

Open house / Edison

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340 Plainfield Ave
Edison, N. J. 08817

A guide to Central Jersey communities for prospective home-buyers

Keeping pace with the population

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EDISON — Known for its toxic waste sites and pockets of traffic congestion, this community often conjures up a negative image that overshadows the many positive features of the second most populous town in Middlesex County.

Real estate agents provide a sundry list of community assets: a large industrial base, a modest tax rate, a fine school system, many recreational activities and access to major arteries and shopping.

And to hear residents tell it, there's no place like Edison — a belief that triggers criticism when they perceive township officials are making the wrong move.

Many of the residents' complaints stem from growing pains. From a farming community, Edison has evolved into a mixture of residential neighborhoods and a major site of business and industry.

In 1950, only 16,348 persons inhabited what was known as Raritan Township. The name was later changed to honor Thomas Alva Edison, who invented the first incandescent bulb among other achievements at his laboratory in the Menlo Park section. A 131-foot tower topped with a light bulb now stands at the site of Edison's lab.

As of the 1980 census, the population had more than quadrupled to 70,193. With vigorous development in the north, township officials are expecting another population leap for the 1990 census.

Within the approximately 32-square mile township, "Generally speaking, there's all kinds of housing available," said Saul Singer, real estate broker at Century 21 Manor House on Route 27. "Right now, the multiple listing has 270 to 300 resales listed."

Beginning at \$60,000

Price tags on single-family homes range from \$60,000 to the hundreds of thousands in the exclusive sections bordering the Metuchen and Plainfield county clubs.



Cape Cod homes line Winthrop Road. Most types of housing are available in Edison.

Major housing projects are under way in the north end, which had been slow to develop compared with the south where development occurred rapidly after World War II. While many of the houses in the south are built on lots of 50-by-100-feet or smaller, a minimum of one-quarter acre is generally required for single-family homes in the north.

In the past few years, the township has approved the construction of townhouses to generate more affordable housing, said Business Administrator John Delesandro.

More than 2,500 townhouse units either are completed or under construction in the north end with prices ranging from \$48,000 to \$150,000.

The proliferation of townhouses has disturbed homeowners who want to protect the quality of life in their community.

A good place to live

Yvonne Tufaro's comments are typical. She finds Edison a good place to live because "it is very convenient for everything. In some areas, you don't even need a car," said Mrs. Tufaro, who moved to the Clara Barton section in 1969.

But she believes the township is changing. "To me, it's not suburban anymore. It's starting to be city — what I left."

"I can see some of them," she said of the townhouses in the north where she moved 1½ years ago. "But I think they're going crazy with them because they're going to lose what Edison is."

Conversely, the new arrivals from congested cities of the north praise their new community, expressing thanks for the opportunity to live here.

Apartment living is also prevalent in Edison, which has nearly 8,000 rental units. The phase out of rent restrictions that began last November, however, may limit apartment availability.

Along Routes 1 and 27 and Woodbridge Avenue are the prime locations for business and industry. Among the major businesses are the Raritan Industrial Center, Mobil Chemical Co., Revlon, Twin County Grocers and the Ford auto plant.

The large industrial base and sale of undeveloped land yielded a relatively modest tax rate during the past few years. Even though the municipal tax rate will increase for the first time in five years, the overall proposed rate of \$2.35 per \$100 of assessed property value is expected to remain among the lowest in the county.

Despite pockets of traffic congestion, real estate agents consider the Edison road system a drawing card.

"I look at (the township) almost as a transportation hub of New Jersey. That's a definite asset for someone who wants to get around this state," said Robert Ferguson, executive vice president of the New Jersey Association of Realtors, which is located on Route 1 in Edison.

Nearly every major north-south artery cuts across the township: the New Jersey Turnpike, Interstate 287 and Routes 1 and 27.

"For anyone who uses rail transportation,



Millbrook Village Apartments off Mill Road.

gosh it's super," Ferguson added. In addition to the Edison Train station off Plainfield Avenue, commuters are close to Metropark in Woodbridge and the Metuchen Train Station.

Convenient shopping

Shopping is also readily accessible, with shops up and down Routes 1 and 27 and Menlo Park shopping center within the township's boundaries, as well as nearby Woodbridge Center and downtown Metuchen.

The fact that three toxic waste sites — two of which are on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list — are located here is not perceived as a deterrent to living in the township, said Ferguson.

Realtor Singer believes the township has only one drawback and a minor one at that. Lacking a central business district, "it has no identity as a municipality for some people," said Singer. "It's more of a suburban community."



Westgate townhouses off Inman Avenue.

Edison facts

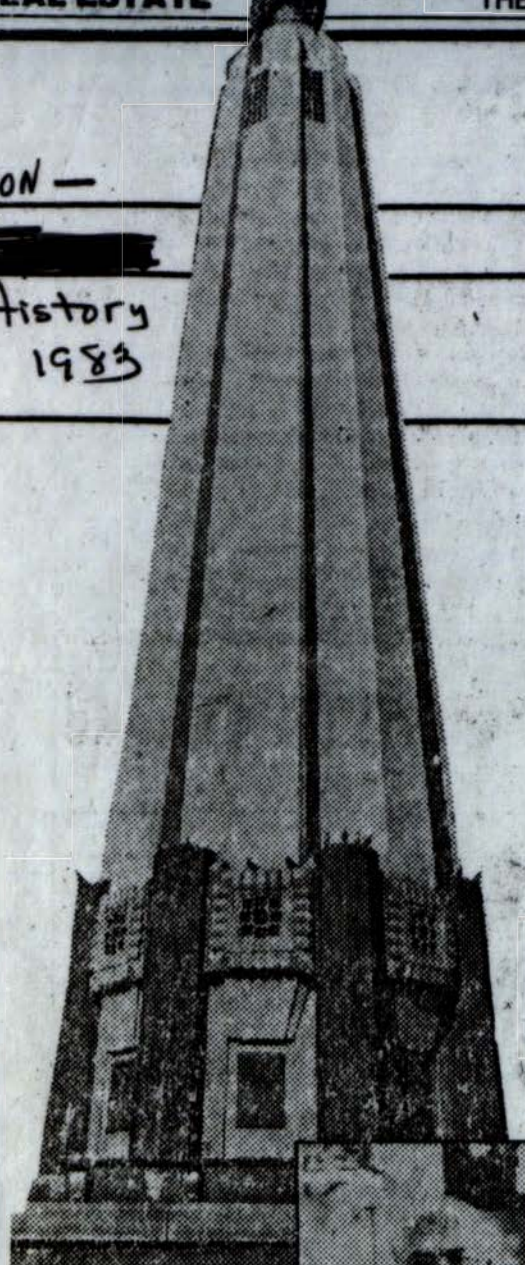
POPULATION: 70,193

TAX RATE: \$2.35 per \$100 of assessed value at 100 percent

SCHOOLS: Public: Middlesex County College, a two-year college; 2 high schools; 4 junior highs; 13 elementary. Private: 2 high schools; 3 elementary.

HOUSES OF WORSHIP: 16 Protestant; 5 Roman Catholic; 2 Jewish; 1 Byzantine Catholic; 1 non-denominational

Edison —
History
1983



The Edison Memorial Tower, above, honors Thomas A. Edison, right, who invented the light bulb in his laboratory in the Menlo Park section.

New Municipal Center on Municipal Boulevard.

