



Plainsboro Today

Plainsboro Township has evolved from a placid agrarian to a high-energy suburban community with numerous world-class, for-profit and not-for-profit corporations and research facilities. The prestigious, high-profile entities include: Novo Nordisk's North American headquarters, Firmenich Inc., Munich Reinsurance headquarters, Siemens Corporate Research Center, Integra Life Sciences, Novartis, Croda International headquarters, Sandoz Inc., Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (fusion energy), Penn Medicine Medical Center and health-care campus, Genmab U.S., headquarters, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In addition, more than half of the town's total square miles has been set aside as open space, an invaluable investment in the quality of the life for those who work and live in the community as well as for generations of future residents and employees.

"Having just celebrated Plainsboro's centennial on May 6, 2019, when we focused on our heritage, we now want to focus on our town today and its path forward for tomorrow," says Mayor Peter Cantu – one of New Jersey's longest serving mayors.

Times have certainly changed over the past 50 years from when Plainsboro native Gale Cantu, the mayor's wife, would ride a horse down Plainsboro Road through a town with 1,600 cows, and only 1,200 residents. And as much as she is nostalgic about the quaint Plainsboro of her youth, Gale is thrilled with how the community has evolved. She also knows what has driven and continues to drive her husband of 61 years to enable Plainsboro to be the best it can be.

Today's perspective is a future of enormous promise. Plainsboro has been recognized by *New Jersey Monthly* magazine as one of the top 10 "Best Places to Live" in New Jersey and by *Fortune Small Business* magazine as one of the "100 Best Places to Live and Launch a Small Business." These accolades were due not only to the town's superb location, but also to forward-thinking governing and planning over many years on the part of the town's leaders, professional municipal staff, and the numerous residents working as volunteers to support their community.

According to the 2020 US Census, Plainsboro's diverse population is 24,084; about 53-percent of the residents are foreign born. Diversity is evidenced by the population breakdown: 58-percent Asian, about 31-percent White, about 6-percent Black, and about 3-percent Hispanic or Latino.

Location, Location, Location

Plainsboro, which has a land area of approximately 12 square miles in the southwest corner of Middlesex County, has what realtors often say is the number one quality sought after by homebuyers and corporations: location, location, location. It has an excellent road system with transit accessibility to almost any employment, educational, or recreational location in New Jersey as well as within the New York-Philadelphia regional corridor.

Princeton University, McCarter Theatre, Princeton Art Museum are 10 minutes away; Rutgers University - State Theatre and Zimmerli Museum are 20 minutes to the north; the New Jersey State House in Trenton is 20 minutes in the other direction. A short trip to the east is the Jersey Shore, to the west, the Sourland Mountains.

The northeast corridor transit hub is minutes away at the Princeton Junction train station, thus providing transit access to New York, Trenton, Philadelphia, Washington DC, New Brunswick, Newark and Newark Liberty International Airport.

The highways serving Plainsboro include: New Jersey Turnpike, Route One, Route 295/195, Route 130 and Route 33. In addition, Plainsboro has one of the region's best local road networks connecting College Road to Princeton Forrestal Center corporate park with the Forrestal Village retail and approved residential development.

Bus service includes: NJ Transit's 600 bus route that serves apartment complexes, retail centers, health facilities, and connects residents to a near-by train station and to Trenton government offices. The hospital provides (through the Greater Mercer Transportation Management Association) free, on-demand ride service for Plainsboro residents seeking medical treatment at the Penn Medicine Medical Center and other services on the healthcare campus in Plainsboro. Tiger Transit is a Princeton University free shuttle bus service open to the general public with stops at the Penn Medicine campus, Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, Princeton Forrestal Village, and the town of Princeton.

Plainsboro is now the host community to the first-class, renowned hospital Penn Medicine Medical Center which relocated from Princeton. The hospital is the main medical entity within the healthcare campus of more than one million square feet. It also includes: an assisted living facility, skilled nursing facility, fitness center, medical offices, child care center, senior daycare center, independent senior residences, and pediatric specialized care medical facility operated by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP).

The Fiscal Picture - a Thriving Landscape

The advantages of Plainsboro's location would dim quickly if the economy were simply a black hole that swallowed the community's vitality. Instead, Plainsboro's economic picture is the bright star in New Jersey.

Plainsboro has one of the lowest (effective) municipal tax rates (including open space, library and fire district) per 100 dollars of assessed valuation in Middlesex County, and the taxes have remained low because of an excellent ratable base of \$4.535 billion.

In October 2021, Standard & Poor's Global Ratings Services announced Plainsboro's long-term credit rating remained at 'AAA' and affirmed the 'AAA' rating on the township's existing General Obligation debt. The 'AAA' rating is the highest issuer credit rating assigned by Standard & Poor's and means that Plainsboro has an extremely strong capacity to meet its financial commitments.

"I am extremely pleased that the township has again received the highest credit rating offered by Standard & Poor's. It is a testament to good fiscal policy exercised by the Plainsboro Township Committee and sound management practices of our staff," says Mayor Peter Cantu. The Standard & Poor's report referenced the township's strong management, very strong local economy, strong budgetary liquidity, strong institutional framework and an adequate debt and contingency liability position.

"The 'AAA' rating means that when we borrow money, we get the lowest possible rates; this is benefitting the township and our taxpayers by paying less interest than we would otherwise pay if we had a lower credit rating," says Gregory Mayers, Plainsboro's chief financial officer. It is estimated that fewer than five percent of the 565 municipalities in New Jersey receive the 'AAA' bond rating from Standard & Poor's.

The economic strength of the community directly relates to decades of careful, strategic land use planning and implementation. The planning process has enabled Plainsboro to become Central Jersey's pre-eminent site for world renowned corporations that have gone through a thorough deliberate analysis similar to the one used by the hospital when it relocated. They all have come to the same conclusion - Plainsboro is the place to be.

The heart of Plainsboro's corporate development is Princeton Forrestal Center - Princeton University's Corporate Office and Research Complex. Today, Princeton Forrestal Center represents over 90 percent of Plainsboro Township's commercial tax ratables. The Plainsboro lands within the Princeton Forrestal Center represent an economic powerhouse in the region with an approximate annual \$7.3-billion-dollar economic impact.

Founded in 1973, Princeton Forrestal Center is one of the nation's premier university-associated office and research parks. Today it is home to over 225 businesses, ranging from prestigious multinationals to start-ups and academic research facilities, focused on a range of disciplines including life sciences, biotechnology, health services, financial services, information technology, engineering, architectural services, legal services, pharmaceuticals, energy services, communications, logistics, and philanthropy. Plainsboro's Planning Board has also approved a plan for part of the Princeton Forrestal Center known as the Nurseries that will provide a lasting economic benefit to the community. The plan calls for a mix of residential, commercial, and office development with a generous amount of open space within a walkable "Main Street" design concept.

A-Plus Schools

People and corporations flock to Plainsboro for the excellence of its K-12 schools, thus providing: developers' confidence in their ability to market new housing units; corporations' confidence in their ability to attract quality employees; and homeowners' confidence in maintaining the value of their homes.

The West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District educates over 9,300 students and employs over 1,300 staff members in 10 schools throughout West Windsor and Plainsboro. The School District is consistently ranked among one of the finest in New Jersey. The district is routinely among the top five statewide for highest SAT scores with 96 percent of the students going on to college.

Housing – A Solid Foundation

Excellence in the schools would be irrelevant if people were unable to find suitable housing to fit their lifestyle and budget. Plainsboro, once again, gets an A-plus grade this time the subject being housing for people of all ages, financial means, and physical demands.

Plainsboro has about 10,000 housing units; half are single-family homes, the other half are townhomes, condominiums and apartments. "We have a housing type that fits everyone's style and need," says Les Varga, Director of Planning and Zoning.

Because Plainsboro is a very desirable Route One corridor community, some of the homes are valued at more than a million dollars. The housing stock, though, accommodates the middle housing market, with \$468,000 being the average house price, and several moderately priced rental units, with a median rent of \$1,663.

The affordable housing rental units are set at rental amounts just slightly above median rents for New Jersey affordable housing units. One outstanding example of state qualified rental units is a development on Dey Road called *The Place at Plainsboro* that comprises 70 beautiful, contemporary, low- and

moderate-income affordable apartments. It was built on municipal property through a partnership between the town and a developer that created an opportunity for high quality housing construction.

Senior residential communities in Plainsboro are thriving on both sides of Route One. The projects consist of hundreds of upscale, age-restricted residential units - homes, condos, and apartments; assisted living; and skilled nursing facilities. Plainsboro Town Center, anchored by the public library, also has apartments and townhomes within walking distance to the library, restaurants, medical offices, and retailers. In addition, there is a recently completed age-restricted residential development situated on the healthcare campus that includes 260 apartments and 45 townhomes.

R&R&R - Relaxation and Recreation and Restoration

Plainsboro's commitment to excellence in education, jobs, health care and wellness, land use planning, economic stability, and housing, is matched by its commitment to open space and other amenities that enhance mental and physical health of every resident in the community.

More than 50 percent of Plainsboro's approximately 12 square miles is preserved open space. Every building project that has been approved during the past several decades has an open space and walkways component. These site open space mandates, plus other building and infrastructure requirements to conserve energy, recycle, and educate residents about the urgency of action to slow down climate change, resulted in Plainsboro's prestigious statewide sustainability recognition. Sustainable Jersey has certified Plainsboro at the bronze level of sustainability achievement, for three consecutive program years.

Plainsboro's public parks provide for both active and passive recreational pursuits. The jewel is the 1,000-acre Plainsboro Preserve, which includes the 50-acre McCormack Lake, walking trails, valuable wetlands and large wooded areas, with an abundance of natural habitats for plants, animals and migratory birds. The 6,500 square foot Rush Holt environmental education center, managed by Plainsboro Township's Recreation Department, offers many nature and environmental programs. In addition, the township recently established a Plainsboro museum dedicated to telling the story of Plainsboro's rich history. It is located within the restored historic John Wicoff House, the residence of one of the founders of Plainsboro's in 1919.

Plainsboro also contains an extensive network of pathways that connects neighborhoods with parks, the library, the municipal building and the Village Center. The township hosts one of two public Middlesex County owned golf courses. In addition, there are three fitness centers that accommodate all levels of exercise needs from those seeking hard-core cross-training to physical therapy and rehabilitation.

The recreational programming under Lenny Celluro, Director of Recreation and Community Services, is "excellent and as diverse as any you will find in New Jersey," in his words. The township presents a cohesive roster of programs that in most communities are offered in a patchwork of activities presented by different organizations and departments

<https://www.plainsboronj.com/DocumentCenter/View/10970/Winter-2022>

Going Forward

"It has been my privilege to serve Plainsboro for almost 50 years, and as good as we think Plainsboro is today, I am confident the future will be even more spectacular," says Mayor Cantu.

For those who would like to play a role in Plainsboro's future, no matter what your skills or interests, please reach out to: <https://www.plainsboronj.com/329/Local-Volunteer-Opportunities>