

Public Information Meeting
Preliminary SDRP
Passaic County – Monday, March 10, 2025 – 2:00 PM

START: 2:07 PM

PREPARED REMARKS:

Andras Holzmann AICP, PP, Planning Director

- Recognized OPA and welcomed attendees.

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*

Paterson is an urban area. Did the previous State Plan encourage development in those areas?

Yes, is for redevelopment and revitalization fostering those existing buildings.

Is there infrastructure development funding?

The Plan is used as a tool to address certain factors, plus OPA gives certain assistance.

Do those cities give funding?

Those areas have investment opportunities.

Is there a balance between public development and natural spaces for economic development?

Reflecting on our built environment and natural environment, we are encouraging agricultural tourism. An example is the Passaic Greenway. Funding application and gain resources.

For economic relevance, there should be a center of business activities. Paterson should have that without relying on NYC.

Agreed.

I hear a lot of policy and community goals. Was this Plan developed by public input? How did the public meetings involve policy-making?

We held many stakeholder group sessions. If policies are too soft or strong, we want to address those concerns. The State Plan is a guide for the municipalities, not to grade their planning efforts, but to determine how consistent municipalities are with the State Plan.

Wayne is struggling with housing. We have about 18,000 housing units. We do not see the affordable housing policy as applicable to Wayne. Wayne is the epitome of the American Dream. After the post-war era, people started moving out. However, when people move to Wayne, the city becomes their identity. When new development comes in, communities are not used to change. Additionally, these additional developments are not sustainable as they maximize water and sewage infrastructure. Growth is not necessary at Wayne.

Please submit your comments to have those issues addressed.

There is a need for business retention and attraction in the Highlands. The plan focuses on business urbanization, but there is no room for redevelopment with funding opportunities.

The Preservation area of the Highlands is not part of the State Plan Policy Map, but you should bring this up to the Highlands Council. The Highlands RMP should work together with the State Plan.

There are very few of pockets of undeveloped land in our county. Is there any protection?

The Green Acres program serves as funding source to preserve land. The State Plan outlines strategies to guide local planning, but does not focus on individual communities; it addresses the large scope of issues and case studies.

Does the State Plan recommend land preservation?

Yes, where appropriate. The Plan considers various environmental issues, including threatened and endangered species habitat, and whether areas are suitable for preservation or conservation.

To clarify, are the Plan's policies merely suggestions?

It is a guidance document, not a regulatory plan.

Does the Cross Acceptance go county by county?

We work with participating counties individually. Then, we share the information gathered from the individual county meetings with the State Planning Commission.

Does the State Plan include Environmental Justice mapping, or is it being used it to plan for housing and overburden communities?

It uses all criteria from the available NJDEP maps. This is a guidance document. If the municipality does not have enough open space, we do not punish them. These are only recommendations.

Is there mapping input? Piedmont seems to be overlooked. Also, there is flooding in the city of Clifton.

We are asking county planners to address these issues. Also, we emphasize critical environmental sites.

What about the housing laws?

The State Plan highlights modern housing policy.

What about fair share housing policy? I'd like to see more from the State on fair share.

Please submit these comments.

Historic manufacturing sites are adjacent to housing. Is there any way to separate these uses?

This would be the right time to suggest policies addressing the separation of those uses/sites. There could be setbacks implemented when developing those sites.

Do you have any thoughts on small manufacturing for neighborhoods?

I think that is already there, for example, 3D printing and other types of advanced manufacturing processes, rather than traditional manufacturing. The draft strategies support the evolution of the manufacturing industry.

How do you support infrastructure? Do you have the resources and development suggestions?

The INA will address this. If you want to grow, you can do it where growth is appropriate or where preservation is not needed.

What are the differences between the old and new Cross Acceptance processes?

The old Cross Acceptance process was lengthy and complex, but now we are simplifying the process. Strategies can be improved by commenting on policies that be too soft or too bold. We are looking for a high level review of your plans, and specific comments on potential changes to the plan. My predecessor worked with counties to streamline the process and avoid past issues.

When was the previous process?

The draft 2007 Plan and 2012 State Strategic Plan were not adopted. The 2012 plan was close to being adopted, but then Super Storm Sandy hit, and the primary focus changed to recovering from the storms' impacts.

How long will it take to complete Cross Acceptance and adopt the new State Plan?

Mid-December. This is the beginning of the process, not the end.

END: 3:03 PM