

**REPORT OF THE URBAN POLICY  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**SUBMITTED TO THE OFFICE OF STATE PLANNING  
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**Committee Members**

**Nancy Beer  
Woodrow Wilson School**

**George Carey  
Rutgers University**

**Jewel Thompson Chin  
City of Paterson**

**John Coscia  
Delaware Valley Regional  
Planning Commission**

**Bob Holmes, Esquire  
Woodbridge**

**Neil Seldman  
Institute for Local Self Reliance**

**Staff Facilitator**

**Dave Maski  
Office of State Planning**

The Urban Policy Technical Advisory Committee met on April 7 and April 14 to discuss urban policy issues as they relate to the Draft Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The primary focus was on Tier 1 and applicable statewide strategies.

There was a general consensus that while the strategies and policies found in the Plan will not hinder the revitalization of urban areas, neither do they go far enough toward achieving the goal of revitalization. Weaknesses surfaced in several policy areas, some minor – some major. The basic conclusion of the committee was that each of these "soft-spots"<sup>11</sup> needed to be revisited and appropriately bolstered if the plan is to truly foster urban revitalization.

Areas of general concern were:

1\* Any attempt at urban revitalization will depend substantially on how the social problems are addressed and resolved. Although the current draft of the Plan includes a "Human Development" section, it falls short of the mark.

The areas of education, welfare, employment training, drugs, public safety, day care, health and the related issues of housing and the homeless need to be expanded upon and discussed in greater depth rather than in the present cursory fashion.

2. The Plan should be more specific on what the intent of Tier 1 is, given the differences existing among the municipalities making up this tier. The tier ranges from central cities to suburbs, cities declining in population to overcrowded cities, cities experiencing a strong resurgence to cities taking the first steps back. The perceived 2010 goal of maintaining 1985 population levels seems inappropriate in many of these cases.
3. The stated vision of a "scaled down" central city raises in some Tnlnds the aura of 1950's vintage urban renewal – tearing down, rather than building up. This vision needs to be better explained.
4. The Plan should leave no doubt that urban areas are to be prioritized for state assistance. This should be clearly stated throughout the statewide section of the plan as well as in the Tier 1 chapter and wherever else it is appropriate. Presently, this priority is not always well stated.
5. The Plan should be careful not to set up corridor centers as competitors of urban centers.
6. Prioritizing urban areas for capital facilities is not always seen as a plus. Urban areas often become the locations for facilities that nobody else wants, e.g., sewage treatment plants, incinerators, prisons. The "benefit" realized by the host municipality is sometimes questionable, indeed the social costs of these facilities are borne by the host while the benefits are realized in the suburban or rural "sending" areas.

7. The above scenario likewise applies to transportation facilities that only make it easier to "pass-through" urban centers or make them receptacles for suburban cars, e.g. a new parking lot at Trenton station serving Bucks County residents.
8. There is a danger in targeting too say resources to glossy downtown projects at the expense of neighborhoods. It is important to strike a balance between these two development strategies.
9. At times the plan lacks a clean cut implementation strategy. Many of the policies call for yet another "review"<sup>11</sup> of existing policies and programs rather than calling for some meaningful action. However, it is equally non-productive to call for the expansion of existing programs without first having an understanding of their past effectiveness.
10. There is a recognized need for state funding of local planning and economic development offices to better enable urban municipalities to carry out various redevelopment policies.