



Camden Works Progress Report June 2024

Background

Camden Works was launched in October 2019 under the leadership of and with funding from several corporate and philanthropic funders, including support from the members of the Camden Community Partnership Board of Directors. Camden Community Partnership, formerly Cooper’s Ferry Partnership at the time, along with the New Jersey National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Latin American Economic Development Association, Center for Family Services, Volunteers of America Delaware Valley, Camden County Workforce Development Board, and Hopeworks were enabling organizations that helped to establish and manage the initiative.

Camden Works is committed to connecting Camden residents to employment opportunities and workforce development training within the city and surrounding region. By providing resources, case management, and wraparound services to encourage job placement and retention, Camden Works offers holistic support to Camden residents seeking pathways to viable careers. Camden Works continues to establish relationships with employers and workforce development organizations to match job seekers with available employment opportunities; offer job training resources, resume building, and skills development; and provide connections to workforce development programs.

Camden Works is not designed to substitute individual employer outreach and private placement efforts across the City of Camden. When the initial four-year pilot program was launched, the objective was to support hiring 100 Camden residents per year. We are approaching our sixth year of operation and have exceeded the initial target. Since November 2019, Camden Works and its immediate partners have been able to hire or support the hiring of more than 1,000 Camden residents into various positions with employers and industries, both in the City of Camden and throughout the local region.

Economic Climate

While the current unemployment rate in Camden has improved over the years, the economic climate remains fragile. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, Camden’s unemployment rate increased from 7.8% to almost 22%.¹ Since then, we have witnessed a gradual improvement as more Camden residents have returned to work. The unemployment rate is currently at 10% as of

¹ https://ycharts.com/indicators/camden_nj_unemployment_rate

June 2024. Although the workforce landscape is challenging, we continue to focus our efforts on supporting the placement of qualified Camden residents in available job positions to the best of our ability.

Equally important in achieving the program's desired outcome is understanding and assessing the City of Camden's demographics. Camden, New Jersey's population is 71,791 (2020), as reported by the US Census Bureau. The city is a diverse community, comprising 52.8 percent Hispanic or Latino, 42.1 percent Black or African American, 10.4 percent White, and 1.8 percent Asian. Approximately 60.3 percent of the total population includes working-age individuals ranging from 18 to 64 years old, where the median annual household income (2017-2021) is \$30,247 compared to \$89,703 for the State of New Jersey.²

Regarding educational attainment, residents with less than a high school diploma comprise 31.6 percent of the population. Roughly 68.4 percent of adults hold a high school diploma or slightly more education. Others, or 6.2 percent, earned a GED or alternative credential. Those with higher education include 23 percent of the adult population with some college education or having earned an associate's degree and 10.1 percent having obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.

Camden Works and its immediate partners are focused on advancing equitable workforce development strategies that are inclusive and expand employment, housing, and wealth creation for residents. These strategies are supported by the implementation of various programs under the auspices of the Camden Works Initiative, including but not limited to Reinventing Our Communities, Camden Loop, Camden Works Job Board, and various job fairs held throughout the year.

Reinventing Our Communities: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

In November 2023, Camden was accepted into the 2024 Reinventing Our Communities Cohort Program. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia designed the program to encourage strong local economies by helping communities address structural racism and barriers to economic opportunity. Camden, NJ, is one of eleven communities nationwide participating in the program, focusing on building a more equitable workforce development ecosystem that capitalizes on local assets. Reinventing Our Communities seeks to address historical structural barriers that are inherent, pervasive, and prevalent in workplace systems and often limit access for communities of color. Cohorts participate in fourteen months of strategic training consisting of workshops and peer-to-peer learning exchanges, ultimately developing a multi-year racial equity plan.

Camden Community Partnership and Rutgers University-Camden serve as Co-Leads for the Camden, NJ Cohort. Local participating cohort members include the Office of the Mayor, Center for Family Services, Rowan University/Rutgers-Camden Board of Governors, Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs, St. Joseph's Carpenters Society, and Hopeworks. Participation in the ROC builds upon the ongoing efforts of the Camden Works and Camden Loop Initiatives as spearheaded by Camden Community Partnership. It is anticipated that by mid-year 2025, the

² https://data.census.gov/profile/Camden_city,_New_Jersey?g=160XX00US3410000

Camden, NJ Cohort will release the multi-year racial equity plan and move into the implementation stages.

Camden Loop

Camden Community Partnership continues to advance its vision of Camden as an equitable, thriving city with high-quality opportunities for individuals, families, and businesses. We learn about the issues most pressing to our city, identify potential partners and solutions, and convene the right stakeholders to make change happen. To this end, Camden Community Partnership and its service partner Via launched the Camden Loop, an innovative on-demand micro-transit service.

The Camden Loop was designed to support residents seeking employment by addressing transportation barriers, including the first and last miles of a commute. It also supports connections to other social determinants of health needs, such as access to health care appointments, social services, and healthy, fresh food options in addition to a full-service grocery store. The Camden Loop was launched on June 23rd, 2023.

Key highlights and findings from the first year of operation include:

- ***Connections to employment:*** 44% of riders identified commuting to work as their most frequent trip type.
- ***Connections to healthcare and schools:*** 21% of rides are to schools. 18% of rides connect passengers to Cooper University medical facilities and other healthcare destinations.
- ***Encouraging public transit usage:*** The PATCO Ferry Avenue Station is the most popular pickup and drop-off point. Fifty percent of riders use Camden Loop to connect with other forms of public transit.
- ***Expanding access to transportation:*** 69% of users do not have access to a personal car, and 47% said they travel more frequently thanks to the program.
- ***High satisfaction:*** Riders have given the service an average trip rating of 4.9 out of 5.

Additional Statistics & Highlights Through June 2024

- **Rides Completed:** 40,000+
- **Accounts Established:** 10,000+, representing 14% of the population.
- **Reduced Price Weekly and Monthly Past Options for Residents:**
 - Weekly Pass for \$7 per week for up to 4 daily rides.
 - Monthly Pass for \$26 per month for up to 4 daily rides.
- **Resident Referral Promotion:** There is a \$20 referral promo for the person who is referring and the person who is opening a new account.
- **Connections to Transit Options:** Via reported continued growth in users seeking connections to NJ Transit services, including the NJ RiverLine and DRPA PATCO Stations.

As Camden Community Partnership continues to evaluate the impact of the Camden Loop micro-transit service, its ridership, and the demand for increased service delivery, the on-demand micro-transit service program has adapted to accommodate residents without existing bank accounts, debit, or credit cards. Another payment option now includes a pre-paid gift card, addressing the needs of the community and increasing accessibility. We have increased the fleet of vehicles from five (5) to seven (7) to maintain reliability and quality of service due to a steady growth in ridership, which averages about 25% monthly. Equally important is a conversation around exploring more connections to the Cherry Hill commercial area to better connect Camden residents to jobs and commerce.

Without question, since launching in June 2023, the Camden Loop has become a critical part of the public transit system in the city of Camden and has received outstanding reviews.³ Cooper University Health Care, the Urban Enterprise Zone program, and numerous educational institutions have all inquired about potential partnerships.

Camden Works Job Board & Spring Job Fair

Camden Community Partnership is reimagining the Camden Works Initiative to better engage residents seeking employment opportunities within the City of Camden and the Delaware Valley region. Earlier this year, our organization launched the Camden Works Job Board, an online weekly resource publication featuring available job openings and opportunities with over 50 employers. In addition to employment listings, the job board offers a wealth of resources, including workforce development and training announcements, details on upcoming job fairs, internships, and scholarships for high school seniors and adults pursuing higher education. It also provides training videos, expert tips for enhancing interview skills and techniques, transportation alternatives, and more.

The weekly publication targets Camden households and has a reach of over 11,709 email accounts. The online publication is also disseminated to local community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, nonprofits, and civic associations.

Our Camden Works (CW) Facebook social media platform impressions, reach, and metrics have indicated the following from January 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024 :

- 415 new followers, totaling 1466 currently.
- 257.6k impressions, i.e., the total number of times our content (post, stories, ads) was displayed, regardless of whether it was clicked, plus page visits and tags.
- A reach of 95.1k people, i.e., the total number of people who have viewed our content.
- 196 posts published with 4.9k content interactions and 909 link clicks.

The Camden Works Job Board, in addition to our Camden Works Facebook Page, is just another step in the right direction as we build pathways for Camden residents to participate in the City's economic growth. Our shared objective is to support the workforce needs of Camden employers by helping to attract talent from the local workforce.

³ Via Camden Loop Progress Report dated March 21, 2024

Next, the Camden Works Spring Job Fair was held on May 23rd at the Camden High School Campus in collaboration with the Office of the Mayor. Over 50 employers and service providers participated throughout the day. The event drew over 300 participants as they interacted with local employers, filed applications, and interviewed on the spot for available job openings. Free shuttle services from the Cramer Hill, North Camden, and Malandra Hall Community Centers were provided throughout the day courtesy of the South Jersey Transportation Authority. The Camden Works Spring Job Fair not only exemplified the effectiveness of our collaborative approach in supporting the needs of local employers to recruit talent for available job positions but also reinforced our commitment to connecting Camden residents to employment opportunities.

January 2024 through June 2024 Progress

As the City of Camden continues to experience economic growth and investment, Camden Work(s) and its managing partners continue to support the training, hiring, and placement of residents in meaningful employment opportunities that pay living wages and support economic mobility.⁴ While the numbers below do not represent employment data from all companies operating in Camden and the region, they do represent efforts through Camden Works and its immediate partners, including the Center for Family Services, Volunteers of America Delaware Valley, Hopeworks, and Camden County Workforce Development Board to assist Camden job seekers, both adults and youth. The metrics below represent activities over the past six-month period from January 2024 until June 2024.

CAMDEN WORKS INITIATIVE STATUS UPDATE

Six-Month Period: January 2024 through June 2024

- **76** Residents hired or supported by Camden Works and its immediate partners.
- **101** Residents registered for assistance through Camden Works and its immediate partners.
- **61** Placements on track for long-term employment.

Total Number of Camden Residents Served through Camden Works Initiative:

- **1,238** Residents were hired or supported by Camden Works and its immediate partners.

Job & Resource Fair Events: January 2024 through June 2024

- January 25 Center for Family Services Resource Fair
- February 1 Cooper Hospital Job Fair
- April 18 Center for Family Services Employment & Community Resource Fair
- May 6 CCWDB Youth Job Fair & Community Resources
- May 11 Cooper Health Hiring Event | Medical Assistants & Licensed Practical Nurses
- May 23 Camden Works Job & Career Fair

⁴ Camden Works Organizational Charts 2024 – 2026

Summary

Camden, NJ, has experienced significant economic growth and improvements in public safety and education, along with critical investments in transportation, housing, parks, and open space to improve the social determinants of health and quality of life for residents. The key to sustaining growth rests with the City's ability to create employment opportunities for its citizens through the Camden Works initiative. What began as a pilot program in October 2019 has evolved into an initiative focused on equity, inclusion, and wealth creation. This success is attributed to our ability to innovate in service delivery and implement research-based strategies that have proven effective in other parts of the nation.

While the work is far from complete, we are grateful to the managing partners in this effort for your continued commitment to supporting residents in connecting with employment and workforce development opportunities. To the New Jersey National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Latin American Economic Development Association, Camden County Workforce Development Board, Hopeworks, Center for Family Services, Volunteers of America Delaware Valley, and the Rowan University/Rutgers-Camden Board of Directors, we express our appreciation for your spirit of collaboration and exchange of innovative ideas which helps drive progress and support the hopes and dreams of Camden residents in achieving their career aspirations and better life for their families.

To our funders, this work would not be possible without your philanthropy and continued commitment to this effort. As we continue to assess and monitor the economic climate and landscape, we look forward to improving our efforts and social impact in the city of Camden through the Camden Works Initiative. We hope this report is insightful and underscores the importance of Camden Works and Camden Loop as ways to drive progress and focus on equity.