

Public Information Meeting
Preliminary SDRP
Cumberland County – Thursday, February 13, 2025 – 6:00 PM

START: 6:01 PM

PREPARED REMARKS:

Matthew E. Pisarski, Planning Director

- Welcome & Introductions

Jim Sauro, Commissioner Director

- Adopting the new State Plan is essential
- Economic development and environmental protection are both achievable
- Cumberland County's fourteen municipalities will all be participating in the adoption process

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*

What can be done about major points of disagreement between municipal objectives and the State Plan's goals?

Conversations can be had between various State agencies in the event that there is a major disagreement that may require a change in policy. For truly intractable disagreements, the State Planning Commission itself will have to render a decision.

Is the purpose of the Negotiation Phase is to iron out as many disagreements as possible?

Yes, the objective is to identify pragmatic solutions.

Does the Preliminary SDRP account for the vast differences in the character of New Jersey's northern, central, and southern regions?

We believe it does, but this is an example of something that the public can bring to OPA's attention, if you happen to feel this is lacking.

Will the State Plan be impacted by the ongoing changes to the way the federal government addresses issues such as equity and climate change?

It may be too soon to tell. Suffice it to say that the State Plan itself is required by State law, and it seeks to effectuate other State laws, rules, and regulations, such as those pertaining to environmental justice..

Certain municipalities in our county are situated in the Pinelands Area, the CAFRA region, or both. This limits the amount of land that is available for development and economic activity. What can be done to ensure that existing centers are not reduced in size? Will certain developable areas be eligible for PILOT programs?

These are all matters that can be addressed in the Cross Acceptance Responses. If you can provide justification for an area's special designation, let us know.

To what extent does the State Plan facilitate regional coordination?

We feel that it does so extensively. Going forward, the counties will be a great resource for regional coordination.

CLOSING REMARKS:

Matthew E. Pisarski, Planning Director

- Cross Acceptance Response preparation is underway
- County Planning Department representatives will be attending municipal Planning Board meetings in the month of April
- Cumberland County's countywide CART will be submitted to OPA in May

END: 6:48 PM