



New Jersey Pinelands Commission

PRESS RELEASE

July 17, 2024

Contact: Paul Leakan, NJ Pinelands Commission

Phone: (609) 894-7300, ext. 124

E-mail: info@pinelands.nj.gov

For Immediate Release:

New Jersey Pinelands Commission Issues Latest Report Charting the Economic Health of Municipalities in the Pinelands

NEW LISBON, N.J. July 17, 2024 – Pinelands municipalities have recovered well from the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of unemployment and wage rates, and are faring similarly to other parts of New Jersey in several economic indicators, according to a new report issued by the Pinelands Commission.

The Commission issued its latest [Long Term Economic Monitoring Report](#), covering 2018 – 2022, earlier this month. The report is funded by the National Park Service. The Commission released its first Long Term Economic Monitoring Report in 1997, and the reports include much of the same economic data, so the agency can identify changes or trends over time.

“This report includes important data that helps us to evaluate the economic health of the Pinelands region in an objective and reliable way,” said Susan R. Grogan, Executive Director of the Commission.

Relying on publicly available data from other State and federal agencies, Commission staff analyzed and reported on key economic trends in the areas of population, real estate, economy, and municipal finance. The report analyzes trends for selected economic datasets across three regional geographic areas: the Pinelands Area, the non-Pinelands Area, and the entire state. The Pinelands Area represents data aggregated for the 47 municipalities with at least 90% of their total area inside the Pinelands Area boundary. The non-Pinelands Area is made up of the municipalities having less than 10% of their land area inside the Pinelands Area, plus all municipalities outside the Pinelands Area but within the eight counties in southern New Jersey.

Data collected from 2018 – 2022 reveal some key findings about the economy in the Pinelands, including the following:

■ Between 2016-2022, per capita income for Pinelands municipalities grew by \$6,662. During that same period, per capita income for non-Pinelands municipalities grew by \$5,596 and by \$3,338 for the rest of the state.

■ Between 2018 and 2022, private sector employment figures in the Pinelands municipalities showed an increase to 154,980 jobs (up 1.9%). The number of private sector establishments increased to 14,465 (up 11.6%) in the same period. Private sector average annual wages also

rose between 2018 and 2022 to \$54,650 (up 6.2%). The Pinelands municipalities' private sector average annual wage growth outpaced both the Non-Pinelands and the statewide average, which were 3.3% and 3.5%, respectively.

■ Between 2018 and 2021, all three regions saw a spike in estimated unemployment rates before returning to pre-pandemic levels by 2022. In 2022, the Pinelands unemployment rate stood at 4.2%, the Non-Pinelands stood at 4.0%, and the statewide unemployment rate was 3.7%.

■ Average residential property tax bills declined across the state between 2018 and 2022. Property taxes in the Pinelands municipalities remain lower than the Non-Pinelands municipalities and the state average.

■ Per capita State Aid to municipalities has been on a downward trend in the short and long-term. Per capita State Aid to Pinelands municipalities has consistently been lower than per capita State Aid to non-Pinelands municipalities. In 2022, State Aid per capita was \$121 for Pinelands municipalities and \$186 to non-Pinelands municipalities.

■ The Pinelands population grew more quickly than both the Non-Pinelands and the state between 1980 and 2010 but grew at a slower rate than these regions in the last decade. As of 2020, the Pinelands municipalities had a population of 717,442. Most of the population growth occurring in Pinelands municipalities has taken place outside of the Pinelands Area boundary. From 2010 to 2020, the areas outside the Pinelands Area grew by 10%, while the areas inside only grew by less than 1%.

■ Between 2017 and 2022, the Pinelands gained an estimated 29,901 people (a 4.3% increase), while the Non-Pinelands region saw a greater gain of estimated population, about 100,038 people (a 5.8% increase). In the same period, the state as a whole increased in population by an estimated 376,174 people (a 4.2% increase.)

■ Data from the 2017 Economic Census shows that the 2017 sales per capita increased at a greater rate in the Pinelands (12%) than in the state as a whole (4%) in the five years spanning 2012-2016, inclusive. This mirrors a longer term trend, between 2002 and 2017, in which the Pinelands (5%) also outpaced the statewide average (3%).

The full report is available on the [Commission's website](#), along with a [Municipal Fact Book](#) that includes maps and data for each of the Pinelands municipalities.

####