

State Plan

Statewide policies to coordinate government actions to direct government investments and regulated development into areas with infrastructure and preserve the environment

Purpose

Under the *State Planning Act*, the [State Plan](#) is meant to coordinate government investments, planning and regulatory activities to achieve statewide objectives in the following areas: land use, housing, economic development, transportation, natural resource conservation, agriculture and farmland retention, recreation, urban and suburban redevelopment, historic preservation, public facilities and services, and intergovernmental coordination ([NJSA. 52:18A-200\(f\)](#))

Background

The 1987 *State Planning Act* extended regional planning to the entire state by calling for the creation of a State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The State Planning Act mandated that the Plan provide a mechanism to achieve a series of quality-of-life and economic goals for the benefit of the whole state. The *State Planning Act* requires that the Plan "identify areas of growth, limited growth, agriculture, open space conservation and other appropriate designations that the Commission may deem necessary."

The State Planning Commission adopted the first Plan (1992) using a consensus building process (Cross-Acceptance) incorporating state, county and municipal recommendations on land use and infrastructure, this plan was revised and readopted in [2001 \(download\)](#)

The Commission released a draft of the third version of the State Plan in November 2011 as the [State Strategic Plan \(download\)](#). This Draft plan, which was never adopted, emphasized economic growth, and although it discussed open space preservation, it did not offer measures for environmental protection. Instead, it called for focusing State policies and investments in "vibrant regions," fostering critical job growth, supporting effective regional planning and preserving the State's critical resources.

In February 2012, the Commission released "Priority Investment Area Criteria" defining areas for growth and preservation. Under the proposed Criteria, development was preferred in Priority Growth Investment Areas or Alternate Growth Investment Areas with planned or existing infrastructure. Priority Preservation Investment Areas included areas where land preservation, agriculture, historic or environmental protection was preferred.

The Criteria also stated that the *State Planning Act* has no authority to regulate the use of land. Instead local governments "independently make planning and zoning decisions but ultimately these decisions remain the prerogative of local government."

Opportunities for Environmental Commissions

Environmental Commissions can play a role in the state planning process. As keepers of the municipal Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI), which should be the basis of land use planning in the municipal master plan, a commission should review any draft State Strategic Plan when a new version is released and comment on places where local resource information or local policy does not seem to be accurately reflected in the state document. Commissions also should be consulted on how the goals of the State Plan can be met through local action.