

**STATE PLANNING COMMISSION/OFFICE OF PLANNING ADVOCACY
2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

State Planning Commission members increased to 14 during 2023. Two members were added (one public member and one Gubernatorial Appointee who replaced one Gubernatorial Appointee who resigned due to his resignation from State Government). Three seats remain open (one public member and two representing county and municipal interests).

During 2023, the Office of Planning Advocacy lost several staff members due to resignation or retirement. Hiring was challenging and the Office remains understaffed. Currently, the staff consists of an Executive Director, three planners, one project manager, and one GIS Specialist. Open positions consist of one planner and an administrative assistant. Several interns were hired to assist counties with the cross-acceptance process.

In 2023, we began the process of updating the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. This was long overdue and the Commission and the Office have made substantial progress toward the update of the Plan. Details are provided below. In addition to this significant undertaking, the Commission and the Office continued to work on the 2023 goals, as stated in the 2022 Year-End Report, as follows:

- Continue the Effort to Endorse Communities
- Develop and Update State Planning Commission Policies
- Continue Interagency Coordination
- Update the State Planning Rules and Guidelines
- Coordinate with other Planning Partners
- Continue to Advance Technical Assistance and Capacity to Counties and Municipalities

State Plan Update

Likely the most significant effort by the Commission and the Office is the commencement of the update to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. Pursuant to Resolution #2023-17, the Commission authorized the update with an aspirational timeline of completion by year-end 2024. While this timeline is very aggressive, the Office has committed to work toward that date, with an understanding that the primary goal is a good end product. The timeline is reviewed regularly and will be adjusted as necessary.

The Office procured the services of four consultants to take on the tasks required for the update. Voorhees Transportation Center/Rutgers Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy is working on the Infrastructure Needs Assessment; Rowan University is working on the interactive mapping product; NJ Future is performing research and population projection analysis; and the NJ Chapter of the American Planning Association is working on the Plan document and our outreach efforts. A very topline schedule is as follows:

- Through year-end 2023
 - Stakeholder sessions were scheduled, advertised, and convened
 - Numerous presentations to various groups and other outreach efforts
 - Interagency workgroup meetings were scheduled and held monthly

- A Plan Development Subcommittee of the State Planning Commission was named
- Detailed discussions were held with county planners
- County informational meetings were held
- Research on population trends began
- Phase I of the Infrastructure Needs Assessment has begun
- Public Comment software was procured
- An Interactive mapping tool was developed and introduced
- The Goals and Strategies of the Plan Document were drafted
- The Cross-Acceptance Manual was developed, approved, and distributed to counties
- County assistance for cross-acceptance has been explored
- The Plan document structure has been drafted

A detailed discussion of each of these items is discussed below.

- The first half of 2024 anticipates the following actions:
 - The issuance of the Preliminary Plan
 - Holding 21 public hearings, one in each county
 - The beginning of the cross-acceptance process
 - Continuation of outreach and stakeholder efforts
 - Commencement of the Infrastructure Needs Assessment Phase II; completion of Phase I
 - Development of mapping protocols
 - Continued efforts on and finalization of population trends
- The second half of 2024 anticipates the following actions:
 - Completing the cross-acceptance process
 - Incorporating recommended changes into a Draft Final Plan
 - Completion of the Impact Assessment
 - Holding 6 public hearings on the Draft Final Plan
 - Presentation to the Commission the Draft Final Plan for consideration of adoption.

The 2024 activities will be discussed in the 2024 Goals section of this document.

Specific results regarding the 2023 State Plan update activities include the following:

- Stakeholder sessions were scheduled, advertised, and convened – Eight webinars were held in October and were topic-based (Public Facilities, Housing Strategies, Environment, Open Space, Historic, and Cultural Preservation, Social Justice, Climate Change and Resilience, Economic Development and Workforce Strategies, Sound & Integrated Planning). All eight sessions were recorded and available for viewing on the Public Input website. Approximately 75 participants attended each session.

Additionally, work has begun on a second outreach effort to get better representation from underserved communities. Working with the Department of State’s Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, initial conversations have begun with community organizations on how best to structure this effort.

- Numerous presentations to various groups and other outreach efforts – A communications plan has been developed that identified three “legs”. Those three legs are stakeholder engagement,

education, and written communications. Specific stakeholder engagement processes were discussed above in a dedicated effort. Numerous presentations, both formal and informal, have been held that are a combination of additional stakeholder engagement as well as educational events that reached over 1,100 people from June through December of 2023. The educational goal is twofold:

- To inform regarding the importance of an updated State Development and Redevelopment Plan toward an economically and environmentally sustainable New Jersey;
- To inform local government on good land use practices to ensure that New Jersey is a great place to live, work, play, and age for our future and that of our children and grandchildren.

The outreach effort began in June with a listening session at the NJ Planning and Redevelopment Forum. A panel of subject matter experts answered three questions in rapid fire. Members of the Commission were in the first row as responders and, more importantly, listeners. While time constraints prevented taking questions from the audience, a provision for written comments was provided. The questions addressed by the panel include what current planning challenges a new State Plan should address; how the next State Plan should be different from the current Plan; what New Jersey should look like in 2050 and what policies the State Plan should promote to achieve that vision. Attendance was high with about 85 people in the audience. Additionally, the Plan was a major topic of the plenary session of the Forum.

Additional sessions/audiences/presentations include:

- NJ League of Municipalities webinar
- NJ League of Municipalities conferences session
- Booth presence at the Governor’s Conference on Housing and Economic Development
- County Economic Development Organizations
- Central Jersey Transportation Forum
- DEP programmatic staff
- A message on the update of the Plan was sent to the State’s business newsletter which is distributed to over 100,000 businesses.
- NJ Future
- NJ Builders Association
- Sussex County Planning Board (including several municipalities and their Economic Development Organization).
- NJ Chapter of NAIOP
- Somerset County Planning Partnership
- Fair Share Housing Corporation

Additionally, the State Plan update was included in the Governor’s remarks at the League of Municipalities.

- A one-page flyer was developed. The purpose of the flyer is to distribute to state agencies, counties, local governments, and the general public on what the Plan is, what it is not, and how it can assist local governments in making good land use decisions.

- Interagency workgroup meetings were scheduled and held monthly – Early input by our State Agency partners is critical. These meetings are held to receive feedback to ensure that State agency input is incorporated into the Preliminary Plan.
- A Plan Development Subcommittee of the State Planning Commission was named – The purpose of the Subcommittee is to review documents, materials, and protocols as a first-level Commission review.
- Detailed discussions were held with county planners – The County Planners Association created a State Planning Subcommittee that the Office participates in monthly. Broad issues are discussed and feedback from the Subcommittee is solicited to address some of those issues before cross-acceptance.
- County informational meetings were held – Eighteen individual county meetings were held to address concerns and answer questions specific to each county. Only three (Hunterdon, Ocean, and Salem) did not request one.
- Research on population trends began – A review of demographic and population data from the 2020 Census has begun and initial findings have been developed. Additionally, a review of the population projections of the three New Jersey Metropolitan Planning Organizations is underway to determine if utilization of those projections is appropriate for use in the State Plan. The research consultant and the Office’s GIS Specialist completed the task of mapping 62 layers of demographics and statistics developed by the research consultant and has developed JPEGs of the layers and a map package was sent to the mapping consultants to incorporate them into their mapping tool.
- Phase I of the Infrastructure Needs Assessment has begun – Phase I includes the Environment, Energy, and Transportation sectors. The current need has been identified and is currently being quantified. The overall approach to the Infrastructure Needs Assessment is not to “reinvent the wheel”. Rather, a review of State agency documents and plans that currently exist has occurred. Working with our State agency partners, over 200 documents have been reviewed in these three focus areas. Work on the development of a protocol for prospective need has begun.
- Public Comment software was procured – The Public Input portal is live. Please visit www.publicinput.com/njstateplan to review it. To date, there have been over 10,000 views, over 270 survey responses, and over 280 subscribers. The survey responses have been slowly building. The survey is one way to comment. Additionally, comments can be provided
 - through stateplan.comments@sos.nj.gov
 - through the public input email: stateplan.comments@publicinput.com
 - at the “Community Input” or the “Surveys” tab on Public Input
 - through a voice mail message left at 1-855-925-2801, passcode 2813
 The Public Input software will consolidate all comments, regardless of where the comment is left.
- An Interactive mapping tool was developed and introduced – The Office held two mapping tool training sessions, primarily for counties; approximately 65 attendees in both sessions attended. Twenty of the 21 counties were represented. The training was recorded and added to the public input site for future reference.

- The Goals and Strategies of the Plan Document were drafted -- The first draft of the vision statement, goals, and strategies of the Plan was forwarded to the Interagency Workgroup and the Plan Development Committee for first-round comments. Comments are being incorporated for approval by the Plan Development Committee as part of the Preliminary Plan.
- The Cross-Acceptance Manual was developed, approved, and distributed to counties – The State Planning Commission approved the Cross-Acceptance Manual at its November 1 meeting by approving Resolution #2023-19. The Manual was forwarded to the county planners so that they can begin planning their cross-acceptance process. Changes include a streamlined process for more efficiency and less burdensome on the negotiating entities and the municipalities that participate in the Cross-acceptance process to adopt a new State Plan. The manual will greatly help participants, mainly the 21 counties, understand the process and what would be required if they choose to participate. Staff has developed a fillable PDF for required responses from the counties once the Preliminary Plan is published. A contact database for public notices has been completed for all municipalities.
- County assistance for cross-acceptance has been explored – All three Metropolitan Planning Organizations are exploring ways to financially assist the counties through the Cross-Acceptance process. Additionally, OPA hired 5 interns to assist the counties with gathering data toward completion of the Statements of Agreements and Disagreements. Additional intern support is possible.
- The Plan document structure has been drafted – Work has begun on a template format for the Plan document

Continue the Effort to Endorse Communities

Pursuant to SPC Resolution 2022-05, the remaining 52 centers and/or endorsements that were previously given extensions expired on March 31, 2023. This group of expirations completed the extension period and all other centers/endorsements have or will expire on their scheduled expiration date.

In 2023, an additional nine municipalities were endorsed by the Commission, bringing the total endorsed communities to 24 since January 2020. Those municipalities endorsed in 2023 are Vineland, Bound Brook, Florence, Edgewater Park, Maurice River, Middle Township, Stone Harbor, Wildwood Crest, and Bedminster.

At year-end 2023, the staff is actively working with 11 municipalities toward Plan Endorsement. Those municipalities are Dover, Burlington Township, Seaside Heights, Little Egg Harbor, Ocean Township, Ocean City, Barnegat, Berkeley, Sparta, Dennis, and Red Bank.

Develop and Update State Planning Commission Policies

In furtherance of the State Planning Commission Warehouse Siting Guidance that was approved in September 2022 via resolution #2022-13, several efforts continued into 2023. An additional seven presentations were given in 2023 to the League of Municipalities, the County Planners Association, the

League of Conservation Voters, the New Jersey Society of Municipal Engineers, the NWNJ Rivers Conference, the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, and The Metro NJ Chapter of the Appraisal Institute. As a result of the warehouse presentation to the New Jersey League of Conservation Voters, njherald.com published a story about the webinar, and AICP credits were offered for the League of Municipalities session. Seven presentations were given previously to the DVRPC Goods Movement Task Force, the Middlesex County Office of Planning, several Burlington County municipalities (Bordentown Township, Florence, Chesterfield, and Mansfield), the Delaware River Greenway Partnership, the NJTPA's Freight Initiatives Committee, the Somerset County Planning Partners, and the Central Jersey Transportation Forum. Fourteen presentations have been given to date on the Guidance.

The Office participated in a stakeholder group to map existing and potential warehouse sites. Mapping protocols and counties to pilot were identified (Burlington and Somerset Counties). A beta map was created.

A first draft of model ordinance language for warehouse siting was presented to the Commission. Several comments were received by both members of the public and Commission members. Those comments are being incorporated and a revised recommendation will be presented to the Commission in the first quarter of 2024.

The Highlands Council published its warehouse guidance document that was largely driven by the SPC document. The Highlands addendum addressed the unique needs of the Highlands areas.

A focus on the upcoming update to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan is a higher focus on regional planning. While this concept may be challenging in a home-rule state, there is a need for municipalities to work with their neighboring communities toward this end. The current climate change risk, stormwater management challenges, and threats to infrastructure necessitate a broader view of our land use practices. A focus on regional planning on a county, watershed, or other regional basis is important for a sustainable future for New Jersey.

Toward that end, the Commission encourages a regional endorsement process where municipalities can work together to achieve like goals and encourage counties, other regional entities, or even several neighboring communities to plan jointly to achieve smart land use practices.

Staff participated in a Rutgers-facilitated meeting regarding the expansion of MOD IV data for other uses. MOD IV is the standardized system for tax assessors to manage their tax base. Topics under discussion include flood plains and zoning. It was determined that this information is valuable, but MOD IV is not the best vehicle by which to maintain statewide data. Discussions will continue on both of these topics.

Another one of our 2023 goals was the idea of customizing the Plan Endorsement guidelines based on the characteristics of a municipality such as being built out or having development pressure. While we were not able to achieve this goal in 2023, we anticipate achieving this goal in 2024.

Interagency Coordination

During 2023, the Office represented the Commission and/or the Secretary of State on many interagency efforts.

NJ Interagency Council on Climate Change work included participation in the development of the Extreme Heat Action Plan, the two-year anniversary report, and discussions related to how, moving forward, the Council can be most effective. Additionally, we participated in and provided feedback on a DEP/DOH effort to provide municipal guidance for healthy communities.

The Office worked with BPU on their Internet for All initiative, a federally funded program to provide broadband internet for the entire population under the concept that internet access is no longer a luxury, but rather, a necessity. The focus is on underserved communities where the larger carriers do not find that providing this service is cost-effective. We assisted in advising the BPU project team on how best to organize existing data, how to determine what is missing, and how to get it. Additionally, a plan was discussed regarding county participation and when and how to bring county government into the discussion. This effort is integral to the State Plan's goal #5 – Provide adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost.

Additionally, an objective of the project is to ensure a qualified workforce to support the implementation. Toward that end, OPA facilitated an introduction and a working relationship with Vocational Schools to explore the possibility of providing an academic program and training to enable the workforce at all levels of employment.

The Office continued its work on the Department of Health's Age Friendly Council. The formal meetings have ended and we await the Blueprint for Aging in New Jersey.

The Office provided support to DEP and OIT to upgrade the LIDAR system. The upgrade will assist the Commission when updating the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The LIDAR system assists in determining building heights on developed parcels and is used in determining development density and other factors in land use.

The Office participated in DOT's Transit Village Task Force, the Quarterly Brownfields Roundtable, the Highlands Council's efforts on their sustainable economic development plan and resilience plan, and the Office of Emergency Management's update to their Hazard Mitigation Plan (required to be eligible for FEMA disaster response funding). We actively engage with the Business Action Center's Business Advocates to work together at the intersection of good land use and sustainable economic growth.

Coordination with other Planning Partners

The staff continues to work closely with the three Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

The Office is a non-voting member of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and is a voting member of the Regional Technical Advisory Committee, and is on their Financial Planning Subcommittee (that determined the project evaluation criteria for their Transportation Improvement Plan for their updated Connections 2050 Plan). Additionally, the Office was on the review committee for their Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) grant program. The program alternates each year between their Pennsylvania and New Jersey counties and 2023 was New Jersey's year. The program awarded \$600,000 in grant funding in the four counties within their jurisdiction (Mercer, Burlington, Gloucester, and Camden).

This year, the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO) voted to include OPA as a non-voting, advisory member of their Technical Advisory Committee. This is a similar structure in place for the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). Activities that the Office participated in as part of this role include the SJTPO Vulnerability Study, a draft Technical Memo, entitled Network and Facilities Issues and Analysis (a technical memorandum providing an overview of the SJTPO regional freight network, as well as a summarized list of freight issues and analyses identified to date by this planning effort), and a regional growth model discussion.

The North Jersey Transportation Authority reached out to the Office to participate in several Bus Rapid Transit studies for Southern Middlesex, Northern Monmouth. Participation was solicited for studies in Perth Amby and Passaic City.

Staff participated in the Regional Compatible Use Study for Joint Base Mc-Guire-Dix-Lakehurst. Sponsored by Ocean County Commissioners, the project includes Burlington County and the 10 surrounding municipalities. This effort will update the Compatible Land Use Study completed in 2009. The goal of the study is to ensure that land use practices at the joint base are done in collaboration with surrounding municipalities and to protect and preserve the Joint Base. The Base spans over 40,000 acres and is responsible for over 40,000 jobs (the second largest employer in the state after the State). The study has been completed and an implementation guide has been produced with a series of recommendations. One recommendation is that the policy committee (of which OPA is a part) be converted to the implementation committee. If that recommendation is accepted by the Base, the 2 host counties, and 10 municipalities, then OPA will participate in the implementation committee.

The Office participated in several individual studies and efforts. Those efforts include a Route 9 TOD Study, the Somerset County Regional Stormwater Roundtable, the Morris Canal Working Group Meeting, the Passaic County's Stakeholder Advisory Committee, the NJ Conservation Blueprint, the Empire Wind Offshore Wind Project, the update to the State's Hazard Mitigation Plan, the Southern Middlesex County Freight Movement Study Technical Advisory Committee, NJ Future's Model Climate Hazard Vulnerability Assessment Guidance, and NJ's Coastal Resilience Collaborative.

The Office continues to participate in numerous state, regional, and local planning organizations and initiatives. Some of these organizations include Rutgers Megalopolitan Coast Transformation Hub (MACH Collaborative Stakeholder Advisory Panel (CSAP), the Central Jersey Transportation Planning Forum, Somerset County Regional Center Partnership, Federal and State Brownfield Interagency Working Group, NJDOT's Transit Village Task Force, NJ Coastal Coalition, NJ Delaware Bayshore Council, NJ County Planners Association, the Watershed Institute, and the Southern Barnegat Bay Watershed Advisory Committee.

Update the State Planning Rules

In 2021, the State Planning Commission approved Resolution #2021-13, which authorized the submission of new Rules, as codified in N.J.A.C. 5:85-1.1 to -8.10. The purpose of the Rule update is to modernize and update the Rules, to incorporate Administration policies to incorporate climate change considerations, and to make improvements to existing processes.

Proposed Rule changes were published in the August 7, 2023, NJ Register for the requisite 60 public comment period, as authorized by Resolution #2023-11. A total of four organizations provided comments

which were addressed in the response. The response and the final Rule language were approved for final publication by Resolution #2023-20. Additionally, the Rules were recodified to be included in the Department of State (15:30) from the Department of Community Affairs (5:85). The Rule adoption was published in and is effective as of the January 2, 2024, NJ Register.

Update guidelines, where applicable

This review will be deferred until 2024 and be brought to the Commission for approval, based on the final Rule language.

Determine value-added efforts that OPA can offer municipalities and identify incentive opportunities for municipalities

The Office provides technical assistance to municipalities on an as-needed basis, where our resources can accommodate the requests. The Office has been asked to participate in numerous technical advisory committees, including Somerset County's Circulation Element Technical Advisory Committee, the Highland Resilience Project Advisory Committee, the Morris Canal Working Group, and the Middlesex County Freight Initiatives Committee.

The FEMA Resilience Accelerator program was completed. The project team consisted of our state agency partners, Rutgers Climate Corps, and FEMA and included input from an advisory group of interested stakeholders. The program brings together resources to assist invited municipalities in the completion of their vulnerability studies, develop realistic resilience plans, and assists in coordinating state and federal assistance. The program consists of one "partnership" meeting (where the communities get to know each other develop a network, and receive an understanding of what is expected of them and what they can expect from the resilience team), and two workshops where the communities identify their vulnerabilities and develop a resilience plan. All communities received technical assistance from either Rutgers Climate Corps or FEMA in completing their assessment.

There were two cohorts in this program. The first focused on riverine communities and were Lambertville, Belvidere, Bound Brook, Denville, Millburn, Manville, and Millstone, five of whom completed the program. Participating municipalities and state agencies attended a "Funding Resilience Panel" presented by Federal agencies. Additionally, Somerset County followed up and hosted a 3-hour workshop called Regional Stormwater Management Roundtable for Somerset County municipalities. Those conversations around a regional stormwater program continue. The second cohort focuses on coastal communities and includes Commercial, Maurice River, Ocean City, Little Egg Harbor, and Pennsville. This cohort held its partnership meeting in 2022; the workshops began in 2023. Participating municipalities mapped their community assets and began discussing programs and projects that could assist in protecting those assets. Finally, implementation plans were developed.

This FEMA NJ Resilience Accelerator program won one of two nationwide FEMA Administrator's Awards for Climate Resilience and Maurice River and Commercial Township were the recipients of FEMA's BRIC Direct Technical Assistance grant program in recognition of their planning work done as part of the Resilience Accelerator Program. The final meeting of the Accelerator Program transitioned the two municipalities into the BRIC DTA grant program.

Other benefits of this program included facilitated meetings with DEP to resolve permitting issues that the communities were having as well as an SJTPO technical study that will focus on economic activity, circulation/traffic flow, waterfront development initiatives, and trails/greenway potential along the Maurice River in Commercial and Maurice River Township

In conjunction with Voorhees Transportation Center, NJ Transit, DOT, and EDA, OPA was the lead applicant for a USDOT Thriving Communities Grant. The grant provides technical assistance and capacity building for local governments to utilize transportation to achieve equity, economic development, and climate change goals. We had a very short timeframe for submission of the application but we worked very closely with three identified communities to complete the application. The team has identified the three communities we will be working with – Trenton, Irvington, and Riverside to develop a scope of work and letters of commitment from the three communities. If we are successful, the State will receive about \$2 million over three years to provide technical assistance and capacity building for these three communities. We expect notification in the spring of 2024.

The Office met with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance (ACEA), the National Aviation Research and Technology Park (NARTP), the South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA), and the surrounding municipalities of Egg Harbor, Galloway, and Hamilton Townships to discuss initiatives in and around the Atlantic City International Airport and the aviation industry in general. We will continue to work with these groups as the aviation industry is a high-tech industry that can provide economic growth in South Jersey.

As part of its Plan Endorsement petition, staff met with Town of Dover officials, NJ Transit, and 2 developers regarding a partnership to realize transit-oriented redevelopment in the Town. Discussion centered on land swaps, parking requirements, and amenities to make the community more pedestrian-friendly.

As a result of Burlington County's efforts for regional endorsement of 12 Route 130 corridor municipalities, DEP has offered to provide funding for all Burlington County municipalities that have been endorsed by the State Planning Commission for a Climate Change Hazard Vulnerability Assessment. This is a great offering as the cost to complete this for the 12 municipalities is significant. Of the original total of 12 Burlington County municipalities involved in the Route 130 regional endorsement, 9 have been endorsed and two are active. The Office is working with DOT and Burlington Township regarding road network issues. The request is being made due to the increased truck traffic due to the significant warehouse development along the 130 corridor. It is important to address these transportation corridor issues to ensure the safety of residents, given the future truck traffic projections.

OPA staff continues to respond to requests to speak at training sessions, conferences, and planning events, as well as acting as guest lecturers and advisors for programs at state colleges and universities when asked to do so. Some of those events include sessions at the League of Municipalities, League webinars, NJ Planning and Redevelopment Forum, the Michigan chapter of the American Planning Association, the NJ Chapter of the Appraisal Institute, and numerous local and regional events.

The Office supported the Town of Dover in its successful efforts to receive a \$50,000 T-Mobile Grant for trail development and enhancement. The grant will improve pedestrian safety and provide a safe outdoor recreational amenity for Dover residents and visitors.

The Office supported Stafford Township of Stafford's successful application for DEP's Natural Climate Solutions Grant Program. The grant will enable Stafford to make environmental and resilience improvements for the community.

The Office assisted Somerset County and the Township of Bedminster in reimagining the AT&T site into a clean manufacturing, multi-use campus. Included in this effort were representatives from the Governor's office, EDA, Somerset County, AT&T, MetLife (the owner of the property), and Township officials. Bedminster was endorsed by the Commission as part of this effort.

STATE PLANNING COMMISSION/OFFICE OF PLANNING ADVOCACY 2024 GOALS

The primary goal of the Commission and the Office is the completion of the update of the State Development and Redevelopment. While this is the primary goal, the goals of the previous year continue. Many of these efforts are interrelated and accomplishing one will address others. In addition to the updated Plan, other goals are consistent with the State Planning Act and are continuing from 2023.

State Development and Redevelopment Plan Update

The second half of 2023 was spent gathering stakeholder input and beginning the tasks statutorily mandated to complete the Plan update, as detailed above. The 2024 goals for the Commission and the Office related to the Plan update are as follows:

- Issue the Preliminary Plan in the first half, 2024
- Continue the outreach effort to include underrepresented communities, youth, and other populations that have had limited voices
- Complete Phase I of the Infrastructure Needs Assessment and begin Phase II in the first half of 2024
- Complete Phase II of the Infrastructure Needs Assessment and combine it into one report in the second half of 2024
- Begin and complete the Impact Assessment in the third quarter of 2024
- Complete current demographic and population projections analysis in the first quarter of 2024
- Develop and gain consensus on future mapping protocols in the first quarter of 2024
- Hold 21 public hearings, one in each county, per Rules, by mid-third quarter of 2024
- Continue to work with the county planners to ensure constant communication throughout the process
- Complete the cross-acceptance process and county negotiations efficiently and effectively to gain the highest level of consistency possible.
- Prepare the Final Draft Plan and hold 6 additional required public hearings in the fourth quarter of 2024
- Present for approval to the Commission the Final Draft Plan, which includes the final proposed State Plan Policy Map.

- Throughout the year, respond to requests for presentations and/or meetings promptly to promote the Plan, with an eye toward education, outreach, and information regarding good land use planning and why the State Plan is important for the daily quality of life for New Jersey residents.

The Commission recognizes that this timeline is an aspirational one and is aggressive. While we will strive toward these dates, it is important to recognize that a quality Plan is the priority and will not be sacrificed. It is hoped that these dates can be met for our State agency partners to begin implementation of the plan in 2025.

Continue the Effort to Endorse Communities

The Office will continue its effort to work with communities toward Plan Endorsement. We are currently working with 11 communities toward this goal. An emphasis will be placed on regional planning where our work with regional state entities, watershed management organizations, metropolitan planning organizations, counties, and other regional entities will continue.

The Office continues to struggle with the lack of community resources necessary to engage in the endorsement process. Given the focus of the State Plan update and the resources necessary to complete that effort, the Commission and the Office will continue to pursue planning grants through state, regional, and non-profit sources. We will continue to provide technical assistance as our resources allow.

To the issue of local land use policies that lack consistency with State policies because local community character and vision are inconsistent with State goals, the Commission and the Office will develop educational programs and information to better provide more current information for local land use officials. This effort will be done in conjunction with the update of the State Plan.

Develop and Update State Planning Commission Policies

Concurrent with the update to the State Plan, Commission policies will be reviewed and updated to reflect the principles in the updated Plan.

Staff will continue to support the warehouse siting guidance and review it to determine whether the guidance should be updated. Staff will continue to work on model ordinance language and other ways to ensure that the State supports the logistics industry in the right location and rightly sized.

In addition to providing follow-up to the warehouse guidance, some immediate policy topics will include:

- Equitable provision of affordable housing
- Regional planning, where appropriate
- Promoting economic and environmental sustainability through land use practices

Continue Interagency Coordination

A statutory requirement of the State Planning Commission is the coordination of State agency partners. This is particularly important when it comes to incentivizing good land use practices. The Office will

continue to work with our State agency partners to ensure that the State is not incentivizing land use practices that are contrary to a safe and sustainable future while still maintaining the balance of the State goals that the State Planning Act requires.

It is hoped that with the adoption of the new State Development and Redevelopment Plan, there will be several areas where incentives can be helpful to local government officials. The State Development and Redevelopment Plan must be implemented across State government. Funding resources that can be made available to assist in comprehensive planning either at the local or the county level. Secondly, access to technical assistance and educational opportunities can be expanded. Third, a critical component of this goal is to continue to coordinate State agency participation to resolve local concerns that require State action by facilitating access to state agency decision-makers. In this way, the lines of communication to discuss obstacles to approvals and to find ways of achieving local and state goals can be optimized.

The value-added efforts should also include financial incentives from our State Agency partners. Toward that end, the Office and the SPC will continue to advocate for more robust financial incentives for municipalities that practice good land use policies. We have begun to, but need to more broadly, change the narrative from center-based incentives to plan-endorsed-based incentives. While some progress has been made, the success is limited and needs to be more broad-based. Funds for planning efforts should be made available; however, understanding budget constraints, a relatively small amount of funding can go a long way toward this end. Items identified also include technical assistance, additional points for competitive state grants, possible set-asides of existing funding programs, and permitting assistance are all areas that likely will encourage municipalities to participate in good land use planning.

While this goal continues from 2023, it is an integral part of this Commission's work.

Update State Planning Guidelines

The updated State Planning Rules were effective January 2, 2024. The guidelines require review and update to reflect the updated Rules and policies that are approved throughout the year by the Commission. We anticipate this to be an ongoing goal, with the first update in the first half of 2024.

Coordinate with Other Planning Partners

In the fourth quarter of 2023, OPA was the lead applicant in the USDOT's Thriving Communities Grant application. Should the Office be awarded the grant, we will work with NJ Transit, NJDOT, EDA, and the three applicant communities to implement this grant.

The Office will continue to represent the Commission and the Lt. Governor on all task forces, committees, councils, and workgroups where it is appropriate to have representation. We will continue to work with our government and non-government planning partners at all levels to ensure public input on policies and subject matter expert consultations. We will continue to respond positively to presentation and panel requests.

Additionally, we will continue to make available vehicles by which the public, and in particular, underrepresented communities have a voice in all that we do.

Continue to Advance Technical Assistance and Capacity to Counties and Municipalities

Whether it be through the State Plan update process, the Plan Endorsement process, ad-hoc assistance, or policy guidance, the Commission and the Office stand ready to assist municipalities and counties as requested.

While the Office used the services of a consultant for research and data, it would be most optimal to have that function as a full time function in the Office. This is a carry-over goal from 2023, since due to resources we were unable to accomplish this goal. There continues to be a need for this function, especially when we consider that education to our local elected and appointed officials is so critical.

The Office made progress in 2023 regarding an updated website. Working with OIT, it is expected that a new website will be up and running in the first quarter of 2024. The resources on the Office's current website are dated and are in desperate need of updating. Model ordinances, reference materials, templates, and guidance will be updated to provide a "one-stop shop" to those municipalities and counties looking for information.