



## **A4422/S3165 Adds Farmland, Open Space to “Smart Growth Areas,” Undermines Regional Planning in the Highlands and Pinelands**

We write to explain our position on A4422/S3165, which extends the expiration date of certain permits, pursuant to the Permit Extension Act of 2008.

Extending permits in smart-growth areas during an economic downturn is not unreasonable. However, **A4422/S3165 creates a new definition for a smart-growth area that includes places that have never been included before, and should never be included:**

- **Planning Area 4, The Rural Planning Area**, which comprises much of the countryside of New Jersey, characterized by “large masses of cultivated or open land” where the state’s intention is to “maintain large contiguous areas of farmland and open space and accommodate growth in Centers.”<sup>1</sup>
- **Planning Area 3, The Fringe Planning Area**, a “predominantly rural landscape” with limited infrastructure, appropriate for “development and redevelopment in appropriately located and designed Centers to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the Environs.”<sup>2</sup>
- **The entire Highlands Planning Area**, including not only areas that are already developed and/or appropriate for growth, but also many environmentally sensitive areas where growth should not occur.

This new definition of smart growth areas clearly conflicts with the Christie administration’s State Strategic Plan, which emphasizes farmland preservation in Agriculture Development Areas. It contradicts the Highlands Act by describing the entire Highlands Planning Area as appropriate for growth. The new definition will have a limited effect on which permits can be extended. We believe the intent may be to establish an expansive definition for where growth should be encouraged that could be used in future legislation, thereby opening these rural and environmentally sensitive areas to a host of development incentives.

**The bill further undermines regional planning by amending its definition of “environmentally sensitive area” to remove the Pinelands and Highlands regions from areas where permit extensions are prohibited.**

**As organizations committed to sound land-use planning, we oppose the bill as written.** It should be amended by: 1) removing the new definition of “smart growth area;” 2) using the original definition of “environmentally sensitive area” rather than the amended one; and 3) removing section 4 (i) that allows permit extensions throughout the Pinelands region.

For more information, or to discuss our position, please contact:

New Jersey Future: [Chris Sturm](#), (609) 393-0008, ext. 114

Regional Plan Association: [Robert Freudenberg](#), (609) 228-7080, ext. 1

American Planning Association/NJ Chapter: [Charles Latini](#), (212) 203-5137

Thank you for your consideration.

<sup>1</sup> State Development and Redevelopment Plan, 2001, p. 205 – 213.

<sup>2</sup> State Development and Redevelopment Plan, 2001, p 200 – 205.