THE DRAFT STATE STRATEGIC PLAN: A Somerset County Perspective

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SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

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ACTIVE COUNTY INVOLVEMENT IN STATE PLANNING

- Lead three rounds of Cross-Acceptance at the County-level, serving as “Designated Negotiation Entity”
- Facilitated 12+ Center Designations
- Provided support to Municipalities seeking Plan Endorsement (Somerset Regional Center, Millstone Borough, etc…)
- Ongoing role as WMP Agent and MPO Member
- Engaged in current State Strategic Planning Project via participation in Stakeholder Meetings
STRENGTHS OF THE STATE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

- Strong governor-level commitment and support
- Repositions OPA and SPC under the Secretary of State
- Puts state planning back in the spotlight
- Accurately reflects the current administration’s (and the public’s) priorities
- Reflects current conditions
- Brings back the balance lost in CA III and integrates Sustainability
STRENGTHS OF THE STATE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS (Cont.)

- Implementation focuses on alignment of state agency policies and resources with the new State Plan
- Is straight-forward – does not get mired in details
- Promotes effective regional planning
- Links priority industry sectors with higher education
- Gets rid of Plan Endorsement & Unfunded Mandates
SHORTCOMMINGS OF THE STATE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

- Represents a “Plan for a Plan”, (not “ready-to-go” in terms of implementation)
- Limited opportunities for public involvement in refining the Draft Plan prior to adoption
- Meets State Planning Act mandate, but provides little meaningful local guidance
- Ignores planning partnerships built during the past two decades
- Are other Guiding Principles for decision-making overlooked?
SHORTCOMMINGS OF THE STATE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS (Cont.)

- County and Local involvement in development of scorecard criteria and guidelines for State Agency Strategic Plans uncertain – (how will working groups be structured?)
- Too silent on property tax reform issue
- Relationship between “Priority Industry Clusters” and “Priority Growth Investment Areas” unclear
- Process for identifying “Priority Preservation Investment Areas” unclear
- What about the “in-between” (non-investment priority) areas?
- Will Garden State Values “work” Statewide?
ASSURE MUNICIPAL AND STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN

#1 - Define what the Plan means to municipalities and counties via FAQs

Expand minimum of 6 Hearings to a maximum of 21 (one per county)

Engage diverse stakeholder groups in a deliberative plan-building process

Make Investment Criteria, Scorecard, Guidelines for State Agency Strategic Plans, etc., subject to public review and comment

Set-up the Steering Committee and Workgroup Processes to allow maximum transparency

Empower Counties to deliver the message
TRANSFORM SUPPORT INTO ACTION

- Keep the momentum going by building partnerships right away
- Complete the analysis of industry sectors and identification of core areas and Priority Industry Clusters
- Expedite the identification of “Priority Growth Investment Areas” and Priority Preservation Investment Areas” at the county and local levels
- Define coordination process with Highlands, Pinelands and Meadowlands Commissions
- Help counties and municipalities begin the process of aligning regional and local master plans with the State Strategic Plan
- Define additional areas where planning and technical support will be provided by the OPA
The Plan is heading in the right direction
Critical Plan details are missing
Uncertainty regarding what the outcomes will be
What do we need to do to minimize the uncertainty?

Include a detailed public involvement process to assure citizen, municipal and stakeholder involvement in all aspects of the plan-building process.
FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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