
Kenneth Keltai

16 Outlook 2025: Addressing the needs and meeting the challenges of State and Local Government

Nicholas Scutari

18 Outlook 2025: Supporting Local Government

John DiMaio

20 The Future of New Jersey Journalism: Evolution, Not Extinction

About legal advertising
Marc Pfeiffer

24 The Next Chapter

Women's leadership starts with you
Cai Barias

26 2024 Innovation in Governance

Jersey City and Deerfield honored for achievement

28 2025 Mayors & Elected Officials Halls of Fame

30 Focus Saving Seabeach Amaranth

Coastal restoration project gives threatened coastal plant another chance
JoAnne Castagna

34 Combatting Runaway Lawsuits

Effective strategies to protect local governments
Michael L. Razze Jr. and Joseph Hrubash

NJLM

42 Meet Your New Congress Members

45 2025 Legislative Guide

IN THIS ISSUE

4/ 222 West State
Michael F. Cerra

10/ NJ Now

54/ Business Card Directory

56/ Local Knowledge/Supporters
Amy Spiezio

DEPARTMENTS

36/ Finance Center
Jessika Sherman

38/ Labor Negotiations
Matthew U. Watkins

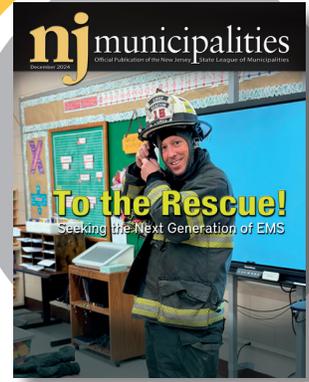
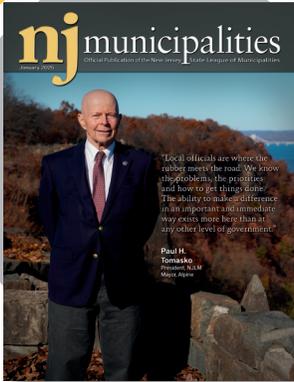
40/ Gold Dome
Ben Dworkin

53/ Legal Q&A
Frank Marshall

On the Cover

Inclusivity is the new design standard for parks. Read all about it in Kenneth Keltai's UpFront article on page 6.

Stay Informed, Stay Inspired... with *NJ Municipalities* Magazine



Subscribe Now!



Print format



Digital format

For questions, email njm@njlm.org
www.njlm.org/Subscribe

Name/Title: _____

Municipality/Company: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____ # of Subscriptions: _____

Rates: Members - \$25 • Non-members - \$30 • Foreign - \$47

www.njlm.org/Subscribe

New Jersey State League of Municipalities • 222 West State Street • Trenton, NJ 08608

nj municipalities
Official Publication of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities



Speaking of environments... have you sent in an entry for the Show Off Your City photo contest yet? It's not too late!



Your Voice In Trenton

This month *NJ Municipalities* includes the annual Legislative Guide, sharing information about state and federal legislative processes and how the League is your partner and advocate. We've had a few changes in staffing in the new year, including the naming of Paul Penna to Director of Government Affairs. We have also hired Erin Mallon Knoedler as Legislative Analyst and are in the process of hiring a staff attorney. Please see NJ Now (page 11) for more details.

Our team is dedicated to serving as advocates for local governments in Trenton and Washington and will continue cultivating open, energized dialogue between local officials, legislators, and the Governor, and our federal representatives. Help ensure the process is successful and make your voice heard by sharing with the League and your state-level representatives specific policy-related needs. Take the opportunity to volunteer for League committees or task forces studying issues important to you.

This issue also includes outlooks for 2025 from the Senate President and the Assembly Republican Leader. They look at topics including legal notices, affordable housing, health care costs, and public safety. Going into a gubernatorial election year and with a new (returning) president sitting now seated, there will be challenges and opportunities for local voices to be heard. We encourage you to stay informed. Read the magazine,

the website, and newsletters and attend the League's wide-ranging seminars and Lunch & Learn sessions.

Finally, this month our focus is on parks and recreation. We discuss inclusivity in park planning and preserving endangered flora and fauna. Creating a place in nature for all local residents, human and non-human, fosters a peaceful environment worth saving and sharing.

Speaking of environments...have you sent in an entry for the Show Off Your City photo contest yet? It's not too late. Municipalities are invited to send us photos of their tourist attractions, downtown areas, economic development initiatives, parks, city halls, community groups, and new projects. Images are due by February 7 and the winner will be featured on the cover of the April 2025 issue and will win a free League publication of their choice. To apply, visit www.njlm.org/ShowOffYourCity.

April is, coincidentally, the month of Local Government Week, which will be held April 6-12.

Are you participating? Use the NJ Local Government Week hashtag, #NJLocalGovt, when promoting your activities on social media. Please encourage all involved in related activities to use the hashtag. Using hashtags connects your posts with similar content and allows cities to view a running list of #NJLocalGovt content. We thank you for your participation. As a group we are all stronger and better able to serve local governments. 📌

Michael Cerra

Topic Alerts

The news you want -
delivered directly to your inbox.



Choose from **over 15 topics**, News Flashes allow you to **filter news** to receive alerts for the **topics of your choice**.

Current topics include:

- ▶ Cannabis Legalization
- ▶ Emergency Management & Public Health
- ▶ Federal Government
- ▶ Grants
- ▶ Legislative Advocacy
- ▶ Pension & Benefits and more.

Subscribe today to stay informed for tomorrow.

www.njlm.org/TopicAlerts



Inclusivity

A new design standard for parks

Kenneth Keltai, RLA, LLA, ISA, Assistant Vice President & Landscape Architecture Practice Leader, H2M architects + engineers



An example of inclusive park design at work.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 27% of adults in the United States has some form of disability that impacts their mobility, cognition, hearing, vision, independent living, and/or capacity for self-care. The CDC has also reported that between 2019 and 2021 the prevalence of developmental disability in children aged 3 to 17 increased from 7.4% to nearly 8.6%. Likewise, data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows an increase in the number of Americans with disabilities from 11.7% in 2019 to 12.5% in 2023.

Given the dramatic increase in disability throughout the country, it is more imperative than ever that people of all ages can access recreational facilities like parks, beaches, and playgrounds regardless of disability. There are a number of ways to improve accessibility in these facilities, but the gold standard of design is shifting toward creating spaces that are not just accessible, but inclusive.



Accessible vs. Inclusive Design

Accessibility in the United States is governed primarily by two laws: the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA), which created accessibility requirements for facilities that receive federal funding or were built on federal land, and the Americans with

Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), a similar law which created accessibility requirements for a broader range of public accommodations and codified civil rights protections for people with disabilities along the same lines as protections based on race, sex, religion, or national origin.

Facilities that meet the guidelines provided by the ABA and ADA can be said to be accessible because individuals with disabilities can access and use them. However, even if facilities are designed with the goal of providing equal access, they may not provide an equal experience to all users. Designs which emphasize universal usability regardless of age or ability are inclusive.

One example of inclusive design is curb cuts: small slopes in the sidewalk that can be found at most major pedestrian-friendly intersections. Although these were originally designed in the wake of World War II to allow veterans with physical disabilities to more easily cross the street, they ultimately benefit everyone from mothers with strollers to the elderly to cyclists and skateboarders.

Put simply: accessible designs create separate accommodations for

people with disabilities to use a facility and its services, whereas inclusive designs aim to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of as many different people as possible such that separate accommodations are seldom even necessary.

Accessible Parks

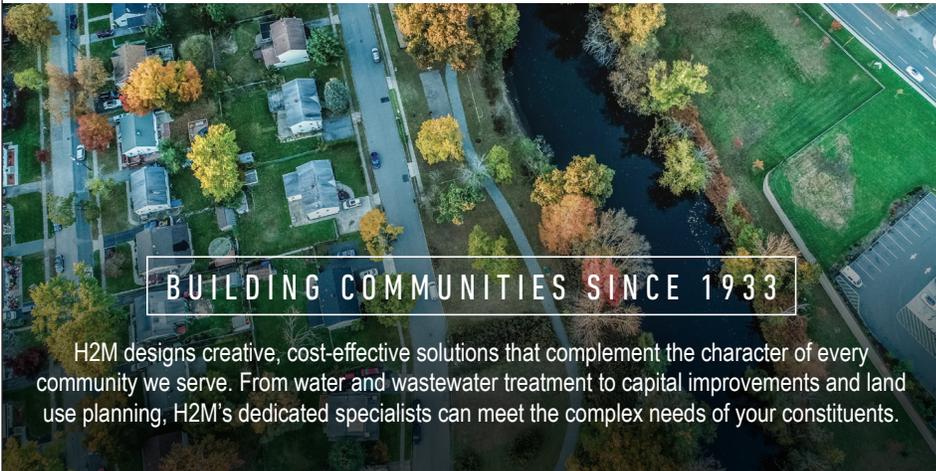
Parks cannot be inclusive without also being accessible. This means that ensuring a baseline standard of accessibility is the first vital step in providing equitable usability for all park and playground visitors.

The U.S. Access Board (USAB), an independent federal agency originally formed in 1973 to ensure compliance with the ABA, has developed comprehensive design guidelines for creating accessible environments that meet ABA and/or ADA criteria or surpass them.

The USAB guidelines for playgrounds suggest including both ground-level and elevated play structures in designs and placing them along accessible routes. Children who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices should be able to access these structures via ramp or transfer station.



H 2 M architects + engineers



BUILDING COMMUNITIES SINCE 1933

H2M designs creative, cost-effective solutions that complement the character of every community we serve. From water and wastewater treatment to capital improvements and land use planning, H2M's dedicated specialists can meet the complex needs of your constituents.

862.207.5900 | h2m.com | [f](#) [in](#) [@](#) [X](#)

Inclusivity

For parks, USAB recommends considering the width, slope, and surface uniformity of trails and other pathways, as steep inclines and large gaps can pose a danger to wheelchair users. Additionally, the USAB recommends that accessible parks have regular rest areas to allow trail users to take a break if needed. In the case of beaches, visitors should have access to the shoreline during high and low tide via beach access mats.

USAB's robust and comprehensive guidelines can be incredibly valuable when designing all types of facilities for accessibility, but true inclusivity often requires thinking beyond mandates and regulations.

Equipment that engages and stimulates the five senses can improve a child's concentration, communication, and gross and fine motor skills, among other benefits.

Inclusive Parks

One of the major differences between inclusive and accessible design is that the latter often focuses exclusively on remedying issues of mobility. Inclusive design takes physical disabilities into consideration but goes even further by providing an environment in which people with a wide variety of needs thrive regardless of ability.

Inclusive design elements need not stand out, either. They can be cleverly incorporated into the existing aesthetic. Access ramps, for example, can be decorated to serve as public art displays or outfitted with benches to



serve as a seat wall. The inclusive design elements of a park and/or playground should serve multiple purposes, as it contributes to a more efficient use of space and reduces stigma toward people with disabilities who utilize these design elements.

Some examples of inclusive design on playgrounds and in parks are:

1. Nonverbal communication boards. Nonverbal communication boards (NVCBs) use a grid of images to allow nonspeaking children, such as children who are on the autism spectrum or hard of hearing, to communicate with their peers and caretakers by pointing to specific images on the board that represent feelings, needs, or physical objects.

By using NVCBs, nonspeaking children can more effectively advocate for themselves and foster stronger interpersonal relationships with peers of all abilities.

2. Sensory equipment. Equipment that engages and stimulates the five senses can improve a child's concentration, communication, and gross and fine motor skills, among other benefits. Furthermore, sensory equipment benefits children who engage in self-stimulation, a type of behavior common in people with autism and characterized by repetitive, autonomous body movements or sounds for the purpose of self-soothing, emotional regulation, or sensory regulation.

3. Quiet play areas. Children with autism spectrum disorder or other sensory processing issues may have a difficult time on traditional playgrounds. Inclusive designs can account for this by incorporating calm, quiet areas devoid of overstimulation. These spaces should be located as far away from major sources of noise, such as public rights-of-way, as possible.

Inclusive design operates on the principle that design choices that improve the lives of people with disabilities will ultimately improve the lives of everyone else.

4. Companion seating. Companion seating is common in venues such as movie theaters, concert halls, and sports stadiums. These venues typically have spots reserved for wheelchair users. Companion seating allows their friends and family to join them.

5. Uniformly accessible bathrooms. Bathrooms should be large enough to accommodate a 5-foot turning radius for wheelchairs and feature grab bars and amenities at a height that wheelchair users can reach. If bathrooms are segregated by gender, then changing rooms should be available in both men's and women's restrooms. In lieu of gendered bathrooms, inclusive design should include either single-occupancy or non-gendered group bathrooms with floor-to-ceiling walls and full-size doors to maintain privacy.

Inclusivity as the New Standard

Inclusive design operates on the principle that design choices that

improve the lives of people with disabilities will ultimately improve the lives of everyone else, as was the case with the curb cut. Inclusive designs may require some added creativity, but experienced and dedicated architectural firms can develop designs that meet the universal needs

of children and adults alike.

Inclusive design pays off in dividends, as it helps foster a greater sense of community, breaks down social barriers between those with disabilities and those without, and creates an environment that allows children to learn, grow, and thrive. 🦿



Municipal Consulting Services

- ✓ **Professional Planning - Exclusively for Municipalities**
- ✓ **Executive Recruiting**
- ✓ **Temporary Administrators and Department Heads**
- ✓ **Management and Efficiency Studies - Based on LEAN & ANSI G1**
- ✓ **Leadership Training**
- ✓ **HR Consulting and Organization Development**

Call or e-mail for a quote

908-276-2777

JPM@JERSEYPROFESSIONALMGT.COM

www.jerseyprofessionalmgt.com

Long-Serving Mayor Cantu Steps Down



League Past President, Plainsboro Mayor Peter Cantu shakes hands with Governor Phil Murphy as he steps away from the mayor's office.

Governor Phil Murphy was on hand last month to mark Plainsboro Mayor and League Past President Peter Cantu's stepping down from the Mayor's role. Cantu, 84, has served on the Township Committee since 1975. He was first selected as mayor in 1977 and was selected again for the role each year since under Plainsboro's township committee form of government.

In December Cantu informed his colleagues on the Plainsboro Township Committee of his plan to step away from the mayor's desk. He will remain on the committee until his term ends in December 2026.

A longtime League participant and supporter, Cantu served as president of the League in 2005 when the



An honor guard started the reorganization.



Governor Phil Murphy (l) with Mayor Cantu (r) and Gale Cantu (c).

organization purchased the current headquarters building from the City of Trenton and restored the property. In 2014 Cantu was inducted into the Platinum level of the League's Mayors' Hall of Fame for those who have served 30 or more years. He is the Vice President of the 222 West State Street Urban Renewal Corp.

A Former Chairperson of Middlesex County's Agricultural Development Board, Cantu retired from IBM after 30-year career and retired from his role as Executive Director of KMM Inc., Middlesex County Transportation Management Association



Governor Murphy addresses the reorganization meeting attendees.

Cantu, a lifelong Plainsboro resident, has lived there with his wife of 63 years, Gale. He was key in the township's transition from farming community to suburb. 🇯🇵



(L to r) Plainsboro Mayor Edmund Yates, Township Clerk Carol Torres, and Committeemen Pater Cantu and Neil J. Lewis.

League Names Penna Director, Adds Analyst

The League has announced the promotion of Paul Penna to the position of Director, Government Affairs and the hiring of Erin Mallon Knoedler as Legislative Analyst.

Paul Penna joined NJLM in August 2020 as a Legislative Analyst on our Government Affairs team. His experience includes owning his own consulting business focused on communication and association management, serving as the Chief of Staff at the New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance, and holding staff positions with State- and Federal-level officials. Paul graduated with a B.A. in History from Rutgers College.

The League has also added Analyst Erin Mallon Knoedler to the legislative team. She has worked in Union City, and was municipal manager in Evesham and Cherry Hill. Previously, she worked at the DCA, Division of Local Government Services. She is also a RMC (Registered Municipal Clerk) and a QPA (Qualified Purchasing Agent.)



Stay Informed
Don't miss news on a topic of interest!

Scan below or visit:
www.njlm.org/StayConnected

SCAN ME!
 TO LEARN MORE



Budgeting for the Elected Official

Everything you need to know to create, balance, and approve your municipalities' budget.

Creating and approving a feasible budget is one of the most important tasks of an Elected Official. It is also one of the most complex and time consuming tasks.

Saturday, February 22, 2025
 Conference Center at Mercer
 1200 Old Trenton Rd, West Windsor, NJ 08550
 8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Members: \$75.00
 Non-Members: \$100.00

Scan or visit
www.njlm.org/Seminars



SEMINAR - FEBRUARY





Advertiser Listing: February 2025

Accuscan

Alaimo Group

Arcari + Iovino Architects

Associated Builders and Contractors of NJ (ABCNJ)

Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind

Bai Lar Interior Services

Carroll Engineering

Conner Strong & Buckelew

DiFrancesco Bateman, P.C.

Direct Flooring

Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ)

First Managed Care Option (FMCO)

Gann Law Books

General Code

General Recreation, Inc

Genova Burns

GPI

Green Touch Nursery & Landscaping

H2M Architects + Engineers

Jersey Professional Management

Jingoli & Sons

Laddey Clark & Ryan

Lincoln National Life Insurance Co.

Mason, Griffin & Pierson

Neglia Engineering Associates

New Jersey Municipal Management Association (NJMMA)

New Jersey One Call

NJGMIS

Princeton Public Affairs Group

Rehabco Inc

RFP Solutions, Inc.

Surenian, Edwards, Buzak & Nolan LLC

USA Phone

Want to read more?

**Subscribe to view the full issue at
njlm.org/subscriptions**

Already subscribe?

**Log-in at
njlm.org/njmsubscribers**