

Public Information Meeting
Preliminary SDRP
Essex County – Wednesday, February 26, 2025 – 2:00 PM

START: 2:09 PM

PREPARED REMARKS:

David Antonio, Planning Director

- Thanks to the audience for attending.
- Announced the OPA has and will visit many NJ counties to promote and answer questions on the draft Preliminary State Plan.

Walter C. Lane, Acting Executive Director, OPA

- The Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) is tasked by the NJ State Planning Act to implement the goals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP).
- In addition to providing administrative support to the State Planning Commission, OPA is organized within the NJ Department of State's NJ Business Action Center (BAC). The broader purpose of the BAC is to facilitate economic growth in New Jersey through technical assistance and guidance provided to businesses and local governments.
- OPA is currently in the process of updating the SDRP.
- As per the NJ State Planning Act, the SDRP intends to establish an optimal balance of economic development and environmental conservation through sound planning practices.
- The SDRP is not a regulatory document, but a guidance document. It does not overrule, negate, or interfere with local plans or regulations. Instead, its aim is to foster greater coordination and consistency between planning objectives at all levels of government.
- In December of 2024, OPA disseminated the Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan, which is a draft version of the new SDRP. This began a process called Cross Acceptance, in which all New Jersey residents and local and regional entities are free to offer comments, thereby contributing to the final version of the SDRP.
- Because stakeholder engagement is critical to the Cross Acceptance process, OPA commenced its outreach to municipalities, counties, and regional entities well in advance of the release of the Preliminary SDRP.
- At present, OPA is conducting public meetings such as this in all 21 counties and at the Highlands Council. Later this year, OPA will conduct six public hearings on the outcome of the Cross Acceptance process.
- Concurrently, OPA is working with a team from Rutgers and Rowan Universities to prepare an Infrastructure Needs Assessment, which will project the public investments necessary to implement the new SDRP. An Impact Assessment, investigating societal and economic impacts of the new SDRP, is also underway. Furthermore, OPA is soliciting comments on the State Plan Policy Map and its underlying mapping protocols.
- The current SDRP, adopted in 2001, contains eight goals. The Preliminary SDRP contains ten goals. These goals pertain to economic development, housing, infrastructure, urban revitalization, climate change, water and natural resources, environmental protection, historic and scenic resources, equity, and comprehensive planning.
- The State Plan Policy Map, required by the State Planning Rules, serves as the geographic application of the SDRP's goals, strategies, and policies. Although planning area amendments will

occur during Cross Acceptance, the addition of new centers and nodes will be addressed outside of Cross Acceptance, through the Plan Endorsement process.

- The Smart Growth Explorer is an online mapping tool developed by OPA's partners at Rowan University. It can be used to identify areas suitable for development and areas suitable for conservation. It can serve as a resource to stakeholders when considering requests to amend the State Plan Policy Map.
- OPA will complete its public meetings by mid-April. The Cross Acceptance process will then proceed to the Comparison Phase, in which County Cross Acceptance Reports are developed and submitted to OPA. Next is the Negotiation Phase, in which OPA and the counties will discuss points of agreement and disagreement in the Preliminary SDRP. Ultimately, we hope to adopt the Final SDRP, along with the Infrastructure Needs Assessment and the Impact Assessment, before the end of the year.
- QR codes are available to access the Preliminary SDRP, the Citizen's Guide to the Preliminary SDRP, and an online portal to submit comments on the Preliminary SDRP.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD:

Summary of **Questions** and *OPA Responses*

Is there any value in looking at centers in PA1?

It can be identified in Cross Acceptance, but to take action it must be done via the Plan Endorsement.

What if your municipality had a center about 25 years ago?

The municipality will need to resubmit.

What should we seek to do with the Municipal Master Plan?

Look for consistency with the State Plan.

Since centers can expire, was the Plan Endorsement process intended for re-designation of centers?

Yes, the Plan Endorsement process can be used to re-designate centers that have expired.

Can you explain the difference between the different types of centers?

There are definitions in the current State Plan for centers, nodes, and cores. Centers can be designated in any Planning Area of the State Plan Policy Map.

Cross Acceptance requires working with municipalities, whereas the Plan Endorsement is another process, correct? Should we work with the counties for mapping?

Yes, you will work with your county. Before the State Plan is adopted, OPA and the negotiating the County serving as the negotiating entity will discuss any requested mapping changes.

Are you making changes to the flood maps?

No, but we are looking at how to best map flooding risks which may require changes to the mapping criteria.

Do towns have centers?

Multiple towns have centers.

How do we determine land use limitations?

The Smart Growth Explorer Tool is the best bet for decision-making.

What is the next step for the County of Essex?

You should work with your municipalities to compile your CART submission. Try to build and maintain momentum during the process.

Are there any important deadlines we should be aware of?

May 30th is the deadline for the final county CART submission.

Do the other counties know about this process?

Yes, other counties, as well as municipalities and state agencies are involved.

The process for stormwater management in municipalities such as Bloomfield is not transparent. In my experience, a private engineer was able to provide me with needed information on flooding mitigation, while the town has yet to respond or act. Is there any law for public disclosure?

Municipal stormwater management must follow DEP rules and regulations.

Will the State Plan include examples on flood mitigations?

The State Plan looks at flood cases studies, but does not prescribe flooding mitigation projects for individual municipalities.

As a citizen, can I make comments and give suggestions on the State Plan?

Yes! We do not intend to discourage any comments, and encourage citizen participation in the process.

Does redevelopment only apply to designated centers?

No, redevelopment can occur where there are appropriate opportunities.

Our county lost several historic sites to fires during the COVID period. Is there funding for historic preservation?

You can reach out to OPA, and we can refer you to available resources.

[David Antonio, Planning Director]: NJEDA grants may be helpful.

What is the difference between the old and new State Plan?

The current State Plan has eight goals pertaining to land use, conservation, economic development, and other societal needs. The new State Plan builds on these original goals and adds two more: one on climate change mitigation and one on equity in planning. Both plans encourage new development in existing developed areas, and encourage preservation in areas not suited for development. Both plans serve as a vehicle to guide conversations and decision-making including short- and long-term goals.

What do municipalities have to do to be consistent with PA1?

[David Antonio, Planning Director]: Make sure to add strong language for vital efforts that pertain to PA1. Read the narrative and connect your needs.

Can we participate in other meetings even if we do not reside in that county?

You are always welcome to join the other Public Meetings.

END: 3:00PM