Union City…Working for The Future

History & Demographics

The City of Union City is a very special place for those of us who grew up here and for those of us who came here from other cities, towns and villages all over the world.

Since its incorporation on June 1, 1925, Union City has been a destination and become a home for people with a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. One of the things we pride ourselves on is the fact that so many people – over 67,000 – live and work together in this small city of 1.4 square miles.

Union City resulted from the merger of West Hoboken and Union Hill, two towns in eastern Hudson County. Although records indicate that Hudson County was first settled in 1614 when the Dutch established a trading fort only a few miles away from the present site of Union City, it was not until the mid-1800s that the city began to develop. Before the Dutch settlers, the area was inhabited by the Lenni Lenape Indians.

Active subdivision and settlement of the area began in the 1850's when a group of German-American printers built homes in the Union Hill section (32nd to 49th streets). The city then began to grow rapidly, reaching a population of about 60,000 in the 1920s. After World War II, with the movement of city dwellers out into the newly developed suburban areas, the population dropped to less than 53,000, according to the 1960 census.

However, during the 1960s, Union City's population quickly recovered from its temporary decline, thanks largely to an influx of Cuban refugees fleeing the communist dictatorship in their native island nation. Union City became a destination for the Cubans most likely due to its proximity to New York City. At the time, Union City had an abundance of reasonably priced housing and business opportunities, which also attracted other newcomers such as middle-class New Yorkers seeking to escape the expensive New York lifestyle and hectic pace of the "big city."

In the 1960s, the Cubans were the newest ethnic group to find Union City attractive. Before them came the Dutch, the Germans, the Italians, the Irish, the Armenians, and the Puerto Ricans. After the Cubans came others: South Americans, Central Americans, Haitians, Asian Indians, Koreans, Arabs and many others. Since the end of World War II, Union City has had a large Hasidic Jewish community who have become very much a part of the Union City tapestry.

Through the years, each of the groups has left their own indelible mark on Union City culture. Today, we all enjoy foods tasting of the spices from many lands and we all share our lives with friends and relatives from different ethnic backgrounds. On a walk through our shopping districts, one's senses are stimulated by the sights, sounds and smells of a rich variety of cultures. We celebrate our diversity – it is what makes Union City a unique and interesting place to live and work.

Union City is bordered on the south by Jersey City, on the north by West New York and North Bergen, on the west by North Bergen, and on the east by Weehawken. We are in Hudson County, in and area known as North Hudson.

Business & Shopping

Business and commerce has always been a big part of Union City life. Known internationally as the home of the American embroidery industry, Union City continues to be a hub of the textile industry with dozens of garment and lace manufacturers located throughout the city. In fact, the lace made in Union City is used on garments sold around the world and is a fine example of European-style lace making. Of late, the textile industry is making new inroads and coming back strong in the North Hudson area.

Current zoning allows mixed use of virtually all areas of the city, with residential buildings co-existing with commercial and light-industrial buildings. Union City has two commercial districts, although there are many small stores and businesses located throughout the city. The main commercial districts are Bergenline Avenue, from 49th to 32nd streets, and Summit Avenue, from 15th to 8th streets. Both of these avenues are lined with shops and bustling with activity seven days a week. These two shopping districts were granted Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) status by the State of New Jersey.

The Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) is a program of the New Jersey Department of Commerce and Economic Development. Participation in the program allows merchants to charge a reduced sales tax (currently N.J. sales tax is 6 percent) and to receive a variety of tax benefits. In addition, the sales tax that is collected in the UEZ is returned to the city by the state for use in making improvements in the zone. City officials used the first check from the state to construct a parking garage on Bergenline Avenue. New street lighting and a night-time clean-up program are also UEZ benefits. Future improvements could include more parking facilities for Summit Avenue, low-interest loans for business owners, and beautification grants. These decisions will be made with the best interests of the city's merchants in mind. A UEZ Development Corporation Board, comprised mostly of merchants, was recently established to oversee and make recommendations for the use of UEZ funds.

The Union City UEZ is currently in the expansion process, allowing more businesses to participate in the program.
There is no state sales tax on clothing in New Jersey.

New businesses are encouraged to move into Union City. The Mayor and Commissioners and the Union City Community Development Agency will make every effort to assist businessowners who want to relocate to our city. Currently Union City is the home to franchises of several national chains including McDonald's Restaurant, Kids R Us, International House of Pancakes, Burger King, Dunkin Donuts, Super Cuts Haircutting, Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, Payless Shoes, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Walgreen's, CVS, and Rite Aid Pharmacy. Several local chain stores are also located in Union City including Fine Fare Supermarkets, Palermo Plumbing Supplies, and Drug Emporium.

There are several smaller, independently owned supermarkets in the city, many catering to ethnic food needs, and major national chain supermarkets such as Pathmark, Shop-Rite and A&P are within walking distance of all sections of Union City.

Union City's restaurants are many and varied. Whether you are in the mood for Cuban, Italian, Ecuadorian, Turkish, Peruvian, or a variety of other ethnic foods, or just some good, old-fashioned diner fare, you can find something to appease your appetite and please your pocketbook here.

Most of New Jersey's major shopping malls and outlet centers are only a short drive or bus ride from Union City.

Our merchants and residents can do their banking at over half a dozen banks including the Trust Company of New Jersey, the Bank of New York, United Jersey Bank, Hudson United Bank, Banco Popular, Hamilton Savings Bank, Summit Bank, Provident Savings Bank, and Commercial Trust Company of New Jersey.

Public Services

Union City residents and property owners receive their utility services from several sources.

Sewage is now collected and treated by the North Hudson Sewage Authority, which also services Hoboken, West New York, and Weehawken. Sewer bills are sent separately from tax bills and become a lien on property if not paid. Every building in the city is connected to the main sewer system.

Water is provided to Union City through United Water New Jersey, headquartered in Harrington Park, NJ. Electricity and gas are supplied by Public Service Electric & Gas Co. Both of these companies are investor-owned utilities whose shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

Cable television service is currently provided to Union City residents by Cablevision, which has an office and television studio in Union City. A nightly local news show is broadcast from that studio.

Government

Although the city originally had a Mayor and a Council form government, Union City municipal government has been a non-partisan, commission form of government since 1930. On May 27 of that year, William Rannenberg, who had been mayor of Union Hill for several terms, was elected along with Frederick Berge, Harry E. Little, John F. Boylan and Louis B. Eastmead, all Democrats. Although Union City government is non-partisan and there has been Republican representation on the Board of Commissioners, Democrats have dominated the city's political make-up, as they have throughout Hudson County.

Five members comprise the Union City Board of Commissioners and serve in both administrative and legislative capacities. Each commissioner acts as the director of one of the five major departments of the City, administering the daily operations of his or her department.

The five major departments of Union City government are Public Safety, Revenue and Finance, Parks and Public Properties, Public Works, and Public Affairs.

When they act collectively as a Board, the Commissioners conduct the business of the city, such as adopting the city budget and passing resolutions and ordinances.

The commissioners decide among themselves who will take the position of Mayor.

Public Safety

Since Union City is currently one of the most densely populated cities in the United States, public safety is a major concern of city officials.

Currently the city employs approximately 200 police officers, making Union City's police force one of the largest in the state. Reflective of the city's population, our police officers' ethnic backgrounds are varied. Currently, Union City leads the North Hudson communities in the hiring of female police officers. Ten women have been hired to date, with more women on the waiting list.

Police headquarters is at City Hall, with precincts at 7th Street & Bergenline Avenue and 2700 Bergenline Avenue.

The 27th Street precinct is also home to the Juvenile Aid Bureau, D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education, a program for children), and the Traffic Division of the police department.

In addition, the Union City Police Dept. maintains a community service center at the property of the Union City Housing Authority at 640 39th Street.

The Community Police Program was recently expanded throughout the city and a bicycle patrol unit, added in 1996, has also been expanded throughout the city.

The Union City Fire Department, with over 100 firefighters located in four firehouses throughout the city, joined a historic merger with three other North Hudson towns in January, 1999 to form North Hudson Regional Fire & Rescue. Included in NHRFR are Union City, North Bergen, West New York and Weehawken. The NHRFR works within a mutual aid system with all municipalities in Hudson County.

Union City Emergency Medical Services provides ambulance, first aid, and emergency medical services to Union City residents. UCEMS is not a volunteer squad, but employs paid emergency medical technicians.

Education & Schools

There are eight public grammar schools in Union City and two public high schools. In addition, in September of 1995, Union City leased a school from the Weehawken Board of Education. This school, the Wilson School, is now a magnet school for students gifted and talented in the arts.

There are also several private schools currently in operations, including Holy Rosary Academy grammar school, St. Francis Academy, St. Augustine's School, Mother Seton School, and St. Anthony's School. Union City is also home to a Hasidic seminary and elementary school.

Union City's newest public grammar school, the Christopher Columbus School, is the site of an interactive, multi-media networking program initiated in partnership with the Bell Atlantic corporation. In October, 1993, Bell Atlantic (now Verizon) provided the newly opened Columbus School with computers for students and teachers.

The building in which the Columbus School is located formerly belonged to St. Michael's Grammar School. The city purchased the building and completely renovated and modernized it for Union City public school students.

In February, 1996 President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore visited Columbus School to get a firsthand view of this innovative approach to education. Both the President and Vice President were very impressed by what they saw here. The President used the occasion to announce his initiative to bring computers to every student in America.

The Edison School, located in the Downtown section of the city at 507 West Street, is New Jersey's largest public grammar school with over 1600 students. The Edison School is also the home of the city's Safe Haven program, an alternative to the streets for children in the Downtown area. Safe Haven provides organized and supervised activities during the evening hours and is a component of the Community Police Partnership Program.

In the fall of 1997, the Safe Haven program expanded into Washington School on 39th Street to give children in the uptown area of the city access to the program.

At one time, City Hall housed a high school.

All of the Union City Schools have undergone complete physical renovations and upgraded over the past several years.

In recent years, Union City students have been recognized for their many advances in mathematics and science. The Board of Education has entered into partnerships with several corporations and universities to provide opportunities for our students to go beyond the regular school curriculum. Many Union City students have been recognized for their work and some have gone to prestigious colleges and universities after their studies in Union City. The Union City school district is recognized internationally for its innovative programs and its success as an urban district.

Union City also has an award-winning day care program. Union City Day Care, Inc. has main facilities at 219 47th Street and 510 35th Street.

The Union City Board of Education has its offices at 3912 Bergen Turnpike.

The current Superintendent of Schools is Thomas Highton.

Recreation

Union City is not all work and no play. Recreational opportunities are plentiful and there is something for everyone.

Although open space is very limited, we have tried to take advantage of the space we do have. Our parks and playgrounds are being renovated and our schools are open in the evenings for supervised activities.

In 1993 we opened the Union City Swimming Pools and Recreation Center, now called the Bruce D. Walter Recreation Center and Pool in memory of the late mayor, adjacent to the Edison School at 507 West Street. The indoor, year-round swimming pool is used by all ages – from toddlers to senior citizens – with special time slots dedicated to different groups. There are swim times for families, for students, for "early birds" and for adult aquacise. Senior citizens get free transportation to the pool and pool registration is free for all Union City residents.

A seasonal outdoor pool is located uptown at 47th Street and Palisade Avenue.

In the early 1930s, there was a federal program called the Works Progress Administration which was established to help the economy moving after the Great Depression. Many municipal projects were undertaken through this program, including Union City's Roosevelt Stadium.

Through the years, sports of all kinds were played at "the Stadium," which sits on the site of the former Consumer's Brewing Company on Summit Avenue between 24th and 26th streets. It is also the site of the annual Thanksgiving Day football game between the city's two public high schools, Emerson and Union Hill. This rivalry is a tradition, with graduates of both schools returning each Thanksgiving to watch the game and reminisce.

On September 9th, 1994 we celebrated the grand re-opening of the renovated and modernized Roosevelt Stadium, complete with an artificial sports turf to replace the outdated field that was always alternately muddy or dusty.

The "new" Roosevelt Stadium has received high praise as one of the best sports facilities in the area.

In 1995, "Night Basketball" was instituted. The games, scheduled in the evenings several nights a week, are for players age 19 and up. The program has been a huge success.

Union City has also organized sports for children of all ages, as well as adult softball leagues. The summer recreation program offers a variety of sports as well as arts & crafts and music. Registration for the summer program takes place in late June.

Thanks to New Jersey Green Acres funding every park in Union City has been or will be renovated with new playground equipment and overall improvements.

Union City has two public libraries, the main library on 43rd Street and the branch on 15th Street.

The Union City Board of Education recently entered into a partnership with the Union City Public Library to bring computer access to the community. Residents, including senior citizens, can learn computer operations and how to get on the Internet. Computers are also available at the libraries to residents who need computer access, but don't have a computer in their home.

A "friends" organization was recently established – the Union City Public Library Friends, Inc. – and is always looking for members to help the library have a voice in the community.

The library buildings themselves were donated by the Carnegie Foundation in the early 1900s and are historically and architecturally significant.

Both the main library and the branch are currently being updated and both are handicapped accessible.

The Park Performing Arts Center at 560 32nd Street hosts a variety of cultural and ethnic shows and performances throughout the year. It is internationally known for its annual Eastertime production of "The Passion Play." Busloads of theatergoers come from miles around to see this famous and beloved play about the passion and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, based on the Oberammergau which was first produced in Germany centuries ago. About 10,000 children and adult come to Union City every year to see the play, which will have its 86th season this year.

Union City was also home to "Veronica's Veil," the story of Christ's walk to Calvary. In 1999 "Veronica's Veil" celebrated its 85th season but has since ceased production. The building was sold by the Archdiocese of Newark to the Union City Board of Education and will soon be used as a public school.

There are no public museums or galleries in Union City, although City Hall occasionally hosts an art or photo exhibit and several small commercial galleries have opened in the city recently. The Park Theater also hosts an occasional art exhibition.

City Hall & Other City Buildings

ON June 1st, 1995, we celebrated not only the past 70 years of Union City, but also our hopes and dreams for the future of our city.

On that day, we officially opened the new addition to City Hall, built to take Union City residents into the 21st century, and installed a time capsule to be opened by city residents in the year 2065.

We love our old City Hall, which was built around the turn of the 20th century; it has been so much a part of our lives. The majestic red brick building on the corner of 38th Street and Palisade Avenue is a local landmark.

For years, it's historic façade was covered with paint. In the spring of 1994, sandblasting of the building revealed the beautiful red bricks once again. Next door, ground had been broken several months before, in what was formerly a parking lot, for an addition to the old building.

In 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed. As a result, all public buildings were mandated to provide accessibility for handicapped persons to all sections of the building. For our antiquated city hall, that was a huge, if not impossible, task. An elevator had to be installed, doors and bathrooms had to be made accessible for wheelchair-bound people, special emergency lighting had to be installed to warn those who could not hear bells and sirens, ramps had to be installed to allow access to places which an elevator could not service. All this and more had to be done – not just at City Hall but at every city-owned building.

An exhaustive ADA survey of all city buildings was performed. The bottom line was that consolidation of services and massive renovation was needed. What made the most sense was to build an addition to city hall, renovate the old building, bringing it into compliance with the ADA, and bringing in as many city services and business offices into city hall from other locations as possible.

The city buildings that were vacated were sold or leased, bringing income to the city.

The City Hall addition was built with attention to detail, using the best materials we could afford given the construction budget. We did not get the best money could buy, because we did have a limited budget, but we made sure that the materials used and the furnishings we purchased will hold up under years of wear and tear to come. After all, this building must serve Union City residents for many, many years to come.

Commissioners and directors added their own personal touches, at their expense, to their offices.

In the summer of 1994, the City acquired the old New Jersey Transit bus barn at 27th Street and Bergenline Avenue, another historically significant building that once housed trolley cars, then buses. The acquisition of that building allowed the city to close down several outdated, dilapidated buildings, such as the Department of Public Works building at 3910 Palisade Avenue, and consolidate them at the 27th Street location.

Known as the Union City Central Municipal Facility, the building houses a police precinct, the Department of Public Works, the Parking Authority, Central Vehicle Maintenance and Storage, and several other city departments which were previously scattered throughout other buildings in the city.

Like the addition and renovations at City Hall, the acquisition of the 27th Street property has helped to streamline and consolidate city services.

Although the city still occupies it, this mid-town property, which measures two city blocks by one city block, is currently available for development.

Parking & Transportation

Union City recently established a Residents Only parking policy in most neighborhoods. Parking permits are free for residents and available for a nominal fee for businesses.

Union City is easily accessible by public transportation. NJTransit and other buses and independent commuter vans traverse the city almost 24 hours a day, seven days a week and buses leave from Union City to most of northern New Jersey, New York and Miami. Transportation to Manhattan is available via the Lincoln Tunnel, the approach to which runs underneath our streets; bus; and, within a short shuttle bus ride or car drive, ferry. Construction on a new light rail station in the uptown section of the city is slated to begin next year. This station will connect Union City by rail to the entire northeast region of the country.

We have been cited, by the American Automobile Association (AAA) with awards for pedestrian safety.

The New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway are only minuted away. Union City can be reached directly via Turnpike Exit 16E northbound, or Exit 17 southbound by simply following the directions out of the toll booth to Kennedy Boulevard. Once you have reached Kennedy Boulevard you are in Union City.

Union City is also less than one mile from Route 1, which travels down the East Coast from Maine to Florida.

Union City is an easy commute to Newark International Airport (about 20 minutes by car) and to Teterboro Airport (a smaller, commuter plane, private jet, and helicopter airport in Bergen County – about a half-hour's drive).

Housing

Union City's neighborhoods are varied. Some areas are comprised of mostly one, two, and three-family homes, while others include light industrial and commercial. There are many large apartment buildings in the city, some of which command great views of the New York skyline, as do some private homes. While Union City has no waterfront property on the Hudson River, we do have spectacular views of the river and, to the west, of the Meadowlands area, from some vantage points.

Housing stock tends to be older, but there is some new construction throughout the city. Recently, developers have expressed interest in several parcels of property for the construction of residential

units. There is some property available for development and the Mayor and Commissioners are accepting proposals from developers who want to build residential and mixed-use structures.

The Union City Housing Authority oversees public housing, Section 8 (federally subsidized) housing, and senior citizen housing in the city. Their offices are located 3911 Kennedy Boulevard.

Places of worship in Union City include almost all denominations.

Union City has had a colorful and wonderful history. The changes we are making today will guarantee that our city's future will be just as great.

In June of 2000, Union City celebrated its Diamond Jubilee 75th Anniversary with several special events throughout the year, including a parade in which our school children and dozens of local groups and organizations participated. In the 1930s through the 1950s Union City was home to the world-famous Hudson Burlesque Theater – and many other theaters featuring movies and live entertainment – and several of the "burlesque queens" who were featured at the Hudson Theater came back to ride a float in the parade.

We all look forward to continuing to celebrate our city's history – and its future – with all of our neighbors.

City Programs

Union City has many programs and activities for people of all ages.

Recreation:

A full year-round recreation schedule is available for children, adults and senior citizens.

Union City has an indoor swimming pool which is free for all city residents and the pool has time slots for all ages. An outdoor pool is available in the uptown area in the summer.

Late-night basketball is available for people 19 and up.

Union City schools have instituted “extended days” so that children may remain at school after hours. During the extended day period, children may participate in recreation, computer classes, and other activities.

Senior Citizens are offered a full schedule of activities including trips, parties, music and lectures. The city has a full-time Senior Affairs Director. The Senior Affairs office provides help with a number of problems including transportation to doctors and shopping areas.

Other Programs

Union City has a tree-planting program with money coming from a Community Development Block Grant. Any property owner in the city may have a tree planted on their sidewalk merely by requesting it. The Department of Parks and Public Property will plant the tree and take care of any problems the property owner may encounter with the tree.

There are a number of public safety programs including crime prevention, fire prevention, and juvenile aid. Union City is a Community Oriented Policing city and has a very active D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program in the schools.

City Services:

Union City is a full-service municipality. Fire and police services are provided by full-time paid personnel. We have regularly scheduled garbage and recycling pickups and street cleaning services. Sewage is handled by the North Hudson County municipalities. Street lighting is provided by Public Service Electric and Gas Company and water by United Water New Jersey.

Union City Mayor and Commissioners

Public Safety
Mayor Brian P. Stack

Public Works
Commissioner Ernestine “Tina” Yandolino

Parks & Public Property
Commissioner Michael A. Leggiero

Revenue & Finance
Commissioner Christopher Irizarry

Public Affairs
Commissioner Raymond Lopez

Merchant Associations:

While there are many and a wide variety of stores throughout Union City, there are two distinct shopping districts: Bergenline Avenue and Summit Avenue.

Most of the Bergenline and Summit avenue shopping districts are included in the Urban Enterprise Zone.

Fore more information about merchant associations, contact the UEZ office at 201-271-2350

THE UNION CITY OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS CAN PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT UNION CITY. CALL 348-5777 OR STOP BY, THIRD FLOOR OF CITY HALL, 3715 PALISADE AVENUE.

DEVELOPERS INTERESTED IN UNION CITY CAN CONTACT THE MAYOR'S OFFICE AT 201-348-5754, ALSO LOCATED ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF CITY HALL.

The Union City Public Library branch on 15th street also has some city information. You can call the library at 866-7503; ask for reference librarian.

Our Web site is currently under re-construction. We are sorry for the inconvenience.

Hospitals & Medical Centers

Union City has no hospitals within the city limits, however there are several close by. All are within approximately 3 miles, with the exception of Jersey City Medical Center which is a little farther away.

Meadowlands Hospital Medical Center, Secaucus

Christ Hospital, Jersey City

Jersey City Medical Center, Jersey City (trauma center, county emergency ambulance service, county medical examiner)

Palisades Medical Center, North Bergen

We have two nursing homes, Castle Hill Nursing Home, on 23rd Street and Manhattan View Nursing Home at Hudson Avenue and Hackensack Plank Rd.

An adult medical day care center – 2nd Home – is located at 3610 Palisade Avenue.

North Hudson Community Action Corp. provides medical services and health screenings, including a mobile health unit, to our residents, with many services and screenings free. Their main office is located 5301 Broadway, West New York, NJ 07093. Medical services for Union City residents are provided at NHCAC's Community Health Center at 714 31st Street (telephone 863-7077). NHCAC also provides Head Start programs for pre-school children.

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For more detailed demographic information, contact the Hudson County Dept. of Planning and Economic Development in Jersey City at 201-432-4222 or visit their website at www.hudsonedc.org.

They keep the Census statistics for all municipalities in the County.

Frequently called Union City Telephone Numbers

- all 201 area code
- all offices located in City Hall, 3715 Palisade Ave., unless otherwise noted

Mayor's Office/Dept. of Public Safety	348-5754
Dept. of Public Works	348-5737
Dept. of Revenue & Finance	348-5748
Dept. of Parks & Public Property	348-5744
Dept. of Public Affairs	348-5735
Municipal Court Office	392-3691
Union City Parking Authority Resident parking decals 2701 New York Ave.	348-5836
Police Desk	348-5790
Police Chief's Office	348-5780
Garbage & Recycling Information	348-5840
Tax Collector	348-5719
Tax Assessor	348-5725
Board of Education 3912 Bergen Turnpike	348-5851
Union City Day Care 219 47th St.	348-2754
Union City Public Library Main branch – 324 43rd St.	866-7500
Immigration/Citizenship Assistance	271-2392
Heat Complaints	348-5608
Community Development Agency (free tree program)	348-2764

Rent Control Official	348-5734
Building Inspections/Permits	348-5710
City Clerk (marriage licenses, dog licenses, public meetings, statistics)	348-5731
Public Relations/Public Information Officer	348-5777
Urban Enterprise Zone	271-2350
Citizen Citizens Affairs Office	348-5701
Veterans' Affairs Office	271-2299

Union City is part of the 911 emergency system. Please call 911 in the event of a fire, police, or health emergency.