



FACT

And

Fiction



**About The Preliminary
State Development
And
Redevelopment Plan
And The State
Planning Process**

The New Jersey Office of State Planning
January 1990

FICTION: "The State Plan will establish densities and lot sizes for agricultural and other land in the State."

ACT: The State Planning Commission does not have zoning authority, and the Preliminary Plan does not recommend that it be given this authority. The Plan recommends that counties and municipalities themselves undertake studies to determine the densities necessary to reduce future need for expensive new public facilities where they are not planned, and to protect natural resources in the absence of these facilities. The Plan states that any density, lot size, or other tool or program that is effective in achieving these objectives is appropriate. Where counties or municipalities have not undertaken such studies, the Plan identifies a statewide density *guide* of 100 persons per square mile for new development occurring outside of towns, villages, hamlets, and other "communities of place" in rural areas. This is an effective way to achieve these objectives until local studies are completed.

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

ACT: 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.

FICTION: "The State planning process is a "top-down" process, it does not incorporate municipal and county plans, and has not provided adequate opportunities for public participation in formulation of the Plan."

ACT: The State planning process has very likely inspired and received more public and interest-group participation than any other major State initiative in the past 50 years.

Even before the first draft was produced, the State Planning Commission conducted 11 advertised public meetings across the State and sponsored a statewide public opinion poll, resulting in a tremendous amount of information that helped shape the first draft. A public comment period was included as a part of every monthly Commission meeting, and this is still the case.

A staff draft was forwarded to the Commission in April 1987. Commission members and staff then made over 100 presentations of the draft to development, farming, environmental, business, and other groups. Committees of the Commission thoroughly reviewed the draft in light of responses it was receiving, and in January 1988 the Commission released its official draft for public and State agency comment. A State Planning *Bulletin* was also initiated and mailed to groups and individuals (the mailing list now exceeds 3000 persons).

After releasing its January 1988 draft, the Commission conducted five public presentations statewide, and provided a public and State agency comment period, receiving over 700 letters from the public and reports from 19 State departments. In addition, the Commission produced a videotape describing the draft and the State planning process; it distrib-

uted copies of the tape to libraries statewide, to county planning boards, and to interest groups and citizens. It also created 11 technical advisory committees to review and recommend changes to the draft; these committees were comprised of over 100 leading State and national experts—including builders, attorneys, engineers, environmentalists, housing experts, and other representatives from a wide range of State Interest groups. An "800" number was installed to inform the public about upcoming meetings of the Commission and its open committee meetings. Commission meetings were moved around the State to provide easy access by the public.

Upon release of the Preliminary Plan in January 1989, the Commission sponsored 21 public informational meetings jointly with and in each county to explain the Plan, and to respond to questions and concerns. It produced a new videotape, and has distributed 100 copies to libraries, interest groups, county and municipal planning boards. State agencies, and individual citizens. Again, Commission members and staff have made hundreds of presentations of the Preliminary Plan to civic and special-interest groups, county and municipal agencies, legislators, and the general public. Staff of the Office of State Planning has written articles for numerous professional journals explaining various aspects of the Plan. Editorial board meetings have been held with newspapers across the State and press briefings are held after each monthly Commission meeting.

FINALLY, the cross-acceptance process is drawing public and local officials into the State planning process. As that process continues through negotiations and issue resolution, public hearings and other forms of participation will continue.

FICTION: The State Plan will fiscally bankrupt rural municipalities by not allowing any growth there and will do the same to suburban municipalities by forcing them to accept more growth than they can handle." (Another version of this "myth" is that the Plan will cause tremendous increases in property taxes in both rural and suburban areas for the same reasons.)

ACT: The Preliminary Plan clearly states that all rural municipalities can grow to the full potential projected by the State Department of Labor, if they so wish. The Plan recommends, however, that they do so in more rational patterns and locations. Growth in rural areas can occur without creating unnecessary and wasteful needs for new public services, and without destroying valuable natural resources needed by present and future New Jerseyans. The Preliminary Plan states that suburban municipalities that are already fully developed or overburdened with recent growth need not accept more growth.

The more troubling aspect of this allegation, however, is that it ignores what is happening now without a State Plan. It implies that there are no flagrant abuses of the environment and that the fiscal integrity of State and local governments is not in jeopardy. It ignores a \$20 billion deficit forecast for the year 2010. This deficit assumes, however, that we will only maintain our present status; and given present levels of traffic congestion, water pollution, etc., the present status leaves much to be desired. The actual amount of tax dollars needed to support new infrastructure for development the way it is presently occurring will greatly exceed this figure. Those who criticize the State Plan on this basis should consider the enormous fiscal crises we will surely face without a Plan.

FICTION: "The State Planning Commission opposes any assessment of the economic impacts of 'the Plan' during the cross-acceptance period when it would be most useful."

F **ACT:** The State Planning Commission, by official Commission resolution and in testimony before the Assembly Appropriations Committee, supports not only an economic assessment of the Plan, but assessments of the environmental, fiscal, community life, and intergovernmental coordination impacts of the Plan as well. This assessment will be completed and available for municipal, county, and public review and consideration long before the end of cross-acceptance. In fact, it will accompany the "Interim" State Plan and will be subject to public hearings held statewide.

FICTION: "There is little research and data supporting the State Plan."

ACT: To the contrary, there are presently—even at this Preliminary Plan stage—over 50 "technical referenced documents" comprising thousands of pages of data and analyses supporting the Preliminary Plan. These research documents present data on environmental, fiscal, economic, and other areas relevant to the Plan's policies and guidelines. There are also legal research documents describing, for instance, what constitutes a "taking of land without just compensation." There are analyses on the effects of the Preliminary Plan delineations on housing and land availability. Even the Plan's "Preliminary Cross-Acceptance Map" presents data on municipal fiscal distress; sewer-ed areas of the State; and environmental factors such as farmlands, wildlife habitats, and pristine waters. As the Plan progresses through cross-acceptance, even more data will be collected, analyzed, and presented in additional reports.

FICTION: "The Plan will shut down growth in two-thirds of the State. The State Planning Commission will dictate where you live and where you work."

ACT: Almost 50 percent of the State—the Pinelands, the Hackensack Meadowlands, and the coastal regions—is already outside of the Plan's jurisdiction. In the remaining areas of the State, the Plan asks the counties and municipalities to show how they intend to accommodate the full amount of population and employment growth projected for them by the State Department of Labor. Rather than recommending that municipalities limit growth, the Plan recommends that they plan for growth in patterns and locations that conserve tax dollars and protect valuable natural resources. These are goals fully supported by the¹ general public, as demonstrated in public opinion polls and mandated by the State Planning Act.