



# Advisory Meeting Summary: “Housing and the NJTPA”

Location: Virtual

Date: Wednesday, May 29, 2024, 5:00 to 6:00 pm

## About UpNext North Jersey

UpNext North Jersey (UpNext) is an advisory group that engages young North Jersey residents in a dialogue with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). The NJTPA seeks to better understand the values and needs of this demographic group regarding key transportation issues. The NJTPA provides UpNext members with unique opportunities to learn about and discuss timely topics related to regional planning and public policy, develop a network of peers who share similar interests, and engage with regional thought leaders and decision-makers.

The Public Outreach and Engagement Team (POET), part of the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, worked with the NJTPA to plan and conduct this virtual advisory meeting about housing, including its relation to transportation needs, services, trends, etc. This meeting addresses a significant topic of the NJTPA’s next Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

## Overview of the Housing and the NJTPA Event:

The UpNext North Jersey advisory meeting was held virtually on May 29, 2024. UpNext members were joined by Jeff Perlman, the NJTPA’s Senior Director of Planning. Perlman led a discussion that covered various aspects of housing and transportation, aiming to integrate these elements into the NJTPA’s next Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), currently being developed and set to be adopted by the NJTPA Board in 2025. The purpose of the discussion was to gain valuable insight from young professionals in the who live/work in the region and better understand their housing needs, especially as these needs related to transportation.

## Agenda:

5:00 to 5:05pm - Welcome and Introduction, NJTPA and POET staff.

5:05 to 6:00pm - Open-ended discussion with Jeff Perlman and UpNext members.

**Housing and the NJTPA**  
**Wednesday, May 29, 5 p.m.**

Everyone deserves to live in a safe and affordable home. Whether you rent or own, having a place to live that you can afford in a neighborhood with opportunities is the foundation for so much else in life. Housing costs are still too high for too many and new policies and investments are needed to address the large deficit in accessible and affordable homes across the country. Action is needed to lower costs for renters and homebuyers, address the shortage of housing, make our economy stronger and more resilient, advance equity, and offer economic opportunity for all.

The Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act now requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), like the NJTPA, to discuss housing in their Long Range Transportation Plans. **The NJTPA is considering how to incorporate housing its in next plan update and wants your input!**

## Discussion Summary:

UpNext members were given a quick introduction to new federal requirements for MPOs to include housing in their LRTP's.

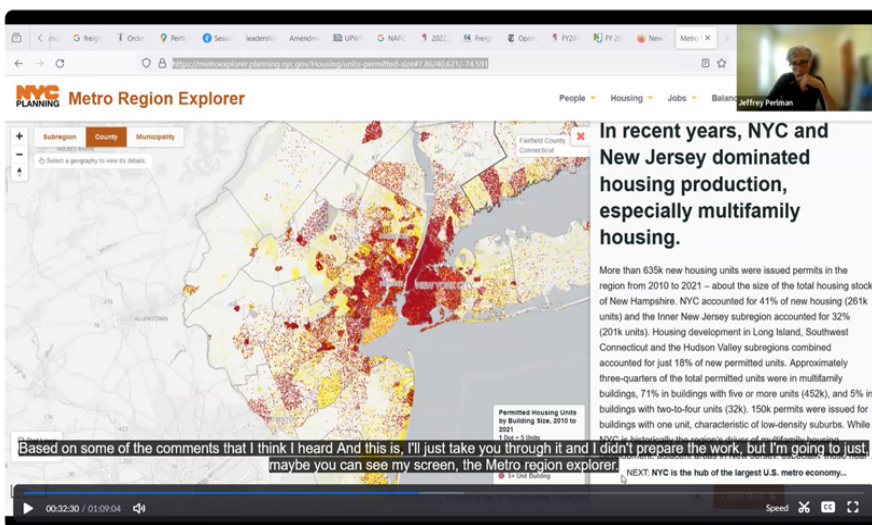
The discussion began with introductions in which UpNext members and Jeff Perlman shared their personal experiences with housing, including childhood experiences of independence and mobility (or a lack thereof). These introductions prepared participants to start thinking of housing as emotional and social spaces, rather than merely physical locations.

Perlman asked UpNext members about factors that determine their decisions about housing. Members cited factors including affordability, proximity to their jobs, and transportation options, especially for those who can't afford a car or prefer to be carless. They also said that over time, they would consider factors such as school systems, being close to open space, and being close to family. One member brought up the high up-front cost of moving into an apartment in addition to the price of rent, such as security deposits, realtor and broker fees, and other costs.

The conversation then turned to discussing the region's housing stock. Key points included the lack of housing diversity and economic constraints. For example, the group noted the decline in the development of 2-4 family units and small apartment buildings, with developers favoring large or luxury buildings that don't generally serve low-income or moderate-income people. In addition, the group talked about developers' preferences for large-scale projects, like 5-over-1 buildings, due to better financial returns. This preference is influenced by local zoning policies and economic incentives, which often favor large, high-density developments over medium-sized housing projects. As a result, there is a shortage of medium-density housing that could provide more affordable options. The discussion also touched on how local zoning regulations impact housing diversity. Strict zoning laws can limit the types of housing that can be built, leading to homogenous neighborhoods that do not cater to a variety of income levels and household types. Members emphasized the need for more flexible zoning policies that allow for a mix of housing types, including multi-family units and smaller apartment buildings.

The discussion then shifted to transportation and infrastructure. UpNext members discussed the need for better transportation within and between locations in New Jersey, not just transportation to access New York City. There are also issues for those living outside of Jersey City and the New York area with accessing frequent transit. Members also called for better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, including protected bike lanes, crosswalks, and places to rest that would encourage people to opt for transportation besides cars. One member discussed the importance of friendly streetscapes outside of housing that are clean, shaded, and provide opportunities for socializing with neighbors. They also discussed a need for consistent micromobility options for last-mile concerns,

as micromobility services are often restricted by municipal boundaries and policies.



The meeting concluded with the NJTPA staff acknowledging the valuable input gathered from UpNexters and a commitment to continue engaging the group in wider public outreach efforts as part of the development of the LRTP.