

STATE PLANNING NOTES

New Jersey State Planning Commission

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New State Plan Provides Vision for the 21st Century

The New Jersey State Planning Commission has approved an updated and improved blueprint for smart growth, the *New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan*.

The State Plan supersedes the document that has been in place since June 12, 1992.

On March 1, Acting Gov. Donald DiFrancesco delivered the keynote address before a standing-room only crowd of more than 300 people at the War Memorial Building in Trenton.

“We want our state to grow. We need it to grow,” DiFrancesco said. “But we need that growth to be smart growth. That means balancing a vibrant economy with a clean environment. It means attractive, affordable places to live that don’t waste precious resources.”

Redesign Sprawl

“The State Plan is a blueprint because it focuses growth in cities and town centers where infrastructure already exists. It improves and promotes coordinated and diverse transportation. It promotes the redesign of sprawling areas. It protects and preserves natural resources while

allowing for growth and development,” he said.

State Is a Partner

While the Acting Governor announced \$1 million in smart growth planning grants during his remarks, he primarily focused on broad themes.

“I believe that when it comes to smart growth, the state is more effective as a partner than as a policeman. That does not mean we will back down from protecting the environment or preserving resources. It means we believe more in the power of incentive than the weight of restriction,” he said.

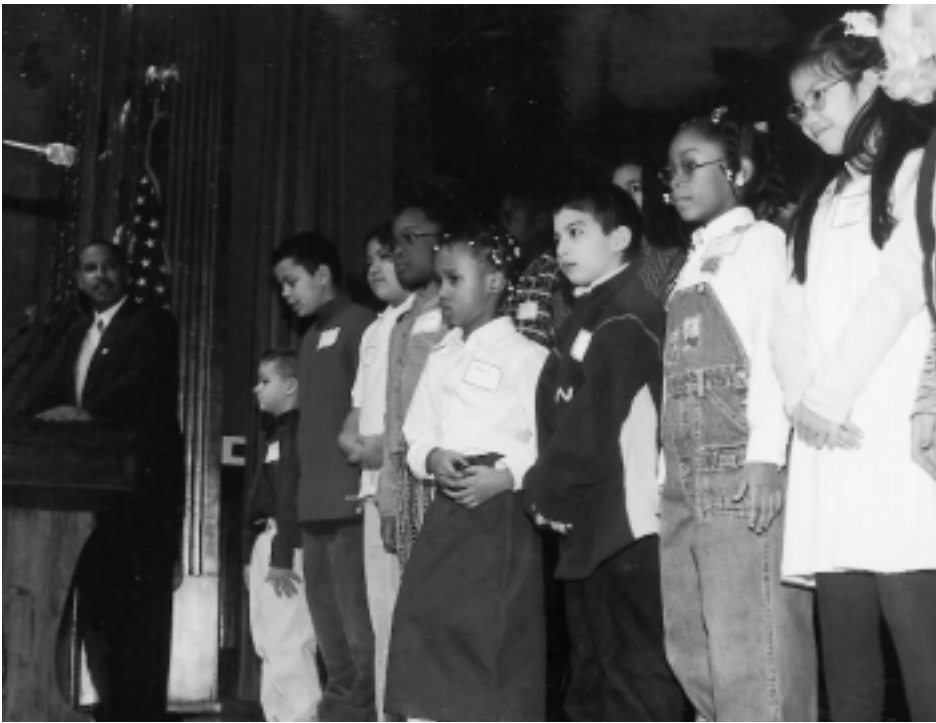
“Incentives encourage companies, developers, homeowners, and others to locate in areas they never before considered. Incentives inspire new thinking, foster better cooperation, and build a better product.”

His remarks came during the meeting that featured students from the Columbus School in Trenton and the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf in nearby Ewing Township leading the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. The children were



Holly Marvin

Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco reiterates his support for the State Plan, saying he believes in incentives to promote smart growth.



Holly Marvin

Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer, with children from the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf in Ewing Township and the Columbus School in Trenton, began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Among the officials present was former state Senator Gerald Stockman of Trenton, sponsor of the State Planning Act which was enacted in 1985.

“The State Plan provides a vision for the future that will preserve and enhance the quality of life for all residents of New Jersey,” said Joseph J. Maraziti, Jr., Chairman of the 17-member Commission. The Commission is comprised of citizens and representatives of state, county and local government.

“The State Plan is a common-sense document that promotes the revitalization of our cities and towns, a sound economy, and more affordable places to live, at the same time it preserves open space and farmland,” said Maraziti.

Towns Benefit

Commissioner Jane M. Kenny of the Department of Community Affairs, who sits on the 17-member State Planning Commission, said it was important to understand that land-use decisions in New Jersey are local matters for each of the state’s municipalities. However, she said, there are benefits and opportunities for the 566 municipalities and 21 counties that voluntarily follow the State Plan.

“There are tangible and measurable benefits for municipalities that mesh their local master plans with the State Plan. An independent study by Rutgers University found that the State Plan saves precious land, billions of dollars and improves our environment without harming the economy,” said Commissioner Kenny.

STATE PLANNING

NOTES

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invited as a reminder of the future generations whose lives are touched by land-use decisions across the most densely populated state in the country.

Standing Room Only

Several hundred people interested in the State Plan jammed the ballroom for the meeting. They included state legislators, municipal and county officials, and representatives of various interest groups including developers, environmental organizations, and citizens from urban, suburban and rural New Jersey.

Senate Majority Leader John O. Bennett of Monmouth County, who represents the 12th District; Senator William Schluter of Mercer County, who represents the 23rd District; and Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein of Middlesex County, who represents the 14th District, were present.

GOALS

- ✓ Revitalize the state's cities and towns
- ✓ Conserve the state's natural resources and systems
- ✓ Promote beneficial economic growth, development and renewal for all residents of New Jersey
- ✓ Protect the environment, prevent and clean up pollution
- ✓ Provide adequate public facilities and services at a reasonable cost
- ✓ Provide adequate housing at reasonable cost
- ✓ Preserve and enhance areas with historic, cultural, scenic, open space and recreational value
- ✓ Ensure sound and integrated planning and implementation statewide

State government offers strong incentives to communities to participate in the state planning process. Municipalities and counties that have their plans endorsed by the State Planning Commission are entitled to greater priority to receive funding, permit review and technical assistance from state agencies.

Administrators of 20 separate state agency funds or programs explicitly use the State Plan as part of the decision-making process in awarding grants, loans and funding of projects, and for providing technical planning assistance to municipalities and counties.

The State Planning Act, passed by the state Legislature and signed into law by Governor Thomas H. Kean, required the creation of a plan for the state's future.

Goals, Policies

The State Plan contains eight goals and 19 policy areas. The substantive policy areas provide guidance for state and local planning initiatives.

The eight goals are:

- ✓ Revitalize the state's cities and towns
- ✓ Conserve the state's natural resources and systems
- ✓ Promote beneficial economic growth, development and renewal for all residents of New Jersey
- ✓ Protect the environment, prevent and clean up pollution
- ✓ Provide adequate public facilities and services at a reasonable cost
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Public Involved

"The State Plan is a comprehensive blueprint for the future development, redevelopment and conservation of New Jersey and was developed with the most exhaustive public participation process in the nation," said Herbert Simmens, Executive Director of the State Planning Commission.



Holly Marvin

Jane M. Kenny, Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, offers her thoughts before the vote.

The State Plan supports and enhances fiscal efficiency, all types of transit, open space, water and air quality and community.



Holly Marvin

Trenton Mayor, Douglas H. Palmer, also a member of the State Planning Commission, comments on the opportunities under the State Plan to revitalize New Jersey's cities and towns.

Take Care of What We Have

Maintain and revitalize our existing cities and towns.

When We Build New, Build Communities

Organize new growth in centers – compact, mixed-use communities where people can live, work, shop and play and find a variety of choices – in housing, in transportation and in access to jobs.

Take Care of Our Farmlands, Natural and Historic Resources

Protect our farmland and natural and historic resources.

The State Plan contains three core ideas. They are:

- ✓ Maintain and revitalize our existing cities and towns.
- ✓ Organize new growth in centers – compact, mixed-use communities where people can live, work, shop and play and find a variety of choices – in housing, in transportation and in access to jobs.
- ✓ Locate new centers and the expansion of existing communities in ways that protect our farmland and natural and historic resources.

The State Plan supports and enhances fiscal efficiency; all types of transit including rail, bus, light rail and shuttles; bicycle and pedestrian mobility; open space; water and air quality; a sense of place; and community, meaning social interaction by people with neighbors.

The State Plan reduces land consumption, pollution, energy and water consumption, municipal and county services costs, and capital costs of infrastructure, such as roads, bridges and sewers by over a billion dollars.

An independent study released in September by the center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University showed that following the State Plan would save billions of dollars.

While the State Plan is voluntary for municipalities to follow, it is a guide for investing, and spending state dollars, in ways that are in line with the plan's goals.

Towns Benefit

Judging by the number of communities participating in the State Plan process and their enthusiasm about it, the word is getting out about the plan. More than 200 communities have proactively stepped forward to be part of the state planning process.

This includes municipalities in which there are 64 designated centers. In addition, 12 municipalities in Hudson County and 12 municipalities in Burlington County worked with their counties and have received State Planning Commission endorsement of their joint plans.

Plan Endorsement Update

The State Planning Commission on March 1 voted to publish new rules that will provide guidance for municipalities and counties seeking Commission determinations that their plans are consistent with the State Plan. This new process, called Plan Endorsement, will incorporate the center designation process. The Commission is also revising how interested parties seek planning areas changes or other amendments to the State Plan Policy Map.



Holly Marvin

Joseph J. Maraziti, Jr., Chairman of the State Planning Commission, right, congratulates Charles Kuperus, Chairman of the Plan Development Committee, left. Herb Simmens, Director of the Office of State Planning, is at center.

Improvements in the 2001 State Plan

Here is a summary of improvements in the new State Plan.

Public Participation Has Improved The Plan

The process, begun in 1997, created a statewide dialogue and provided enormous public input.

In hundreds of public meetings involving thousands of participants, almost 1,000 separate issues were negotiated between the State Planning Commission and local governments and citizens.

The Commission reached agreement with local governments on over 75 percent of these issues.

Over 1,200 people attended the series of public hearings, which were held in every county in the state, and over 400 people sent in their comments to the State Planning Commission for consideration.

The Plan has also been widely distributed through the web and a CD-ROM, to make it much more accessible to the public.

The Plan Provides Greater Clarity

This Plan reinforces the fundamental principles of the 1992 Plan, but provides much greater guidance. These improvements include:

The Plan has an Executive Summary with pictures that show how New Jersey would look in 20 years with or without the State Plan.

The Plan has new sections providing Vision statements and Key Concepts, which present the Plan's goals and describe the critical relationship between the planning process and desired outcomes.

The Plan Provides Stronger Policy Direction

New Policies in the Plan address issues which will have profound effects on our quality of life, including:

The Highlands: In response to a petition submitted during Cross-acceptance, the New Jersey Highlands have been designated a Special Resource Area. This designation recognizes the Highlands' critical importance to all of us and provides assistance for coordinated planning efforts.

Design: This new section recognizes that achieving our goals depends not only on the location of new growth and development, but also the form that it takes.

Healthy Communities: The Plan recognizes the link between community design and lifestyle, and the effects these have on public health.

Smart Schools: As New Jersey is poised to make major investments in school facilities, the Plan promotes schools as centers of community.

In addition, improvements have been made to existing policies. These include:

- Higher priority for public investment in urban areas.
- Addressing the need to retrofit and redevelop areas of sprawl in suburban locations.

The Plan recognizes the link between community design and lifestyle, and the effects these have on public health.

- Protecting the Environs of Centers through strengthening policies insuring viable agriculture and environmental protection in rural areas.

Greater Attention Has Been Paid To Plan Implementation

The overwhelming public consensus has been that this Plan has the right goals, but needs to be better implemented to ensure our future. In response, the Department of Community Affairs is now providing financial assistance to communities and regions working to use the State Plan to improve their local plans. This Plan also provides improvements for:

State Agencies: This plan has benefited from partnership with state agencies, and has been written to help agencies implement the plan in their decisions.

Strategies: The Plan includes new sections that explain how tools can be used by local governments to achieve State Plan goals.

Indicators and Targets: The Plan also includes Indicators and Targets that will help us make sure we are working to achieve our goals over the next 20 years. These targets include:

Eliminating our \$46 billion backlog in maintenance and repair needs.

Improving water quality by reaching a goal of having 95% of our stream miles support aquatic life.

Significantly reducing levels of distress in our communities.

Having all municipal and county plans consistent with the State Plan and endorsed by the SPC.

Acquiring or protecting an additional 1 million acres of farmland and open space.

Locating 85 percent or more of new jobs and population growth in areas designated in the State Plan for growth, while reducing land consumption per person significantly.

The Plan Endorsement Process Will Carry These Improvements Forward

Plan Endorsement was a major change that came out of Cross-acceptance. This process will allow:

Regional Coordination, by emphasizing countywide and regional planning initiatives.

Partnership among citizens, local government and the state to develop plans consistent with the State Plan and to implement these plans through Plan Endorsement Agreements.



Holly Marvin

Charles Kuperus, Chairman of the Plan Development Committee, has shepherded the writing and adoption of the new State Plan



Holly Marvin

Hudson County Executive Robert Janiszewski, a strong supporter of the State Plan, says his 12 municipalities are benefiting from being designated as the state's first Urban Complex.

NOTES

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How To Get Involved

Everyone in New Jersey has a stake in its future. Here's how you can get involved and find out more:

Go to a local planning board or a county planning board meeting. Find out what your elected and appointed officials have in mind for the future of your area.

Write to your legislator, your local, county, state and federal officials, urging them to do everything possible to plan for a New Jersey that grows smart.

Many organizations across the state are involved in suggesting ways to shape the State Plan and to implement it to an even greater degree. Participate in such organizations.

If you're in the private sector, use the State Plan to shape development and investment decisions.

If you're a local official, urge your planning board and governing body to discuss in detail what the State Plan says and how it stacks up to your local master plan.

Come to a meeting of the State Planning Commission. Our meetings are open to the public and members of the public are encouraged to speak.

The Commission's upcoming monthly meetings this year are: May 16, June 20, July 18, September 20, October 17 and December 5. Please call for times and locations.

How To Contact Us

Your voice counts. We want to hear from you. Call us. Write us. Or e-mail us. The public is invited to all meetings of the State Planning Commission, which are open to everyone and scheduled and publicized in plenty of time for you to attend.

Please contact the Office of State Planning for more information. You may reach us at 609-292-7156.

We have a toll-free information line for an up-to-date list of future meetings. Call 1-800-522-0129.

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