

STATE PLANNING NOTES

New Jersey State Planning Commission

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APA Lauds New Jersey for Smart Growth Leadership

The American Planning Association (APA) has recognized New Jersey as one of six states in the country serving as exemplary models for smart growth planning practices.

New Jersey, along with five other states, is featured in a report released on Dec. 13 by the APA at a news conference in Washington, D.C. The 108-page report, "Planning Communities for the 21st Century," contains detailed information about the state's comprehensive smart growth efforts.

Governor Christie Whitman said in a news release that she was honored by the national plan-

ning association's recognition of New Jersey's efforts.

"New Jersey's historic initiative to preserve one million acres of open space over the next 10 years will allow our children and grandchildren to enjoy our state's fields, forests and farms for all time. Keeping the 'garden' in the Garden State is only part of the solution - smart growth is the other part," said Governor Whitman.

"Saving farmland and open space well into the new millennium will require better designing and smarter planning for our cities, towns, and suburban areas than we've ever had - or needed - before," the Governor added. "We need to encourage smart growth of any future land that is to be developed as well as the redevelopment of our existing cities, towns and brownfield sites."

And it's the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, according to Governor Whitman, that provides such a blueprint for smart growth and a strong framework for the future that will contribute to making New Jersey a better place to live, work and raise a family.

The APA's report included many references to New Jersey, citing among other accomplishments, the creation of a new, \$3 million Smart Growth Planning Grants program. (See story on page 3)

The grants will be allocated to counties and municipalities by the Department of Community Affairs, in consultation with the Office of State Planning and other agencies.

The APA's report noted that the State Plan is under review and revision, with a new plan expected to be adopted by the New Jersey State Planning Commission in May.

"This is a vision for New Jersey that grows smart," said Joseph J. Maraziti, Jr., Chairman of the State Planning Commission. "We will soon have a new State Plan that is more comprehensive, more up-to-date and more usable for shaping where want to live, work, play and raise a family."

Chairman Maraziti urged citizens, interest groups, and local, county and state officials to get involved in the state planning process. A series of public 21

continued on back

INSIDE NOTES:

Briefly	2
<i>Somerset Centers Update</i>	
Smart Growth Grants	3
Highlands	3

Briefly...

Three Somerset Towns Ink Regional Planning Pact

The New Jersey Office of State Planning enthusiastically supports and applauds the cooperative land-use efforts of the Bridgewater-Raritan-Somerville regional center, said Executive Director Herbert Simmens.

“The State Development and Redevelopment Plan encourages regional cooperation. None of New Jersey’s 566 municipalities is an island unto itself. What happens in one community affects quality of life conditions in its neighboring towns and the entire region,” said Simmens.

Simmens’ remarks came in

response to the Nov. 24 signing by various officials of an inter-local planning coordination agreement. The officials inked the pact at a news conference at the Somerset Ballpark.

“This is a positive outgrowth of the four-day workshop in Somerville last spring. That design charrette created visions for greater sustainability and livability within the Bridgewater-Raritan-Somerville regional center,” he added.

The charrette brought together professionals as well as members of the public, who worked on plans for important sites in the

area, including a park along the Raritan River, and traffic calming methods for Route 22.

The Office of State Planning, and the State Planning Commission, which approved the regional center designation in 1996, both are available to help these communities as they continue their smart growth planning efforts, Simmens noted.

The Office can provide technical and logistical support to any municipality or group of municipalities considering organizing a community or regional planning workshop or charrette.

STATE PLANNING

NOTES

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More Municipalities Eligible for Priority Aid for State Plan Centers

Seventy-six New Jersey communities are now designated by the State Planning Commission as centers, or are included in an endorsed regional plan.

The State Planning Commission has approved town center designations for the City of Cape May, Stone Harbor and Avalon. This action on Oct. 27 brought to eight the number of municipalities in Cape May County - half of the municipalities in the county - that have been designated as village, town or regional centers under the State Plan.

The Commission in December approved regional-center designation for the City of Salem in Salem County and in September, approved village-center designation for Vincentown in Southampton Township in Burlington County.

In order to provide strong incentives to communities to participate in the state planning process, municipalities and counties that have their plans endorsed by the Commission are entitled to greater priority to receive funding, permit review, and technical assistance from state agencies. Currently, nearly 20 programs at the state and regional level provide priority assistance to State Plan centers and communities with endorsed plans.

Smart Growth Grants \$3 Million Available To Counties, Towns

New, smart growth planning grants totaling \$3 million are now available for municipalities and counties, Gov. Christie Whitman and Community Affairs Commissioner Jane M. Kenny have announced.

Mayors of the Garden State's 566 municipalities and officials of 21 county governments received a letter from the Commissioner and a program guide outlining how to apply and how the grant requests will be judged. Officials hope to start awarding grants sometime in January.

"Our program to preserve 1 million acres of open space over the next 10 years is only part of the solution to providing our children and grandchildren with a New Jersey that they can enjoy in the future," said Governor Whitman. "The other half of the equation is to encourage smart growth of the land that is to be developed and redevelopment of our cities and towns."

"These grants will enable counties and municipalities to develop plans that will lead to more livable and sustainable communities," said Commissioner Kenny. Sustainable communities are those that protect today's resources so they are there for the future.

"One of the goals of Governor Whitman and the Department of Community Affairs is the promotion of comprehensive, community-based planning that supports the department's varied initiatives in the areas of community development, affordable housing, redevelopment, capital planning and regional planning," the Commissioner added.

"Until now, we have not been able to provide the financial support that so many cities and towns and suburbs and rural communities and counties have requested. That has changed. I am pleased that the Legislature agreed with Governor Whitman's inclusion of \$3 million for local planning assistance in the department's fiscal year 2000 budget," she said.

Joseph J. Maraziti, Jr., Chairman of the State Planning Commission, applauded the Governor and the Legislature for new \$3 million appropriation in the department's budget for planning grants.

"These grants present an exciting opportunity for municipalities and counties to show us what they can do to implement smart growth strategies in their local land-use decisions," Maraziti said.

"I am looking forward to receiving proposals by counties and municipalities and working in partnership to create an economically prosperous and environmentally sound New Jersey," said Commissioner Kenny.

The program guide is available on the Office of State Planning's web site. The address is <http://www.state.nj.us/osp>.

PDC To Hold Second Forum on the Highlands

The Plan Development Committee is scheduled to hold a second public meeting on a petition filed by the Highlands Coalition asking that the State Planning Commission designate the area in northwestern New Jersey as an "area of critical state concern."

The meeting is slated for the evening of Jan. 26 in Warren County. Interested parties are asked to call the Office of State Planning meetings information hotline at 1-800-522-0129 or see the web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/osp/>

The Highlands province spans 1,000 square miles in Morris, Sussex, Hunterdon, Bergen and Somerset counties.

More than 125 people attended the first meeting on Oct. 20 at the Morris County Administration Building and more than 50 presented testimony to the committee during the five-hour meeting led by PDC Chairman Charles Kuperus.

Staff planner Jessica Sanchez presented an overview of a Highlands summary report prepared by she and planner Barbara Walsh. The report describes the characteristics, trends and issues of the Highlands region, as well as planning efforts and programs currently in place to consider those issues. The report is on the OSP web site.

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APA LAUDS NJ continued

public hearings - one in each county - will be held in the spring before adoption of the new State Plan.

Commissioner Jane Kenny of the Department of Community Affairs joined in the Governor's acknowledgement to the APA for singling out New Jersey's efforts. The APA report details a host of state programs and efforts in a range of areas that further principles of smart growth. The areas include comprehensive planning laws, farmland and open space preservation, heritage and cultural assets, affordable housing, economic development, transportation, and environmental protection.

"The Whitman administration is working in a coordinated manner to support the goals of smart growth," said Commissioner Kenny. "It is encouraging to see that our efforts are being recognized nationally."

Commissioner Kenny noted that New Jersey was the only state to win a national award for sustainability in 1999 from Renew America and the President's Council on Sustainable Development. The term sustainability means being able to live today without using up the resources, such as air and water, needed for future generations.

Herbert Simmens, Executive Director of the Office of State Planning, was in Washington to thank the APA on behalf of the Whitman administration and the State Planning Commission.

The other states singled out by the APA in its report are Maryland, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee and Washington.

For more information, see the Office of State Planning's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/osp/> or the APA's website at <http://www.planning.org>.
