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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**Mayor Fulop Joins Community to Break Ground on Bergen Square Revitalization Project; New Pedestrian Plaza & Park, Added Parking, Major Safety Improvements, Flood Mitigation & More**

*Latest Improvement Project in Rapidly Growing Journal Square Area to Highlight Jersey City's Significant Role in our Nation's History*

**JERSEY CITY, NJ – Mayor Steven M. Fulop** joins **City Council members** and the **Department of Infrastructure** alongside **community members and organizations** to announce the groundbreaking on the Bergen Square revitalization project in the rapidly growing area of Journal Square. After years of working closely with local organizations and Jersey City residents, the community-led project will transform Bergen Square into new and innovative public spaces with renewed vibrancy in the heart of the City – all while highlighting the critical role this section of Jersey City played in the development of our country, dating back thousands of years.

“The Journal Square area is an important part of Jersey City’s history and is undergoing an unprecedented renaissance to become one of the most vibrant and exciting places to live, work, and visit in the region,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “This new Bergen Square revitalization project will be a key part of that progress and will help to ensure that Jersey City remains a thriving and vibrant community for years to come.”

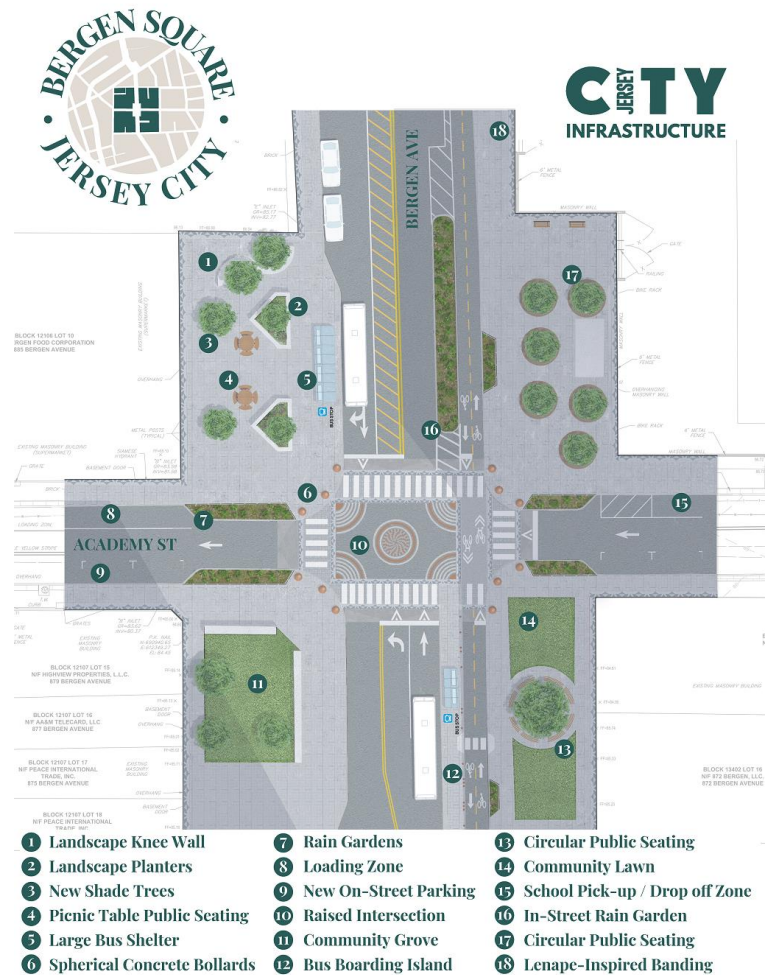
"We're thrilled with the public investment being made in Bergen Square," added **Chris Bernardo, Administrator of the Journal Square Special Improvement District (SID)**. "The planned improvements will highlight the area's historical significance while establishing a vibrant and accessible urban space for customers, residents, and visitors to enjoy."

In 2018, the Fulop Administration formed the Bergen Square Committee, which launched an effort to strengthen the historic identity of Bergen Square and activate it as a vibrant public space. As a result, the improvements slated for construction in Bergen Square include:

- Relocating PS 11's school bus area for safer, more streamlined school pick-up and drop-off activity.
- Converting surface parking lots into a 5,400 square foot pedestrian plaza and park space.
- Planting new trees and green infrastructure to increase green space for environmental, physical, recreational, and social benefits.
- Improving public bus stops with new seating and transit shelters at one of the busiest bus stops in the City.
- Adding 14 parking spots by relocating public parking to Academy Street and converting the street to a one-way.
- Raising the intersection at Bergen Avenue and Academy Street for a safer, continuous pedestrian experience.
- Highlighting the area's rich history through design elements.
  - Traditional Lenni Lenape banding design around the perimeter of the square.
  - Designs on the new raised intersection mimicking the well that once existed at that exact location to provide water to residents and livestock in the mid-1800s.
- Building a protected cycle track.

"The Journal Square community has been working closely with the City for years to realize the redesign of Bergen Square, and we are all thrilled to break ground on this project. Since 1660, Bergen Square has been the site of community exchange and cross-cultural interaction. It is wonderful to see it as such again, both in the public consciousness through events such as Bergen Square Day and now through this momentous groundbreaking for the new Bergen Square Plaza," added **James Dievler, Ph.D., Chairman of the Journal Square Community Association History Committee and founding board member of the Museum of Jersey City History at the Apple Tree House.**

Today's announcement is the latest in a series of investments the Fulop Administration has made in the Journal Square area to reinvigorate the transportation, business, and retail hub. In addition to the Bergen Square updates, these pivotal projects include the restoration of the historic Loew's Jersey Theatre, the addition of Centre Pompidou x Jersey City, and the new Court House Park.



"Bergen Square was the first permanent European settlement in New Jersey. After working closely with the Journal Square Community Association, the Journal Square SID, and community members, our collective

vision for Bergen Square is to create usable outdoor public space in the heart of our community with an important emphasis on the area’s historical significance that helped shape our nation,” concluded **Barkha Patel, Director of the Department of Infrastructure** leading this project.

The historical significance of Bergen Square dates back to ancient times when the area served as a critical crossroads for the native Leni Lenape for over a thousand years. Bergen Square was established in 1660 as the village of Bergen on land long utilized by Lenni Lenape Native American people. It was the first urban square established in the colonies and is the oldest continuously inhabited European settlement in New Jersey.

All media inquiries should be directed to **Kimberly Scalcione** at [KScalcione@icnj.org](mailto:KScalcione@icnj.org).

The City of Jersey City Presents

# The History of Bergen Square

Est. 1660

Bergen Square was established in 1660 as the village of Bergen on land long-utilized by the Lenni Lenape Native American people. It was the first urban square established in the colonies and is the oldest continuously inhabited European settlement in New Jersey. Streets like Vroom, Newark, and Van Reyken were named for prominent families that lived in Bergen Square during the period of establishment.

**1700**  
This early map shows routes to and from Bergen Square, as well as the original location of the community's Church.

**1841**  
The well located within the center of Bergen Square, surrounded by residents' and livestock. Some homes and agricultural plots can be seen around outside of Bergen Square.

**1882**  
This map identifies the Van Wageningen property, the school site, the current location of Old Bergen Church, and various graveyards, still preserved today.

**1928**  
This map depicts the cable car lines that previously crossed through and stopped at Bergen Square. Small Dead-end alleys are located within each quadrant of the square and have remained open.

## BERGEN SQUARE

**PETER STUVVESANT**

C. 1813

Peter Stuyvesant, Director-General of New Netherland is often credited as the founder of modern-day Bergen Square and the historic Bergen Township. A statue of Peter Stuyvesant "Dagobert Peck" was previously located in Bergen Square in front of the school. The statue is now located in the Hudson County Community College Park between 5th Ave. and Newark St.

**PUBLIC SCHOOL**

1790-1857

1910

The site of P.S. 11, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School (dedicated in 1968) has a long history as an educational institution. While the size and architecture of the school has changed over time, this is the site of the oldest continuously operated public schoolhouse in the Americas. A school has been located on this corner since the 1800s.

**APPLE TREE HOUSE**

C. 1945

The Van Wageningen Homestead, nicknamed "The Apple Tree House" reopened its doors in October 2017 after a long restoration and renovation process sponsored by the City. The building now houses a museum, educational center, and Cultural Affairs office. On one of the original lots inside of Bergen Square, the Van Wageningen family purchased the property in 1688. Legend has it that General George Washington and Major General Marquis de Lafayette met here under an apple tree during the American Revolutionary War. After the Van Wageningen family sold the house in the 1840s, it became Queen's Luncheon Parlor owned and operated by Lawrence and Mary Quinn.

**SOUTHEAST CORNER**

C. 1920

C. 1935

The taller building shown above was the First National Bank is a prominent example of the history of banking in Journal Square. The Old Fellows Building is the smaller, three story building shown in both images. This building was where a social group called the Independent Order of Odd Fellows gathered. This social group was established in England in 1810 and an outpost was established in Bergen Square. Cable cars used to run through Bergen Square and were removed following the rise of the automobile.

**BERGEN + ACADEMY**

C. 1850

C. 1945

These views looking north in the center of Bergen Square show the transition of the Square over time. 19th-century family homesteads and livestock dominated in 1850s, businesses, institutions, and automobiles prevailed by the 1930s.

**OLD BERGEN CHURCH**

1681-1773 1773-1841 1841

The Old Bergen Church is the oldest continuous congregation in the state of New Jersey. Old Bergen Church, located at the intersection of Bergen Avenue and Highland Avenue was built in 1681. Prior to the construction of the structure that still stands today, smaller churches had been constructed on the corner of Bergen Avenue and Vroom Street.

**THE STOCKADE**

Bergen was fortified by a spiked wooden stockade with gates on each side. This fort was created to protect the Dutch settlers from the Native Americans. Settlers lived within the fort and established farms outside of the fort.