

Public comments on this document will accepted until January 7, 2027. Comments can be sent directly to the State Planning Commission via e-mail to ospmail@sos.nj.gov or mailed to State Planning Commission, c/o Walter C. Lane, Department of State, P.O. Box 820, Trenton, NJ 08625-0820.

Special Resource Area Process and Timeline

Introduction

Per the 2025 State Development and Redevelopment Plan, “A Special Resource Area is an area or region with unique characteristics or resources of statewide importance, which are essential to the sustained wellbeing and function of its own region and other regions or systems—environmental, economic, and social—and to the quality of life for future generations.” SRA recognition indicates the need for a regional vision and is intended to help an area stimulate and support collaborative regional planning efforts to work towards said vision. SRA recognition is intended to result in a new, legislatively established authority for the proposed Special Resource Area, with its own regulatory authority to oversee regional planning and implementation strategies. This authority would not preclude the implementation of existing laws and regulations, including the State Planning Act and the Fair Housing Act.

This document describes the process and timeline which entities may follow to be recognized as a Special Resource Area (SRA) by the New Jersey State Planning Commission (SPC). Each step of the SRA recognition process is described below. At the end of the document is a visual representation of the process.

Please note that SRA recognition is separate from the technical assistance and facilitation which the Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) normally provides. Facilitation requests are case-dependent and cover a broad range of issues, at the discretion of the entity which is requesting that facilitation. For example, regional and local planning organizations might request facilitation from OPA so they can meet and proactively plan for a new transit station. Facilitation may be a useful tool for entities which are considering whether to pursue SRA recognition, or are working on an SRA application. All requests for facilitation to advance regional planning in New Jersey begin by contacting the Executive Director of OPA. These requests are separate from the SRA recognition process.

SRA Process

(Optional) Facilitation on Planning Goals

If the entity is unsure about whether the SRA process is right for their planning needs and goals, they are welcome to meet with OPA in the office's capacity as a facilitator before starting the SRA process. OPA may work to schedule meetings with the potential petitioner, relevant planning organizations, and/or relevant state agencies to discuss pathways to meet their planning goals.

Timeline: None; at the discretion of parties interested in facilitation.

SRA Request Letter

To initiate the process to be recognized as an SRA, the entity which is expected to lead an SRA application must submit a letter to OPA indicating their interest in and/or questions about pursuing SRA recognition to OPA. Entities which may submit this request letter and lead an application include but are not limited to: state agencies, counties, municipalities, regional planning organizations, nonprofits, and private organizations, or any combination thereof.

Timeline: None; at the discretion of the potential petitioner.

Pre-Meeting(s) with OPA

After OPA receives the SRA request letter, staff will work with the potential petitioner to schedule a pre-meeting with OPA, the potential petitioner, and all relevant state agencies. At the meeting, OPA staff will describe the SRA process in more detail and speak with the potential petitioner about whether they are interested in the legislative authority which SRAs should be moving towards. If the group is not interested in the legislative authority, OPA staff will recommend that the entity go through regular facilitation with OPA and the SPC to meet its planning goals. If the group *is* interested in that legislative authority, then OPA staff will recommend that they begin the SRA application. Potential petitioners may also use the Pre-Meeting to ask questions about the SRA process and learn more before starting the application.

Timeline: None; at the discretion of the potential petitioner and OPA.

(Optional) Facilitation on SRA Application

As the potential petitioner is working on their SRA application, they may find it helpful to meet with OPA in the office's capacity as a facilitator to make sure the application meets all the requirements. For example, a petitioner may ask for advice on the level of justification needed, and OPA may facilitate meetings to plan for submitting the SRA application as well as plan for SRA recognition itself.

Timeline: None; at the discretion of parties interested in facilitation.

SRA Application

After attending the Pre-Meeting, the petitioner is welcome to submit a formal application for SRA recognition. The SRA application includes information about (a) the applicant, (b) mapping the proposed SRA boundary, (c) the uniqueness and significance of the area, (d) current planning efforts, and (e) what help the entity is requesting. OPA staff will notice interested parties that OPA has received an SRA application within five (5) business days of receiving it.

Timeline: None; at the discretion of the petitioner.

OPA Completeness Review

OPA will review all applications for completeness. After the review, OPA will inform the petitioner in writing to confirm whether the application is complete. If an application is deemed incomplete, OPA will also inform the petitioner of outstanding requirements in writing. These outstanding requirements must be met before the petitioner can move to the next step.

Timeline: OPA will have forty-five (45) business days after receiving an application to review it for completeness.

Simultaneous Review Periods

Once an application has been deemed complete, the simultaneous review periods begin. OPA will send notices to (a) all relevant federal, military, and state entities, (b) relevant county and municipal governments, and (c) all interested parties to request input regarding the requested SRA. Federal, military, and state agencies will have the opportunity to submit reports and comments regarding the SRA. Local governments will have the opportunity to submit resolutions, letters, or comments describing their position on the matter. During this

time, OPA will also hold a publicly noticed public hearing in the relevant jurisdiction to collect additional comments from the public. Individuals may also make comments via mail or email.

Timeline: All agencies will have ninety (90) business days to review the application. A public meeting to hear comments will also be held during this ninety (90) business day period.

OPA Recommendation Report

After the simultaneous review period, OPA will write a staff recommendation report that details whether recognizing the requested area as a Special Resource Area both fits the intent of SRAs as described in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, *and* is consistent with the Plan's ten goals. The recommendation report will also include a staff-proposed boundary for the requested SRA, in response to the petitioner's application. OPA will consider the information received in the simultaneous review period when writing the report. During this time, OPA may conduct a site visit to the proposed SRA area. Staff may also request additional information from the petitioner if OPA is unable to make a recommendation. If additional information is requested, additional time may be added for OPA to review the new materials.

Timeline: OPA will have ninety (90) business days after the conclusion of the simultaneous review period to write the recommendation report. Additional time up to thirty (30) business days may be added if additional information is requested.

Plan Implementation Committee Recommendation

After releasing the recommendation report, OPA will present the staff's findings regarding the proposed SRA to the Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) of the SPC. Based on the information provided, the PIC will recommend that the SPC either (a) recognize the proposed SRA as a Special Resource Area adopt the boundary line on the State Plan Policy Map; or (b) not recognize the requested SRA, and instead focus on facilitation.

Timeline: The PIC will make a recommendation to the SPC at a regularly scheduled meeting within forty-five (45) business days of the release of the OPA recommendation report.

State Planning Commission Recommendation

After the PIC makes a recommendation, OPA staff will present that recommendation to the State Planning Commission. Based on the information provided, the SPC will either (a) approve the recognition of the Special Resource Area and adopt the boundary line on the State Plan Policy Map; or (b) recommend only facilitation going forward. The decision of the SPC on this matter will be final.

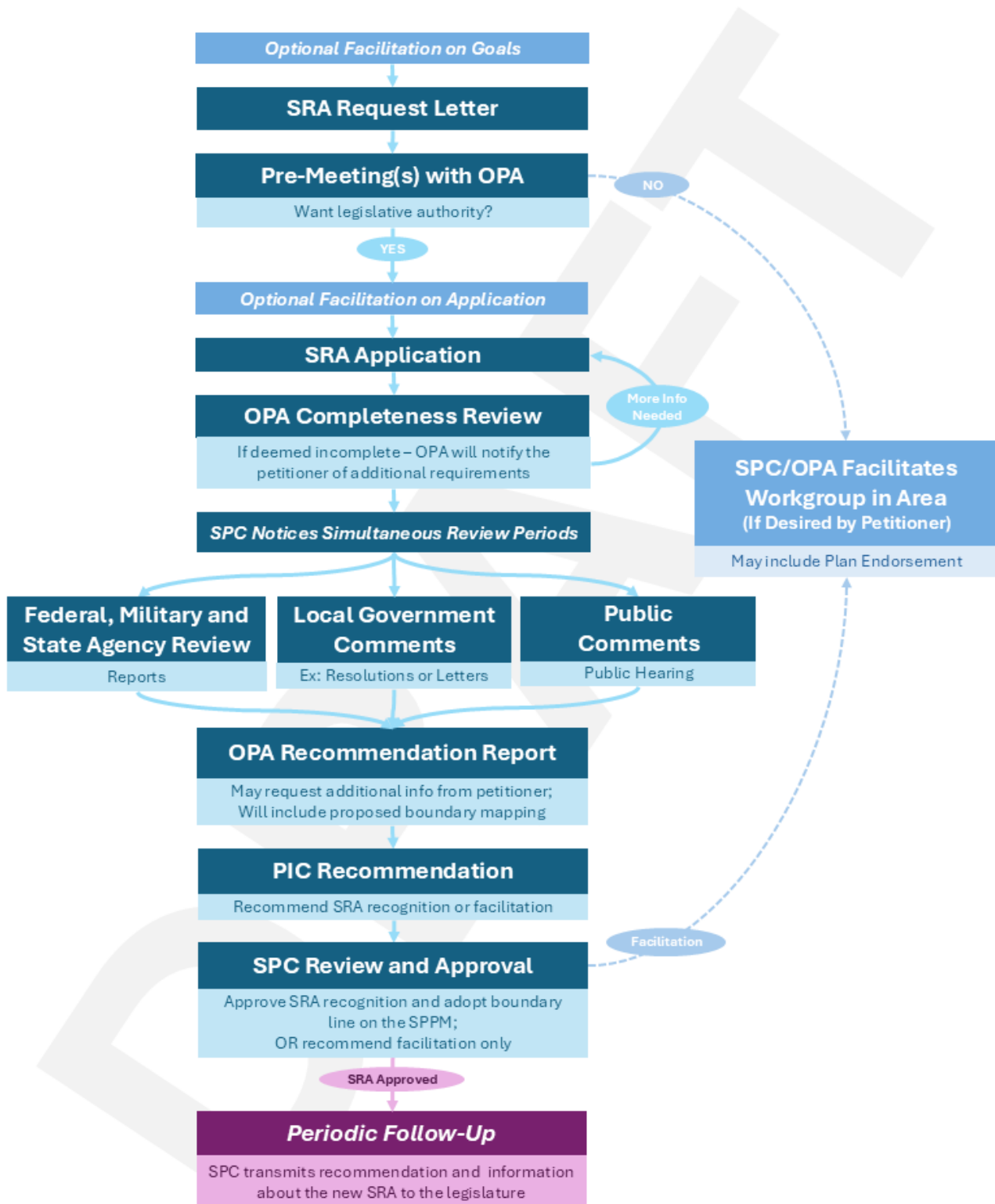
Timeline: The SPC will make a final decision at a regularly scheduled meeting within forty-five (45) business days of the PIC recommendation.

Periodic Follow Up

After recognizing a Special Resource Area, the SPC will support the new SRA as it works towards the establishment of a new, legislative authority for the SRA. This support may include transmission of findings and recommendations about the SRA from the SPC to the New Jersey Legislature. In the time that an SRA has been recognized but not yet received legislative authority, the SPC will conduct periodic follow-ups and facilitation as needed to ensure that planning efforts continue to positively affect the area, and to ensure that steps are being taken by the SRA to move towards that legislative authority.

Timeline: None proposed at this time.

SRA Process Visualization



SRA Timeline

The timeline for the SRA recognition process is as follows, and at the discretion of the Executive Director of OPA:

Step of Process	Time Requirements	Example Dates / Deadlines
SRA Request Letter Received	[none; based on petitioner]	-
Pre-Meeting with OPA	[none; based on availability]	-
SRA Application Received	[none; based on petitioner]	<i>On June 1, 2027</i>
OPA Completeness Review	Maximum of 45 business days after receipt of application	<i>By August 5, 2027</i>
Simultaneous Review Periods Begin	Same day as completeness review	<i>On August 5, 2027</i>
Public Hearing	Within 90 business days of OPA completeness review	<i>By December 16, 2027</i>
Simultaneous Review Periods End	Minimum of 90 business days after OPA completeness review	<i>On December 16, 2027</i>
OPA Recommendation Report	Maximum of 90 business days after conclusion of simultaneous review periods; unless additional time (maximum of 30 business days) is needed to review newly submitted materials	<i>By April 25, 2028</i>
PIC Meeting	Maximum of 45 business days after release of the OPA recommendation report	<i>On May 17, 2028* (By June 29, 2028)</i>
SPC Meeting	Maximum of 45 business days after PIC recommendation	<i>On June 7, 2028* (By July 24, 2028)</i>
Petitioner Notified in Writing	Maximum of 30 business days after SPC decision	<i>July 21, 2028</i>
Placed in NJ Register	Maximum of 45 business days after SPC decision	<i>August 11, 2028</i>

*=SPC and PIC meetings have not yet been scheduled for 2028.

The proposed SRA recognition process is expected to take place over the course of about one year (give or take a month) from the time of a successful application to a final SPC decision.