

N E P

NEIGHBOR'S EMPOWERING PENNSAUKEN

- November 1996*** 7 Pennsauken Residents gathered to discuss the number of sale signs clustered around our new African-American neighbors. Was this “White Flight” or coincidence? All six believed Pennsauken is a great place to live/work and all agreed to meet again to discuss formally becoming a neighbor’s group to embrace and celebrate a racially integrated town.
- December 1996*** More residents attend meetings and we formally become a “committee.” Committee was mostly white females, with powerful influence. No one was an “elected official” by design.
- January 1997*** **Mission Statement Created.** “To promote and advance our culturally rich and harmonious Pennsauken Community through mutual respect, open dialogue and creative action.”
- February 1997** Brainstorming for name. “Neighbors Empowering Pennsauken”
- March 1997*** **Vision Statement Created.** “By the year 2010 Pennsauken will be nationally recognized as a model community.”
- April-July 1997* Goal Setting and personal process of our own beliefs, prejudices, concerns.
- Sep-Dec 1997*** Research funding to incorporate, pursue non-profit status, conduct open meetings and diversity workshops for residents.
- January 1998*** NEP is incorporated and a board and bylaws created.
- February 1998** Active promotion of NEP-Newspapers, mailings, flyers, businesses, schools.
- April 1998*** First Information Night open to all residents at Pennsauken Library.
- May 1998*** Diversity Workshop presented by Elsie Cross and paid for by a grant from Core States Bank. Town Council members attended. Participants form 6 tasks forces: Places of Worship; Spreading Awareness; Coalition Building; Education & Schools; Community & Code Enforcement.
- August 1998*** First Township wide NEP picnic.
- Sep- Dec 1998 *** Open Meetings at Library with guest speakers. Topics interested all neighbors of all races and created lively discussion groups. Start of “Study Circle” form of communication. NEP members attend training sessions re

		Study Circle techniques to discuss racial diversity.
January	1999**	Board Retreat for NEP members.
Feb-Mar	1999***	Plan of Action for next 5 years developed. All tasks assigned to members.
April	1999***	Non-Profit Status obtained from IRS - 501(c) 3
May	1999	‘SHARE THE PLAN’ FORUM AT LIBRARY – ELECTED OFFICIALS ATTEND. Recruited many more residents onto committee structure.
July	1999	All Realtors “Put on Notice” of NEP’s mission and vision. “Watchdog” attitude implied. Members begin research of other towns’ success towards integration.
Nov.	1999	Logo Contest in High Schools to create awareness among youths & their families.
Dec.	1999	Meet Don DeMarco and Fund for an OPEN Society. OPEN is the only national non-profit organization with a mission to promote stable integrated communities.
March	2000	Don DeMarco quest speaker for township wide meeting at Library with Mayor Orth and other Council members present. NEP asks Pennsauken Town Council to hire Don and OPEN as consultants to NEP. OPEN offers an \$8,000 grant to NEP if we change our philosophy from “neighbors only” to being actively engaged with government. NEP agrees. Don is hired.
May	2000	Philadelphia Inquirer article on NEP and Pennsauken is picked up by Chicago Tribune and other well known newspapers nationally. Chicago Tribune sends photographer to Pennsauken. We are on our way to fulfilling our vision.
April–Nov	2000	STABLE INTEGRATION GOVERNING BOARD Work with government, school board, businesses, churches, etc to form a new entity – a community coalition. NEP will remain autonomous and must redefine our plan to include being a counter balance and funding source for this new entity. Don begins interviews with the top 50 leaders of Pennsauken to determine “climate” for the real work of integration. NEP continues monthly meetings (study circle format) while new entity is being formed.
Dec.	2000	Integration Works: Building Open and Thriving Communities Conference held in Philadelphia. Pennsauken had government, NEP, business and community representation present for all or part of the conference.

First official meeting of the community coalition named “**Stable Integration Governing Board of Pennsauken.**” (SIGB)

Defined Integration/Segregation;
Integration and the Law of Supply & Demand (of housing);
Premises on which ‘pro-integration’ programs may be based;
Why intentionally work for stable integration?

Jan 2001

Mission Statement: “We are committed to act with other public and private forces to reduce the under-representation of whites in Pennsauken’s markets for housing and schools and to reduce the under-representation of people of color in its civic life, in order to realize our vision of an interracial accepting, whole and stable community.”

Vision Statement: Pennsauken will be a racially integrated community intentionally inclusive where robust demand for housing, schools, and civic life making it a resource for all surrounding towns sharing the same vision.”

Committees Formed:

Development & Finance (NEP will serve to develop human and financial support)

Marketing, Publicity & Promotion

Civic & Neighborhood Life

Schools

Faith Community Support

Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Testing

Recommendation by Consultant: Chair of this Board would be best to be of color, co-chair, white.

March 2001

Original members selected for SIGB begin to resign. Stable Integration is a difficult concept. New members recruited.

April 2001

2000 Census data available. NEP tackling ‘Boarded Homes.’ Pennsauken Redevelopment of Waterfront resurfaces with renewed hope and vigor.

May 2001

Great disillusionment setting in. Committees not working, members resigning from SIGB, change needed.

New Neighbors Orientation established. Program to introduce new neighbors to Pennsauken, its ideals for integration, its government, schools, services, all organizations, etc. and offer a “Taste of Pennsauken” food from local eateries. Analyze where ‘new neighbors’ are moving from to determine success of our marketing efforts. Must attract more “white”

home owners to fulfill mission of “all” races vying equally for Pennsauken homes.

“Tours of Pennsauken” for prospective home buyers established.

NEP still holding Library forums for community discussion involving people of all races.

Pennsauken Schools’ vision of diversity polar opposites of our work – what can we do??. Number of children of color in schools growing disproportionately to the racial makeup of Pennsauken.

Article “Riding My Bike” written for “All Around Pennsauken” changes direction of Township Committee thinking.

Influence of SIGB has huge impact on selection of new school superintendant.

Start Grant Writing with help of OPEN

Multi-cultural days set up in community to create sense of unity within the diversity.

2002

Created Human Relations Council – new forum for more volunteers, answered the need for a “neighbors’ rather than civil solution to problems arising in a multi-cultural community.

Gov. Tom Kean invites Pennsauken’s NEP and SIBG to participate in a State Wide Initiative – Focus on NJ at Drew University. The topic of ‘inner ring suburbs’ and how NJ will develop in the future and thrive were the challenges presented to the attendees.

NEP & SIGB both speakers and participants at Building Blocks for Inclusive Communities Convention in Cleveland Ohio, Nov. 2002.

Step up all marketing efforts. Create a brochure; billboards; town tours; website, monthly articles in local town paper, etc.

2003

Continue all marketing and PR efforts. Township has 800# to field questions from prospective buyers. Create focus groups, People of color invite others to home for diners to talk about the under-representation of people of color in leadership roles in community.

“Sting Training” to catch Realtors using unethical practices.

SIGB creates “Speakers Bureau” for presentations to Better Business

Bureau meetings, Lions, Rotary, Churches, etc.

2004

OPEN & SIGB receive \$40,000 grant from Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation to create a Leadership Development training program geared specifically for leadership in a multi cultural setting. Participants will spend 6 months in training and 6 months as a volunteer towards the efforts of stable integration. Thirty-three started the course, 25 completed it. This effort turned the tide of “whites” only in leadership positions in township.

NEP received NJ State Martin Luther King Grant to create Teen Summits at High School and Town Wide Study Circles.

3rd Annual New Neighbors Orientation had 250 new neighbors attending. New Neighbors coming from a much broader spectrum of locations.

Pennsauken & SIGB co-sponsored “Building Blocks for Inclusive Communities” national convention in Cherry Hill, NJ.

2005

In collaboration with Fund for an OPEN Society, Dodge Foundation provided 2nd \$40,000 Grant for 2nd Leadership Development Training

Flag Designing Contest in all schools to represent the “face” of Pennsauken to counter the racism being experienced in community with a confederate flag flying by one neighbor. More than 500 flags supporting inclusiveness were flying by year’s end.

Marketing efforts step up. Billboards, dinners for prospective buyers in homes of Pennsauken residents. Town Tours continue.

Gemaelia Organizing philosophy arrives in NJ in the form of the NJ Regional Coalition. NEP, SIGB take active steps to promote regional collaboration on all fronts.

Andrea Torrice, nationally recognized filmmaker meets Pennsauken and includes us in her documentary highlighting the challenges of 1st ring suburbs and the effect of ‘white flight’ on Pennsauken and other communities.

Founding member of NEP announces retirement in 12 months. Town Council asked to create Administrative Assistant position to take on the tasks and costs of running SIGB. (This was never formalized).

2006

At the urging and demanding of SIGB, Pennsauken Township Committee rejected a \$3 Million Regional Contribution Agreement (RCA).SIGB presented “A Meritorious Conduct Award” to the Pennsauken Township

Committee for:

1. Rejecting a segregative and inequitable Regional Contribution Agreement.
2. Filling a vacancy on Township Committee with an appointment that more robustly represents the Pennsauken community's diversity in its government, and
3. Encouragement and support for other pro-integrative policies and programs.

SIGB participated in "Lessons Learned: How communities are addressing racial inequalities" community survey.

SIGB collaborates more intensely with NJ Regional Coalition to effect change in all of NJ.

2009

Vision of NEP fulfilled: Nationally recognized as a model community. Documentary aired first in October 2009 and continues in 400 media markets in US.