



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
STATE PLANNING COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SMART GROWTH
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JAMES E. MCGREEVEY
Governor

SUSAN BASS LEVIN
Commissioner

April 28, 2004

Dear County and Municipal Officials and other interested parties:

On Wednesday, April 28, 2004, the State Planning Commission approved the release of "Building a Better New Jersey," the Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and with that, officially launched the third round of Cross-acceptance.

The State Planning Act of 1985, N.J.S.A. 52:18A-196 et seq., empowered the State Planning Commission with the responsibility to prepare, revise, and readopt the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan) every three years. The State Plan was adopted using the process of Cross-acceptance, a legislatively mandated process whereby planning policies are reviewed by government entities at all levels and the public to assess their consistency with each other and with the State Plan.

The theme of the Preliminary State Plan, "Building a Better New Jersey," refers to the actions that are needed to realize New Jersey's Vision 2025. The public members and government representatives on the Commission, and the constituencies we represent, must work together to find a balance between the varied interests throughout the state. Cross-acceptance, and the public input it involves, make New Jersey's State Plan a unique document that serves as a national model.

Preliminary Plan Document

Rather than re-writing the entire 2001 State Plan, this Preliminary Plan is designed to identify amendments proposed by the State Planning Commission to the current State Plan. The proposed amendments improve the implementation of the State Plan. In general, the State Planning Commission proposes to clarify the roles of the public and governments at all levels; update the Indicators and Targets for measuring the successful implementation of the State Plan; restructure the organization of the State Plan to more closely align the policies with the goals and strategies; update definitions to be consistent with recent changes to the State Planning Rules; explain efforts underway to enhance

preservation and planning efforts in the Highlands; and incorporate two mapping policy changes for designating agricultural nodes and Critical Environmental Sites.

Preliminary State Plan Map

Along with the Preliminary Plan document, the State Planning Commission has also authorized the release of the Preliminary State Plan Map. For this third round of Cross-acceptance, scheduled to begin on April 28, 2004, the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) conducted a comprehensive review of the State Plan Map for all counties.

OSG worked with the various state agencies to identify updated GIS files that could have an impact on a planning area designation. Data was collected from the Departments of Environmental Protection, Agriculture, and Transportation, incorporated onto an “informational data layer” map and distributed to all counties and municipalities for their reference. OSG then conducted a side-by-side review of these maps with the current State Plan Map. That review was supplemented with local knowledge, aerial photography, Land Use Land Cover data, housing starts data, available mapping of affordable housing sites, the Department of Agriculture’s Smart Growth Plan, the Department of Transportation’s 5-year Capital Plan, regional plans, and public comments. Finally, OSG overlaid the mapping with GIS files for wetlands and open space, as well as with updated sewer and road files, to identify features that conflict with their current Planning Area definition.

The new parks data layer is a combination of the Department of Environmental Protection’s Green Acres inventory, which includes federal, state, county and municipal parks, where available, along with park data that was developed during Round II of Cross-acceptance. All of these areas are now shown as green on the Preliminary Map.

We illustrated wetlands on the State Plan Map in the following ways: (1) If wetlands were larger than 2 acres and adjacent to a Planning Area 5, then they were appended to the PA5; (2) If an area of wetlands is larger than one square mile, it is shown as a PA5; and (3) if the wetlands are smaller than one square mile, they are shown with yellow cross-hatching, as a potential Critical Environmental Site.

We also overlaid an updated map of Sewer Service Areas to show areas where the sewerage infrastructure may not be consistent with the Planning Area definition. Sites in Planning Areas 3, 4, 4b, and 5 with sewers are shown with red dots. Sites in PA 1 and 2 without sewers are shown with green dots.

In addition, the State Planning Commission proposes to make some additional technical changes. First, the location of all C1 waterbodies are mapped as a reference; however, the map is not at a scale to show buffers around the streams. Second, the areas previously marked as Critical Environmental Sites (CES) in Planning Areas 4B and 5, outside of designated centers, are no longer noted as such because the planning areas in which they are located are considered environmentally sensitive already, and CES designation within them is redundant. Finally, there is pending legislation that would establish a regional planning entity for New Jersey’s Highlands Region. Upon passage of

the legislation, the State Planning Commission will add the pertinent boundaries of the region onto the Preliminary State Plan Map.

The resulting map is a starting point for discussion and negotiation during Cross-acceptance, and should be considered as preliminary.

Next Steps

The Office of Smart Growth is posting on its website, www.njsmartgrowth.com, all of the quad maps; the county delta maps; a resource list; a link to additional data layers from the Departments of Agriculture, Environmental Protection and Transportation; the Preliminary State Plan document; the Cross-acceptance Manual; and the Plan Endorsement Guidelines.

All of the counties have agreed to be the negotiating entities for Cross-acceptance and have been offered a grant to assist in this planning effort. The State Planning Commission will send all county planning offices hard copies of the quad maps pertaining to their counties, a county-wide “delta” map that highlights the areas for potential change, and a CD with GIS files and the PDF files of the quads within their county. In addition, CDs containing all of this information will be available upon request from the Office of Smart Growth.

Cross-acceptance is, by definition, a negotiating process. The State Plan and the State Plan Map are intended to represent the input of counties, municipalities and the public so that we can all work together to create a State Plan that makes sense for all of New Jersey. We look forward to working with you over the course of the next year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Bass Levin".

Susan Bass Levin
Commissioner
Department of Community Affairs

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