

Council of New Jersey Grantmakers
Remarks By Nina Stack
2017 Spring Conference for New Jersey's Social Sector
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"The Next 20: People, Places, Perspectives"

Good morning. I am Nina Stack, president of the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers. Welcome to the 2017 Spring Conference for New Jersey's Social Sector.

What will New Jersey be like in 20 years? And how can we be ready for it?

We'll have a lot more information — after the provocative discussions, presentations, and exchanges of ideas we've all come here for today.

The Council is proud and excited to host this conference and glad so many of you are here to participate. I'm going to kick things off this morning with a "tour" of some trends that may shape our state over the next 2 decades, challenges we'll likely face, and some aspirations and speculation on just what New Jersey in 2037 will offer.

2037: the date itself is hard to imagine, let alone what will be happening then. One way to prepare for time travel to the future is to take a quick dip into the past. We gain some perspective by remembering that — in 1997 — 2017 seemed as far off and unknowable as 2037 does this morning.

Here we go... 1997 —

No Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, or ...Twitter. Gas was \$1.22 a gallon and if you had a computer with a 56 K dial-up Internet connection and a 2-gig hard drive, you were smokin'.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone launched a rather enduring franchise. The first Austin Powers movie came out too – not quite so enduring. Ellen DeGeneres came out -- on prime-time TV.

Google was a year old. The web browser of choice was Netscape. *If* you carried a mobile phone, it probably was a Nokia. In fact, a tech "expert" writing in *Us* magazine admonished Apple: "Admit it, you're out of the hardware game."

Our physical mail boxes were flooded with discs from AOL that we could load and hear our computers tell us, "You've got mail." The top inventions of 1997 were in vitro fertilization, the MRI scanner, and inkjet printers.

The Broadway premiere of *Lion King* was a year away. It is still running today. And Eric Clapton's *Change the World* won the Grammy for best song of 1997. Listen for other hits from that year as our soundtrack throughout the day.

I think I made my point about the past. Let's go boldly ahead. And remember...I said trends, challenges and aspirations.

If today's trends hold, New Jersey in 2037 is on the verge of 10 million people, maybe more. We're still the most densely populated state – but we didn't acquire more land. In fact, we lost some, due to rising sea levels.

The elderly and senior population is growing. The youngest baby boomers turn 73 in 2037. No wonder there are so many more RNs, nursing assistants, home health aides, and other healthcare related jobs. Speaking of health, we haven't eliminated addiction in 2037, but the good news is that, society-wide, it's now accepted as a health issue, not just a criminal issue. That also means our prisons have far fewer inmates; nonviolent offenders get treatment instead of jail time.

We saw the number of school-age kids decline up to 2020, then pick up again, as the children of millennials have kids of their own. And there has been a resurgence in interest in being a teacher. Many New Jerseyans, in fact, maintain their community ties by teaching in the very schools they went to.

In 2037, New Jersey no longer has the dubious distinction of being the state with the highest percentage of adult offspring – millennials -- still living with their parents as it does today. Those kids finally settled down, and not in the suburbs where they were raised. In fact, urban New Jersey has made quite a comeback. Continuing a two-decade trend, New Jersey's biggest population growth is in the counties closest to New York City.

City life isn't for everyone in 2037, so it's a good thing that so many of those office parks built in the '80s have been repurposed into affordable apartments and condos. And what is on the roofs and built above the parking lots? Solar panels.

New Jersey still produces plenty of blueberries and cranberries, and has the best tomatoes and sweet corn – it is even harvesting sea kelp in 2037, the “new kale,” but often, people are calling this the Solar State. Just as we saw with the cable TV boom decades ago, today there are lots of jobs in areas like building, installing, and maintaining solar panels and building energy efficient appliances. And the white specks barely visible from New Jersey beaches? Those are windmills. The state is making good progress toward its goal of 80% renewable energy by 2050. The question of good jobs versus a clean environment was long ago settled in favor of both.

One of the nation's most diverse states 20 years ago, in 2037 we're even more so. In fact, non-Hispanic whites are about 46% of the population, compared to nearly 60% in 2010.

That diversity is now more “salt and pepper” than “checkerboard,” which is to say communities and neighborhoods are more mixed than they were, especially now that the state recommitted to making sure affordable homes could be found everywhere in the state, contributing to walkable communities and a new civic consciousness. A poll taken in 2037 finds that – unlike in 2017 – New Jerseyans are as likely to encounter people of a different race *outside* of work as *at* work. Merging urban and suburban school districts together is helping more kids get a better education, and – not coincidentally – New Jersey’s schools no longer are among the nation’s most segregated.

How did all this happen?

It really helps that New Jersey, post 2017, got serious about investing in transportation infrastructure – especially after the *NJ Transit Summer from Hell*. Politicians stopped debating about which taxes made people leave and instead devoted themselves to making this a state people want to come *to*.

The high-tech hubs and array of state programs that nurture start-ups are making a difference. People around the world have heard of New Jersey’s Route 278 tech corridor. New Jersey, among other things, became a leading center for research and production of driverless vehicles. A densely populated state with state-of-the-art roads and an abundance of scientists and tech-savvy entrepreneurs turned out to be just what the new industry needed.

By nurturing small businesses and startups, New Jersey remade its economy. Recognizing that most entrepreneurs start companies where they live, New Jersey changed its emphasis from trying to lure big companies to *building* big companies. By the way, in 2037, no one in New Jersey has a job that doesn’t allow them paid time off when they are too sick to come to work.

And, what’s that game all those people in white shorts and some sort of paddle are playing? It’s cricket -- one of the biggest sports in New Jersey. The huge South Asian population has brought its game of choice to our state, and leagues are everywhere, like softball in the '90s.

There are leagues in many of New Jersey’s 250 municipalities. Wait, 250...not 565? Yes, localism just made *less and less sense* in an Internet world, so consolidation finally took hold. Once the police chiefs and school superintendents who were grandfathered in retired, no one really missed the way it used to be.

Local news sites transformed New Jersey from a media desert to a forest. They helped us re-appreciate and reeducate us to the difference between journalism and fake news, commentary, and news coverage.

And what about philanthropy and nonprofits in 2037? Well, trends begun 20 years ago have transformed how giving happens. First, we've had a massive transfer of wealth estimated to be over \$20 trillion dollars.

Though fewer foundations are being created, America's legacy as a country of givers remains. The number of Giving Circles have multiplied 10 times, coming into their own by utilizing social media. With the rules around donor advised fund distribution changing in the "great tax reform of 2022" fund holders now engage with and give at a deeper level to charities in their own communities.

The early crowdfunding innovations and campaigns built on Social Media completely transformed the way charitable dollars are raised from individuals. Governments now regularly rely on impact investors to provide the capital that seeds social sector enterprises before any state contracts are even considered. From youth development and afterschool to support services and even art galleries - as government funding retreated capital markets found a niche.

And, so on and so forth.

Are these predictions? No. I mean, let's face it, the way things are going in Washington it's hard to predict what's going to happen tomorrow – or this afternoon, for that matter. But if this vision I laid out isn't a prediction, it certainly is a possibility.

Today's trends give us *some* outlines of New Jersey in 2037. And of course, the state will be shaped by events outside our borders too. But, a lot of what New Jersey-2037 will look like will depend on us.

Choices stretch out like forks in a road – a forest of decision trees that can lead us here or there, or who knows where. Will New Jersey change as little as it can get away with? Will huge aspects of life as we know it in 2017 be different in ways we can't even think of? No one can say for sure. No one should pretend to know.

What I know is that the *people* in this room will play a big role in what kind of state New Jersey becomes. You're going to hear from some New Jerseyans today with the vision and energy it takes to think beyond the present — to not only *show* us what the future can hold, but help to *build* it.

New Jersey is always a place where people dream and plan; innovate and adapt, where our future has the potential to exceed our imagination. Now, let's embark upon a mind-stretching day that I hope will stay with you as New Jersey's social sector does what it always does...lead the way in driving a livable, sustainable, enviable future for our state...

It's time to get started.