



NEWS TO SHAPE New Brunswick's Future

Local journalism can enrich community discussions, boost political engagement and guide decision-making on urgent issues.

Every resident in New Brunswick has the potential to help define the news that will sustain the city's future.

We invite you to join NEWS VOICES: NEW JERSEY as we explore ways to engage communities in local journalism. We're beginning a sustained collaboration between newsrooms and residents to fold community knowledge into the process of newsgathering.

Go to NEWSVOICES.ORG to learn more.



New Brunswick's Local News Landscape

Local news has changed considerably in New Brunswick – for better and for worse. There's less local coverage available today from regional newspapers, but emerging outlets are helping to fill some of the gaps.

Over the past few decades, New Brunswick residents have relied on multiple sources – primarily *The Star-Ledger* (owned by NJ Advance Publications) and the *Home News Tribune* (owned by Gannett) – to stay informed. In 2008, *The Star-Ledger* lost more than half its newsroom staff and Gannett shed over 200 positions across its eight New Jersey papers.¹ Since then, both publications have seen numerous rounds of layoffs, buyouts and employee furloughs. There are now only a handful of reporters covering Middlesex County and its 25 distinct municipalities and many unincorporated communities. These reporters continue to provide professional coverage of the area under demands and constraints that didn't exist just a few years ago.

New Brunswick Today is a digital-first, bilingual, hyperlocal community newspaper. Since its launch in 2011, *New Brunswick Today* has also begun publishing a monthly print edition, allowing it to reach more of the community.

Patch.com, a national chain of hyperlocal news sites, employs veteran newspaper reporters to cover Middlesex County. *Reporte Hispano*, a Spanish-language weekly based in Princeton, covers New Jersey communities, including New Brunswick, with Latino populations of at least 15 percent. Rutgers produces both print and online versions of the *Daily Targum* campus newspaper, and students also contribute to the Raritan River Review, a hyperlocal site covering the campus and New Brunswick.

New Brunswick lies within the New York City media market and receives relatively little attention from broadcast stations. Public broadcast outlets such as NJTV, WNYC and WHYJ cover some New Brunswick stories but usually only if they're relevant to their larger audiences across New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia.

Two new radio stations offer community coverage. Low Power FM station Radio La Costeña provides Spanish-language public affairs content, and 90.3 FM "The Core," a station licensed to the Piscataway Board of Education, hosts a weekly public affairs program.

Many residents patch together basic news and information from a variety of official government sources and social media accounts.² A program called Nixle allows subscribers to sign up for alerts from the city, county, public school system and Rutgers.



¹ "Layoffs at *Star-Ledger*, NJ.com, Other Advance Newspapers Top 300," by Mark Mueller and Ted Sherman, *The Star-Ledger*, April 3, 2014: http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2014/04/layoffs_at_star-ledger_njcom_other_advance_newspapers_top_300_1.html

² See focus-group research in "Community Information Needs Assessment: New Brunswick, New Jersey" by Kathleen McCollough, Bryce Renninger, Philip M. Napoli and Jessica Crowell, June 2015, Media and the Public Interest Initiative, Rutgers University: <http://mpii.rutgers.edu>



Civic Life in the Hub City

While New Brunswick is a vibrant and diverse community, much of the city's civic life is shaped by its relationship to Rutgers. The university is the city's largest landowner, and it enrolls 40,000 students in a city with a permanent population of 57,000. Many students and professors – such as those in the School of Management and Labor Relations, the Collaborative Center for Community-Based Research and Service, and the Journalism and Media Studies Department – work within the city on public service, writing and research projects. Students from Middlesex County Community College's New Brunswick Center also have deep local ties.

New Brunswick also has a large immigrant population. Half of the city's population is Hispanic or Latino, and 56 percent of local residents speak a language other than English at home. Many residents are undocumented, and the vast majority of undocumented residents work low-wage jobs.

Local civic participation is low. Voter turnout in the 2014 general election was only 16 percent in New Brunswick compared to 31 percent in the county. Turnout was so low in the spring of 2014 that the \$197 million school board budget was approved by a vote of just 201-73.

Yet New Brunswick also has a growing network of civic organizations. Groups like Elijah's Promise provide access to healthy food. New Labor champions the rights of the predominantly Latino workers who rely on temporary employment. Unity Square, a community organizing and social justice initiative of Catholic Charities, works on economic development issues, crime and safety, immigrants' rights, and tenants' rights. Churches Improving Communities, a network of faith-based organizations working in New Brunswick and neighboring Highland Park, work on several social justice initiatives. And the arts organization coLAB Arts has hosted public events and forums on local issues.



Original photo by Flickr user Anthony Adams

News Sources in New Brunswick



PRINT AND ONLINE

Home News Tribune / MyCentralJersey.com
Gannett daily newspaper based in Somerville

The Star-Ledger / NJ.com
NJ Advance daily newspaper based in Woodbridge

Reporte Hispano / ReporteHispano.com
Spanish-language weekly newspaper based in Princeton

New Brunswick Today / NewBrunswickToday.com
independent news site with monthly print and bilingual Spanish edition

Patch.com New Brunswick
patch.com/new-jersey/newbrunswick
AOL digital news

RADIO

NJ 101.5 / WKXW-FM
based in Trenton, owned by Townsquare Media

WCTC 1450 AM / The Voice of Central Jersey
based in Somerset, owned by Greater Media

WUEY 103.9 FM / Radio La Costeña
LPFM station based in New Brunswick, licensed to The Wire

WVPH 90.3 FM / The Core
based in Piscataway, licensed to Piscataway Board of Education

WNJB 89.3 FM
one of five New Jersey stations simulcasting
Philadelphia NPR affiliate WHYI

TELEVISION

WNJB-TV Broadcast Channel 58
NJTV New Jersey Public Television

News 12 New Jersey
affiliate of Cablevision's 24-hour cable news, based in Edison

Channel 15
City of New Brunswick government channel, currently off the air

Did we miss anything? Email Mike at newsvoices@freepress.net with info on any other news outlets.

CAMPUS

The Daily Targum Rutgers student newspaper

WRSU 88.5 FM Rutgers Radio

RU-tv Rutgers TV

Raritan River Review student online hyperlocal

NJ Spark Rutgers student social change and journalism outlet <http://njspark.rutgers.edu>

Muckgers: Rutgers student investigative journalism <http://www.muckgers.com>



Original photo by Flickr user Shawn Jordan

New Brunswick by the Numbers

57,000 population

14,000 households

5.23 square miles

45 percent white

16 percent Black or African American

50 percent Hispanic or Latino

8 percent Asian

1 percent Native American

56 percent speak a language other than English at home

23 percent home-ownership rate

64 percent high school graduate or higher

\$39,901 median household income

34 percent below the poverty level

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014