

COMMUNITIES

# of Place

## The State Planning Bulletin

New Jersey State Planning Commission

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### AT ISSUE:

What are the issues arising from the comparison phase of cross-acceptance that will require negotiation? How is the State Planning Commission meeting its obligation to craft a State plan that responds to the concerns of local and county officials and the public? Staff at the Office of State Planning has been working to analyze and categorize major issues arising during the comparison phase since late summer, when 19 of the State's 21 counties requested extensions for the completion of their comparison phase reports. Each of the counties requesting extensions provided "status reports" to the Commission detailing their progress to date, as well as issues of concern to county and local officials, citizen organizations, and interest groups. The status reports, the official county comparison phase reports received to date, and the results of two full-day workshops organized by the Office of State Planning for the 21 county planning departments provided the basis of a new paper for use during the negotiation phase of cross-acceptance.

*Cross-Acceptance Issues: Preliminary Staff Analysis* provides detailed descriptions of the issues for use by the Commission and its Plan Development Committee. The report is cross-referenced to specific policies and strategies contained in the Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan. Each issue includes different perspectives expressed by the public, interest groups, and local and county officials as communicated through the county reports. A range of alternative policies or action steps the Commission may want to consider in answering these concerns is also listed with each issue.

The report currently focuses on urban, suburban, rural, and regional design system issues. The paper, like the State plan-

ning process itself, is evolutionary. New issues will be added and others revised as public officials and private citizens continue the dialogue of cross-acceptance. Copies of *Cross-Acceptance Issues: Preliminary Staff Analysis* are available upon request from the Office of State Planning.

### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

#### *Impact Assessment*

#### *Becomes Law*

On January 4, 1990, the General Assembly approved Assembly Bill 3799 (Haytaian, Rocco, Haines), legislation requiring an impact analysis of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. While the State Planning Commission supported this legislation by formal resolution on February 24, 1989, a reduced appropriation to conduct the study falls significantly short of the \$500,000 estimated need to complete the study.

Signed by Governor Thomas H. Kean before leaving office, the legislation provides \$200,000 to the Commission for an assessment of the economic, environmental, infrastructure, community life, and intergovernmental coordination impacts of the Interim State Development and Redevelopment Plan relative to the impacts that would likely occur without a plan. The legislation also requires that the effects of the final Plan on these variables be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. It is expected that the results of this impact analysis will provide valuable information to the Commission, counties, and municipalities as they work together to develop an effective growth management strategy for New Jersey.

# NEGOTIATION DIALOGUE BEGINS

The Plan Development Committee (PDQ—the committee of the State Planning Commission charged with negotiating and recommending changes to the Preliminary State Development and Re-development Plan—has begun meeting with each of the 21 county planning boards and departments, as well as the respective municipalities, in final preparation for cross-acceptance negotiations. The purpose of these meetings is to give county and municipal officials the opportunity to meet Commission members leading negotiations, provide first-hand accounts of how the comparison phase reports were developed, and to discuss some of the major concerns encountered by these jurisdictions during the first phase of cross-acceptance. At press time, the Committee had met with five counties. A schedule of upcoming meetings is available in this Bulletin.

On Wednesday, January 24, the PDC met with the Mercer County planning staff and representatives of Hopewell, Lawrence, and Washington Townships. The County reported that it had scheduled monthly meetings with municipal officials, environmental organizations, developers, and other interested parties seeking to help craft Mercer's response to the Preliminary Plan.

High on the list of major issues included in the response is the need for clarifications and direct policy changes to the Preliminary Plan. Better integration of Council on Affordable Housing policies with the State Plan, the equity issue, and legislative reform were included in Mercer County's discussion of statewide issues. Tier issues raised in the report focussed on the different "types" of Tier 3 towns in Mercer—some still have room to grow, and others are almost fully developed. The difference between Tiers 4 and 5 was also cited, because the distinction relies

on existing or planned sewer service (Tier 4). Changes from the Department of Environmental Protection regarding its criteria for sewer expansions could alter these designations.

Several Mercer County municipalities filed dissenting reports to the Commission. The concerns raised in these reports ranged from changes to tier criteria, the creation of "subtiers" in Tiers 3 and 5, disputes over Mercer County's identification of Tier 7 areas in two municipalities, and a perceived lack of attention to social issues in the Preliminary Plan.

*(continued on page 2)*

## FACT & FICTION

*About the Preliminary State Plan and the State Planning Process*

**FICTION:** "The State Plan will take funds from rural municipalities and send them to the cities."

**FACT:** The Preliminary Plan makes no such recommendation. The Plan recommends the creation of a State "Infrastructure and Affordable Housing Trust Fund" to finance urban revitalization. The Plan also recommends that rural municipalities use future appropriations of State and local funds to accommodate growth in better ways—to create major development centers, villages, and hamlets with identity and character, surrounded by open land. It suggests correcting the inadequacies of the current system—whereby these funds are used to support sprawl development that unnecessarily wastes taxpayers' dollars and destroys the livability of our communities.

# Counties and Municipalities Focus on Growth Management

The Plan Development Committee's (PDC) top priority over the past several months has been to meet with each county and its respective municipalities in a face-to-face dialogue about the Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The Committee has now met with all of the 21 counties, with the discussions aimed at preparing each of the participants for the upcoming negotiation phase. Opening the communication lines early has helped to clear up misunderstandings about or misinterpretations of the Preliminary Plan. Highlights of county and municipal perspectives are described below\*.

Middlesex County....had high praise for the cross-acceptance process, stating that it provided the opportunity for the county to come together with its municipalities to discuss planning issues as they have rarely (if ever) done in the past. The dialogue alone, according to the county, made all of the work that went into preparing the report worth the effort....The report explains that the tier system was confusing to many of its municipalities, as they had difficulty distinguishing it from local zoning practices and responsibilities. The County also called on the Commission to look carefully at the tension the Plan establishes between the tier and regional design systems, and to more clearly define how the State will establish and implement reasonable and equitable procedures to set priorities among Plan goals (e.g., Tier 1 cities vs. corridor centers; rural vs. suburban towns). Further, the County suggests broadening the regional design system to include other types of central place communities, such as waterfront redevelopment and downtown preservation areas. And, while permit streamlining

is supported throughout the Preliminary Plan, the County suggests the Plan should provide more direction on how to go about achieving it.

Somerset County described its comparison phase program as a "bottoms up" process, designing it to allow for maximum input from municipalities and the public. The approach used in Somerset resulted in a three-legged response to the Preliminary Plan: a County response, a collection of municipal responses, and public reactions. Thus, the Som-

(continued on page 2)

## *Changing Times A Message From The Chairman James G. Gilbert*

Over the past year and a half, counties, municipalities and State planners have come together to discuss the Commission's proposals for growth management in New Jersey. These past 18 months have been remarkable, as all of the players and interests involved in State planning focused on and debated about the important issues of intergovernmental coordination, natural resource protection, transportation, housing and urban revitalization. As we on the Commission travelled around New Jersey, explaining the Plan and listening to various perspectives on its strengths and weaknesses, there has been one consistently recurring theme that assures us that the process is working as we hoped it would: towns and counties have started to communicate about planning issues! That is indeed a milestone in this densely-populated, home rule State.

Recognizing that common concerns about the Preliminary Plan exist throughout the State, the Plan Development Committee has proposed a number of policy alternatives in response to some of the major issues arising from

(continued on page 3)

# DNJ ENDORSES STATE PLAN

Leaders from the organization representing central business districts from all over New Jersey endorsed the State Plan as the vehicle for promoting downtown revitalization. They also proposed a package of implementation strategies that could be used to draw commerce back to these central places. Downtown New Jersey presented its preliminary recommendations on strengthening and rebuilding central business districts via partnerships between local business leaders, elected officials and State agencies at the June meeting of the State Planning Commission.

Outgoing president of DNJ, Lawrence O. Houston, Jr., said that decades of State and Federal policies, such as highway development, drew commercial activities away from central business districts to highway locations. He suggested that the Plan provides an important opportunity to begin to balance those dispersive public investments and to preserve jobs, business opportunities and amenities in the State's hundreds of traditional centers. Some of the measures DNJ has asked the Commission to support are as follows.

1. Give Priority to Downtowns for State Investments—Financial aid should be used to address urban environmental problems such as the redevelopment of former railroad lands and the removal of asbestos from older structures. Transit or highway investments made with scarce State resources should be considered in terms of their relative economic benefit or harm to central business districts; priority should be given to those that best support downtown revitalization. The various arts should be brought together in downtowns, in order to regenerate the stock of unused and underutilized theatres and to attract crowds back into these areas. Indeed, the State should continue its present empha-

sis on arts in downtowns. DNJ also recommends the use of financial aid from the State for repair, reconfiguration or replacement of inadequate infrastructure in downtowns.

2. Use State Leases as Rehabilitation Leverage — DNJ recommends the continued emphasis on the use of State leases to attract new private sector retail and office tenants to occupy portions of buildings primarily occupied by State agencies. Leverage leasing should be used to provide incentives for the rehabilitation of older, primarily pre-World War II construction, so that some of the most attractive and underutilized structures can be maintained and/or upgraded. State offices should also be located near transit stops for the benefit of the public and employees.

3. Support Local Self Help Strategies — State assistance from all departments should be contingent upon a local commitment to downtown planning, with the extensive involvement of private and non-profit interests. Aid from the various departments of State government should be coordinated effectively. DNJ also commented that New Jersey's law authorizing Special Improvement Districts is the best in the nation. It allows business-led non profit corporations or municipal commissions to organize and finance services that encourage commercial expansion in downtowns. Organizing these programs has proven to be the most difficult part of this business self-help concept, and DNJ urges short term loans from the State to support this planning.

DNJ also recommends revising redevelopment laws and expanding historic preservation. The organization is currently supporting legislation that would provide assistance to downtowns for the purpose of creating more housing for all income levels. These recommendations have been referred to the Commission's Plan Implementation Committee for its consideration.

Downtown New Jersey developed these proposals at the request of Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Randy Primas to help guide the Administration's work on downtown revitalization.