

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bergen Leaders To Present Public Forum on Suburban Downtowns

Bergen County: The 2015 Class of Bergen LEADS, Bergen County's premier civic leadership program, will present "Revitalizing and Refocusing Bergen County Suburban Downtowns" at a Public Forum on Tuesday, June 9, 2015 from 2:30-4:30 pm at the Ciccone Theater at Bergen Community College. The Public Forum is an opportunity for Bergen LEADS participants to present their class project, which is part of the 10-month learning and leadership development program managed by the Volunteer Center of Bergen County.

The 2015 Class of Bergen LEADS will present their findings on understanding the issues and challenges facing diverse suburban downtowns. One important change that is taking place in Bergen County is that we are beginning to come together and identify ourselves as suburbanites. We do so because our fates will not be determined solely by the individual towns or villages we live in and are proud of but rather involve the larger venue of the "middle landscape." We have learned this from our fellow citizens and their leaders who have united regionally and nationally under the banners of "urban" and "rural" to share information and develop resources to enhance life in cities, small towns and farms. We can and must see the wider picture especially during this period of suburban transformation.

"There is a need to create a dialogue that brings attention to the role of suburban downtowns in our wider Bergen County community," says William "Pat" Schuber, former Bergen County Executive and Bergen LEADS seminar director. "The Bergen LEADS Class of 2015 is confronting that challenge head on, and invites the public to be a part of the conversation."

The Public Forum will be moderated by Francis Reiner, an accomplished professional planner, urban designer and landscape architect with more than 20 years of experience working in both the public and private sector. Reiner has extensive experience working with municipalities on the design and development of mixed use, urban infill, transit oriented and traditional neighborhood developments, including the Hackensack Downtown Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Plan. The event is sponsored by Rockland Electric Company.

There will be an opportunity for audience participation followed by networking. The event is free and open to the public, but pre-registration is required; visit www.bergenleads.org/public-forum or call 201-489-9454 Ext. 112.

The 24 men and women in the Bergen LEADS Class of 2015 have met monthly since September to dissect issues, debate viewpoints and get a first-hand look at Bergen County's infrastructure. The Forum is the culmination of the seminar year for the Class of 2015. Members of the graduating class are: Cindy Andrade, Tonice Bunting, Maria Deptula, Rhona Feimster-Vega, Beth Figman, Eric Hugo, Shonya Jordan, Blake Levine, Kimberly Lewis-Banks, Mark McKoy, Erika Monell, William Mulaney, James Narin, James O'Leary, Kristen Pakonis, Isabel Perez, Tenia Peterson, Scott Reddin, Marisa Santiago, JoAnne Seibel, Charisse Taylor, Paul Thomasset, Eric Tomaszewski and David Van Schalik.

Bergen LEADS is sponsored by the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, which has successfully engaged Bergen County residents in civic life for 49 years. Bergen LEADS - led by former Bergen County Executive William "Pat" Schuber - carries on that tradition by providing an extraordinarily rich, diverse and stimulating program focusing on topical issues, leadership and community trusteeship.

Bergen LEADS is supported by funding from the Lillian Pitkin Schenck Fund, United Water Foundation, Wells Fargo Foundation, Hudson City Savings Charitable Foundation and the Palisades Educational Foundation.

For more information on the Bergen LEADS program, go to www.bergenleads.org or call Beanne DeGuzman at 201-489-9454. ext. 112, or email bdeguzman@bergenvolunteers.org.

The Volunteer Center strengthens the community by connecting people through service and developing civic leaders.

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CAPTION:

Adults who live or work in Bergen County can experience Bergen County's educational, environmental, economic and political diversity from behind the scenes. Deadline to apply for the 2016 class of Bergen LEADS, Bergen County's premier learning and leadership program for adults, is April 11th. Visit www.bergenleads.org for application form or call 201-489-9454.

Members of a Bergen LEADS class learned firsthand about the inner workings of one of the country's most traveled bridges, the George Washington Bridge.