



Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update October 20, 2020



CONFIRMED CASES

- Today, there are 222,193 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey to date, with another 416 still under investigation. Union County has reported 18,949 cases in total, and was the county with the highest number of new cases today. Westfield is reporting 11 new cases since my last update on Friday (three each on Saturday and Sunday, one on Monday, and four today), bringing our total to 414 since our first reported case in March.
- For a more detailed breakdown of statewide numbers, visit the NJ Department of Health COVID-19 Dashboard.

STATE UPDATES

- The Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control is extending special outdoor liquor license permits through March 2021 in order to further assist bar and restaurant owners by having the ability to serve liquor to their customers beyond their normal premises.
- The New Jersey Economic Development Authority announced that pre-registration for Phase 3 of the Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant is now open. Visit bit.ly/NJEDAGrant3 to apply and for more details.
- The State launched a COVID-19 Transparency website to provide a central point of information on COVID-19 federal fund allocations, programs, awards, and expenditures by federal awarding agency, State Department, and State program. The information can be found at nj.gov/covid19oversight.
- Governor Murphy extended a moratorium preventing New Jersey residents from having their utilities disconnected through at least March 15, 2021. In addition, cable and telecommunications providers are prohibited from disconnecting Internet service in households that have one or more school-age children that may be using such service for educational purposes. For full details, visit <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562020/approved/20201015c.shtml#:~:text=TRENTON%20%E2%80%93%20Governor%20Phil%20Murphy%20today,utilities%2C%20both%20public%20and%20private>.

LOCAL UPDATE

- Yesterday, Hudson's Bay Company, now known as HBC, LP, announced the acquisition of Streetworks Development (finance.yahoo.com/news/hbc-unveils-hbc-properties-investments-141500257.html). As you know, HBC owns the Lord & Taylor property here in Town, which includes the lot where the store sits, as well as two lots across North Avenue -- totaling seven acres of land -- making them our largest downtown property owner and one of our largest taxpayers.
- Streetworks Development is a world-renowned development and planning firm with a high-profile portfolio of success that includes the transformation of a variety of downtowns, both large and small, including West Hartford, CT; Bethesda, MD; San Jose, CA; and downtown Detroit. We are incredibly fortunate to have them now occupy another seat at the table to potentially collaborate on the future of our own downtown. Their model of community consensus-building development, with an emphasis on incorporating and preserving local history, is a hallmark of their notable and award-winning transformations.
- I initiated conversations with HBC nearly two years ago in anticipation of a shifting retail landscape and to ensure that we, as a Town, would have a voice in potential discussions regarding the future of their property. Yesterday's announcement only reinforces what I have experienced so far -- that HBC remains strategic, forward-thinking, and innovative as they contemplate what's possible. I look forward to the possibility of a close future collaboration between the Town and Streetworks.
- Have you submitted your completed ballot for the election? As of October 13, there have been 5,467 ballots from Westfield residents returned, out of 22,815 sent out by the County Clerk's Office (about 24%). For those who registered to vote last week, just ahead of the deadline, the County Clerk will be sending those ballots out shortly, which will cause the total sent number to change. Please remember that your ballot can be returned by US Mail (no postage required), by secure ballot drop box, or by handing it in to your polling location on Election Day. For full details on deadlines and other important voting information, visit unioncountytvotes.com.
- In case you missed it, we posted the Town's guidelines for a safe Halloween late last week, which can be found here: <http://bit.ly/WestfieldHalloween>. This guidance, which is subject to change based on public health indicators, is provided with the hopes and expectations of voluntary compliance by the community. COVID cases are on the rise in New Jersey, including Westfield, so we implore everyone to use sound judgment and abide by all related protocols so that our schools can stay open, sports can continue, and our local businesses and restaurants can survive.
- Thanks to the Westfield 300 Steering Committee for their work in organizing Sunday's time capsule burial in historic Triangle Park. Intended to be opened in 2120, the capsule contains a variety of items both specific to Westfield and more widely commonplace in 2020 (full list at <http://bit.ly/300TimeCapsule>). A tree was also planted in Triangle Park as a legacy gift to the Town, which is funded by a grant from The Rotary Club and facilitated by the Westfield Tree Preservation Commission. Thanks also go out to the Department of Public Works for preparing the time capsule and tree planting sites, and to Valley Bank as the Presenting Sponsor of Westfield 300.

- The final response rate for Westfield in the 2020 Census was 84.3%, which surpassed our 2010 response rate by 3.9% and tied us for the fourth-highest of the 21 towns in Union County. In addition, we far surpassed the response rates on a national (67%), state (69.5%), and county (71.4%) basis. Many thanks to everyone who took the time to get counted in this important process that helps to guide funding and representation.
- The Health Department continues to encourage residents to get a flu shot and to “Be Seen Before Halloween.” In addition to free flu shots provided by the Health Department, Union County will also be offering a flu clinic on October 29 at the County Public Safety Complex (300 North Avenue East) by appointment. Please visit <https://ucnj.org/covid19/upcoming-flu-clinics>.
- Late last week, the County announced the following grant awards for Westfield to offset costs for the following Recreation improvements: \$24,950 for the Edison School Master Plan, \$20,914.75 for an ADA Accessibility Audit for all Town parks, and \$6,635.25 for improvements at the Tamaques Park picnic area (new roof on the pavilion, new grills and picnic tables). Westfield also received \$10,000 for the annual Greening Union County Grant, which will go towards approximately 200 new tree plantings in 2021. Thanks to Don Bogardus and Heather Re in Recreation, and to Greg O’Neil in Public Works for preparing the grant applications for the Town.
- AddamsFest is in full swing! Don’t miss the chance to vote for your favorites in the Haunt Your House Contest or to check out the amazing Wicked Windows downtown! The team has also added some fun discoveries in Mindowaskin Park and a Maniacs’ Carving Contest, and there are still tickets available for Dudley’s Drive-In this Friday and next in the South Avenue station lot. All of the details can be found on addamsfest.com.

The debut of the sold-out Tamaques Haunted Trail is this weekend, which will require some parking and access modifications so that the equipment for the event can be set up safely. From 5:00PM on Friday through 1:00PM on Saturday, entry to the park will be via Dickson Drive only, exiting on Lamberts Mill. Although Saturday morning sports will continue as planned, we ask those attending to plan accordingly, as parking will be limited. From 1:00PM Saturday until Monday morning, the park will be closed to vehicular traffic entirely, except for those attending the Haunted Trail.

- Finally, as leaves begin to collect on the ground, keep an eye out for the annual leaf collection mailer, which has been mailed to all households. Leaves can be placed on the street starting October 26, with curbside pick up beginning November 2 (weather permitting). This year, the Town will be providing up to ten free leaf collection bags per household to help encourage voluntary leaf bagging. For details on how to get your free bags, other key dates, and how to stay informed about the location of the pick up crews, visit westfieldnj.gov/leafcollection.

Our recent four day uptick in COVID cases is a worrisome trend, and consistent with what we’re seeing across the state. Many cases seem to be the result of small family and social gatherings where people have let their guard down. Please continue to exercise caution to help the community as we enter the colder months. We all know what we need to do...wash our hands, wear a face covering, and stay six feet apart. Thank you in advance for your ongoing commitment.