



## TABERNACLE: TOPS IN SMALL TOWNS

Looking for a small town that's scenic and laidback?

Then set your compass to green, and you'll invariably come to Tabernacle, which topped the list of South Jersey Magazine's Top 10 Small Towns, a subset of the publication's Top 25 Towns of South Jersey ranking.

A farm-community gem that draws folks far and wide for the delicious produce on farmstands and you-pick farms, Tabernacle is one of the reasons you call New Jersey the Garden State. Strawberries in the spring, blueberries and sweet corn in the summer, they're all hallmarks of the pastoral Burlington County town situated in the core of the Pinelands.

Bill Bell, the general manager of Cooperative Growers Association, an organization of farmers and greenhouse growers, made Tabernacle the home for his family 32 years ago.

"I was growing up in Voorhees when it was all farms, but now it's all built up," Bell says. "I still consider myself a newcomer."

Connecting Hammonton north to Trenton, two-lane Route 206 threads its way through Tabernacle in a blink-and-you'll-miss-it fashion, and there's just a pair of stoplights in town, one at a firehouse, the other at a drugstore.

Dotted with tiny housing developments, the 40-square-mile town was a community of only 2,000 residents about 30 years ago. It's now 7,100, a mix of the longtime inhabitants who farm its soils and the newcomers with more cosmopolitan tastes and jobs in Philadelphia and Cherry Hill.

Either way, the folks who live in Tabernacle appreciate the rural life that's still within reach of the shopping centers

located in neighboring towns.

"We're small. We like it small. People ask me my vision for the next 10 years, I say I'd like see us the way we are now. We're happy with the laidback rural life," says Mayor Rick Franzen.

Franzen moved to town in 1972, drawn by its school system, which includes its own K-8 schools and constituency in the Lenape Regional High School District.

Like a lot of people in town, Franzen enjoys fishing for pickerel in the old cranberry bogs in the Pinelands. But there are other recreational opportunities, such as the two sports complexes for baseball and soccer programs, as well as tennis and basketball.

One thing you won't find, and that's a true downtown, "There's town hall, a cemetery, a farm market and a vacant lot. That's our downtown and we like it that way," Franzen says.

### TOP 10 SMALL TOWNS

TABERNACLE

GIBBSBORO

SHAMONG

MEDFORD LAKES

ELK TWP.

CHESTERFIELD

SPRINGFIELD

NATIONAL PARK BOROUGH

EAST GREENWICH TWP.

HADDON HEIGHTS

#### DISCLAIMER

The story above has been retyped from an article printed in a 2009 South Jersey Magazine. Effort was made to replicate the article as it appeared, however errors in layout may have occurred during this retyped version. Photo is not original to the article but was taken by employee of Tabernacle Township in an attempt to replicate the one in the original article.