

Technical Memorandum #1A

December 1, 1995

Supersedes Technical Memorandum #7, 6/16/93

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A STRATEGIC REVITALIZATION PLAN *Consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan*

Introduction

One of the goals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, which responds directly to the legislative mandates of the State Planning Act, is the revitalization of the State's urban areas through sufficient public investment in their human resources and infrastructure systems to attract private investment. To that end, the State Plan recommends that certain priorities be established for those communities that may be considered "distressed" based on several economic, physical, social, and fiscal measurements. Those measurements form the basis of the Municipal Distress Index prepared by the New Jersey Office of Management and Budget. For the purposes of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, "municipalities and centers experiencing distress" are defined as:

1. Municipalities ranked in the top 100 on the June, 1993 OMB Municipal Distress Index and further categorized on the MDI as "urban level" 1 or 2; or,
2. Urban centers, regional centers, towns or villages (as defined in the State Plan), that fall within the top 100 municipalities on the Municipal Distress Index.

The State Plan establishes priority for distressed communities through two specific policies in the Public Investment Priorities section (page 29). Policy 3 (under the statewide category on page 31), recommends that a special discretionary fund be made available to distressed municipalities, with added priority for urban centers, and for municipalities within an urban complex. Policy 14 (under the additional priorities category on page 34), recommends that in the broader spectrum of state funding, both priority and funding amounts should be directly related to a municipality's level of distress. A summary of the public investment priority system is available in Appendix F of the Plan.

In order to take advantage of those priorities, a municipality must first develop a comprehensive strategic revitalization plan that addresses the needs of the community. The purpose of the strategic revitalization plan is to isolate key issues, assess capabilities, and allocate resources, resulting in a program of realistic actions. The plan should demonstrate a coordinated approach to revitalization to ensure the most effective utilization of State, county, municipal, and private resources. Focusing on neighborhood restoration, these plans may include projects for infrastructure improvement and expansion; rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing; increased public safety; facility rehabilitation and construction; economic development; environmental clean-up;

employment training; the improvement of educational opportunities for youth; and efficient provision of social services dedicated to strengthening the community's human capital.

The State Planning Commission recommends that State agencies accept a strategic revitalization plan that has been endorsed by the Commission as satisfying the minimum application requirements for State funding and technical assistance whenever applicable.

The strategic revitalization plan may also satisfy portions of a municipality's petition to the State Planning Commission for a center designation (see Technical Reference Document #99, The Centers Designation Process). Municipalities should consult with the Office of State Planning regarding coordination of the revitalization plan and center application to avoid any duplication of effort.

There is one exception to the requirement for individual municipal revitalization plans. As stated on page 46 of the State Plan, the strategic plan for an urban complex (see OSP Technical Memorandum No. 2., Guidelines for Establishing an Urban Complex) may be substituted for the individual revitalization plans of the municipalities within the complex. In those instances, the urban complex plan must incorporate all the elements outlined below for a strategic revitalization plan.

For a fuller discussion of urban revitalization and the attendant policies or the Municipal Distress Index, see the State Development and Redevelopment Plan Urban Revitalization section on page 44, and Appendix B on page 138.

State Planning Commission Endorsement

A strategic revitalization plan must be endorsed by the State Planning Commission before a municipality can avail itself of the priorities recommended in the State Plan. Municipalities that are considering preparing a strategic revitalization plan should first contact the Office of State Planning and arrange for a preliminary conference. This will provide an opportunity to identify the scope of work involved and to outline the expectations and requirements of the Commission. To ensure that the local planning process stays on track, participants should expect to make periodic status reports to the Office of State Planning and /or the appropriate SPC Committee. To the extent possible, the Office of State Planning will provide guidance and technical assistance throughout the process.

The final strategic revitalization plan must contain appropriate local endorsements which will include, at a minimum, a resolution of the local governing body, and letters of endorsement from the participating private sector agencies, organizations, and business groups. Additional endorsements may also be necessary from other local participating agencies such as school boards, utility authorities, and the county.

The Director of the Office of State Planning will coordinate the review of the final strategic revitalization plan with the appropriate State agencies. The Director may also consult with the applicant regarding details of the plan and request any clarifying information that may be necessary. Upon completion of this preliminary review process,

the Director will forward the plan along with the Director's recommendations to the State Planning Commission for its review and action. If the strategic revitalization plan is subsequently endorsed by the Commission, the Office of State Planning will notify the appropriate State agencies of the Commission's action. All strategic revitalization plans will be reviewed for progress by the Office of State Planning in conjunction with each triennial review of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

Preparing a Strategic Revitalization Plan

Community Participation

The strategic revitalization plan should be the result of an open dialogue conducted among both public and private sector interests. The strength and viability of the strategic plan will depend on the early involvement and long-term commitment of all the parties that are responsible for its eventual implementation. To ensure a high level of such participation and coordination, a local government, institution, or community group, needs to act as a catalyst and convene a broad-based steering committee of government agencies, non-profit groups, businesses, institutions, and public service organizations from all parts of the community. As the strategic planning process progresses and specific neighborhoods become identified for targeted action, neighborhood councils may need to be established to fine tune the community-wide planning to the neighborhood scale and to guide the program-specific and site-specific implementation of the plan.

The Planning Context

The strategic revitalization planning process will operate on two levels - community-wide and neighborhood. At the more general community-wide level, the plan will establish the larger context for the more specific neighborhood plans, serving not only to tie the neighborhoods together into a cohesive community, but to relate the individual neighborhoods to the larger region within which the community must function. The community-wide portion of the plan will evaluate and where necessary create links (physical, social, cultural, civic, and economic) from neighborhood to neighborhood, neighborhood to community, and community to region.

With the community-wide assessment as a basis, the strategic plan will target one or more neighborhoods for a concentrated revitalization program. Neighborhoods will serve as the building blocks for the revitalization of the larger community. Neighborhood plans will flesh out specific projects, highlighting resources (both available and needed), time frames, and partnerships.

The Plan

The "Oregon Model" for community visioning provides a fairly simple four step process that can be used as a guide for preparing a strategic revitalization plan. The model is built around four basic questions that a community might ask itself -- Where are we now? Where are we going? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? Each question results in a specific product as described below.

1. Profiling the Community: "Where are we now?"

The community profile constitutes the first level assessment of the strategic plan. It paints a picture of the community as it is today and highlights both strengths and weaknesses. Whenever possible, the municipality should take advantage of existing plans and studies conducted by local, county, State, Federal or private agencies. New research should be conducted, however, if there is no existing basis for an assessment. An assessment need not include a full-scale investigation of every aspect of community life, but should provide the focal planning committee with a firm basis for identifying and evaluating the needs of the community and its neighborhoods. The community profile should succinctly identify problems, capacities, deficiencies and resources.

Suggested assessment areas include:

- *Demographics* -
A socio-economic profile of the region, the community, and identifiable neighborhoods.
- *Physical Form* -
Infrastructure condition and capacity, including, at a minimum, roads, public transportation, wastewater treatment, water supply, schools and parks;

Available and suitable land for development and redevelopment;

Zoning capacity and its relevance to market needs.
- » *Transportation* -
Circulation and transportation systems as they relate to the movement of goods and people within the municipality and regionally.
- *Housing* -
Existing and potential housing supply and its availability and affordability to a broad range of income groups (consider new construction, rehabilitation, reclamation of abandoned stock, and retrofit of non-residential buildings).
- *Economic Development* -
Available work force, employment opportunities, and work force training and education needs;

The municipality's historical basis for its social and economic growth, its present socio-economic role in the region (including a discussion of the stability and diversity of the existing economic base), and the niche it expects to fill in the region's future.
- *Public Safety* -
Availability and adequacy of public safety facilities and services;
- *Social Services* -
Availability and adequacy of social and health facilities and services.

- *Natural Resource Base* - Environmental considerations such as air and water quality, open space, historic preservation and remediation of contaminated sites.
- *Institutional Capacity* - Past and current revitalization efforts in the municipality -what worked, what didn't work, new approaches;

The role of non-profit organizations in local revitalization efforts;

Available and potential local, regional, State, and Federal incentives such as funding sources, public-private partnerships, permit streamlining, tax abatement, and enterprise zones;

Local institutional capability to carry out a revitalization program;

Local fiscal capacity to carry out a revitalization program.

2. Analyzing the Trends: "Where are we going?"

The trend analysis constitutes the second level assessment. Here the community should try to create probable scenarios of what might happen given certain expected outcomes based on the best available projections and forecasts. A trend analysis should be conducted in those areas covered by the community profile that the local planning committee has identified as being of strategic concern.

3. Creating the Vision: "Where do we want to be?"

An open dialogue among all the community's stakeholders, i.e. the planners, providers and consumers of public and private facilities and services, is essential to this process. Having a clear picture of where they are, and where they might be headed given current trends, citizens and community leaders should all engage in the development of a common vision of what they want their community to be in the future, and, the role of each neighborhood in that future. The vision should identify long-range goals for economic, social, environmental, and physical development of the community and its neighborhoods. The vision statement should reflect the community's preferred scenario, build on the community's assets, and coordinate a response to the needs of the community by integrating economic, physical, and human strategies.

4. Developing an Action Plan: "How do we get there?"

In this step, communities make the transition from large visions and long-range goals to realistic, measurable objectives, and from a community- wide perspective to a neighborhood perspective. They take a targeted approach that makes the most of their own resources, blends them with Federal, State, county, and private resources, and applies them in a coordinated manner. For each objective the action plan should identify a schedule of revitalization activities in each targeted neighborhood and describe:

1. The technical, institutional and financial resources needed to execute them;

2. The agencies, organizations, and individuals responsible for each activity; and,
3. A timetable for the completion of each activity.

An important element of the action plan will be the benchmarks established to monitor the progress of the plan. A benchmark charts the progress from the baseline of the present condition (as identified in the community profile) to the achievement of the goals (as identified in the vision statement). For example, the benchmarks should include timetables and numerical targets for supporting economic development, housing development, infrastructure, social services, and other necessary improvements. This information should be presented in a chart that illustrates the various goals and objectives; the applicable projects, programs and commitments; and milestones that pinpoint when the goals and objectives will be met.

Evaluating Your Plan

As the local plan is being prepared, communities can use the following checklist to evaluate their own progress and comprehensiveness.

Does the plan:

- 0 Describe how the community at large and specific neighborhood groups were included in the planning process?
- 0 Provide a regional, municipal, and neighborhood context for revitalization?
- EI Provide a community profile that sets baseline conditions and identifies needs and resources?
- 0 Establish a realistic set of goals, objectives and strategies for revitalizing the community?
- 13 Coordinate economic, social, and physical activities into a comprehensive plan for revitalization?
- 0 Identify specific revitalization activities in each targeted neighborhood and describe the technical, institutional and financial resources needed to execute them; the agencies, organizations, and individuals responsible for each activity; and a timetable for the completion of each activity?
- 0 Identify the amount of State, local and private resources that will be available and/or needed to carry out the plan including the utilization of public/private partnerships?
- 0 Establish benchmarks for monitoring the progress of specific revitalization activities?
- 0 Establish an on-going, community-based, planning and implementation mechanism?

Appendix A

Municipalities ranked in the top 100 on the 1993 Municipal Distress Index
and further categorized as urban level 1 or 2

	Municipality	County	1993 MDI RANK	Urban Level
1	Newark city	Essex	1	1
2	Trenton city	Mercer	3	1
3	East Orange city	Essex	4	1
4	Camden city	Camden	5	1
5	Union City	Hudson	6	1
6	City of Orange twp.	Essex	7	2
7	West New York town	Hudson	8	2
8	Paterson city	Passaic	10	1
9	Jersey City	Hudson	11	1
10	Gloucester city	Camden	12	2
11	Passaic city	Passaic	14	1
12	Bridgeton city	Cumberland	15	1
13	New Brunswick city	Middlesex	18	1
14	Irvington twp.	Essex	19	2
15	Asbury Park city	Monmouth	21	1
16	Beverly city	Burlington	23	2
17	Phillipsburg town	Warren	24	2
18	Elizabeth city	Union	25	1
19	Woodlynne bor.	Camden	27	2
20	Perth Amboy city	Middlesex	30	1
21	Hoboken city	Hudson	31	2
22	Wildwood city	Cape May	32	1
23	Plainfield city	Union	34	1
24	Millville city	Cumberland	38	1
25	Audubon Park bor.	Camden	40	2
26	Brooklawn bor.	Camden	41	2
27	Bayonne city	Hudson	44	2
28	Long Branch city	Monmouth	48	1
29	North Bergen twp.	Hudson	49	2
30	Vineland city	Cumberland	50	1
31	Roselle bor.	Union	51	2
32	Harrison town	Hudson	52	2
33	Dover town	Morris	54	1
34	Prospect Park bor.	Passaic	55	2
35	Collingswood bor.	Camden	58	2
36	Woodbury city	Gloucester	59	1
37	Westville bor.	Gloucester	60	2
38	Hillside twp.	Union	61	2
39	Atlantic City	Atlantic	62	1
40	South River bor.	Middlesex	63	2

Appendix A continued

	Municipality	County	1993 MDI RANK	Urban Level
41	Belleville twp.	Essex	64	2
42	Red Bank bor.	Monmouth	67	1
43	Audubon bor.	Camden	71	2
44	Bogota bor.	Bergen	73	2
45	Carteret bor.	Middlesex	74	2
46	Weehawken twp.	Hudson	80.5	2
47	South Bound Brook bor.	Somerset	80.5	2
48	Bloomfield twp.	Essex	82	2
49	Kearny town	Hudson	85	2
50	Burlington city	Burlington	86	2
51	Roselle Park bor.	Union	88.5	2
52	Garfield city	Bergen	91.5	2
53	East Newark bor.	Hudson	93.5	2

Appendix B

As of 6/12/96

Designated Urban Centers, Regional Centers, Towns, and Villages located
in municipalities in the top 100 on the 1993 OMB Municipal Distress Index

County	Center Name	Type	Municipality	MD/ Rank
Atlantic	Atlantic City*	UC	Atlantic City city	62
Camden	Camden*	UC	Camden city	5
Cumberland	Millville/Vineland*	ER	Millville city/Vineland city	38/50
Essex	Newark*	UC	Newark city	1
Hudson	Jersey City*	UC	Jersey City city	11
Mercer	Trenton*	UC	Trenton city	3
Middlesex	New Brunswick*	UC	New Brunswick city	18
Monmouth	Long Branch*	RC	Long Branch city	48
Monmouth	Red Bank*	RC	Red Bank borough	67
Morris	Dover*	RC	Dover town	54
Passaic	Paterson*	UC	Paterson city	10
Salem	Woodstown	TN	Woodstown borough	72
Sussex	Newton	ER	Newton town	96
Union	Elizabeth*	UC	Elizabeth city	25

* Also included in Appendix A

Center Type Code

UC = Urban Center

ER = Existing Regional Center

PR = Planned Regional Center

TN = Town

EV = Existing Village

PV = Planned Village