

**TRENDS AND HARD CHOICES:
SETTING OBJECTIVES FOR
NEW JERSEY'S FUTURE**

New Jersey State Planning Commission

February 1987

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PREFACE

The tremendous growth New Jersey has experienced in the past several years has accentuated the need for a more comprehensive approach to planning throughout the State. Various organizations and legislative initiatives have recently focused on issues related to transportation, housing, open space, and other areas, but few address the need to manage development and redevelopment in a more integrated manner. There is, however, one major exception.

On January 2, 1986, the New Jersey State legislature approved P.L. 1985, Chapter 398, an act which will dramatically alter the structure for planning the State's future. This piece of legislation, known as the "State Planning Act," created the New Jersey State Planning Commission and its staff arm, the Office of State Planning. The Act set forth the following mandates for the Commission:

prepare and adopt within 18 months after the enactment of the Act, and revise and readopt at least every three years thereafter, a State Development and Redevelopment Plan which shall provide a coordinated, integrated and comprehensive plan for the growth, development, renewal and conservation of the State and its regions . . . ;

prepare and adopt as part of the plan a long-term Infrastructure Needs Assessment, which shall provide information on present and prospective conditions, needs and costs with regard to State, county and municipal capital facilities . . . ;

develop and promote procedures to facilitate cooperation and coordination among State agencies and local governments . . . ;

provide technical assistance to local governments . . . ;

periodically review State and local government planning procedures and relationships . . . ;

review any bill introduced in either house of the Legislature which appropriates funds for a capital project . . . ; and,

take all actions necessary and proper to carry out the provisions of the act.

The purpose of this first publication of the Commission is to identify, for public discussion, a set of planning goals and objectives for the State. These goals and objectives emerge from provisions of the Act; from an overview of trends and conditions in the State; from a poll of public opinion conducted in December 1986 regarding issues of growth, community and governance; and from verbal and written testimony given by private citizens, government officials and special interest organizations during a series of public meetings held in January 1987.

The Commission invites any reactions and advice the reader may wish to offer.

INTRODUCTION

New Jersey has entered a new era of growth and change. Awakening from a major recession in the beginning of the nineteen eighties, the state has emerged as a strong economic entity. Signs of prosperity abound as we watch the construction of new office buildings and shopping malls to accommodate thousands of newly-created jobs and consumer demand. The rate of residential building is higher than it has been in a decade. Statewide unemployment is well below the national rate. There is renewed interest and enthusiasm in our cities.

We have also become keenly aware, however, that this prosperity does not come without a price. Our current practices for dealing with growth and economic change are straining the capacity of both our man-made and natural systems to absorb development:

Our valuable agricultural land is rapidly giving way to suburban sprawl;

Transportation arteries are becoming increasingly congested and available sewage capacities are disappearing as excessive demands are being placed on these public facilities;

The growing scarcity of land and the increased demand for housing, among other factors, have priced many of our citizens out of the market or have forced them to travel great distances to their jobs; and,

The quality and availability of our natural resources are diminishing.

Responding to our need to enjoy the benefits of growth while mitigating its negative consequences, the Legislature adopted the Act establishing the State Planning Commission. Of course, State planning is not a new idea in New Jersey. In fact, a state planning board was first established in 1934. Past planning efforts have been the genesis of the major open space systems and public facility networks that New Jersey has today. The first state development plan, published in 1951, proposed constructing the Garden State Parkway. It also called for preserving Island Beach as a state park, the Wharton Tract (now the core forest of the Pinelands), and the Worthington Tract along the Delaware Water Gap. Subsequent state planning efforts provided the impetus for preserving the Pinelands and developing the Hackensack Meadowlands, as well as laying the groundwork for the Green Acres Program.

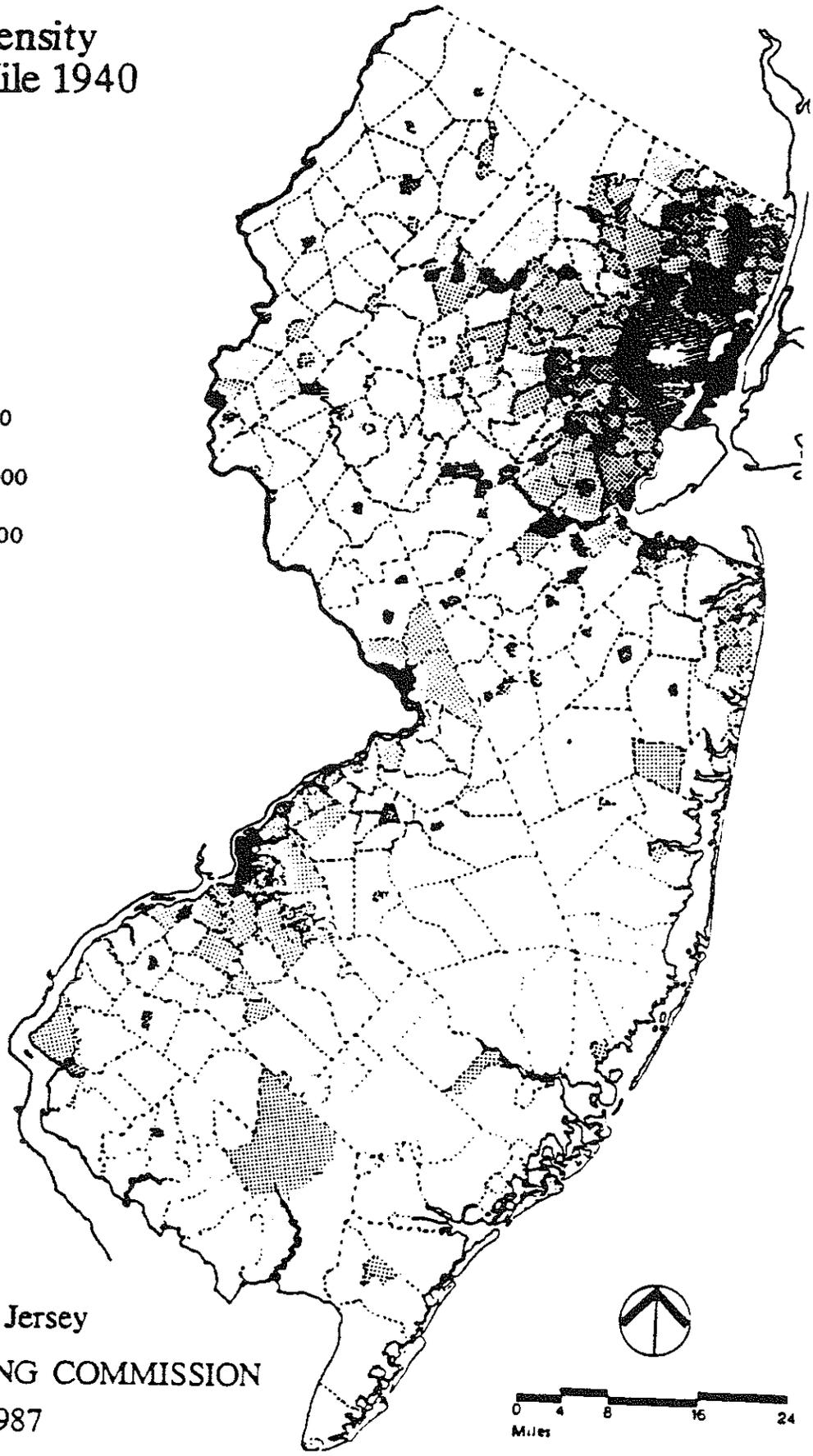
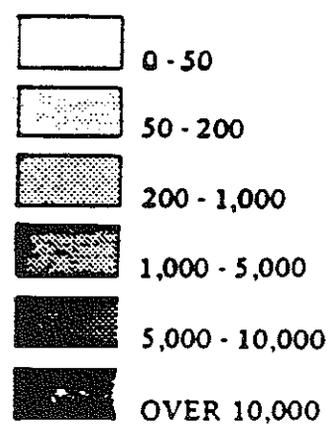
Even more than in the past, there is an urgent need today for sound planning and coordinated decision-making by public agencies at all levels. As the demand on our natural resources increases with the burgeoning population, we must plan how these resources can best be used to ensure that we do not destroy the very qualities of the State which makes it such an attractive place to live, work and recreate. Also, the Plan must take into account the State's long and valued traditions of home rule -- putting in place a cooperative planning process which asserts legitimate State level interests, yet preserves the citizen's primary access to decision-making processes through local elected officials. In this sense, the Commission faces the difficult mandate of finding the balance between efficient solutions to pressing problems and maintaining effective local self-governance.

1. GROWTH TRENDS AND ISSUES

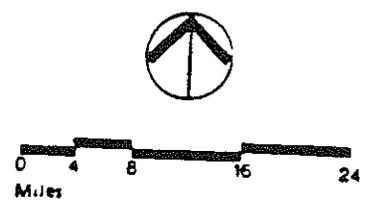
New Jersey has been called the most urbanized state in the nation. However, what we have seen over the past several decades is not the tendency to urbanize, but rather to suburbanize. The decisions New Jerseyans have made about where to live and work have dramatically altered the landscape of the State. As growth in employment and population occurred in the post-war era, highways were built to connect the population and employment centers of this and neighboring states. These highways provided access to hundreds of thousands of acres of yet undeveloped land. Once access to jobs and markets was provided from the countryside, people and businesses increasingly chose to locate in the newly-built suburbs rather than in the older, more dense urban centers.

These trends are illustrated quite clearly in Figures 1.1 through 1.3 which reflect changes in the average concentration of population per acre for each municipality. As reflected in Figure 1.1, much of the State's population in the pre-war year of 1940 was concentrated in the cities and the small urban villages serviced with water, sewerage, roads, and other urban amenities. The rural areas of the State could be characterized as consisting largely of forests, wetlands, open pastures and farms. The most densely populated areas of the State were the cities of the Northeast along the Hudson River, such as Jersey City and Hoboken, and those in the southwest along the Delaware River, such as Camden and Trenton.

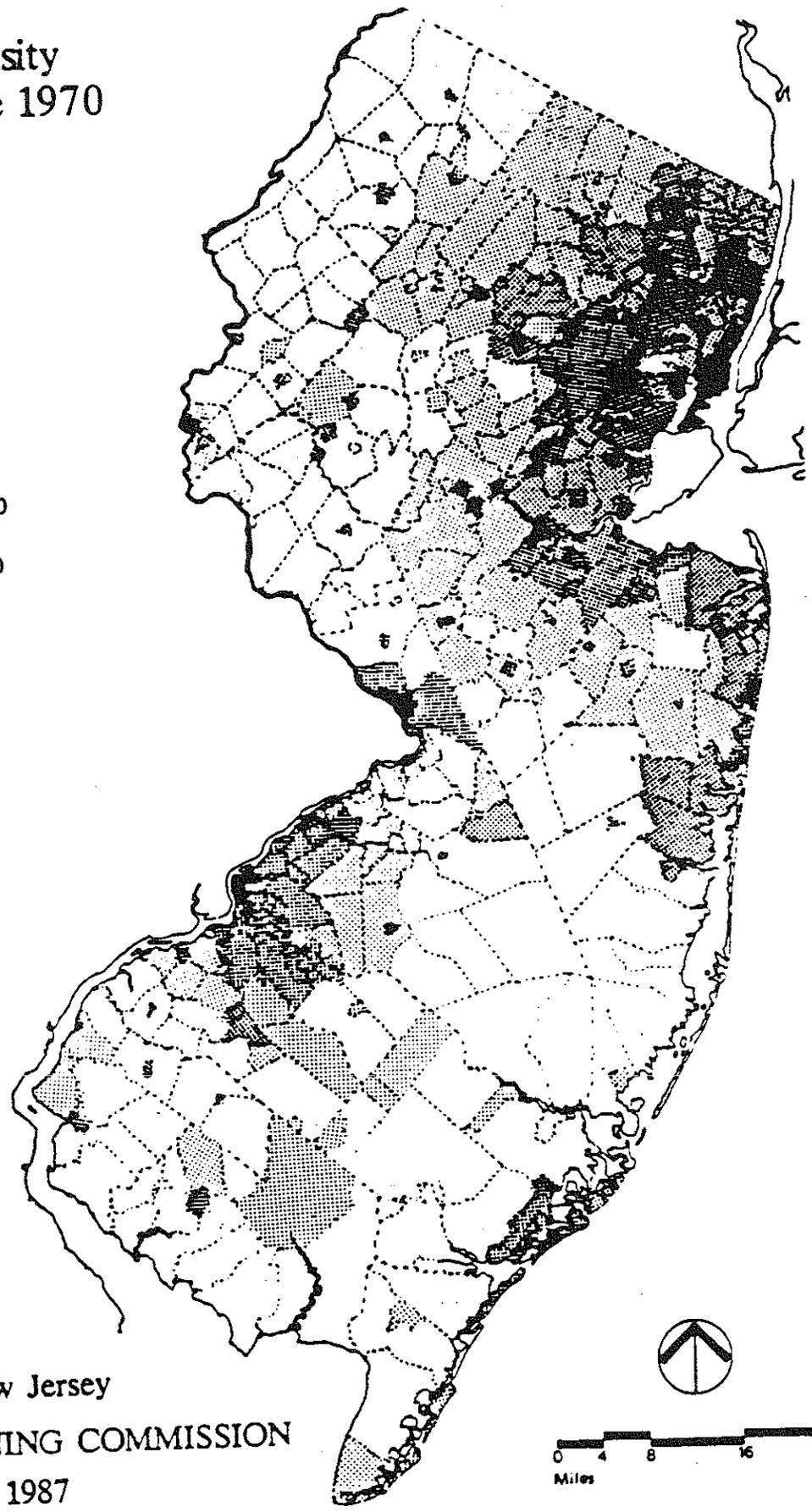
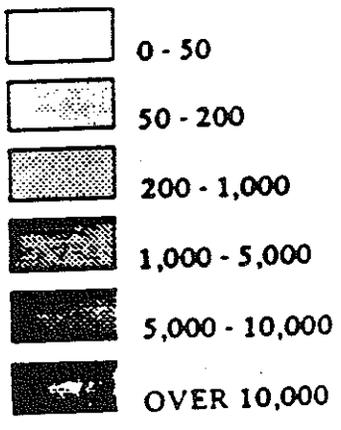
Population Density Per Square Mile 1940



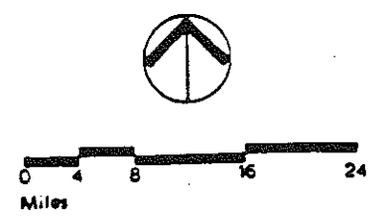
New Jersey
STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
1987



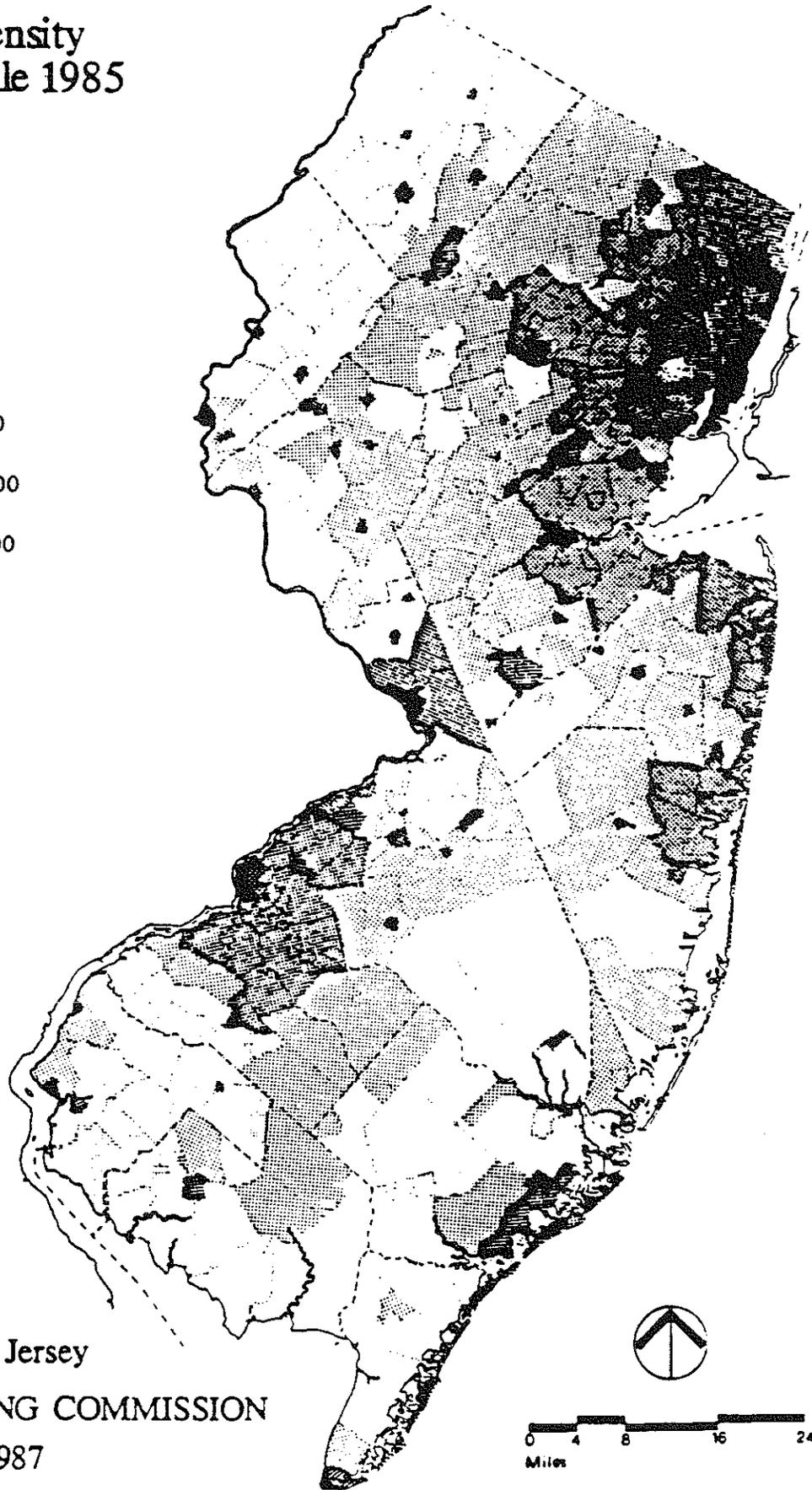
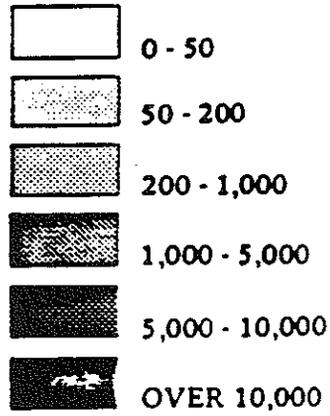
Population Density Per Square Mile 1970



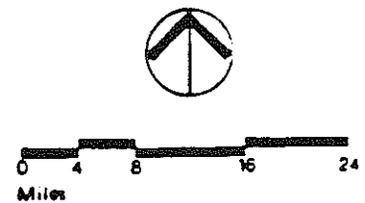
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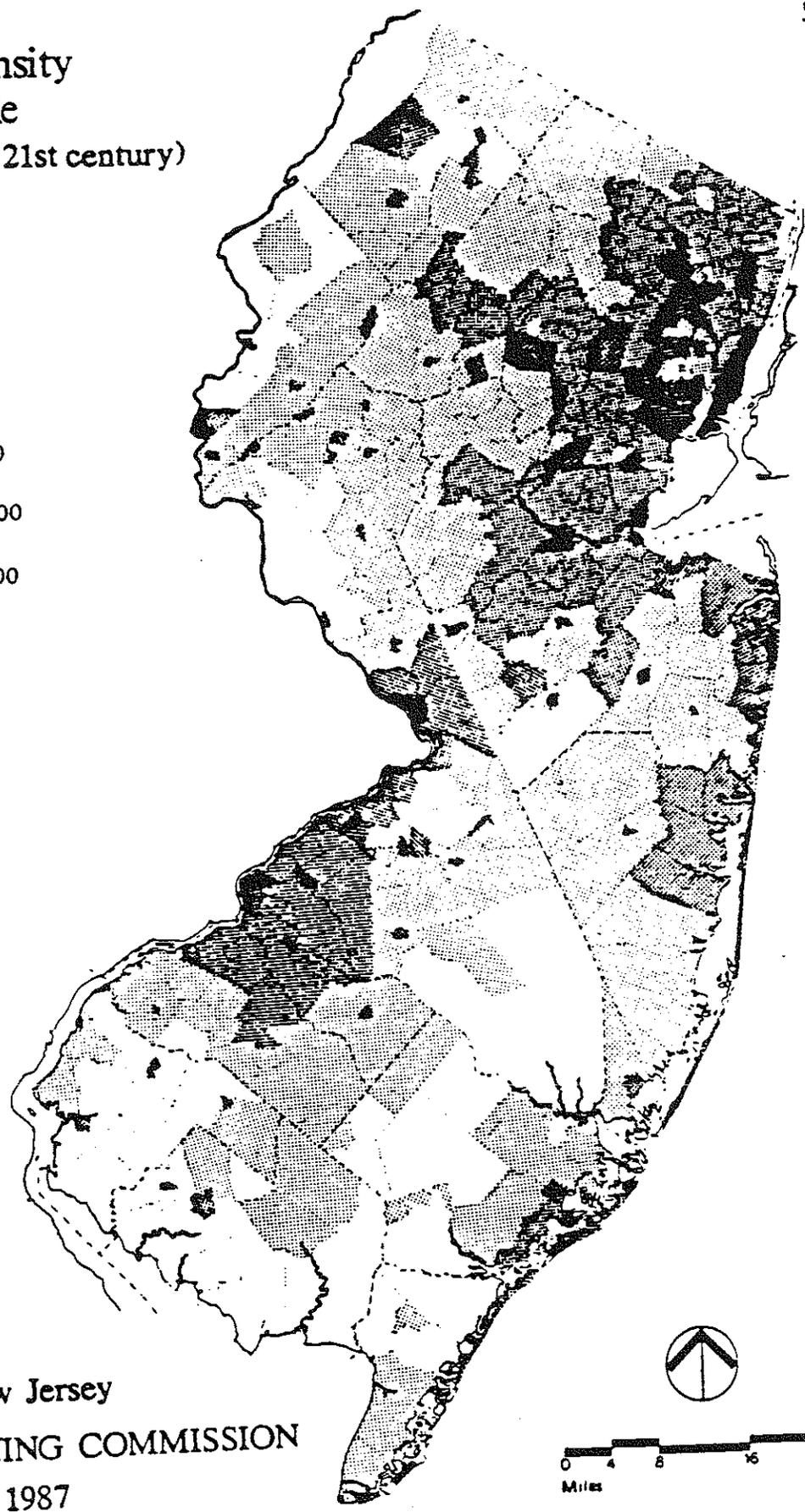
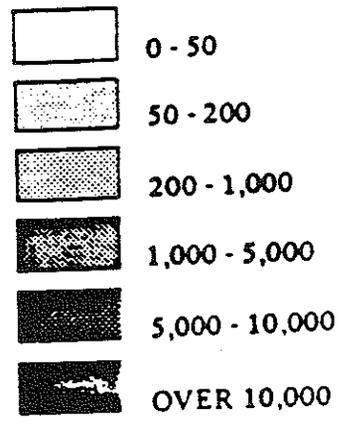
Population Density Per Square Mile 1985



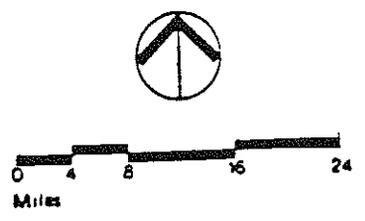
New Jersey
STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
1987



Population Density Per Square Mile (At the start of the 21st century)



New Jersey
STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
1987



Comparing figures 1.1 and 1.2 reflects the significant transformation which occurred from the 1940's to 1970. With improved roadways throughout the State, access was opened to rural New Jersey. Growth pushed its way into counties such as Morris, Hunterdon and Somerset as the vast suburbs of northern and central New Jersey were born. As residents and businesses located in these new suburbs, the cities which thrived for the first half of this century began to deteriorate.

Figure 1.3 brings us to 1985 and reflects that growth has continued to flow away from the urban centers and into the rural areas of the State. In the northern part of the State, much of that growth swept into the Skyland region, while in the southern portion of the State, it drifted into the Pinelands area.

Figure 1.4 reflects a continuation of growth trends into the 21st century. It is clear that if current trends continue, much of the rural landscape of the State will have disappeared. It reflects also that much of this growth would be absorbed in central New Jersey, particularly along the Route 1 corridor between New Brunswick and Trenton, and along Interstate 78 toward rural Hunterdon County. These trends, if not redirected in some manner, will profoundly affect the character of the State in terms of its agriculture and open space, the quality of its natural resources, the adequacy and price of its housing stock, and the quality of life in its major cities and urban villages.

Agriculture and Open Space

Since 1950, 850,000 acres of agricultural land have been lost -- almost 24,000 acres per year.¹ During the same period, land in many of our urban areas, already serviced with water, sewer, and roadways, has been sitting idle or underused. As development leapfrogs over the more expensive urban land with services to the less expensive farmland without services, property values of farmland increase. Farmers who wish to continue farming then find themselves having to pay increasingly higher taxes on higher assessed values. They soon find it more profitable to sell their farms for development than to continue growing crops or raising animals. This conversion of farmland is a permanent loss, not only of an agricultural resource but of land which could be more efficiently developed in the future when urban services are extended to it. It is also a permanent loss of valuable open space.

The untimely development of rural land deprives us of open spaces which help shape our communities and provide pastoral relief from urban congestion. Unmanaged growth threatens not only agricultural open space, but other types of scenic and recreational resources as well. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection estimated in 1984 that the State was approximately 399,000 acres short of its public open space goals.² Open space not only provides recreational opportunities for the human population but is essential for the thousands of plant and animal species which live in the State. For example, over 430 species of birds have been recorded

in New Jersey, making it fourth in the nation, surpassed only by the much larger states of Texas, California, and Florida. In fact, Cape May is considered to be perhaps the single most important migratory bird concentration area in North America.³ To protect the natural beauty and balance of our ecological system, we must pursue policies which protect its wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, and forests.

Water Resources

One of the most valuable resources supporting continued economic growth of the State is its water supply. The 1960 drought, however, revealed a serious water supply crisis in the State. As a result, planning efforts were undertaken to ensure a sufficient supply of drinking water, to maintain the quality of these supplies, and to improve the water delivery system. Nevertheless, water shortages continue to exist. In many areas of the State, the ability to deliver potable water in adequate amounts cannot keep pace with growing demand, even during non-drought years. New surface water storage facilities and better protection of aquifers will be required to meet demands created by growth.⁴

Concurrently, the capacity of sewage treatment facilities in many areas is not sufficient to handle the demands of hundreds of new housing units or millions of square feet of office space. Presently, a moratorium is in effect on almost 200 existing facilities throughout the state due to lack of treatment capacity or the low quality of treated effluent.⁵ This problem makes the rural areas which are not yet densely settled more attractive for development.

Air Quality

Another basic necessity that we often take for granted in our daily lives is the quality of our air. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has voiced concern about our ability to reach or maintain air quality standards in various areas of the State. As growth has continued along major highway corridors and in areas increasingly distant from urban centers, people have become more dependent on the use of automobiles instead of mass transportation systems. Not only does this produce traffic congestion, it also increases the amount of automobile pollutants emitted to the air. At the present time, the entire State is classified as "nonattainment" regarding safe levels of ozone.⁶

Roadways

There are few of us who have not experienced the effects of rapid growth on our road system. The suburban Route 1 corridor between New Brunswick and Trenton has gained national notoriety for the levels of congestion occurring there, not only during rush hour but during other periods as well. Of more significant concern is the fact that there seems to be no sign of a slowdown in new construction along this corridor. By mid-1986, over 30 million square feet of office space had been proposed, approved or was under construction in Route 1 corridor municipalities.⁷ Other growth corridors experiencing comparable levels of development have emerged throughout the State, some with traffic conditions approaching the severity of Route 1.

These conditions affect not only the major arteries but impact smaller county and local roads as well. Development is occurring along roads built many years ago to accommodate considerably fewer vehicular trips than are currently being forced upon them. A recent study in Somerset County provides a good illustration of this problem. It was found that over eighty new lanes of roadways would have to be built in the county to accommodate the growth which could occur under current zoning!⁸

Housing

Housing availability and affordability continue to be a major element of concern. Growth will be hampered if the labor force cannot find a place to live within a reasonable distance of the workplace. Recent average home prices in some counties have been recorded at well over \$150,000 - some of the highest prices in the country.⁹ These areas rely heavily on other areas with less expensive homes to house their labor force. The Council on Affordable Housing has begun the monumental task of addressing the need to increase the supply of housing for low and moderate income households. According to the Council, the projected number of units required to meet the low and moderate income needs throughout the State between 1987 and 1993 is 145,707.¹⁰ However, with the current development pressures and the accompanying escalation of housing prices, it is becoming more and more difficult for people at all levels of income to find affordable housing reasonably close to their jobs.

Cities

While rural and suburban areas are dealing with the many problems arising from new growth, our cities, once thriving commercial and cultural centers, are struggling to compete with suburban shopping centers, office campuses and housing developments. While these rural and suburban areas enjoy the increasingly mixed blessing of growth, the cities are facing financial crises. The six largest cities in the state -- Camden, Elizabeth, Paterson, Trenton, Newark, and Jersey City -- experienced a loss of 99,000 jobs from 1972 to 1984, or almost one quarter of their employment base. During the same period, the state increased its total employment by 568,954 jobs or 25.4 percent.¹¹ Similarly, from 1970 to 1985, these six cities lost over 13 percent of their population, while the entire state population increased by over 390,000, or 5.5 percent.¹²

Given their physical resources, many of these cities have the capacity to accommodate some of the growth that is exerting pressure on our rural areas. Not only are the cities already configured for higher intensity activity, many of them have excess infrastructure capacity. With the declining tax roles, it is increasingly difficult for these areas to allocate the resources necessary to rehabilitate existing facilities and help train unemployed workers. To add to their financial plight, some of the cities are currently faced with a loss of federal funds resulting from the 1986 elimination of a major federal revenue sharing program. This program provided New Jersey cities with \$67 million which many of the cities relied upon for such

basic services as fire and police protection.¹³ Without a reversal in the trends of public and private investment, the ability of the cities to participate in the growth of the State is extremely limited.

The Financing Dilemma

Maintaining the financial integrity of our cities is only one aspect of a public finance problem which must be addressed. Another aspect is the financing of services to accommodate new growth. The burden being placed on our environment and infrastructure system statewide have engaged various agencies in a struggle just to catch up. In a study completed in 1983, Robert Lake, of the Center For Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University, concluded that there will be a funding gap between public facility needs and resources available to pay for them totaling \$15.1 billion between 1983 and 2000, for water supply, wastewater disposal, and transportation.¹⁴ This shortfall may well have risen since this study was published, especially considering the rapid growth which has occurred in rural, unserved areas over the past several years.

The primary source of local revenue for public capital facility construction and maintenance is the property tax. To maintain or increase net revenues, municipalities find themselves caught up in what is called the "rateables game" — competing for commercial and industrial growth. Because local services are funded primarily by

property tax revenues, it is more economical to attract businesses, which tend to generate more tax dollars than they require in the form of local services, than residential development, which tends to cost more to service than it pays in taxes. Hence, business growth is sought over residential growth, creating a crazy quilt pattern of development which increases traffic, air pollution, and inefficient use of existing public facilities. The implications of this public "entrepreneurship" extend far beyond the effects occurring in any one municipality.

Choosing A New Path

Although we have areas of the State which are growing too quickly to maintain adequate services and those which are declining or not growing at all, the fact remains that growth can be desirable. It is, after all, the engine of the State's economy — the generator of new jobs for our growing labor force. We are beginning to understand, however, the negative consequences of growth which is allowed to go unguided. Because we did not make choices affecting the configuration of growth in prior decades, we must now consider these choices carefully — choices concerning the revitalization of our cities, the protection of our environmental and natural resources, and the affordability and quality of our housing. We can continue to enjoy the benefits of growth, but we must at the same time conserve and protect those resources of the State which allow this growth to occur and which support the quality of life to which we aspire.

2. MEETING THE CHALLENGE

In the growth explosion which followed World War II, a new settlement pattern refashioned New Jersey's landscape. People left the cities and established sprawling suburbs which today are the base for community organization. We now rely on a network of highways to commute to our jobs, to our shopping centers, to our schools and cultural facilities. Our open lands, which no longer seem limitless, continue to be developed sprawl-style. New Jersey is today stressed by an expanding suburban web which overruns municipal and county boundaries. Ironically, our present system of public planning and infrastructure investment ignores the cumulative impacts and costs of this development pattern. Our decision-making fails to view the State as a single political unit to be developed for the common good. It does not reflect the constraints of New Jersey's natural areas, the capacity of our public infrastructure, or the need for all our residents to benefit from economic growth. Only if we devise a system of growth management that views New Jersey as a single entity and consider the cumulative impacts of development decisions on the whole State can we truly further the general welfare of all our residents.

The Responses of Other States

Planning systems which manage growth and development using a statewide approach have been pioneered in other states. Hawaii, Florida, Oregon, and Vermont each recognized the need to provide some degree of State or regional participation in the major decisions that

affect the use of our increasingly limited supply of land. Each of these states fashioned different systems to manage their development.

Hawaii, which has a long history of direct state involvement in growth management, took an approach which exercises exclusive state control over some lands and joint state and local control over others. Land in Hawaii is classified into one of four districts (urban, agricultural, rural and conservation). Each district is subject to different procedures and standards for managing land use. Hawaii's Land Use Plan creates a system for the establishment of statewide goals, objectives, policies, and priorities to guide the actions of state agencies and counties. A State Planning Council ensures that the goals, policies, objectives, and priority guidelines of Hawaii's plan are reflected in state and county plans and programs.

Florida, whose infrastructure has been severely stressed by rapid growth, adopted a State Comprehensive Plan in 1985. The Florida plan contains about 300 board policy statements addressing 25 subjects of statewide significance. It will be implemented through a series of functional plans prepared by each state agency, by regional planning commissions and by local comprehensive plans. All plans must be consistent with the State's Comprehensive Plan.

Vermont, though lacking a state plan, has established a statewide system of land use planning and regulations aimed primarily at controlling the impacts of larger-scale development. The core of its process are criteria expressed in the enabling statute, which

address a wide range of potentially detrimental development impacts. Development applications are evaluated against the criteria through a permit process. The process is administered by nine District Environmental Commissions and an Environmental Board. About one third of all development in Vermont is subject to this process.

Oregon has a comprehensive and coordinated program for state and local land use planning and development regulation. Its core is nineteen statewide planning goals developed and adopted by the Land Conservation and Development Commission. The goals are detailed, mandatory, and have the force of law. They set the standard for local and state decisions affecting land. Local and state agency plans must be consistent with the detailed Statewide Goals. Oregon's Commission reviews the plans for compliance.

New Jersey's Planning Experience

In New Jersey, land use planning has traditionally been a municipal responsibility. In the first half of this century, when land use controls appeared on the American scene, most states gave responsibility for land use planning and development regulation to local government. That arrangement, however, has been criticized because it ignores the extra-territorial impacts of land use decisions. Municipal boundaries are generally political lines on a map — lines that the impacts of growth ignore and the needs of citizens transcend. Even though most land use planning and development review in New Jersey continues to occur at the local

level, the long term trend is to provide greater degrees of state or regional participation as a means of protecting and advancing the general welfare.

Thus, in recent decades New Jersey adopted the Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA) and the Wetlands Act to manage development along our fragile coast. In dealing with the environmentally unique Pinelands, the State chose a strong regional approach by creating the Pinelands Commission to manage land use in a way that preserves the viability of a treasured ecosystem. In the Hackensack Meadowlands, lying within the State's heavily urbanized northeast, the Legislature saw "a land resource of incalculable opportunity for new jobs, homes, and recreational sites" whose development require "special protection from water and air pollution."¹⁵ Consequently, the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission was created to plan and regulate development in a thirty two square mile area that is crossed by the boundaries of fourteen municipalities and two counties.

More recently, the New Jersey Supreme Court, in passing judgement on exclusionary municipal zoning practices, determined that inasmuch as the State controls land use through the zoning powers given to municipalities, a municipality cannot exercise that power in a way which favors rich over poor and ignores regional housing needs. The Court envisioned the allocation of housing obligations to municipalities in accordance with growth areas and regions defined at the State level.

New Jersey's State Planning Act

In January 1986, the New Jersey legislature adopted the State Planning Act. The Act creates a State Planning Commission and an Office of State Planning to prepare and adopt a statewide plan and to establish a cooperative planning process which involves the full participation of State, county, and local governments. New Jersey, states the Act, needs integrated and coordinated planning in order to conserve the natural resources, to revitalize its urban centers, to provide affordable housing and adequate public facilities at a reasonable cost, to promote equal social and economic opportunity for New Jersey's citizens, and to prevent sprawl and promote the suitable use of land. The center piece of the Act's program for promoting vertical coordination and integration of State, county, and local plans is the cross-acceptance process. Through cross acceptance, the Act seeks to avoid imposing a plan on other jurisdictions and to afford county and municipal government a full and open opportunity to be involved in integrating state and local policies. The Act states that the plan and its process represents "a balance of development and conservation objectives best suited to meet the needs of the State."¹⁶

Achieving such a balance implies making hard choices in allocating a shrinking land supply in the nation's most suburbanized State. It implies confronting the dilemma that we view land as a resource but trade it as a commodity; that the public purse is not infinite in its ability to provide capital facilities or heal a

resource base damaged by pollution and sprawl.

Plans and planning are not new to New Jersey, even at the State level. What is new is New Jersey's sense of itself. The State recognizes it cannot plan in bits and pieces and hope the end result preserves the quality of life we now enjoy. New Jersey is a single working entity whose well-being depends on complex man-made and natural systems. The systems are interrelated and have capacity constraints. In addition, they are subject to competing and often conflicting demands. Through the process of planning, we can tie together these elements to form a rational approach for shaping New Jersey's future.

3. THE VIEWS OF THE PUBLIC

We all must participate in shaping the future of New Jersey. It is not appropriate that any one group dictate the shape of things to come. Accordingly, the State Planning Commission has conducted a statewide poll as means of understanding the priorities of New Jerseyans. In addition, the Commission has begun a series of regional meetings and workshops so that citizens and organizations have the opportunity to present their concerns for the future. In this way, the State Planning Commission can serve as an enlightened representative of New Jerseyans at large as we begin to address the difficult choices to be made about the future of our state.

During the first stages of this dialogue the State Planning Commission has learned that the perceptions of New Jerseyans about the future of the State are formed from their feelings about the quality of life in the State, their sense of the role of various levels of government in controlling development, and their preferred location for future growth and development.

Quality of Life

Overall, New Jerseyans like their State as a place to live, to work, and to recreate. They are generally satisfied with the quality of the environment, the low level of crime in their communities, and the schools their children attend. People who live in the State are pleased with the ease of getting to the shopping center. They are favorably impressed with the physical appearance of their communities and describe their towns as "pleasant."

New Jerseyans enjoy living in towns which have a country or suburban atmosphere and consider their neighbors to be friendly, nice people. They also like being in close proximity to a metropolitan center for all the cultural and social benefits to be enjoyed.

In general, the people of New Jersey have been expressing satisfaction with the flexibility to choose among a rich variety of community characteristics. Furthermore, they are keenly aware of the quality of life they enjoy and are hopeful about the future and the ability to preserve the characteristics which make the State so popular.

This optimistic view toward the future is tempered by concerns with the cost of housing, traffic congestion, and the burden of local taxes, as well as potential problems which may be brought about by future development. Many residents believe past development has made the State a better place to live, but anticipate some negative affects of new development if existing trends continue unabated.

Much attention has been focused on the rising cost of housing over the past several years. As much as people appreciate the increased value of their own single family houses, they are concerned that their children will not be able to afford to buy homes in their own communities. They are concerned that communities may begin to lose their heterogeneity as fewer and fewer people can afford to buy a house. The concern is that such a trend not only will upset the balance in individual communities, but will jeopardize the state's ability to adequately house its current population of residents and workers, as well as potential new residents.

The structure of the local property tax system is an issue of statewide concern. It is an issue that has been consistently placed near the top of the areas of discontent by the people of New Jersey. Many people have identified problems with the system because it depends heavily on local ratables to provide necessary community services. Suggestions have been made to restructure the local tax system to alleviate the heavy burden placed on local property taxes to finance services and to reduce the tendency of municipalities to zone lands primarily for their ratable value.

Environment, while ranked high on a list of positive characteristics about the State, is also perceived to be potentially one of the most seriously impacted by future growth and development. An array of specific elements of the overall environment have been identified as either already threatened, or potentially threatened, by continued development.

People are aware that farmland has been disappearing and the agricultural economy has suffered. They sense that water supplies are threatened by too much development in water supply watersheds and aquifer recharge areas. Water resources may be overtaxed and run the risk of saltwater intrusion. They see existing parkland being reduced to provide for highways, while the acquisition of additional recreation lands has been slow. Natural areas, such as the pine barrens, the highlands of northwestern New Jersey, the shore, wetlands, and other important ecosystems have been subjected to the pressures of economic development.

Patterns for Future Development

In conjunction with, and partly in response to, their desire to preserve a clean, healthful environment, many residents of the State are looking to the cities to accommodate future economic growth. A large majority of New Jerseyans support concentrating development initiatives in the more urbanized areas of the State, and an overwhelming majority are optimistic that the State's major cities can be revitalized.

A majority of people also believe that concentrating development within existing highway corridors is a good alternative to sprawl development. Concerns, however, have been raised about the inability of the road system to accommodate the great concentrations of automobile traffic associated with this type of development.

Consistent with the widespread concern for the preservation of the environment and natural areas, people are least supportive of development in the rural areas of the State. People savor the countryside as the place for Sunday jaunts, and have supported techniques to preserve farmland, as well as regulations to limit development in environmentally-sensitive, critical areas.

The Role of Government

Closely related to views about where future growth should occur is a concern with governmental coordination in land use decision-making. The people of the State are not sure which level of government is currently controlling development or which level of government is best able to manage future growth. It is clear to the

people of the State that a more integrated, coordinated, and unified process of guiding growth and development between all levels of government is essential.

The residents of the State are in favor of stricter development controls, but insist that regulations must be administered and implemented in a coordinated, comprehensive fashion. Overlapping and unnecessary regulation is viewed as costly not only to developers but to all levels of government.

Summary of Major Concerns

Based upon the results of the public opinion poll and testimony received from the public, the following appear to be the key areas of concern on which New Jerseyans have been focusing:

- * Orderly Growth - People would like to see land managed as a finite resource, not as a commodity. They would like land development decisions based upon the capacity of existing resources and available infrastructure to accommodate growth.
- * Governmental Coordination - New Jerseyans have called for the establishment of an integrated, coordinated, and unified process to guide development and the provision of infrastructure. People believe that improved coordination and cooperation among local, county, regional, and state government will help to avoid overlapping and extensive regulations.
- * Cities - New Jerseyans are overwhelmingly in favor of revitalizing the State's urban centers. They recognize the role of cities as a regional resource and as an alternative to unconcentrated sprawl.
- * Housing - The people of New Jersey would like to enjoy a wide choice in housing opportunities, suitable to a full range of income and lifestyles.
- * Transportation - People would like to have both private sector and public sector land use decisions promote patterns of development which make efficient use of the existing transportation system (including public transit).

- * **Natural Resources** - New Jerseyans place great value on the preservation of the State's natural resources. They want protection provided for wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, important ecosystems, and other natural areas for future generations.
- * **Water Supply** - New Jerseyans recognize water supply as one of the most vital resources of the State and want to ensure the long-term quality and quantity of our water supplies by controlling development in water supply watersheds and aquifer recharge areas and by preventing the overdevelopment of water resources.
- * **Parks and Open Space** - Many people have supported the acquisition, through purchase or regulation, of additional parkland and open space to preserve historic sites and important landscapes, and expand recreational opportunities.
- * **Farmland** - New Jerseyans are sensitive to the need to preserve farmland and maintain a viable agricultural economy. Some people have supported techniques such as the transfer of development rights and other land management mechanisms to achieve this goal.
- * **Local Property Tax Structure** - The people of New Jersey are concerned with the impact the structure of the local property tax may have in local land use decision-making. They have proposed that a restructuring of the tax system may alleviate the heavy reliance on the property tax for the provision of public services and obviate the need for "fiscal zoning."
- * **Economic Development** - New Jerseyans are sensitive to the need to maintain opportunities for economic development and employment throughout the State.

A Vision of the Future

Overall, New Jerseyans both want and foresee continued growth in their State, but they want it to occur in ways which assure a high quality environment to support the quality of life to which they have become accustomed. While they struggle with the dilemma of how to foster continued economic development without sacrificing the qualities of the State which have made it such a popular place to live and work, they believe it can be done. The conflicts presented by such competing objectives are at the forefront of public debate on land use planning, and the people of New Jersey demonstrate a high level of sophistication in their understanding of the choices to be made in how best to utilize State resources.

New Jerseyans' perceptions about the course upon which the State is embarked are framed by their perceptions of their quality of life, the responsibility and ability of government to manage land, and the path of future growth and development. In many respects, the vision of the future which New Jerseyans share is an enhancement of their perceptions and attitudes regarding the present. It is a vision in which the economic vitality of the State can only be maintained by balancing new development with urban redevelopment and, in the process, conserving the State's treasured natural and cultural resources. In their view, balanced development must include expansion of housing opportunities, jobs, convenient transportation systems, and recreation facilities. New Jerseyans place great value

on an integrated man-made and natural environment with clean water, clean air, pleasing panoramas and unique vistas. They value greatly the State's historic and agricultural legacy, wanting to preserve the State's heritage as "The Garden State."

4. MAKING THE VISION A REALITY

New Jerseyans recognize that the course they have charted for their State's future will require a delicate balancing between competing interests. Many have come to the conclusion that the State Planning Commission is a necessary part of the solution to achieving this desired balance and guiding the State along a well chosen course.

As the State Planning Commission works toward meeting the challenges set forth by the State Planning Act, and reaffirmed by New Jerseyans at large, the process of establishing a State Development and Redevelopment Plan has begun. Within this context, the Commission adopted a Statement of Purpose on October 31, 1986. This Statement set forth six goals for New Jersey:

- To conserve the State's natural resources;
- To revitalize the State's urban centers;
- To protect the quality of the State's environment;
- To provide needed housing at a reasonable cost;
- To provide adequate public services at a reasonable cost;
- To accomplish these goals while promoting beneficial economic growth, development, and renewal.

As a result of written and verbal testimony provided by the public and interest organizations at three public input sessions across the State, as well as a statewide poll of public opinion on various planning issues, the following additional goals have been added:

- To preserve and enhance the historic cultural and recreational lands and structures in the State;
- To ensure sound and integrated statewide planning coordinated with local and regional planning.

From each of the eight goals have emerged a set of objectives, also drawn from public comment, which further refine the work of the State Planning Commission in its preparation of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The objectives, set forth below, not only lend further definition to the goals, but provide direction in devising effective strategies to accomplish these goals.

GOAL 1: TO CONSERVE THE STATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES

The forests, streams, farmland, estuaries, and other natural systems in the State are valuable in a number of ways. They have aesthetic value — a beauty and serenity — which adds to the quality of our lives. They have educational value in terms of teaching our children about the natural world. Finally, they have economic value in that they can be converted to man-made uses. New Jerseyans not only want to enjoy what remains of the State's natural resources, they want their children and future generations to have sufficient resources for their enjoyment as well. This will not be possible if we continue to convert these resources at the rate of the past several decades. A first step in conserving these natural resources is to set clear conservation objectives to which public and private plans and activities aspire.

OBJECTIVES

- A. Reduce the rate of conversion of prime agricultural land to suburban uses;
- B. Restrict the development of fresh and salt water wetlands;
- C. Limit the type and intensity of land uses in floodplains;
- D. Limit the type, location and intensity of uses on steep slopes;
- E. Provide sufficient land suitable as viable habitats for the flora and fauna of the State;
- F. Reduce the loss of scenic areas and vistas;
- G. Secure adequate public access to waterfront and coastal areas of the State.

GOAL 2: TO REVITALIZE THE STATE'S URBAN CENTERS

The State's major urban centers — its cities and large communities — are reservoirs of human and physical capital. In most cases, this capital is woefully underutilized. In terms of human capital, the highest rates of unemployment in the State are in these urban centers. In terms of physical capital, some of these centers have excess usable capacities in roadways, sewers, water systems, schools and other components of infrastructure, while in other centers, this infrastructure has deteriorated to the point of needing extensive repair. Often, however, these repairs are needed whether or not new development were to place additional demand on the systems. Revitalization of these centers not only would make more efficient use of this capital, but would also relieve some of the pressures for urban development in the more rural and suburban parts of the State, supporting the achievement of many of the conservation and environmental objectives set forth above. This revitalization will not occur without a public commitment to redevelopment objectives which focus the resources of both the public and private sectors on this goal.

OBJECTIVES

- A. Increase the utilization of existing physical assets, such as homes, offices, infill lands, and other resources, which are already served by public facilities and services in established urban centers;
- B. Secure higher levels of private investment in established urban centers;
- C. Improve access to and within urban areas;
- D. Secure higher levels of public capital investment in established urban centers.

GOAL 3: TO PROTECT THE QUALITY OF THE STATE'S ENVIRONMENT

Not only must we conserve the State's resources, we must also protect the quality of the natural environment within which these resources reside and within which we live and work. To accomplish this goal, we must view the land and other resources of the State as comprising one delicate ecological system in which malfunctions in one subsystem affect the quality and operation of the entire system. In this sense, our homes, offices and factories are a part of this delicate system — they do not stand apart from it. Because our very existence depends upon the continued vitality of the ecological system, we must bring it into our daily lives and make it a part of our every day decisions. As public agencies and private firms invest in new facilities and services to meet the growing demands of the public, their decisions must be guided by a clear set of objectives which represent a unity of purpose between these two vital sectors of our economy.

OBJECTIVES

- A. Achieve closer integration of the natural environment with man-made environments;
- B. Minimize the adverse impacts of land development on the quality and quantity of ground and surface water throughout the State, particularly in stream corridors aquifers, and aquifer recharge areas;
- C. Achieve safe standards for air quality throughout the State;
- D. Minimize the adverse impacts of land development on critical ecological systems in the State;
- E. Reduce the loss of flora and fauna in the State.

GOAL 4: TO PROVIDE NEEDED HOUSING AT A REASONABLE COST

Not only is New Jersey now the most densely populated State in the nation, it is among the highest in average cost of housing. It is a State with a very broad range in the quality of housing: from houses with structural damage, inadequate heating and plumbing, and fire hazards, usually located in or near our urban centers, to estates and modern subdivision homes with large yards, modern plumbing and electrical appliances, and other amenities. We must find ways to raise not only the quality of our stock of low to moderate income housing but, as well, the quality of the neighborhood environment and public services available to New Jerseyans living in this housing. More difficult yet is to achieve this level of housing at a cost which low and moderate income families can afford. Achieving this goal will not occur over night, but we can begin the journey by agreeing on a set of objectives which promote a public-private partnership in solving our housing problems.

OBJECTIVES

- A. Preserve the existing stock of adequate housing;
- B. Preserve the quality of existing neighborhoods and communities in the State's urban areas;
- C. Increase wider use of state-of-the-art housing technology to broaden the availability of housing to lower and middle income families;
- D. Increase the stock of safe and affordable housing for low and middle income families;
- E. Increase the variety of housing at a wide range of prices in diverse neighborhoods and communities;
- F. Provide for the rehabilitation of existing inadequate housing units and neighborhoods.

GOAL 5: TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE PUBLIC SERVICES AT A REASONABLE COST

This goal focuses on two critical issues related to public services. First, it means that we must repair any existing facilities and services which are inadequate. Second, it means that we must slow down or stop the spiraling costs which these services impose on local, county and state budgets. Also, many New Jerseyans feel that the property tax is carrying a disproportionate share of these spiraling costs and that other means of financing these services must be found. Clearly, we must improve the efficiency of existing facilities and services, and we must find more equitable ways to share the costs of new and expanding services, such as through tax policy, regulatory controls, user fees and charges, and special assessments. These issues suggest several objectives to which we should aspire.

OBJECTIVES

- A. Assure an equitable distribution of the costs for capital facilities and services generated by new development, without discouraging appropriate new development;
- B. Rehabilitate and repair existing but inadequate public capital facilities and services in urban and suburban areas;
- C. Maximize the use and efficiency of existing infrastructure to furnish public services for new development.

GOAL 6: TO PROMOTE BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL

New Jerseyans have enjoyed the recent growth trend and they want it to continue. At the same time, however, they have some concerns about its ultimate effect on their quality of life. The Plan must tread a difficult line, therefore, between encouraging additional growth but assuring that this growth occurs in places and in ways that maintain the features of the State which New Jerseyans value most. The public is saying, in effect, that the Plan must balance a number of competing objectives. The objectives which will lead to beneficial economic growth, development, and renewal in the State are set forth below. The balancing between these and other objectives will be accomplished as the State Planning Commission devises strategies to accomplish all of its objectives and selects a growth management approach which conforms to these strategies.

OBJECTIVES

- A. Establish State development and redevelopment policies which guide growth, but do not limit growth, statewide;
- B. Minimize the number and complexity of land development regulations necessary to achieve State planning goals and objectives;
- C. Provide sufficient land for development, in both new and existing communities, of a quality necessary to continue to attract desirable and appropriate private investment;
- D. Prevent the proliferation of urban and suburban sprawl.

GOAL 7: TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE HISTORIC, CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL LANDS AND STRUCTURES IN THE STATE

As growth sweeps across the State, many of the historic, cultural and recreational lands and structures are in jeopardy either of being lost completely or of being surrounded by types of development which effectively destroy their utility and aesthetic value. Historic and cultural treasures can never be replaced, and with the escalating costs of land and construction, public budgets are increasingly unable to move or replace recreational land and structures. Sound standards for compatible land uses and site planning must be developed and applied more frequently if we are to retain these assets in usable forms. Efforts to preserve these assets must be made by all levels of government in the State through a set of mutually agreed-upon objectives.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. Reduce the loss of historic, cultural and recreational lands and structures in the State;
- B. Preserve the quality of the environments within which these lands and structures exist;
- C. Maintain sufficient recreational lands for the growing population in the State.

**GOAL 8: TO ENSURE SOUND AND INTEGRATED STATEWIDE PLANNING
COORDINATED WITH LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING**

It would serve little purpose to prepare a State Development and Redevelopment Plan which, because it reflects only State interests and lacks due consideration of local and regional needs and priorities, is ill-designed for implementation at these lower levels of government. The State Development and Redevelopment Plan must be a catalyst. It must integrate local, regional and State agency interests into a set of clearly articulated policies which lend themselves to implementation through agencies at each level. In this sense, there must be both a vertical and a horizontal integration and coordination of policies among local, regional and State agencies. This coordination within and between levels of government in the State is important not only for fiscal reasons but for reasons of governance as well. For fiscal reasons, this coordination can significantly reduce public expenditures for unnecessary new capital facilities — unnecessary because of the absence of cooperation in making decisions about where and how growth should occur. On the issue of governance, this coordination can lead to resolution of long-standing, growth related problems which cut across local and county boundaries and which, therefore, cannot be solved by any one government or level of government. As continued growth increasingly blurs local government boundaries, we find that the decisions of adjoining localities and counties often have greater effects on our community than our own decisions. Without agreed upon "rules" for how to approach and resolve these regional problems, we find that our neighbors are having more to say about the quality of life in our community than the officials we elect to local office. We are, in essence, fast losing our ability to influence the decisions which most affect our communities. With an agreed-upon set of objectives, we can begin to resolve these multi-jurisdictional problems in ways which preserve the integrity of each unit of government at each level of government.

OBJECTIVES

- A. Establish a cooperative planning process that involves the fullest participation possible of municipal and county governments, of State agencies, of public and private sector interest groups, and of the general public;
- B. Prepare a State Development and Redevelopment Plan which effectively deals with the needs and policies of agencies at all levels of government in the State;

- C. Maintain a primary focus for the Plan which is on issues of greater than local significance;
- D. Reduce the adverse impacts of local and county governments actions upon each other;
- E. Provide the maximum flexibility possible to local and county governments in determining how the policies and standards of the Plan are applied at the local and county levels;
- F. Secure the agreement of all municipalities and counties in the State to bring their local plans and regulations into conformance with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan;
- G. Secure the agreement of State agencies and multi-jurisdictional and interstate authorities to bring their functional plans, capital budgets, and regulatory provisions into conformance with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan;
- H. Assist, to the maximum extent possible, State agencies, multi-jurisdictional and interstate authorities, municipalities, and counties in bringing their plans, budgets, and regulations, as may be appropriate, into conformance with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan;
- I. Assure that State laws and regulations which affect planning and development in the State are consistent, up-to-date, and supportive of sound planning and development.

Charting a Course

It remains for the planning process to distill these goals and objectives into a hierarchy of strategies, policies, and standards that can provide a detailed map for future growth management.

A path must be chosen. Failure to choose is to stand still, to accept that current trends will continue, and to risk witnessing the paths to these goals and objectives becoming encroached upon, tangled, and ultimately blocked.

Yet, while the potential for undesirable consequences of growth and development are recognized, public opinion definitely does not favor a "no growth" attitude. The call for "managed growth" is a call to go forward. It is a call to explore opportunities, rather than to be bound by constraints. Many of these opportunities are paths already paved, having been provided under State law; however, new trails will also have to be blazed. It is our opportunity now to make the choices which provide, in increasing detail, the map to our vision of New Jersey's future.

NOTES

¹New Jersey Department of Agriculture, "New Jersey Agriculture 1986: Annual Report/Agriculture Statistics, " p. 93.

²New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, "Outdoor Recreation Plan of New Jersey," Nov. 1984, p. 31.

³New Jersey Audubon Society, "Comments by the New Jersey Audubon Society to the State Planning Commission," Jan. 27, 1986, p. 4.

⁴Rogers, Golden, and Halpern, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵Rogers, Golden, and Halpern, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

⁷Middlesex Somerset Mercer Regional Council

⁸Somerset County Planning Board

⁹Sunday Star Ledger, Feb. 1, 1987, p.45.

¹⁰New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing

¹¹George Sternlieb and Alex Schwarz, New Jersey Growth Corridors, Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers - The State University of New Jersey, 1986.

¹²New Jersey Department of Labor

¹³The Home News, Feb. 1, 1987, p.1.

¹⁴Richard J. T. Moore and Nancy G. Beer, Council on New Jersey Affairs, Lessons of New Jersey's Proposed Infrastructure Bank, Working Paper No. 6, Princeton University, June 1984, p. 4.

¹⁵Hackensack Meadowland Reclamation and Development Act, N.J.S.A. 13:17-1, Declaration of Purpose.

¹⁶State Planning Act, N.J.S.A. 52:18A-200.