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# COURIER-POST

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Every state has its own transportation agency that handles driver's licensing, so standardizing laws for new drivers isn't as easy as it sounds – even if some safety advocates find the inconsistency alarming. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

## Many states enact tougher requirements for new drivers

**Terry Collins**  
USA TODAY

A new wave of state laws is enforcing stricter requirements for new drivers, but states still can't agree on how much practice is needed. • While most states have some form of graduated driver's licensing laws, ranging from as low as 20 and as high as 70 supervised hours, more states are looking into adopting tougher mandates for young people, said Jonathan Adkins, CEO of the Governors Highway Safety Association, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit.

Florida, Washington and New Jersey tightened up requirements for new drivers in 2025, but even these new laws have inconsistent requirements. The new laws come as some traffic safety advocates say the United States would benefit from more uniform laws on the topic. "There should be a national law for teen drivers," said Cheryl Giles, the longtime owner of Lakeland Atlantic Driving School in Winter Haven, Florida, which conducts about 1,000 student driving tests annually. "We desperately need some consistency." Meanwhile, motor vehicle crashes continue to be among the leading causes of death for teens in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Teen drivers also face a disproportionately higher risk of crashes in comparison with older drivers, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports.

"I would call it an epidemic right now, and we all

See **DRIVER LAWS**, Page 2A

**"Whether you are in Virginia, Florida, Utah or even in the most rural parts of the country, the roads can be very dangerous places, especially when you don't fully understand the dangers of driving."**

**Tammy Gweedo McGee**  
Safe driving advocate

## County awards \$5M for parks projects

**Joseph P. Smith**  
Cherry Hill Courier-Post  
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

Grants for parks, playgrounds and related outdoors recreation features are headed to 37 Burlington County municipalities in the amount of \$5 million, all drawn from county Open Space Preservation taxes. The county commissioners approved the grants at their meeting Aug. 13. Officials in three of the county's 40 municipalities didn't apply for grants. All who did will receive at least \$75,000 and as much as \$175,000, according to county spokesman David Levinsky. Commissioner Allison Eckel noted that the county has more preserved open space and farmland than any other in New Jersey. "Without these grants, many of these park improvements would not be possible, and they provide direct local property tax relief since these are dollars municipalities won't have to borrow or raise from their property taxpayers," Eckel said. According to the grant rules, up to \$250,000 was available per community for use to construct, repair or improve parks facilities, or to acquire open space for a future park. A local match isn't required, though the awards are generally restricted to hard costs such as construction, renovation and repair rather than design or engineering expenses.

County officials said these grants were last issued in 2020. "Awarding grants for towns to create inclusive playgrounds is a sound investment that will make sure all residents and families can access and enjoy these spaces," Commissioner Randy Brulo said. "It sends a message to families that Burlington County does more than just talk about becoming more inclusive."

See **PARKS**, Page 4A

## After 50 years, Collingswood Diner closes for good

**Celeste E. Whittaker**  
Cherry Hill Courier-Post  
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

Collingswood Diner, a landmark South Jersey diner for about five decades, closed for good Aug. 11. Jimmy Papandreou, 72, owned the eatery, which was assembled in 1975, for decades. He and his wife, Andrea Papandreou, posted a note on the door to let customers know of the impending closure. The diner space is located at White Horse Pike and Route 130 at 201 W. Cres-

cent Ave. A sign on the door at the restaurant, signed by the Papandreous, read: "The owners have sold the business and are looking forward to retirement. We appreciate all the years from our loyal customers and our staff for helping our business succeed all these years." **What's happening at the Collingswood Diner space?** Jimmy Papandreou told the Philadelphia Inquirer that the property will be redeveloped and will become a weed

dispensary. Attempts to interview the Papandreous for greater detail prior to publication were not successful. Borough officials said that while a letter of support was received approximately three years ago for a cannabis company called Crucial Wellness in relation to the space, they haven't heard anything from the applicants in more than a year. That letter would be just an early part of a long process before a dispensary could open, they said. See **DINER**, Page 4A

**The Collingswood Diner has closed. Owners have said it will become a cannabis dispensary, although borough officials have not heard from applicants in approximately a year.**  
JIM WALSH/COURIER POST

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