

Public Information Meeting
Preliminary SDRP
Cape May County – Wednesday, March 26, 2025 – 2:00 PM

START: 2:03 PM

PREPARED REMARKS:

Ronald C. Simone, III, Assistant County Administrator

- Welcome & Introductions

Walter C. Lane, Acting Executive Director, OPA

- The Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) is tasked by the NJ State Planning Act to implement the goals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP).
- In addition to providing administrative support to the State Planning Commission, OPA is organized within the NJ Department of State's NJ Business Action Center (BAC). The broader purpose of the BAC is to facilitate economic growth in New Jersey through technical assistance and guidance provided to businesses and local governments.
- OPA is currently in the process of updating the SDRP.
- As per the NJ State Planning Act, the SDRP intends to establish an optimal balance of economic development and environmental conservation through sound planning practices.
- The SDRP is not a regulatory document, but a guidance document. It does not overrule, negate, or interfere with local plans or regulations. Instead, its aim is to foster greater coordination and consistency between planning objectives at all levels of government.
- In December of 2024, OPA disseminated the Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan, which is a draft version of the new SDRP. This began a process called Cross Acceptance, in which all New Jersey residents and local and regional entities are free to offer comments, thereby contributing to the final version of the SDRP.
- Because stakeholder engagement is critical to the Cross Acceptance process, OPA commenced its outreach to municipalities, counties, and regional entities well in advance of the release of the Preliminary SDRP.
- At present, OPA is conducting public meetings such as this in all 21 counties and at the Highlands Council. Later this year, OPA will conduct six public hearings on the outcome of the Cross Acceptance process.
- Concurrently, OPA is working with a team from Rutgers and Rowan Universities to prepare an Infrastructure Needs Assessment, which will project the public investments necessary to implement the new SDRP. An Impact Assessment, investigating societal and economic impacts of the new SDRP, is also underway. Furthermore, OPA is soliciting comments on the State Plan Policy Map and its underlying mapping protocols.
- The current SDRP, adopted in 2001, contains eight goals. The Preliminary SDRP contains ten goals. These goals pertain to economic development, housing, infrastructure, urban revitalization, climate change, water and natural resources, environmental protection, historic and scenic resources, equity, and comprehensive planning.
- The State Plan Policy Map, required by the State Planning Rules, serves as the geographic application of the SDRP's goals, strategies, and policies. Although planning area amendments will occur during Cross Acceptance, the addition of new centers and nodes will be addressed outside of Cross Acceptance, through the Plan Endorsement process.

- The Smart Growth Explorer is an online mapping tool developed by OPA's partners at Rowan University. It can be used to identify areas suitable for development and areas suitable for conservation. It can serve as a resource to stakeholders when considering requests to amend the State Plan Policy Map.
- OPA will complete its public meetings by mid-April. The Cross Acceptance process will then proceed to the Comparison Phase, in which County Cross Acceptance Reports are developed and submitted to OPA. Next is the Negotiation Phase, in which OPA and the counties will discuss points of agreement and disagreement in the Preliminary SDRP. Ultimately, we hope to adopt the Final SDRP, along with the Infrastructure Needs Assessment and the Impact Assessment, before the end of the year.
- QR codes are available to access the Preliminary SDRP, the Citizen's Guide to the Preliminary SDRP, and an online portal to submit comments on the Preliminary SDRP.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD:

Summary of **Questions** and *OPA Responses*

Is it possible to get a copy of your presentation?

Yes, we plan to share a copy with the County.

Does the new State Plan account for the Pinelands Area?

Yes. The State Plan integrates with the Pinelands Commission, as well as other regional entities such as the Highlands Council and the Hackensack Meadowlands. It should be noted that the Pinelands Commission has jurisdiction over all mapping within the Pinelands Area; these are the white areas on the State Plan Policy Map in Cape May County.

Will the State Plan also integrate with other State agencies, and with CAFRA permitting?

Yes, the State is working to eliminate potential disconnects within the various departments. An effort is currently underway, concurrent with Cross Acceptance, to improve the State Plan Policy Map and associated definitions in the State Plan. Any changes will be brought before the State Planning Commission and the Governor's Office.

Can municipalities still proceed through Plan Endorsement during Cross Acceptance?

Yes.

Different State agencies are using different time horizons for their strategic plans. Is there a way that these planning horizons can be standardized?

It should be noted that the State Plan is intended to be a guidance document, and a tool to foster greater coordination between various State agencies. Its proposed strategies are not meant to be implemented by a certain date.

Is the County planning to meet with the municipalities?

[Lauren Purdom, Senior Planner, Cape May County]: Yes. Going forward, the County will be hosting standing biweekly meetings. Any municipal representatives are welcome to join.

Can a municipality request a one-on-one meeting with the County?

[Lauren Purdom, Senior Planner, Cape May County]: Yes, this is possible. We plan to make ourselves available via Teams.

Middle Township received Plan Endorsement in 2023. If our municipality wishes to request changes to its mapping, what would be the proper method?

Please include your requests in your municipal Cross Acceptance Response. We can also address this during your next biennial review.

The municipal Housing Elements and Fair Share Plans are to be adopted by June. How should we handle these separate priorities?

This matter has been raised before, and we understand the situation you are in. In response, we've tried to make the Cross Acceptance process as streamlined as possible.

If a municipality does not participate in the Cross Acceptance process, will their silence be interpreted as agreement with and acceptance of the new State Plan?

Yes. It is up to the County to include the municipality in their Cross Acceptance Response report as a "no response."

Besides the additions of the equity and climate change goals, is the new State Plan a verbatim copy of the 2001 State Plan?

No, the original eight goals have also been updated and reworded.

Have there been any changes to the State Plan Policy Map since 2001?

Yes, but only small changes that have come about through the Plan Endorsement process. Newton, for example, just received a new center designation as a result of its Plan Endorsement earlier this month.

Will there be revisions to the State Plan as a result of recent actions by the federal government?

No. It is still too soon to know the full scope and impacts of the new priorities implemented by the new federal administration. But, this is a State Plan, required by and effectuating State laws, and reflecting the state's concerns and needs.

The draft State Plan does not include Planning Areas in the Table of Contents. Can this be added?

Yes, and we welcome comments such as these, so as to improve the readability of the Plan. Our hope is to produce the most useful Plan possible. We will try to incorporate as many suggested changes as we can.

Is the DEP on board with the new State Plan?

Yes.

For towns that are currently endorsed, what are their responsibilities in regards to the Cross Acceptance Response?

For endorsed towns, only a portion of CART needs to be completed.

It appears that CAFRA centers have recently disappeared from State mapping. Will this be addressed during Cross Acceptance?

The State is working to address this matter.

Will the Plan Endorsement process be expedited during Cross Acceptance?

A municipality can expect an expedited process if they've had a previous Plan Endorsement designation. At the moment OPA is coordinating Cross Acceptance with a limited staff, but we will do all we can to assist you.

Could the State Plan address abandoned railroads? Could this land be repurposed for affordable housing?

The State Plan does address investments in transit infrastructure, as well as greenway conversions. We welcome you to submit your comment online.

END: 2:46 PM