

Borough of Sayreville

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1. Overview of Borough of Sayreville and Its Waterfront

1.1 Geographic Overview



The Borough of Sayreville is located in Middlesex County. The borough is 17.1 square miles in size, with a considerable portion along the Raritan Rivers. Sayreville is bordered to the north by the Raritan River, to the west by the South River and its canal, to the east by South Amboy, southeast by Cheesequake Creek, and to the south by Old Bridge Township.

Sayreville has convenient access to the Garden State Parkway, Route 35, Route 34, Route 9, NJ Turnpike, and several local and county roads. Sayreville is about 33 miles from New York City and about 21 miles from Newark International Airport. Although it does not have a train station, it does have the NJ Transit Bus line.

1.2 Demographics

The 2000 Census reports Sayreville Borough's population at 40,377. The borough has experienced a growth rate of 238.4 % from 1950 to 1990. The racial composition is 76.4% White (Non-Hispanic), 8.9% Black, 11.1% Asian, and 3.2% "two or more races." The population of foreign-born residents is 20.1%.

In 2000, the median household income was \$58,919. The total number of housing units was 15,235, of which 67.7% are owner-occupied and 32.3% are renter occupied. The percentage of housing stock pre-1980 is 74.5%. The median rental cost is \$795. The median home value is at \$153,400.

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The primary industries providing employment along with their associated percentage of total employment are: “education, health, and social services” at 16%; “professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services” at 12.8%; “retail trade” at 11.8%; and, “manufacturing” at 11.6%. The industries with the least percentage of employment include: “agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining” at 0.2%.

1.3 Historical Overview and Traditional Waterfront Uses

The Borough of Sayreville was incorporated in 1876 and is named after James R. Sayre, Jr. of the brickworks company known as the “Sayre & Fisher Company.” Prior to the industrial revolution, Sayreville’s population was less than one hundred families. The Raritan River was a great resource because it provided good fishing and waterway transportation to urban areas, such as New York City. With the exception of the land near the Raritan River, Sayreville was considered to have little fertile land and was mostly forested with oak and chestnut trees.

Historically, access to the water was important, especially for Sayreville’s large brick industry. The Sayre & Fisher Company was a mainstay of Sayreville’s economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sayreville’s land and forests actually became pits and fields for the mining, brick and terra cotta manufacturing of the Sayre & Fisher Company along with the many other uses of industrial companies like National Lead, E.I DuPont DeNemours and Company, Hercules Powder, and Morgan Munitions. Many of the neighborhoods in the borough today can actually be linked the industrial companies once established there.

The Raritan River, the Raritan Bay and any navigable tributaries have all been affected too. These waterways were all used for transportation, manufacturing processes, factory cooling, cleaning and purging processes, as well as for residents’ recreational activities, such as fishing, crabbing, swimming, and boating. Today, the commercial waterfront uses for industry have diminished somewhat due to the fact that many of the companies thriving in the industrial revolution have since closed, leaving behind unclaimed mine

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pits, contamination and abandoned facilities. With 14% of Sayreville’s land area being water, this turn of events continues to impact the borough because of the need to address the legacy of the previous era while planning for the future development of the borough.

2. Waterfront Use

2.1 Summary of Waterfront

The Borough of Sayreville has a lengthy stretch of its land area along Raritan River, much of which is private property; however, there is public access to the waterfront through parks and other informally used points. Along River Road, Sayreville has one fishing pier on the Raritan River. There is no ferry service in town, but neighboring South Amboy has ferry service available. The town does not have any waterfront dependent restaurants or bait shops.

As the borough continues exploring, planning and taking action to reclaim and activate its waterfront resources, a transformation is progress with residential development growth being higher than commercial or industrial growth in Sayreville. The waterfront remains a key area even with recent developments.

2.2 Waterfront Access Sites

	Common Name/Facility	Address/ Location	GPS	Fishing	Private Marina	Public Marina	Trailered Launch	Hand Launch	Passive Recreation	Birdwatching	Swimming	Parking	Handicapped Accessible	Picnic Facilities	Food Concessions	Restroom Facilities	Fee
Publicly recognized	Crab Island			X					X	X							
	Morgan Beach	Route 35		X					X	X		X	X				
	River Road Park			X			X		X	X		X	X	X			

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Informally used and accessible	Street Ends along River Road																			
Private Property	National Lead Area-	Inaccessible due to pollution																		

Publicly recognized sites:

River Road Park: River Roadpark provides access to an area along Raritan River across from Edison and offers a view of the Edgeboro Landfill. Most of the property along River is residential, however, some adjacent street ends are vegetated. This area includes River Road Park which includes a public boat launch, parking, and a fishing pier.

Morgan Beach: Morgan Beach is located off Route 35. According to an official, this beach has not been used for decades and has taken on the reputation of being somewhat trashy; still, upon visiting the site a resident told us that people still use the site for beach fishing, passive recreation during summer, but not for swimming. This beach was public beach since at least late 19th century.

Crab Island: An island in the Raritan River, this used to be a traditional crabbing site for Native Americans. There is contamination issue at this site; still, people do actively harvest crabs from this location. Access is gained by boat.

Informally used and accessible sites:

Street ends along River Road.

Private Property Sites:

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National Lead: This long disused industrial site is located on the Raritan River and has about 1900 feet of waterfront property. There is a bulkhead on the property dating back to its industrial use. The area is highly contaminated and has undergone some cleanup by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency. The property still requires intensive site remediation, which is the reason it is still not being fully utilized.

3. Waterfront Issues and Planning Initiatives

3.1 Waterfront Issues

Waterfront access is limited with some provided through the River Road Park and Morgan Beach. Much of Sayreville's waterfront area is industrial in nature, thereby restricting its public use. Efforts underway to redevelop the National Lead site will have significant ramifications for the future of access and habitat preservation along the waterfront.

In 2003, the Middlesex County Utilities Authority, located in Sayreville, had two large sewage spills, with one of them resulting in the closure of Raritan Bay shellfish beds for six weeks.

3.2 Planning Initiatives

In its Master Plan and planning documents, the Borough of Sayreville has stated that it seeks "to provide for the utilization of the waterfront for appropriate uses." Specifically, the Land Use Plan Element includes many goals and objectives for activating, developing, and reclaiming the industrial areas along waterfront. The Director of the Sayreville Economic Redevelopment Authority stated that by simply touring the Borough's waterfront areas it is obvious that there is lots of potential for increased access to Sayreville's waterfront; although waterfront access today is available in a limited way.

The 1998 Master Plan Objectives included the creation of linkages among existing recreation, public open space/recreation areas and greenway connections along natural corridors and pathways and the protection of streams, waterways, wetland, and aquifer recharge areas through careful stormwater and wastewater management practices.

Source: Bonnie J. McCay, Debbie Mans, Satsuki Takahashi, and Sheri Seminski. 2005. "Public Access and Waterfront Development in New Jersey: From the Arthur Kill to the Shrewsbury River ." Keyport, New Jersey: NY NJ Baykeeper. <http://www.nynjbaykeeper.org>

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In 2005 Sayreville won the lawsuit over its right to take the 485-acre National Lead site through eminent domain. The Borough had declared this area an “area in need of redevelopment” in 1996. Soon thereafter, the Sayreville Economic and Redevelopment Authority released a “Request for Proposals” for redevelopment proposals the National Lead site. The site would need to undergo remediation before redevelopment occurs.

There is a Marine Waterfront (MW) Zone in Sayreville. This designation generally includes environmentally constrained waterfront lands along the periphery of the Borough adjacent to the Raritan River and Cheesequake Creek. The Marine Waterfront category has been expanded to include those lands which are constrained by freshwater and coastal wetlands in the northeast and southwest sections of the Borough. A wide range of uses are permitted in this zone, these uses generally include water dependent and water oriented uses. There are several tracts adjacent to the Borough’s waterways that are encumbered with severe constraints on development because of the presence of wetlands and the 100-year floodplain limit. Several of these parcels have been recommended for rezoning into the MW Zone district.

4. Summary

Sayreville is an historic industrial town actively attempting to reclaim its waterfront land from contamination and underuse – much like the towns of Perth Amboy and South Amboy. Current redevelopment plans call for public access to be provided, however, there is some debate as to the nature of this public access and the preservation of existing natural habitat along the water’s edge.

References

Census 2000 (City of Sayreville)

Master Plan (1998).

Source: Bonnie J. McCay, Debbie Mans, Satsuki Takahashi, and Sheri Seminski. 2005. “Public Access and Waterfront Development in New Jersey: From the Arthur Kill to the Shrewsbury River.” Keyport, New Jersey: NY NJ Baykeeper. <http://www.nynjbaykeeper.org>

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