

Public Information Meeting
Preliminary SDRP
Monmouth County – Monday, March 31, 2025 – 6:30 PM

START: 6:36 PM

PREPARED REMARKS:

Joe Barris, County Planning Director

- Welcome and introductions

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*

How will this process connect to the resilience tools that have come out to help protect the County?

Tools such as the Smart Growth Explorer can assist municipalities and counties in their preparation of Cross Acceptance Responses.

NJPACT REAL Rules does not encourage development in centers as intense as they should be. How does the preliminary Plan address development intensity in centers?

The State Plan encourages higher density land use in centers. The REAL rules may be adopted later this year. NJDEP participated in the development of the draft State Plan which is intended to guide the implementation of their policies and rules.

What is Monmouth County thinking about mapping changes regarding Planning Areas?

[Joe Barris, County Planning Director]: We are only considering requested changes coming from the municipalities or the public. The County will not propose changes on behalf of a municipality.

When are you accepting comments?

We are actively soliciting comments now.

Is there anything specific in the Plan regarding last year's water supply document?

That plan is not explicitly addressed, but the new State Plan contains a section on policy proposals for improved water supply planning.

How does the Plan balance the two conflicting goals of affordable housing and land preservation?

The two goals are not mutually exclusive. Affordable housing can be implemented in appropriate areas, where there is adequate capacity and the opportunity for redevelopment. At the same time, areas suitable for conservation can be protected from development.

How can we empower the public's voice in this county, and augment the municipal responses?

Reach out to the County and get involved in stakeholder outreach. You can use your municipal Cross Acceptance Response to voice your concerns.

Do we know how many municipalities in the county will respond?

It is not known how many of Monmouth County's towns will participate, though there is incentive to do so. A lack of a Cross Acceptance Response will be interpreted as full agreement with the Preliminary SDRP.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Coastal planning areas should be implemented into the map because the coastal areas have different regulations and rules they have to follow.

The Plan should present more solutions for its environmental goals. Put “garden” back in Garden State—especially along major highways. Stop mowing grass. Plant native plants, wildflowers, bushes on guardrails. Put solar panels on parking lots and buildings. Reduce our addiction to plastics. Microplastics are everywhere, including seafood.

New Jersey should have more planning done at the regional level. When a municipality is considering new development, there is little to no county or regional input.

Better partnerships are needed when waterways and watersheds are used as boundaries for planning. New regulations are out to protect the waterways. Towns can work together on a regional watershed management plan. The county should also participate. The watershed plan is critical. The State Plan does talk about regional planning but more work needs to be done, including necessary changes to the MLUL.

Regional planning that includes public involvement is crucial to the future of this county. One recent report found that America is likely to lose 1.5 trillion dollars in property values over the next thirty years due to climate change. Another report found that flood risk is disproportionately high in New Jersey, and moreso in overburdened communities.

High density housing should be restricted to Planning Areas 1 or 2. We should not limit this only to affordable housing. All new development should be directed to brownfields first to help promote their remediation.

The State's mapping of wastewater infrastructure should show where the pipes are in the ground, not just sewer service areas.

END: 8:02 PM