

*New Jersey Office of State Planning*  
**TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 2**

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING AN URBAN COMPLEX

June 16, 1993

Bie Urban Complex

State's eight urban centers (as designated in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan) often function within the context of a surrounding "complex" of municipalities. While the urban center is still the focus of activity, there exists a linkage between the surrounding municipalities and the center that is more direct and obvious than the relationship that exists between the urban center and the larger region or the State as a whole. The urban complex is more than just a regional service agreement between municipalities. It is distinguished by a vast network of public water and sewer systems, transportation systems, cultural facilities, employment, housing, health/hospital services, social services, commerce, higher education facilities and open space/recreation systems that allows the complex to function almost as a city unto itself.

The facilities and services found within the urban complex are often more efficient when planned and provided on a regional scale. A regional approach is not always taken, however, and a localized approach to planning often still prevails. Therefore, the State Plan encourages the creation of an urban complex as a coordinating vehicle for sound regional planning in urban areas. In addition to realizing more efficient service delivery (which may translate into lower costs) and more coordinated, and thereby potentially more successful, community and economic development efforts, municipalities and counties participating in an urban complex may also benefit from higher State priorities.

The State Plan establishes priority for urban complex municipalities and counties through two specific policies in the Public Investment Priorities section (page 29). Policy 3 further 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. For purposes of this policy then, municipalities participating in an urban complex may attain equal status with urban centers. Policy 15 (under the additional priorities category on page 34), recommends that greater priority be given to municipalities and counties that engage in multi-jurisdictional planning and service delivery and that municipalities and counties in an urban complex receive higher priority than those in other forms of multi-jurisdictional programs. A summary of the public investment priority system is available in Appendix F of the Plan. The State Planning Commission also recommends that State

agencies accept the strategic plan for an urban complex (see detailed discussion below) as satisfying the minimum requirements for State funding and technical assistance whenever applicable.

Counties or municipalities that are interested in establishing an urban complex should first contact the Office of State Planning and arrange for a "pre-application" conference. This will provide an opportunity to identify the scope of work involved and to outline the expectations and requirements of the State agencies whose actions may have an impact on the proposed complex. To the extent possible, the Office of State Planning will provide guidance and technical assistance throughout the process.

#### Nominating an Urban Complex

There are three basic criteria that an urban complex must meet:

1. The complex must consist of at least one designated urban center and two or more adjoining municipalities within the Metropolitan Planning Area (The eight urban centers are: Atlantic City, Camden, Elizabeth, Jersey City, New Brunswick, Newark, Paterson and Trenton);
2. The complex must be coterminous with municipal boundaries "but not necessarily with county boundaries; and
3. The complex must exhibit a strong intermunicipal and municipal to county relationship based on socio-economic factors and public facilities and services.

Any county, in conjunction with the participating municipalities, may nominate an urban complex for consideration in the State Plan's priority system. The nomination is to be forwarded by the county (or designated lead county in the case of a multi-county complex) to the Director of the Office of State Planning and shall include the following information:

1. The names of the participating county(ies) and municipalities;
2. The name, title, address and telephone number of the person responsible for submitting the nomination;
3. A letter from each of the participating jurisdictions (county and municipal), signed by the appropriate chief executive officer, endorsing the nomination;
4. A written description of the interrelationships that exist within the proposed complex in the following areas: (a) social demographics; (b) commerce and employment; (c) social services; (d) cultural and recreational facilities; (e) health services; (f) education; (g) wastewater treatment and water supply; (h) public safety; (i) transportation; and (j) housing; and

5. A map with dimensions of approximately 24 inches by 36 inches, delineating the boundaries of the proposed complex and a sufficient amount of the surrounding vicinity to adequately identify the location of the complex in the larger region.

The nomination will be reviewed by the Director who may consult with the nominating county regarding details of the nomination and request any clarifying information that may be necessary. Within 60 days of the receipt of the nomination, the Director will inform the applicant whether or not the nomination is acceptable and thereby grant preliminary endorsement of the proposed complex. The proposed urban complex would then be eligible to proceed for final endorsement by the State Planning Commission.

#### State Planning Commission Endorsement of an Urban

Following preliminary endorsement of an urban complex by the Director of the Office of State Planning, the participating county (ies) and municipalities may decide to apply to the State Planning Commission for final endorsement. Final endorsement is necessary to qualify the participating jurisdictions for the "priorities outlined" earlier. The cornerstone of the application will be a strategic plan for the complex (described in detail below) that is arrived at through an open dialogue conducted among both private and public entities within the proposed complex. The success of the urban complex will hinge on the strength and viability of the strategic plan. The strength and viability of the strategic plan is, in turn, hinged 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, it is strongly recommended that an advisory group be established to provide feedback and guidance in the preparation of the strategic plan. The advisory group should include representation from all the participating county and municipal governments and a cross-section of business and community leaders. At least one public hearing should be conducted on the strategic plan before it is finalized and submitted to the State Planning Commission.

An application for final endorsement of an urban complex by the State Planning Commission should be submitted to the Director of the Office of State Planning by the same host or lead county that nominated the complex. The applicant county must provide public notice of its application for endorsement in a newspaper of general circulation that covers the area involved in the complex. Copies of the application shall also be sent to each of the participating municipalities and counties.

An application for final endorsement shall include the following information:

1. The names of the participating county(ies) and municipalities;
2. *The* name, title, address and telephone number of the person responsible for submitting the application;
3. A resolution from each of the participating governing bodies authorizing submission of the application and endorsing the strategic plan for the urban complex;
4. A map with dimensions of approximately 24 inches by 36 inches, delineating the boundaries of the proposed complex and a sufficient amount of the surrounding vicinity to adequately identify the location of the complex in the larger region (If no changes have been made, the map submitted with the original nomination may be resubmitted with an appropriate date change); and
5. A strategic plan for the proposed complex that promotes regional efficiencies through interjurisdictional coordination and cooperation and targets public investments within the urban complex for greatest impact.

Upon receipt of an application for endorsement, the Director will coordinate the review of the application with the appropriate State agencies. The Director will consult with the applicant to resolve any deficiencies in the application. Upon completion of this preliminary review process, the Director will forward the application along with the Director's recommendations to the State Planning Commission for its review and action. If the urban complex is subsequently endorsed by the Commission, the Office of State Planning will issue an official letter of endorsement to the applicant.

#### The Strategic Plan for the Urban Complex

The purpose of the strategic plan is to isolate key issues affecting the future growth and viability of the urban complex, assess the capabilities of the complex participants to deal with those issues and then establish a series of realistic strategies to address the issues. The strategic plan should demonstrate a coordinated approach to community and economic development to ensure the most effective utilization of State, county and municipal resources.

During the preparation of a strategic plan, the host or lead county should solicit public input by way of public hearings and advisory committees. As noted earlier, the success of this effort will depend on the degree of commitment or "buy-in" that exists throughout the complex by all the constituent groups. Drafts of the strategic plan may be sent to the Office of State Planning for its early input and guidance as well. All strategic 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.

The strategic plan for an urban complex, in addition to satisfying the requirements for endorsement by the State Planning Commission, may also be used to satisfy the requirement for individual, municipally prepared revitalization plans for the municipalities within the complex (see page 46 of the State Plan). In those instances, the urban complex plan must incorporate any additional elements prescribed for strategic revitalization plans in OSP Technical Memorandum No. 1., Guidelines for Preparing a Strategic Revitalization Plan and Program.

#### Components of a Strategic Plan for an Urban Complex

1. An identification of issues affecting the future growth and viability of the urban complex.

An introspective evaluation should focus the participating municipalities' and counties' attention on selected strategic issues. An open dialogue among all the "stakeholders," i.e. the planners, providers and consumers of county and municipal services, is essential in this phase. This process should provide direction for completion of the remaining two components.

2. An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the urban complex.

The assessment should be driven by the issues identified in the first component and be based on, to the greatest extent possible, existing studies 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 each topic listed below. The assessment should present tangible conclusions derived from either new or prior investigations of the pertinent subject areas. The assessment should succinctly identify problems, capacities, deficiencies and resources.

#### Suggested assessment topics:

- a. Population and employment growth or decline through the year 2010;
- b. Infrastructure condition and capacity, including, at a minimum, roads, public transportation, wastewater treatment, water supply, schools and open space;
- c. Available and suitable land for development and redevelopment;
- d. Circulation and transportation systems as they relate to the movement of goods and people;

- e. 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);
- f. Available work force, employment opportunities, and training and education needs;
- g. Availability and adequacy of public safety facilities and services;
- h. Availability and adequacy of social and health services; and
- i. Environmental considerations such as air and water quality, open space, historic preservation and remediation of contaminated sites.

### 3. Strategies for regional cooperation and action.

The evaluation of strengths and weaknesses will provide direction and focus for addressing the issues identified at the beginning of this planning process. That juxtaposition of issues and resources should result in a set of practical strategies for shaping the future of the complex, The plan for the urban complex will include at a minimum:

- a. Strategies to manage development and redevelopment on a regional basis;
- b. Strategies to promote regional efficiencies in facilities and services;
- c. Strategies for creating and administering intermunicipal, municipal-county, and public-private agreements to provide specific regional services and facilities; and
- d. Strategies to target public investments within the complex for greatest efficiency and impact.