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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

Mayor Fulop Announces Jersey City Employee Barkha Patel Awarded for her Standout Work Improving Roadway Safety, Expanding Open Space, and Establishing Connectivity for all Residents

Fulop Administration's Emphasis on Innovation Yields Life-Saving Results, Creating Safer Streets and Increasing Open Space for Residents Citywide

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop announced today that Jersey City's Director of the recently established Department of Infrastructure, **Barkha Patel**, has been awarded the "*Distinguished Emerging Planner Award*" for her exceptional work implementing significant infrastructure improvements and even life-saving transportation operations throughout the community. Under Vision Zero, she has led the City with great success in strategically studying roadways to identify innovative traffic-calming approaches, advance access, and improve opportunities for residents. As a result of these efforts, in 2022, there were *zero traffic fatalities on Jersey City roadways*.

Director Patel was recently honored at the Planning Excellence Awards hosted by the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA).



"Social equity and its integration into planning – especially transportation planning—is among her most valued planning principles," said **Mayor Fulop of Director Patel's distinction**. "I am incredibly thankful for my entire team, all 3,000 City employees, who work hard every day for our 300,000 residents. Barkha Patel has been a standout employee from the start, and I'm proud to be able to honor her today for her critical contributions."

After Jersey City became the first in the state to sign on to Vision Zero in 2017, Director Patel helped form the Jersey City Vision Zero Task Force. Since then, Jersey City's revolutionary traffic safety solutions continue to expand citywide and are being replicated by other towns and cities across the region. Key safety improvements and road diets have improved safety on roadways for all users citywide.

From improving and expanding public outdoor space and park accessibility to establishing safer mobility with nearly 20 miles of protected bike lanes now installed in every neighborhood and creating more connectivity in Jersey City than ever before, Barkha Patel collaborates effectively to produce positive results and advance access and opportunities for the community as a whole.

Additionally, Director Patel successfully managed the launch of Via JC in 2019, Jersey City's first on-demand microtransit service. To date, Via JC continues to exceed goals in closing transit gaps, while providing affordable and reliable mass transit options for all Jersey City residents.

"I feel very lucky to work in a city like ours where our efforts today will help shape the community's future. It is a huge privilege to help serve my community alongside great leadership both within the administration and throughout the community," said **Barkha Patel, Award Recipient and Director of the Department of Infrastructure**. "Beyond infrastructure and safety, our work emphasizes our City's unique diversity, innovation, and justice while also focusing on bringing joy and dignity to communities throughout Jersey City."

"Successfully implementing innovative solutions to urban planning problems is her specialty. The best example was when City residents that live in areas without access to traditional transit systems were in need, she went completely outside of the box," complimented **Tanya Marione, Director of Jersey City's Planning Division**.



"Ms. Patel has an incredibly impressive body of work. She brings innovation, collaboration, and results to the Jersey City community," said **Sheena Collum, Executive Director of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association**. "Seasoned professional planners from throughout the region see the transformative work that is happening in Jersey City, and it's really our honor to shine a spotlight on Ms. Patel. She's a wonderful role model for younger planners beginning their careers."

Barkha Patel, who was raised in India and moved to Rutherford, NJ, graduated from Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy with a Master's degree in City and Regional Planning. Shortly after graduating in 2016, the Ward A resident started her career with the City of Jersey City, where she worked as a Senior Planner within the Division Planning. The Fulop Administration quickly recognized her impressive body of work, and she was soon designated Transportation Planner, where she took the lead on transportation planning initiatives, including a Bike Master Plan, School Travel Plan, and a Citywide Bicycle Master Plan. In 2020, she was promoted to Assistant Business Administrator.

In May of 2022, the Fulop Administration created the Department of Infrastructure to efficiently align the planning, design, and implementation of Jersey City's critical public infrastructure, including streets, transit, parks, public spaces, municipal buildings, and other public facilities. As Director, Barkha oversees hundreds of City employees within six different Divisions, including Architecture, Engineering, Traffic Engineering, Transportation Planning, Sustainability, and Innovation.

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