

**ASSEMBLY, No. 5377**

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**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**219th LEGISLATURE**

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INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 23, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman ROY FREIMAN**

**District 16 (Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset)**

**Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY**

**District 18 (Middlesex)**

**Assemblyman ROBERT J. KARABINCHAK**

**District 18 (Middlesex)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman Verrelli, Assemblywomen Reynolds-Jackson and Vainieri  
Huttle**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes “Food Innovation District Program.”

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/5/2021)**

1 AN ACT establishing the “Food Innovation District Program” and  
2 supplementing Title 4 of the Revised Statutes.

3  
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*  
5 *of New Jersey:*

6  
7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. With respect to the modern food system, which consists of  
9 mass production, processing, transporting, and consumption, most  
10 food moves from farm to plate through long and complex global  
11 supply chains;

12 b. The standardization and large volumes these supply chains  
13 demand do not accommodate the more diverse range of products  
14 and companies within the State’s emerging local and regional food  
15 sector;

16 c. This leaves the State’s small- and mid-size farms and food  
17 businesses without appropriate-scale storage, packaging,  
18 processing, and other facilities and services, known as “food system  
19 infrastructure”; and

20 d. It is, therefore, in the interest of the residents of the State to  
21 establish a program to bring together complementary community  
22 and entrepreneurial activities for synergistic business and  
23 development in the State’s food system infrastructure.

24  
25 2. a. The "Food Innovation District Program" is established  
26 within the Division of Food and Nutrition in the Department of  
27 Agriculture. The purpose of the program is to encourage the  
28 development of food innovation districts within New Jersey. A  
29 food innovation district is a geographic concentration of food-  
30 oriented businesses, services, and community activities that are  
31 supported through planning and economic development initiatives  
32 in order to promote a positive business environment, spur regional  
33 food system development, and increase access to local food.

34 b. The division, in consultation with the Department of Labor  
35 and Workforce Development, the Department of Community  
36 Affairs, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority,  
37 shall establish criteria for the designation of food innovation  
38 districts. Criteria for the food innovation district designation shall  
39 include, but not be limited to:

40 (1) accessibility to mass transportation facilities and services;

41 (2) zoning or a redevelopment plan that permits mixed-use  
42 development; and

43 (3) a cluster of interconnected food businesses, suppliers, and  
44 associated institutions.

45 c. The division shall establish an application form and procedure  
46 for municipalities to apply for designation of an area as a food  
47 innovation district. An application shall include, but not be limited  
48 to:

- 1 (1) the boundaries of the proposed food innovation district;
- 2 (2) an inventory of existing and proposed food-oriented
- 3 businesses; regional food hubs; community kitchens; farmers
- 4 markets; warehousing, processing, distribution, and related
- 5 facilities; and other food system infrastructure;
- 6 (3) a plan for the development or redevelopment of the proposed
- 7 food innovation district, which shall include, but not be limited to,
- 8 plans for:
  - 9 (a) attracting food-oriented businesses to locate within the
  - 10 district;
  - 11 (b) regional food hubs;
  - 12 (c) community kitchens;
  - 13 (d) farmers markets;
  - 14 (e) warehousing, processing, distribution, and related facilities;
  - 15 (f) urban agriculture production;
  - 16 (g) healthy food assistance;
  - 17 (h) programming, events, and community building;
  - 18 (i) improvements or developments of public spaces;
  - 19 (j) marketing and outreach;
  - 20 (k) other food system infrastructure; and
  - 21 (4) any other information required by the division.
- 22 d. The division shall publicize the Food Innovation District
- 23 Program, and provide links to the application form and procedure
- 24 on the division's Internet website.
- 25 e. A municipality may apply to the division for designation of
- 26 all or part of the municipality as a food innovation district. Two or
- 27 more municipalities may jointly apply for designation of an area as
- 28 a food innovation district. An application shall not be submitted
- 29 unless authorized by adoption of a resolution of the governing body
- 30 of the municipality, or, in the event of a joint application, the
- 31 adoption of parallel resolutions by the governing bodies of the
- 32 municipalities.
- 33 f. Within 60 calendar days of its receipt of a complete
- 34 application for designation of an area as a food innovation district,
- 35 the division shall approve, conditionally approve, or deny the
- 36 application.
- 37 g. In consultation with the Department of Community Affairs
- 38 and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, the division
- 39 shall adopt guidance and standards for municipalities to promote
- 40 food innovation districts as places for businesses to locate. A
- 41 municipality may advertise or otherwise use the food innovation
- 42 district designation in accordance with the adopted guidance or
- 43 standards.
- 44 h. In accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
- 45 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), the Commissioner of
- 46 Agriculture may adopt the rules and regulations necessary to
- 47 effectuate the purposes of this section.

1       3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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4                               STATEMENT  
5

6       This bill would establish the “Food Innovation District Program”  
7 within the Division of Food and Nutrition in the Department of  
8 Agriculture. The purpose of the program is to encourage the  
9 development of food innovation districts within New Jersey. A  
10 food innovation district is a geographic concentration of food-  
11 oriented businesses, services, and community activities that are  
12 supported through planning and economic development initiatives  
13 in order to promote a positive business environment, spur regional  
14 food system development, and increase access to local food.

15       The division, in consultation with the Department of Labor and  
16 Workforce Development, the Department of Community Affairs,  
17 and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, would  
18 identify criteria for the designation of food innovation districts.  
19 The bill specifies the criteria for a food innovation district  
20 designation to include, but not be limited to:

- 21       • accessibility to mass transportation facilities and services;  
22       • zoning or a redevelopment plan that permits mixed-use  
23       development; and  
24       • a cluster of interconnected food businesses, suppliers, and  
25       associated institutions.

26       The bill directs the division to establish an application form and  
27 procedure for municipalities to apply for designation of an area as a  
28 food innovation district. The bill would require an application to  
29 include, but would not be limited to:

- 30       (1) the boundaries of the proposed food innovation district;  
31       (2) an inventory of existing and proposed food-oriented  
32 businesses; regional food hubs; community kitchens; farmers  
33 markets; warehousing, processing, distribution, and related  
34 facilities; and other food system infrastructure; and

- 35       (3) a plan for the development or redevelopment of the proposed  
36 food innovation district.

37       The bill directs the division to publicize the Food Innovation  
38 District Program, and provide links to the application form and  
39 procedure on its Internet website.

40       Under the bill, a municipality may apply to the division for  
41 designation of all or part of the municipality as a food innovation  
42 district. Two or more municipalities may jointly apply for  
43 designation of an area as a food innovation district. Within 60  
44 calendar days of its receipt of a complete application for  
45 designation of an area as a food innovation district, the bill directs  
46 the division to approve, conditionally approve, or deny the  
47 application.

1       The bill directs the division, in consultation with the Department  
2 of Community Affairs and the New Jersey Economic Development  
3 Authority, to adopt guidance and standards for municipalities to  
4 promote food innovation districts as places for businesses to locate.  
5 A municipality may advertise or otherwise use the food innovation  
6 district designation in accordance with the adopted guidance or  
7 standards.