

Public Information Meeting
Preliminary SDRP
Bergen County – Tuesday, April 1, 2025 – 12:00 PM

START: 12:04 PM

PREPARED REMARKS:

County Executive James J. Tedesco, III

- Welcome & Introductions
- It is critical that the SDRP equitably addresses needs of all municipalities in Bergen County.
- Highlighted the importance and role of the SDRP and the efforts of the municipalities in comparing their plans.

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.

Mike Davis, Senior Planner, HGA

- Welcome & Introductions

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD:

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

I appreciate the inclusion of air quality in the section on natural and water resources. The section on agriculture should stress the need for additional training for farmers; farmers should learn regenerative agriculture techniques to improve soil quality, and to enhance food access and urban agriculture. There is a need to focus on agriculture's role in community development professional partnership organizations. I would like the Plan to include a mapping analysis rooftop and urban farming's impacts on food supply.

We encourage you to submit your comments through the various portals. We have an aggressive timeline, but we can look into those concepts.

The State Plan seems to push planning onto the municipalities. Bergen County has 70 municipalities, and many of them are small. Water knows no bounds; municipalities cannot handle the management of stormwater on their own. Regional planning of stormwater management and infrastructure should be done at the county and state level. The Plan should push for simple cooperation and emphasize regional planning more.

The Plan includes a series of strategies for regional planning, but we can look into augmenting those strategies. We will look into additional resources, but we can't promise additional resources will be made available. We want to reward municipalities for doing good planning; we can advocate for more from our sister agencies but we may not be always able to provide more resources.

There are hundreds of municipalities, with various density, populations, and goals. Having planning objectives set by the state feels like a one-size-fits-all approach.

The Plan incorporates strategies that are generally applicable to all spatial levels of planning. During Cross Acceptance, we are looking at ways to improve these strategies, as well as the

mapping criteria. If there are ways to improve the process, please let us know. Mike Davis and HGA have done some great work to date as the county's Negotiating Entity. The State is making these consulting services available throughout Cross Acceptance.

Does the Highlands Regional Master Plan supersede the State Plan?

The Highland Council's mapping of the Preservation Area supersedes the State Plan. However, in the Planning Area, it is co-terminus with the State Plan. Some municipalities have decided to use the county as their Negotiating Entity. We are coordinating with the Highlands Council in regards to regional planning for stormwater.

Is the State looking to strip zoning away from the municipalities?

No. This is a voluntary guidance planning and policy document for municipalities.

The Plan seems to push for more development, while also maintaining natural resources. However, the Plan does not seem to treat water as a natural resource.

The Plan actually does contain strategies for the protection and management of natural and water resources, and strives to strike the optimal balance between economic development and environmental preservation. Additionally, the Infrastructure Needs Assessment will look at the future resources and infrastructure needed in New Jersey.

Does the State Plan advise for the coordinated implementation of affordable housing, or does the State Planning Commission have an advisory or influential role in affordable housing obligations?

The legislature developed the new affordable housing legislation. The State Plan addresses affordable housing, but is a higher-level document. We follow similar rules as our state agency partners. We are providing an overall vision and a policy framework. The Plan does advise for coordination of affordable housing processes, and the mapping of planning areas and centers can influence your prospective need and bonus credits.

The State Plan was introduced and will then be implemented. The State Plan does not supersede the Highlands Regional Master Plan. But is the State plan meant to influence local zoning?

The State Plan is meant to guide municipal zoning decisions, but the authority to zone will remain with the municipalities. The Plan also supports municipalities that go through the plan endorsement process.

If a municipality is not consistent with the State Plan, does that make the municipality ineligible for grants?

No, municipalities are not penalized if they are inconsistent with the Plan, and it will not affect your grant eligibility. There are carrots, but no sticks. Bergen County is majority PA1. Planning Areas 1, 2, and designated centers receive higher priority funding from the NJTPA. Also, the NJEDA's Emerge and Aspire tax credit programs require a PA1 or PA2 designation or center designation in order to be eligible for funding.

How do you know what Planning Area you are in?

We have the official map on our website.

How do you apply for planning grants?

You can apply directly through the various agencies.

Cliffside Park is the seventh densest town in New Jersey. I echo that municipalities are unique. The Plan should reevaluate parking standards and offer guidance to amend and meet RSIS standards, and to study the economic factors when addressing parking.

We welcome suggestions on how we can improve the Plan by encouraging parking standards that support transit and economic growth.

Towns need coordinated assistance to celebrate the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding, and to highlight Bergen County's historic assets. How do we bring tourism opportunities to Bergen County?

You can use the County CART to address these topics. REVNJ may be able to assist in tourism opportunities in Bergen County.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

I represent a transportation infrastructure group focusing on NYC and the surrounding region. Regional rail conversions are impacting renovations to Penn Station, Newark, and the Long Island Railroad stations. The various transportation authorities should run through these stations seamlessly, with the cooperation of New Jersey. Such upgrades have been tremendously successful in other urban areas, such as London, where they are on their third iteration.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Walter C. Lane, Acting Executive Director, OPA

- Please reach out to Mike Davis if you have questions about participating in this process.

END: 1:20 PM