

DRAFT
**PLAN ENDORSEMENT REPORT FOR
SUSSEX COUNTY**



Department of Community Affairs
Office of Smart Growth
December 14, 2006
Revised January 10, 2007

This document is a draft recommendation report prepared by the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) as staff to the State Planning Commission. It is subject to change based on the continued input of our partner agencies, the County and members of the public. The OSG reserves the right to edit this document, and the accompanying PIA prior to the presentation of the recommendation at the January 24, 2006 meeting of the Plan Implementation Committee (PIC). Should edits be made, an updated document will be posted on the Office of Smart Growth website (www.njsmartgrowth.com) two weeks prior to the PIC meeting, with edits highlighted accordingly. Notification of such posting will be sent via e-mail to the list of interested parties maintained by the Office of Smart Growth. Interested parties may register with the Office of Smart Growth to receive notifications of SPC meetings, hearings or other matters regarding petitions for plan endorsement by providing contact information, including name, organization, address and email address to osgmail@dca.state.nj.us.

Comments may be provided orally or in written form at the January 24, 2006 PIC meeting and in written form up to 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Comments may be submitted electronically to osgmail@dca.state.nj.us or mailed directly to Eileen Swan, Executive Director, Office of Smart Growth, 101 South Broad Street, P.O. Box 204, Trenton, NJ 08625-0204.

This report is revised as of January 10, 2007 with additions indicated in boldface and underlined thus; deletions indicated in brackets [thus].

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Staff Recommendation.....	6
Location and Regional Context.....	7
Demographics.....	8
Community Vision & Public Participation	13
Other Relevant Planning Activities	15
Statement of Planning Coordination.....	19
Consistency with State Plan – Goals, Policies and Indicators.....	20
Consistency with State Plan – Planning Area Policy Objectives.....	35
Consistency with State Plan – Existing & Future Potential Growth Areas.....	37
Conclusion.....	42
Planning & Implement Agreement.....	42

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:85-7 et seq., the County of Sussex has requested Initial Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission. This report contains findings and conclusions concerning consistency of the County's plans and Planning & Implementation Agreement (PIA) with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). The review of the petition is based on information submitted by the petitioner and information otherwise available to the Office of Smart Growth (OSG).

In January 2000, Sussex County received a \$300,000 Smart Future grant from the Office of Smart Growth to develop a strategic land use plan focusing on each of the specific landscapes of the County as they exist, creating a comprehensive vision for Sussex County that incorporates the goals and objectives of the SDRP. The Sussex County Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) was adopted on September 22, 2004 following 5 years of collaborative efforts between the County officials, more than 1,000 County residents, business owners and local officials.

Sussex County submitted their formal Petition for Plan Endorsement on February 27, 2006. The Petition was deemed incomplete on March 29, 2006 until an addendum was received by the Office of Smart Growth on April 19, 2006, at which time the Petition was deemed complete. A public hearing was held in the Sussex County Administrative Center at 6:00pm on Thursday, June 1, 2006. The 45 day agency review period ended on June 2, 2006. Sussex County made a presentation on their Petition for Plan Endorsement to the Plan Implementation Committee of the SPC on August 23, 2006. A letter requesting additional information for consistency review was sent to the County on August 1, 2006. The Office of Smart Growth received the requested additional information from the County on November 9, 2006, and distributed same via e-mail and posted on the OSG website.

Sussex County recognizes the need for coordinated planning amongst municipalities, Counties and the State. In a County comprised of 24 municipalities, a vision for the County's future provides the impetus to address potential issues facing a County with abundant environmental resources worthy of protection, while at the same time providing opportunities for growth and development in appropriate areas. The SGP for Sussex County provides the foundation for municipalities to plan for their own futures, ensuring the quality of life can be maintained in the face of land use decisions.

The SGP is a *policy* document that describes current and trend conditions throughout the County; and proposes strategies to reduce sprawl, target growth to appropriate areas, and preserve the rural and environmental landscape. The SGP does not propose any changes to the State Plan Policy Map. All of Sussex County, with the exception of a portion of Stanhope Borough, is currently designated as Rural and Environmentally Sensitive on the State Plan Policy Map. The only growth areas in the County exist in the small Suburban Planning Area in Stanhope and Centers previously designated by the State Planning Commission. [Instead, t]The SGP identifies these existing growth areas and recognizes that additional future growth areas will need to be proposed

by municipalities through plan endorsement as a means of targeting anticipated growth while preserving the environs. The County, in its Petition for Plan Endorsement, further describes implementation strategies to achieve the goals and policies mutually recognized in the SGP and the SDRP. As the County's municipalities pursue Plan Endorsement, the SGP will serve as a guidance document on growth strategies consistent with the SDRP.

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The County of Sussex's planning vision is consistent with the SDRP, as defined in the State Planning Rules (N.J.A.C 5:85). Therefore, staff recommends Initial Plan Endorsement for the County Strategic Growth Plan and associated documents.

The Endorsement of the County SGP is recognition of the consistency of the County's land use policies with the goals and policies of the SDRP. Endorsement of the County SGP does not change the State Plan Policy Map in any way. Endorsement does not afford existing designated centers with any recognition or benefits beyond their pre-determined expiration dates, as determined in the State Planning Rules (N.J.A.C 5:85-7.11 et seq.). Furthermore, the Endorsement of the SGP does not imply official recognition of any proposed future growth areas, and should not be construed to relay any of the benefits otherwise garnered by growth areas in the SDRP. Municipalities in Sussex County must demonstrate capacity for development in centers, as well as the community's overall consistency with SDRP through a petition for Plan Endorsement.

This recommendation for Initial Plan Endorsement recognizes the efforts made by the County Board of Chosen Freeholders, its staff and Strategic Growth Advisory Committee. The County has demonstrated commitment and leadership towards further improving its plans, as outlined in the PIA. Some parties have expressed concerns about the timing of this endorsement and the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The County has made a good faith effort to recognize the constraints of the Highlands Region, and incorporate strategies for preservation and conservation of the region's resources. The Highlands Council and its staff have been invited to participate and comment throughout the Plan Endorsement process to ensure that their concerns are addressed either in the petition or the PIA. The County deserves recognition of their hard work and dedication to promoting the goals and policies of the SDRP.

Planning is an ongoing and dynamic process, of which Plan Endorsement captures a particular moment in time. This moment is key due to a wide range of factors: development pressures, changes related to the Highlands Regional Master Plan, improvements to road infrastructure and the potential rail service, and plans for affordable housing. The implementation and monitoring of the PIA is, therefore, vital in continuing the momentum that exists now.

LOCATION AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Sussex County is located in the northwestern corner of New Jersey, bordering Pennsylvania to the west and New York State to the north. The County is comprised of 521 square miles of mainly rural and agricultural landscapes, with the western one-third of the County set aside as public open space. Delaware Valley Water Gap National Recreation Area, High Point, and Stokes State Parks and Forests, as well as the Wallkill Wildlife Refuge provide homes to threatened and endangered species of flora and fauna as well as opportunities for outdoor activities promoting healthy, active lifestyles for all ages.

The County is bordered to the east by Passaic County, the southeast by Morris County, and the southwest by Warren County. The eastern one-third of the County includes ten municipalities within the Highlands Region, subject to the legislative impacts of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et al). Of those ten municipalities, only Franklin Borough and Hamburg Borough exist entirely in the Highlands Planning Area while Stanhope has only 5 acres in the Preservation Area. The remaining municipalities are split between the Preservation and Planning Areas. Many of the land use decisions in this portion of the county will be determined by the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The Regional Master Plan was recently released in draft, and is anticipated to be adopted by the Highlands Council in spring of 2007.

MUNICIPALITY	PLANNING AREA	PRESERVATION AREA	TOTAL
Sussex County			
Byram Township	233	14,272	14,505
Franklin Borough	2,843	0	2,843
Green Township	10,198	281	10,478
Hamburg Borough	753	0	753
Hardyston Township	8,254	12,557	20,811
Hopateong Borough	5,346	2,607	7,953
Ogdensburg Borough	1,232	199	1,431
Sparta Township	13,359	11,538	24,896
Stanhope Borough	1,399	5	1,404
Vernon Township	15,470	29,319	44,789
Total Acres For Sussex County	59,087	70,778	129,864

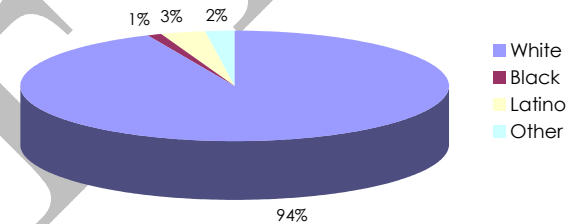
DEMOGRAPHICS

Background

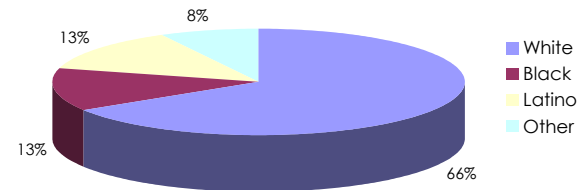
Below are some graphics demonstrating Sussex County demographics:

	Sussex County	New Jersey
Land Area (sq mi)	521	7,417
Population	144,166	8,414,350
Households	50,831	3,064,645
Average Household Size	2.8	2.68
Housing Units	50,831	3,310,275
Home Ownership Rate	83%	66%
Vacancy Rate	11%	7.4%
Median Household Income	\$65,266	\$55,146
Per Capita Income	\$26,992	\$27,006
Poverty Rate	4%	8.5%
Unemployment Rate (NJDOL 2004)	5.1%	4.8%

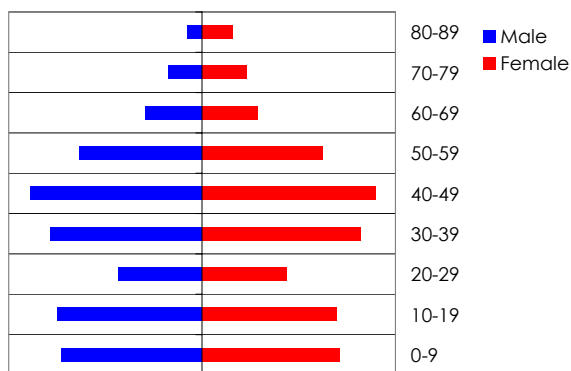
County Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



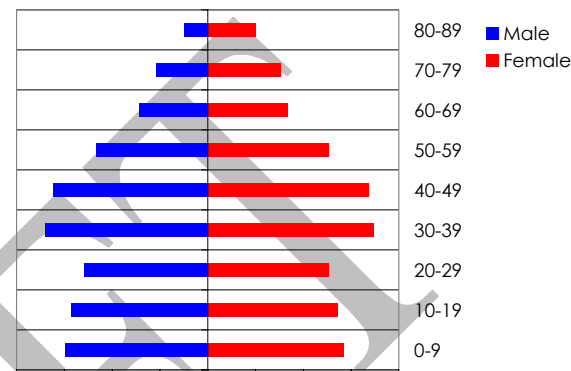
New Jersey Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



County Age Distribution



New Jersey Age Distribution



Sussex County has seen trends similar to the State and the nation in age distribution. The largest increases in population occurred in the 45-64 age group, as the "Baby Boom" population aged. There was also an increase in the number of children in the 5-14 age group, also called the "Baby Boom Echo". The fewer numbers in the "Baby Bust" generation (born during the 1970s) caused a decrease in the 25-34 population. With fewer people in this child-bearing age group, there was a corresponding decrease in children under age 5.

Sussex County is one of the wealthier counties in New Jersey. It ranks 4th in median household income; \$65,266 in 1999 compared to the State median income of \$55,146. Eighteen municipalities in Sussex County have median incomes higher than the State median. The municipality with the highest median income is Sparta, \$89,835. Six municipalities are below the State median: Branchville, Franklin, Montague, Newton, Sussex and Walpack.

The overall poverty rate for Sussex County in 1999 was 4.0% of the population, which equaled 5,693 persons. The poverty rate varied among municipalities: below 2% in Byram, Green and Sparta, and over 11% in Sussex Borough, Montague and Newton. The municipalities with the highest numbers of poor people are Newton (882) and Vernon (717).

Although the population density has increased to 277 persons per square mile in Year 2000, Sussex County remains a sparsely populated area. Population density in New Jersey is 1,134 persons/square mile, making it the most densely populated state in the U.S. The older areas that were built up 40 - 50 years ago with town centers (such as Sussex, Newton and Hamburg) remain the most densely populated.

Projections

From the early 1800s, the population of Sussex County was fairly stable for a century; there was an increase of only 7,500 from 1830 to 1930, to a population of 27,850 in 1930. Since 1950, the population has increased more rapidly, as shown in Figure 2. The growth rate was highest from 1960 to 1970 at 57.4% and the greatest increase in number occurred from 1970 to 1980 with 38,537 new residents. For each decade since 1980, the population increased about 14,000, to 144,166 in 2000.

According to a national study that compared growth rates among counties, Sussex County is a “Metropolitan Growth County”, one of 124 counties in the U.S. that experienced growth rates of at least 10% each decade since 1950. These growth counties have developed at low densities of single-family homes and consequently have longer commutes, they are a typical “bedroom community”.

The following chart shows the population growth from 1990 - 2000 that occurred in northwestern counties of New Jersey, Monroe and Pike County, PA, and Orange County, NY. All of the counties experienced above-average growth, compared to 7.7% growth rate for New Jersey from 1990 to 2000.

<i>Regional Population Growth for Northwest NJ, NY, and PA Counties</i>			
	1990	2000	Growth Rate (%)
NJ Counties:			
Morris	421,353	470,212	11.6
Passaic	453,060	489,049	7.9
Sussex	130,943	144,166	10.1
Warren	91,607	102,437	11.8
Monroe County, PA	95,709	138,687	44.9
Pike County, PA	27,966	46,302	65.2
Orange County, NY	307,647	341,367	11.0

Changes in population varied widely among the municipalities in Sussex County. The greatest gains in population change between 1990 and 2000 occurred in the northeastern portion of the County. Of the total County increase from 1990 to 2000, 55% is accounted for by three Townships: Vernon, Hardyston and Sparta.

Since 1990, five municipalities had minimal decreases in population: Andover, Branchville, Ogdensburg, and Sussex Boroughs and Walpack Township. Stanhope and Newton reversed their trends from 1980 to 1990, and gained population from 1990 to 2000. Vernon still has the largest population, followed by Sparta and Hopatcong; each has over 15,000 persons.

The Census Bureau estimate for Sussex County population in 2002 is 148,680. The following Figure shows population projections for Sussex County to the year 2010 and 2020 developed by the Sussex County Planning Division and the New Jersey Department of Labor. Both projections assume that Sussex County will grow at a faster rate than the State, which has a projected growth rate of 7.7% to the year 2010. Both projections are similar and show an annual projected growth rate over one percent.

Population Projections

AGENCY	Projected Increase 2000 – 2010	2010 Projection	Projected Increase 2010 - 2020	2020 Projection
Sussex County Planning Division	+17,715	161,881	+16,754	178,635
NJ Dept. of Labor	+13,934	158,100	+18,600	176,700

Municipal projections were prepared for Years 2010 and 2020 by Sussex County Planning Division using building permit data, past population trends, and planned development, based on site plan and subdivision applications. It was also assumed that future growth would increase in centers and approved sewer service areas, and that commuter train service would be restored to the Erie-Lackawanna line in the southern part of the County. By Year 2020, some municipalities (such as Branchville, Newton and Sussex Borough) are approaching their maximum build-out, based on remaining available land.

**MUNICIPAL POPULATION PROJECTIONS
SUSSEX COUNTY, 2000 - 2020**

MUNICIPALITY	2000 CENSUS	PROJECTED POPULATION 2010	PROJECTED CHANGE 2000-2010	PROJECTED POPULATION 2020	PROJECTED CHANGE 2010-2020
ANDOVER BOROUGH	658	910	+252	1,760	+850
ANDOVER TOWNSHIP	6,033	7,217	+1,184	8,200	+983
BRANCHVILLE BORO.	845	900	+ 55	960	+60
BYRAM TOWNSHIP	8,321	8,975	+654	9,600	+625
FRANKFORD TOWNSHIP	5,420	6,000	+580	6,900	+900
FRANKLIN BOROUGH	5,160	5,607	+447	6,400	+793
FREDON TOWNSHIP	2,860	3,149	+289	3,500	+351
GREEN TOWNSHIP	3,220	3,620	+400	4,000	+380
HAMBURG BOROUGH	3,105	3,555	+450	3,850	+295
HAMPTON TOWNSHIP	4,943	5,507	+564	6,000	+493
HARDYSTON TOWNSHIP	6,171	7,900	+1,729	10,100	+2,200
HOPATCONG BOROUGH	15,888	16,355	+467	16,800	+445
LAFAYETTE TOWNSHIP	2,300	2,754	+454	3,200	+446
MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP	3,412	3,992	+580	4,800	+808
NEWTON, TOWN OF	8,244	8,838	+594	9,400	+562
OGDENSBURG BORO.	2,638	2,791	+153	3,000	+209
SANDYSTON TOWNSHIP	1,825	1,956	+131	2,100	+144
SPARTA TOWNSHIP	18,013	20,913	+2,900	23,000	+2,087
STANHOPE BOROUGH	3,584	3,976	+392	4,250	+274
STILLWATER TWP.	4,267	4,309	+42	4,400	+91
SUSSEX BOROUGH	2,145	2,358	+213	2,500	+142
VERNON TOWNSHIP	24,686	28,686	+4,000	31,400	+2,714
WALPACK TOWNSHIP	41	26	-15	15	-11
WANTAGE TOWNSHIP	10,387	11,587	+1,200	12,500	+913
SUSSEX COUNTY	144,166	161,881	+17,715	178,635	+16,754
Population projections by Sussex County Planning Division, Newton, NJ					
Prepared January 2004					

COMMUNITY VISION & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Sussex County Board of Chosen Freeholders appointed a Strategic Growth Advisory Committee (SGAC), made up of seventeen members representing municipal government, business, agriculture, environmental and development groups. The SGAC met at least once per month over four years. Members attended the numerous visioning meetings held County-wide, and served on subcommittees to work out details of the SGP.

Between June 13, 2002 – July 29, 2002 and then again from May 6 – June 4, 2003, the Strategic Growth Committee and County Staff made presentations to all Sussex County municipalities. When added to the meeting time spent by members of the Strategic Growth Advisory Committee, a total of 1520 hours had been donated by these committed volunteers. The first series of a dozen meetings during 2002 were open public meetings in which over 600 residents participated. During the spring of 2003, the Visioning process continued, albeit in a smaller forum. The Committee and Staff brought a list of regional topics that had surfaced in the initial process to municipal governing bodies, and zoning, planning and land use boards for their input.

The Statement of Community Vision and Public Participation is incorporated in the SGP, and represents thousands of hours of participation by the public, governing and appointed planning entities, the public, the Sussex County Strategic Growth Advisory Committee, Sussex County Planning Board and the Board of Chosen Freeholders. Numerous public meetings were held with all municipalities. Public participation was solicited at all Strategic Growth Advisory Committee meetings. Public hearings were held by the Strategic Growth Advisory Committee, the Sussex County Planning Board and the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

The SGAC developed the following Visioning Statement: “The visioning objective is to establish a County wide framework for guiding future growth and protecting environmentally sensitive features that constitute the unique physical characteristics and the rural, suburban and lake community development that, in combination, establish the overall character and quality of life in Sussex County.”

The Vision also includes goal statements developed by the SGAC:

1. Maintain the quality of life in Sussex County.
2. Encourage protection of agricultural production areas
3. Protection of private property rights
4. Preserve environmentally sensitive areas
5. Maintain and enhance surface and groundwater quality/water quantity
6. Direct future growth into areas which can support and sustain proposed

development uses, intensity and economic development opportunities.

Finally, the SGAC established strategies to implement the proposed above goals as follows:

1. Protect areas of steep slopes and view sheds. In areas with steep slopes of 35% or greater, recommend and encourage low density “mountain conservation” development of one dwelling unit per 10 acres.
2. Establish and maintain a 150 foot buffer along all stream segments mapped by the NJDEP (75 feet on either side of stream).
3. Recommend minimum lot areas for all new septic systems based on NJDEP Surface Water Quality Standards.
4. Support farmland preservation efforts and right to farm programs.
5. Encourage downtown and highway corridor revitalization while simultaneously encouraging future growth in areas which do not destroy environmentally sensitive areas of the County.
6. Channel future growth of high density residential development and high intensity non-residential development into existing and future sewer service areas.
7. Support the collaborative effort of Federal, State and Municipal agencies in setting open space priorities in the County.

RELEVANT PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Incorporated into the SGP are the following:

- Statement of Community Vision & Participation
- Statement of Consistency with The SDRP
- Plan Foundation Elements
 - Population Projections
 - Housing
 - Economic Development
 - Natural Resources
 - Circulation
 - Historic Preservation
 - Agriculture and Farmland Preservation
 - Open Space
 - Build Out & Capacity Analyses

In addition to the SGP, Sussex County submitted the following documents in support of its petition for Plan Endorsement:

- Sussex County Ten-Year Mobility Study, July 2005
- Sussex County Open Space and Recreation Plan, September 2003
- Sussex County Farmland Preservation Plan, September 2003
- Sussex County Natural Resource Element, June 2006
- County-Wide Wastewater Management Plan, September 2000, Revised September 2001
- Sussex County shape files
- County Facilities Map
- Public hearing meeting minutes, March 9, 2005
- Public hearing notice published in NJ Herald, February 28, 2005

The County is also in the process of preparing a Regional Housing Element, Circulation Plan, and anticipates preparing amendments to the adopted (and current) Water Quality Management Plan and the Solid Waste Management Plan in 2007. The Planning Division is also working to prepare an inventory of historic and cultural sites in support of municipal efforts to further historic preservation.

Housing

The housing plan for Sussex County was prepared to provide an overall picture of housing in the region and to support municipal policies adopted a part of local housing plans, as well as act as liaison for funding through grants at the state and federal levels. This plan specifically references data and policy in the following:

- Fair Housing Plan (Council On Affordable Housing - COAH)
- Municipal Fair Share Plan Housing Elements
- Housing Element and Allocation Plan (County Master Plan 1977)
- Intermediary role between federal, state, and municipal governments

The PIA includes items to strengthen the County's link with the COAH, and provide further guidance to municipalities in accommodating affordable housing.

Economic Development

The Economic Development section of the SGP looks at income and the cost of living, jobs and wages, the job and labor markets, and target industries for economic growth in the County. Agricultural viability and business retention and expansion are critical pieces of the County's economic development strategy, and are items recognized for further study and development in the PIA.

Natural Resources

The Natural Resource Element of the SGP and the [stand-alone] Natural Resource Inventory recognize the need to evaluate the carrying capacity of the natural resource base. The SGP looked at carrying capacity as a function of available water supply, the ability of soils to accept effluent treated to one extent or another, the ability of the land, both from the standpoint of harsh features and topography, necessary protections for surface water bodies, and accommodation to wildlife needs. The SGP specifically looked at geology, water supply, aquifer recharge, physiography, topography, water availability related to waste treatment, water quality, biodiversity and forests. The PIA includes several items to encourage natural resource conservation and enhancement.

Transportation

Sussex County is facing an increasing number of demands and issues with its transportation system. This system, which is primarily the County's highway network, needs to function more efficiently order to maintain the high quality of life for which the County is

noted. Improving the County's transportation system, for residents, non-residents and visitors alike, is an important part of the County's Strategic Growth planning efforts.

The SGP Circulation Element incorporated the findings and recommendations of the Ten Year Mobility Study. It looked at transportation related demographics, trip origin and destinations, the impacts of growth on the transportation system. It called for strategies that would reduce in the use of single occupancy vehicles, specifically the restoration of passenger rail service and expansion of bus routes. Further, pedestrian and bicycle linkages are promoted.

The PIA includes ongoing coordination with the DOT in implementing innovative transportation strategies to relieve pressure on systems, and encourage multi-modal connectivity.

Historic Preservation

The history of Sussex County, dating to the early settlements of the Lenni Lenape, has left us with a rich heritage, embodied in buildings, artifacts, and recorded events. This Historic Preservation section of the Strategic Growth Plan includes a brief history of the County and the beginnings of a comprehensive inventory of County's historic resources, which is a task identified in the PIA.

Agriculture and Farmland Preservation

The SGP speaks of the mission of the Sussex County Farmland Preservation Program, administered by the Sussex County Agriculture Development Board, as well as the desire to enhance agricultural viability through economic development. The County will embark on an up-date of its Farmland Preservation Plan in conjunction with creating a County Planning Incentive Grant Program. These items are included in the PIA.

Open Space

In November 2000, the voters of Sussex County overwhelmingly supported a dedicated tax devoted to Farmland Preservation and Open Space and Recreation. This tax is set at \$0.02/\$100 of assessed value, of which 10% is utilized for Open Space projects. The Open Space Element of the SGP describes existing open space, economic benefits of open space, opportunities for additional projects and the importance that open space plays in the County landscape. The SGP Open Space Element is supplemented by the County Open Space and Recreation Plan, which was adopted in 2004. The continued implementation of open space preservation strategies and reevaluation of priorities are items incorporated into the PIA.

Build-out and Capacity Analyses

A build-out analysis is incorporated in the SGP, as is a general carrying capacity analysis. The latter is the subject of one of the PIA elements. As to infrastructure capacity, Sussex County has limited available infrastructure. Central water and sewer systems are located in Newton, Hopatcong, Byram, Sparta, Hardyston, Franklin, Hamburg, and Sussex Borough. These systems, other than in the Town of Newton and Sussex Borough, serve only portions of the municipality.

A review of the build-out analysis leads one to the conclusion that the zoning in place in many municipalities is more an indicator of older policies and resource assumptions than a considered application of carrying capacity and compact, mixed use development patterns. The SGP seeks to draw attention to the consequences of historical zoning schemes, and promote improvements in land use and service efficiencies. Additional review of environmental and infrastructure capacity in existing and potential growth areas is the subject of PIA items.

STATEMENT OF PLANNING COORDINATION

The Sussex County planning process has been closely linked with the Regional MPO, the NJTPA. Coordination with the various State Agencies relative to their Smart Growth Plans is and has been ongoing for several years. The County has actively solicited and received participation and concurrence that the planning efforts are congruent by the Watershed Management Areas (Upper Delaware and Wallkill). The County is part of and an active participant in the Lake Hopatcong Commission, the Lake Musconetcong Regional Planning Board.

By virtue of numerous discussions and collaboration with the Counties of Morris and Warren, the Sussex County Planning effort has been enriched. Copies of the SGP were sent to all adjacent counties with an invitation to comment. Additionally, the County Division of Planning has reached out to the Counties of Orange, Sullivan, Pike and Monroe with particular focus on the proposed Tri-State Regional Center proposed in Montague Township. The Commission will recall that this was proposed as part of the Montague Centers petition and set aside for inclusion in the County SGP. No specific response was received. However, some discussions have taken place with representatives of the Pennsylvania counties in the context of discussions relating to the Lackawanna Cut-Off project and other regional transportation issues.

Highlands

The SGP includes several sections describing the landscape of the Highlands, and acknowledging the sole jurisdiction of the Highlands Council in the preservation area and shared jurisdiction in the planning area. Accordingly, the SGP does not apply to those areas of the County in the Highlands preservation area as defined by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (N.J.S.A. 13:20-7 et seq.). There will be further opportunity for greater protection of critical areas when the Highlands Master Plan is adopted and the County can coordinate its efforts with the Highlands Council and the Office of Smart Growth, as well as with other pertinent state agencies.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLAN - GOALS, POLICIES & INDICATORS

The State Plan is made up of 8 Goals and Strategies and 19 Statewide Policies that are complemented by a State Plan Policy Map. This section discusses consistency with regard to goals relevant to the County's Petition, along with related policies and indicators.

	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 1: Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns</p> <p>STRATEGY: Protect, preserve and develop the valuable human and economic assets in cities, towns and other urban areas. Plan to improve their livability and sustainability by investing public resources in accordance with current plans which are consistent with the provisions of the State Plan. Leverage private investments in jobs and housing; provide comprehensive public services at lower costs and higher quality; and improve the natural and built environment. Incorporate ecological design through mechanisms such as solar access for heating and power generation. Level the playing field in such areas as financing services, infrastructure and regulation. Reduce the barriers which limit mobility and access of city residents, particularly the poor and minorities, to jobs, housing, services and open space within the region. Build on the assets of cities and towns such as their labor force, available land and buildings, strategic location and diverse populations.</p>	<p>Policy on Urban Revitalization - Prepare strategic revitalization plans; neighborhood empowerment plans and urban complex strategic revitalization plans that promote revitalization, economic development and infrastructure investments, coordinate revitalization planning among organizations and governments, support housing programs and adaptive reuse, improve access to waterfront areas, public open space and parks, and develop human resources with investments in public health, education, work force readiness and public safety in cities and towns.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 1. New development, population, and employment located in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas or within Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas.</p>

Analysis

The SGP suggests that the patterns of development that have occurred over the past thirty years be radically changed, and recognizes the need to revitalize towns to promote the repopulation of these areas. Sussex County promotes center-oriented development in areas that are currently being redeveloped, and areas that will be developed in the future. These centers should contain a variety of features, including retail stores and services that are easily accessible to the surrounding population without the use of the automobile, thus promoting livable walkable communities.

Designated and proposed areas appropriate for future consideration as centers are planned to incorporate central water and wastewater facilities, allowing for the development necessary to reach critical densities for mass transportation. Many designated centers, such as

Newton, Sparta, Hopatcong, Andover Borough, Stanhope, Vernon, Byram and Montague see additional growth within the center as a benefit, yielding densities capable of sustaining mass transit and pedestrian access to a diverse range of services and shopping opportunities, and a renewed sense of community. These high-density areas will provide Sussex County with a strong economic base thus providing for a more sustainable community, and furthering the target for State Key Indicator 1.

Policy on Urban Revitalization

Today, many areas throughout the state are in need of redevelopment. In Sussex County, the development of revitalization plans has already begun. Areas being revitalized will follow recognized center design standards, emphasizing central places and a sense of community, as well as encouraging public transportation. Affordable housing will be incorporated into centers in order to provide diversity throughout the area and compliance with COAH regulations. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings will continue to be a priority in reversing the blight of the New Jersey urban area. Urban revitalization is already under way in a number of Sussex communities, including Sussex Borough, which is seeking state “Main Street New Jersey” designation and the benefits associated therein.

	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 2: Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems</p> <p>STRATEGY: Conserve the state's natural resources and systems as capital assets of the public by promoting ecologically sound development and redevelopment in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas, accommodating environmentally designed development and redevelopment in Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas, and by restoring the integrity of natural systems in areas where they have been degraded or damaged. Plan, design, invest in and manage the development and redevelopment of Centers and the use of land, water, soil, plant and animal resources to maintain biodiversity and the viability of ecological systems. Maximize the ability of natural systems to control runoff and flooding, and to improve air and water quality and supply.</p>	<p>Policy on Water Resources - Protect and enhance water resources through coordinated planning efforts aimed at reducing sources of pollution and other adverse effects of development, encouraging designs in hazard-free areas that will protect the natural function of stream and wetland systems, and optimizing sustainable resource use.</p> <p>Policy on Special Resource Areas - Recognize an area or region with unique characteristics or resources of statewide importance and establish a receptive environment for regional planning efforts. The Highlands region has been recognized as the first Special Resource Area in New Jersey.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 2. The amount of land permanently dedicated to open space and farmland preservation</p> <p>Key Indicator 3. Percent of New Jersey's streams that support aquatic life</p> <p>Indicator 11. Conversion of wetlands for development</p> <p>Indicator 26. Percent of land in New Jersey covered by adopted watershed management plans</p>

Analysis

Sussex County lies in the northern most part of the state, bordering Pennsylvania on its western border and New York on the eastern border, and within the eastern third of its borders lay the Highlands and in the western third of the county is an extensive park system. This ecosystem supports habitat for a wide range of species. Therefore, environmental consideration has been a priority throughout the Plan Endorsement negotiations and consistency review with the SDRP.

Compact centers will help preserve much of the remaining open space in the County. By designating centers and focusing development within those areas, as well as using programs such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), the county and its municipalities can preserve the large areas of open space, essential for many habitats, while increasing density within centers designated through municipal plan endorsement. The transfer of development rights from rural areas to Designated Centers will help the state to achieve the target set for Key Indicator 2.

Policy on Water Resources

Due to the large diversity of resources within Sussex County, specific policies have been developed for the Rural/Agricultural, Job Creation Center, Traditional Center, and Lake Community landscapes that focus efforts to locate development with proper consideration of water quality and quantity. Where development is planned, restrictions on the discharge and storage of hazardous materials will offset potential environmental impacts and hazards thus encouraging the growth of aquatic life and furthering the target of State Key Indicator 3. The SGP contains an analysis of the potential build-out scenario based on existing development and current zoning regulations as it applies to buildable lands. By using a build-out analysis, a community can gain insight as to what the community will look like if current development trends are allowed to continue. In areas where mismanagement of resources have occurred, state regulation, buffering, best management practices, and septic management will contribute to the amelioration of existing degraded conditions. Watershed groups such as the Lake Musconetcong Regional Planning Board and the Lake Hopatcong Commission, together with the Sussex County “208” Water Quality Agency and Watershed Management Areas will continue to concentrate on achieving appropriate reductions in pollutant loading of lakes and other waterways in order to further the beautification of Sussex County and the State Indicator 26.

Policy on Special Resource Areas

The Highlands has been recognized as a landscape in its own right. The SGP offers concrete proposals for increasing resource protection and public appreciation of the resource, while safeguarding landowner equity through TDR. There will be further opportunity for greater protection of these critical areas when the Highlands Master Plan is adopted and the County can coordinate its efforts with the Highlands Council and the Office of Smart Growth, as well as with other pertinent state agencies.

	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of New Jersey</p> <p>STRATEGY: Promote socially and ecologically beneficial economic growth, development and renewal and improve both the quality of life and the standard of living of New Jersey residents, particularly the poor and minorities, through partnerships and collaborative planning with the private sector. Capitalize on the state's strengths—its entrepreneurship, skilled labor, cultural diversity, diversified economy and environment, strategic location and logistical excellence—and make the state more competitive through infrastructure and public services cost savings and regulatory streamlining resulting from comprehensive and coordinated planning. Retain and expand businesses, and encourage new, environmentally sustainable businesses in Centers and areas with infrastructure. Encourage economic growth in locations and ways that are both fiscally and environmentally sound. Promote the food and agricultural industry throughout New Jersey through coordinated planning, regulations, investments and incentive programs—both in Centers to retain and encourage new businesses and in the Environs to preserve large contiguous areas of farmland.</p>	<p>Policy on Economic Development - Promote beneficial economic growth and improve the quality of life and standard of living for New Jersey residents by building upon strategic economic and geographic positions, targeting areas of critical capital spending to retain and expand existing businesses, fostering modern techniques to enhance the existing economic base, encouraging the development of new enterprises, advancing the growth of green businesses, elevating work force skills, and encouraging sustainable economic growth in locations and ways that are fiscally and ecologically sound.</p> <p>Policy on Agriculture - Promote and preserve the agricultural industry and retain farmland by coordinating planning and innovative land conservation techniques to protect agricultural viability while accommodating beneficial development and economic growth necessary to enhance agricultural vitality and by educating residents on the benefits and the special needs of agriculture.</p> <p>Policy on Equity - It is the position of the State Planning Commission that the State Plan should neither be used in a manner that places an inequitable burden on any one group of citizens nor should it be used as a justification for public actions that have the effect of diminishing equity. It is also the position of the Commission that the achievement, protection and maintenance of equity be a major objective in public policy decisions.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 1. New development, population and employment located in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas or within Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas</p> <p>Indicator 1. Average annual disposable income among New Jerseyans</p> <p>Indicator 2. Unemployment</p> <p>Indicator 3. Conversion of farmland for development</p> <p>Indicator 5. Agricultural output</p> <p>Indicator 7. Economic output per unit of energy consumed</p>

Analysis

Increases in population growth within Sussex County, and improvements in accessibility have created the potential for tremendous economic development. Today, the pristine farmland that is much of Sussex County remains one of the prime industries in the area. The SGP recognizes the large degree of agriculture already in place, as well as the need for the expansion of existing job centers, providing a greater diversity of jobs within the county. The expansion existing of Job Creation Centers (Nodes) should be concentrated in order to provide sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, strip development will be discouraged and existing strip development structures will be retrofitted and/or incorporated into centers in order to increase the pedestrian access and mobility

throughout the county. This reuse of greyfields will allow the County to use areas that already have impervious cover, and incorporate better strategies to maximize the value of these areas for economic development.

Policy on Economic Development

The SGP proposes expansion of existing Job Creation Centers (Nodes). The SGP recommends the elimination of strip commercial development and using TDR to move these services into centers in order to promote State Key Indicator 1. Sighting centers in areas best suited to accommodate additional dense development promotes a higher level of efficiency and environmental protection, which will in turn increase the economic output per unit of energy consumed, thus furthering the state target set for indicator 7. The County farmland and open space preservation strategy, supported by public referendum, is to continue the purchase of development rights (PDR) from willing property owners and to offer whatever incentives may be available through leveraging funds from other state, federal, or municipal programs to achieve the maximum protection of farmlands. In an effort to help the state achieve the target set for indicator 3. In addition, the County is working to emphasize the four-season availability of recreation (skiing, golfing, hiking, swimming, etc.) as a means of increased tourism in the County.

Policy on Agriculture

The County has been actively engaged in the preservation of farmland and encouragement of agricultural industries using PDR and TDR techniques, as outlined in the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan of 2003. Approximately 10,000 acres of farmland are or will be permanently protected in the future which will maintain or increase the agriculture output target set in State Indicator 5.

The County has increased its efforts to promote agriculture, and the public appreciation of the wide variety of agricultural activities in the County through its agri-tourism efforts. The SGP encourages the location of agricultural industry (value added) in proximity to agricultural operations as the sole small-scale economic expansion in the environs or Rural/Agricultural landscape.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 4: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution</p> <p>STRATEGY: Develop standards of performance and create incentives to prevent and reduce pollution and toxic emissions at the source, in order to conserve resources and protect public health. Promote the development of businesses that provide goods and services that eliminate pollution and toxic emissions or reduce resource depletion. Actively pursue public/private partnerships, the latest technology and strict enforcement to prevent toxic emissions and clean up polluted air, land and water without shifting pollutants from one medium to another; from one geographic location to another; or from one generation to another. Promote ecologically designed development and redevelopment in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas and accommodate ecologically designed development in Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas, to reduce automobile usage; land, water and energy consumption; and to minimize impacts on public health and biological systems, water and air quality. Plant and maintain trees and native vegetation. Reduce waste and reuse and recycle materials through demanufacturing and remanufacturing</p>	<p>Policy on Air Resources - Reduce air pollution by promoting development patterns that reduce both mobile and stationary sources of pollution, promoting the use of alternative modes of transportation, and supporting clean, renewable fuels and efficient transportation systems.</p> <p>Policy on Energy Resources - Ensure adequate energy resources through conservation, facility modernization, renewable energy and cogeneration; to continue economic growth while protecting the environment; and to modify energy consumption patterns to capitalize on renewable, domestic energy supplies rather than virgin extraction and imports.</p> <p>Policy Waste Management, Recycling and Brownfields- Promote recycling and source reduction through product design and materials management and by coordinating and supporting legislative, planning and facility development efforts regarding solid and hazardous waste treatment, storage and disposal. Capitalize on opportunities provided by brownfield sites through coordinated planning, strategic marketing and priority redevelopment of these sites.</p>	<p>Indicator 4. Percent of brownfield sites redeveloped</p> <p>Indicator 7. Economic output per unit of energy consumed</p> <p>Indicator 8. The generation of solid waste on a per capita and per job basis</p> <p>Indicator 9. Number of unhealthful days annually caused by ground-level ozone, particulate matter and carbon monoxide</p> <p>Indicator 10. Greenhouse gas emissions</p> <p>Indicator 13. Changes in toxic chemical use and waste generation (non-product output or NPO) by New Jersey's manufacturing sector</p> <p>Indicator 15. Vehicle miles traveled per capita</p>

Analysis

Population increases in Sussex County have created a larger strain on the environment, contributing to the degradation of resources and pollution of our air, soil and water. Implementing performance standards and promoting environmentally conscious building is a strong step forward in the reduction of pollution levels and the reduction of unhealthful days caused by pollution. Performance standards will also continue to help the state achieve its target set for state indicator 9. The redevelopment of brownfields, the

preservation of open spaces, enforcement of buffers, and the proper design of centers will all help further the reduction and prevention of pollution in Sussex County.

Policy on Air Resources

The automobile has long been the primary source of transportation in Sussex County. The SGP advocates development in centers as a means to reduce overall dependency on the single occupant motor vehicle for movement of people and goods. A reduction in the overall miles driven will help reduce pollution, and create a pedestrian oriented community where people can live and work using mass transportation as a primary means of movement. High densities in center development will give rise to the required critical population needed to economically justify mass transit facilities thus advance the target set forth in State Indicator 15.

Policy on Energy Resources

Adoption of the center based development pattern will lead to greater efficiencies in service provision by utilities and increase the potential for mass transit service.

Policy Waste Management, Recycling and Brownfields

Brownfields constitute a distinct group of sites which are, or are perceived to be, contaminated. These sites are in dire need of rehabilitation and redevelopment. The SGP actively promotes the remediation of brownfields sites as a means of land reclamation and community revitalization.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost</p> <p>STRATEGY: Provide infrastructure and related services more efficiently by supporting investments based on comprehensive planning and by providing financial incentives for jurisdictions that cooperate in supplying public infrastructure and shared services. Encourage the use of infrastructure needs assessments and life-cycle costing. Reduce demands for infrastructure investment by using public and private markets to manage peak demands, applying alternative management and financing approaches, using resource conserving technologies and information systems to provide and manage public facilities and services, and purchasing land and easements to prevent development, protect flood plains and sustain agriculture where appropriate.</p>	<p>Policy on Infrastructure Investments - Provide infrastructure and related services more efficiently by investing in infrastructure to guide growth, managing demand and supply, restoring systems in distressed areas, maintaining existing infrastructure investments, designing multi-use school facilities to serve as centers of community, creating more compact settlement patterns in appropriate locations in suburban and rural areas, and timing and sequencing the maintenance of capital facilities service levels with development throughout the state.</p> <p>Policy on Transportation - Improve transportation systems by coordinating transportation and land-use planning; integrating transportation systems; developing and enhancing alternative modes of transportation; improving management structures and techniques; and utilizing transportation as an economic development tool.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 4. Meet present and prospective needs for public infrastructure systems</p> <p>Indicator 14. The percent of all trips to work made by carpool, public transportation, bicycle, walking or working at home</p> <p>Indicator 17. Increase in transit ridership</p> <p>Indicator 19. Percent of development on individual septic systems</p>

Analysis

Increasing population in Sussex County, and the lack of mass transportation have put tremendous strain on the roads leading in and out of the County. Currently, fewer the 2 percent of the population travels by mass transportation, the remaining 98 percent travel by private automobile. The redevelopment and creation of designated centers within the county will help provide the critical population needed in order to restore mass transportation to the county. Furthermore, centers will increase the availability of local jobs, thus minimizing personal travel in the automobile.

The creation and designation of centers is a crucial aspect of creating the critical mass that is required in order to provide adequate and efficient public transportation. Water and wastewater infrastructure is among the most important aspects of creating a center that will provide the critical densities. Providing water and wastewater systems in centers will reduce the number of individual septic systems, thus furthering the target set forth in State Indicator 19. Cost savings will also be achieved in serving customers concentrated in a relatively compact area, while development pressure elsewhere will be curbed by the lack of service. As Townships grows, these various benefits should hold true for other infrastructure and utilities.

Policy on Infrastructure Investments

In order for the centers concept to achieve the desired results, existing and proposed infrastructure must be funded and constructed expeditiously. The regional infrastructure planning of sewer service areas has been actively in process through the County Wastewater Management Plan. While there continue to be areas that will not easily adapt or accept large scale infrastructure, a reliance on alternative septic technology will be used to remediate conditions. Furthermore, sequencing of infrastructure installation will be used as a means of growth management in order to focus development within the centers to achieve the desired densities.

Policy on Transportation

Policies laid out in the Plan incorporate the review of current system capacity and projected build-out. With the analysis of the zoned build-out, potential traffic impact may be estimated and the ability of the circulation system to absorb the impact evaluated. Furthermore, transit oriented development will provide a strong impetus to economic development. The concentration of development within centers will help the County to achieve the critical mass needed to provide efficient mass transit opportunities. The increase of mass transit opportunities will have a dramatic effect on the current 98% of commuters who use individual automobiles and advance State Indicator 14 and 17.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>GOAL 6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost</p> <p>STRATEGY: Provide adequate housing at a reasonable cost through public/private partnerships that create and maintain a broad choice of attractive, affordable, ecologically designed housing, particularly for those most in need. Create and maintain housing in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas and in Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas, at densities that support transit and reduce commuting time and costs, and at locations easily accessible, preferably on foot, to employment, retail, services, cultural, civic and recreational opportunities. Support regional and community-based housing initiatives and remove unnecessary regulatory and financial barriers to the delivery of housing at appropriate locations.</p>	<p>Policy on Housing - Preserve and expand the supply of safe, decent and reasonably priced housing by balancing land uses, housing types and housing costs and by improving access between jobs and housing. Promote low- and moderate-income and affordable housing through code enforcement, housing subsidies, community-wide housing approaches and coordinated efforts with the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing.</p> <p>Policy on Design - Mix uses and activities as closely and as thoroughly as possible; develop, adopt and implement design guidelines; create spatially defined, visually appealing and functionally efficient places in ways that establish an identity; design circulation systems to promote connectivity; maintain an appropriate scale in the built environment; and redesign areas of sprawl.</p>	<p>Indicator 20. Percent of New Jersey households paying more than 30% of their pre-tax household income towards housing</p> <p>Indicator 24. Annual production of affordable housing units</p>

Analysis

Production and rehabilitation of affordable and reachable housing is one of the top priorities of Sussex County. The County is acutely aware of the shortfall in housing availability for all but the most affluent sectors of the County population. For traditional Affordable Housing, the rules and incentives of the Council on Affordable Housing have proven to be somewhat effective, at least in the rehabilitation of existing homes and encouragement of group home opportunities. Notwithstanding this fact, many municipalities in the County have not petitioned for or received Substantive Certification, leaving them in violation of the NJ Fair Housing Act. The compliance of these communities with the NJ Fair Housing act and the Certification by the council on Affordable Housing will ultimately lead communities to Plan Endorsement and the furtherance of State Indicator 20.

Policy on Design

The center design guidelines, excerpted from Anton Nelessen, “Visions for A New American Dream”, are wholly consistent with the thrust of this policy. The SGP sets forth the specific objective that development take place, for the most part, in mixed use centers.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value</p> <p>STRATEGY: Enhance, preserve and use historic, cultural, scenic, open space and recreational assets by collaborative planning, design, investment and management techniques. Locate and design development and redevelopment and supporting infrastructure to improve access to and protect these sites. Support the important role of the arts in contributing to community life and civic beauty.</p>	<p>Policy on Historic, Cultural and Scenic Resources - Protect, enhance, and where appropriate rehabilitate historic, cultural and scenic resources by identifying, evaluating and registering significant historic, cultural and scenic landscapes, districts, structures, buildings, objects and sites and ensuring that new growth and development is compatible with historic, cultural and scenic values</p> <p>Policy on Open Space and Natural Systems Protect biological diversity through preservation and restoration of contiguous open spaces and connecting corridors; manage public land and provide incentives for private land management to protect scenic qualities, forests and water resources; and manage the character and nature of development for the protection of wildlife habitat, critical slope areas, water resources, and for the provision of adequate public access to a variety of recreational opportunities.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 2. The amount of land permanently dedicated to open space and farmland preservation</p> <p>Indicator 12. Conversion of land per person</p>

Analysis

Sussex County remains one of the few places left in New Jersey that is largely open space and farmland. With a vast majority of the western third of the county dedicated to open space and recreation and the eastern third of the county within the highlands area, it is a top priority of the County to preserve and enhance open space and recreation opportunities for residents, as well as visitors. In addition to the rich array of natural resources, Sussex County is also home to many of the state's cultural and historic resources. With a long history dating back at least 11,000 years to the first Native American settlements, the area has continued to play a significant historical role in more recent centuries. New Jersey already has a number of plans in place to ensure the continuation and growth of historic preservation efforts. The SDRP calls for the preservation of historic, cultural and scenic resources as an important way to create attractive, prosperous and livable communities while saving New Jersey's rural landscape. The advancement of the preservation of open spaces along with the preservation of historic and cultural resources within the County will continue to further the goals of the SDRP.

Policy on Open Lands and Natural Systems

The SGP places heavy emphasis on the natural resource base, its preservation and management. The County Open Space and Recreation Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan each contribute to the overall County strategy of open space protection, providing connections to prevent fragmentation, as well as directing the design and character of all proposed development and redevelopment to protect wildlife habitat, critical environmental features, and to encourage public awareness of their importance through formal access and interpretive centers. Sussex County plans to conserve an additional 10,000 acres in their farmland preservation plan thus furthering the targets set by State Key Indicator 2 and Indicator 12. The Office of Smart Growth encourages Sussex County to consider setting a target acreage for open space as well, and has included the same in the PIA.

Policy on Historic, Cultural and Scenic Resources

The County has spent millions of dollars in support of the retention of open space, farmland, and preservation of cultural and historic resources. The SGP will be an effective means to further this objective in setting out the importance of this effort to the County of Sussex.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 8: Ensure Sound, Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide</p> <p>STRATEGY: Use the State Plan and the Plan Endorsement process as a guide to achieve comprehensive, coordinated, long-term planning based on capacity analysis and citizen participation; and to integrate planning with investment, program and regulatory land-use decisions at all levels of government and the private sector, in an efficient, effective and equitable manner. Ensure that all development, redevelopment, revitalization or conservation efforts support State Planning Goals and are consistent with the Statewide Policies and State Plan Policy Map of the State Plan.</p>	<p>Policy on Comprehensive Planning - Promote planning for the public's benefit, and with strong public participation, by enhancing planning capacity at all levels of government, using capacity-based planning and Plan Endorsement to guide the location and pattern of growth and promoting cooperation and coordination among counties, municipalities, state, interstate and federal agencies.</p> <p>Policy on Public Investment Priorities - It is the intent of the State Plan that the full amount of growth projected for the state should be accommodated. Plan Strategies recommend guiding this growth to Centers and other areas identified within Endorsed Plans where infrastructure exists or is planned and where it can be provided efficiently, either with private or public dollars. (Designated Centers are included in the category of communities with Endorsed Plans.) Public investment priorities guide the investment of public dollars to support and carry out these Plan Strategies.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 6. The degree to which local plans and state agency plans are consistent with the State Plan</p>

Analysis

The SDRP classifies nearly all of Sussex County in Planning Areas 4, 4B and 5. Planning Area 4, the Rural Planning Area, is designed to highlight an areas' agricultural potential. This is the location of New Jersey's prime farmland and agricultural industry. Policies outlined for PA 4 include keeping the land in large, contiguous masses of farmland while promoting agriculture as an industry and directing new growth into existing or planned centers where infrastructure is or will be located. Planning Area 4B has these same policies with an environmental overlay. The environs of PA 4 or 4B are generally to remain in open space and agricultural use, and not to develop into an urban or suburban character. Planning Area 5 is the Environmentally Sensitive Area that comprises large contiguous parcels with whole ecosystems that can, and should, be protected. In keeping with the spirit of this goal, the County intends to further the goals of the SDRP to the best of its ability and provide sound planning assistance to municipalities to the greatest extent possible.

Policy on Comprehensive Planning

Sussex County has the distinction of having ten designated centers. This, coupled with the affirmative policy support in the SGP, is evidence that the County is interested in implementation of the SDRP policies, not just their recitation. Concentrating growth in centers where capacity exists coupled with environs protection will prevent sprawl and assist in consistency with the SDRP as it applies to Planning Areas 4, 4B and 5. Continuing involvement, including this application for Initial Plan Endorsement reiterates this position. Furthermore the enforcement of a Plan Implementation Agreement and a strict dedication to its time lines will help the County come further into conformance with Key Indicator 6. Cooperation with the with the Highlands Council within the Highlands Region will also be a top priority of the County, pending adoption of the Highlands Regional Master Plan and its endorsement by the State Planning Commission.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLAN – PLANNING AREA POLICY OBJECTIVES

In Sussex County, the Planning Area (PA) designations are predominantly PA 4, PA 4B, and PA 5. There is a very small area of PA 2, located in Stanhope Borough. The SGP does not propose any amendments to the State Planning Policy Map. Furthermore, it recognizes the jurisdiction of the Highlands Council in the Highlands Preservation Area, and the dual jurisdiction of the Highlands Council and the SPC in the Highlands Planning Area.

Since the County varies little in its Planning Area designations, the SGP attempts to break these areas down into more workable and distinctive “landscapes”. The SGP landscapes include Rural/Agricultural, Highlands, Traditional Centers, Job Creation Centers, Parks and Wildlife Management Areas, and Lake Communities. Each of these is identifiable by its physical nature and development capacity. The SGP serves to provide guidance to municipalities in applying those Planning Area policies relevant to the specific landscape’s characteristics.

The largest of the landscapes in the County is the Rural/Agricultural landscape comprising 175,106 acres. This landscape, along with the Parks and Wildlife Management Area landscape (111,981 acres), gives the County its character as a scenic and generally undeveloped area. The remaining landscapes, of lesser extent, are: Traditional Centers 38,800 acres; Lake Communities 17,730 acres; Job Creation Centers 335 acres. The Highlands, which incorporates parts of all the other landscapes comprises 126,233 acres in total with 72,825 acres in the core preservation area.

With the Highlands area extracted, the remaining landscapes’ acreages are as follows:

Rural/Agricultural	145,386	acres
Traditional Centers	37,058	acres
Job Creation Centers	335	acres
Parks and Wildlife Management Areas	76,964	acres
Lake Communities	11,384	acres

The *Rural/Agricultural Landscape* consists of PA4, PA4b and PA5, and is the area most affected by sprawl. Other than in the lake communities, residential development has been scattered throughout the County with non-residential development constructed along the major roads. Connections between residential communities and non-residential development have been minimal. In the future, if the precepts of the SDRP as endorsed by the SGP are followed, development would be focused in centers with far less low density scattered development outside those centers. This will necessitate implementation of enabling ordinances to protect the environs.

The *Highlands* is a physiographic region defined by geology and landform. It consists of highly resistant rock with dramatic topographic variation. As an area of particular water resource importance, restrictions have been placed on development in the preservation area and are recommended in the Regional Master Plan for the planning area to meet the public purpose of water supply protection. The County has committed to working with the Highlands Council in coordinating efforts in the Highlands Region once the Regional Master Plan is adopted.

The preferred development form set forth in the SDRP is the *Traditional Center*. In Sussex County, these are traditional towns, villages and hamlets. Currently, there are ten designated centers in Sussex County, with approximately eight additional centers to be considered in the future. Consideration of additional centers will require proof of the carrying capacity to support growth and successful Municipal Plan Endorsement from the SPC to establish the boundaries of those centers. However, should the municipalities choose not to propose centers where the county has indicated the possibility, those municipalities may still be Plan Endorsed so long as they show their plans are consistent with the SDRP. The majority of future County development should be steered into traditional center-based development where appropriate. This form of development has proven to be more efficient and diverse, consuming less land for a given level of population.

Job Creation Centers are a reflection of existing Commercial-Industrial Nodes as defined in the SDRP, which because of their non-residential character; do not fit the definition of a center. The SDRP provides for these nodes with the understanding that a concentration of wholesale and industrial economic development activities is a major contributor to the regional economy, works to alleviate traffic congestion, air and water pollution, and contributes directly to the quality of life of County residents and visitors.

Park and Wildlife Management Areas occupy approximately one-third of the County, and correspond to Parks and Natural Areas on the State Plan Policy Map. Chiefly located along the western boundary of the County in Montague, Sandyston, and Walpack Townships and in Wantage and Vernon Townships to the east, these areas contribute to the sense of openness, protection of natural resources, and encouragement of active tourism. These elements are critical to the character of the County.

The *Lake Communities Landscape* of Sussex County is a particularly important part of the neighborhood composition of the County. Generally established as summer recreation areas, they have evolved into year round residential communities. As communities developed for only part time occupancy, their initial impact on soil and water resources was low. However, as they became increasing popular as year round residential communities, their relatively high density (5-10 units per acre) began to have a greater and greater impact, particularly on the lake around which the community had grown. They are highlighted in the SGP as a distinct landscape because of their dependency and impact on the water resources of the County.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLAN – EXISTING AND FUTURE POTENTIAL GROWTH AREAS

Center Criteria & Policies

Sussex County municipalities have been actively participating in the center designation process for many years. One of the first centers designated by the State Planning Commission in 1993 was the Newton Regional Center in the Town of Newton. As a result of the extensive visioning sessions, held Countywide as part of the strategic planning process, a wide set of expectations for centers have evolved. Some designated centers, such as Newton, Sparta, Hopatcong, Andover Borough, Stanhope, Vernon, Byram and Montague see additional growth within the center as a benefit yielding densities capable of sustaining mass transit, pedestrian access to a diverse range of services and shopping opportunities, and a renewed sense of community. Others, such as Layton and Hainesville, in Sandyston, and Branchville look at the center process as a means to gain recognition of traditional, historic centers, and assistance in maintaining their important cultural connections between the past and the future.

Development in centers, coupled with drastically reduced densities outside the centers, can be fostered through a combination of rezoning and financial incentives. For example, residential densities in centers, whether those centers are hamlets, villages or towns, will be on the order of 8-30 units per acre. In order for these densities to be safely sustained, central water along with central wastewater treatment utilities and/or advanced (denitrification) septic systems will have to be provided. These concentrations of residential development will also have a complimentary commercial component. They will be designed to offer pedestrian access to goods and services, including recreation, rather than reinforce the current high cost dependency on the automobile. In Sussex County, the effect will be to revitalize existing small towns and prepare for development of new towns (if and where carrying capacity exists). Large lot development will continue to be an option where environmental and access conditions permit.

The Centers will be chosen as expansions and redevelopments of existing centers or as new, freestanding centers, in the areas best suited to carry the impact of development. The physical elements required to support development at higher densities are productive aquifers, permeable soils, availability of existing and/or proposed water supply, sewage treatment, and transportation infrastructure. The design of centers will require elements such as on-street parking, reduced building setbacks, wide sidewalks, town greens and a clear edge to set the center off from the outlying countryside or ‘environs’. Where infrastructure does not exist but is planned, careful phasing of its construction will provide municipalities with some degree of control over the rate and location of development.

The SGP suggests that through the use of TDR, carrying capacity analysis, and careful programming of water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure, the anticipated build-out in the County could be reoriented to compact hamlets, towns, and villages where higher density development can occur.

The SGP acknowledges existing designated centers within the County, as well as identifies future potential centers. The SGP identifies these areas for the purpose of consistency with the goals and policies of the SDRP associated with Planning Area 4, 4b and 5, in that growth in the State's environs should be accommodated in centers. Endorsement of the SGP does not serve to "re-designate" any of the existing centers, nor designate any of the potential future centers. Municipalities must pursue Plan Endorsement with the State Planning Commission, or Plan Conformance with the Highlands Council to receive official recognition of these centers.

Below are the centers previously designated by the State Planning Commission within Sussex County, including the date of designation and expiration. These municipalities must pursue Plan Endorsement with the State Planning Commission to retain the center designations past their expiration dates.

Designated Centers			
Municipality	Center Type	Date of Designation	Date of Expiration
Andover Borough	Town	December 04, 1996	January 07, 2008
Branchville Borough	Village	June 16, 2004	June 16, 2010
Byram Township	Village	May 19, 2004	May 19, 2010
Hampton Township	Regional (Expansion of Newton Regional Center)	July 21, 2004	July 21, 2006 (Expired)
Hopatcong Borough	Town	April 28, 1995	January 07, 2008
Montague Township	Town	April 23, 2003	April 23, 2009
Newton Town	Regional	September 24, 1993	January 07, 2008
Sandyston Township (Hainesville)	Village	April 23, 2003	April 23, 2009
Sandyston Township (Layton)	Village	April 23, 2003	April 23, 2009
Sparta Township	Town	July 16, 2003	July 16, 2009
Stanhope Borough	Town	October 16, 2002	October 16, 2008
Vernon Township	Town	July 16, 2003	July 16, 2009

Municipalities that seek endorsement from the State Planning Commission must demonstrate how their proposed center is consistent with the corresponding center criteria. The State Plan acknowledges that, depending on the context, some flexibility may be needed with regard to the application of quantitative criteria; however, the municipality must explain any inconsistencies with the below criteria and why the proposed center is overall consistent.

State Plan Criteria	Regional Center	Town Center	Village	Hamlet
Land Use				
Function	Focal point for region's economic, social and cultural activities with a compact mixed-use core.	Mixed-use core and diverse housing.	Mixed-residential community	Small-scale compact residential settlement with community functions
	Located in market area supporting high-intensity development and redevelopment.	Identified as a result of a strategic planning effort.	Integrated into regional network of communities with transportation links.	
	Identified as a result of a strategic planning effort conducted on a regional basis.		Planned to preserve farmland or environmentally sensitive areas.	
	Located, scaled and designed not to adversely affect economic growth potential of Urban Centers.		Identified in master plans and as part of municipal planning effort.	
Land area	1- 10 sq mi	< 2 sq mi	< 1 sq mi	10-50 acres (<100 if wastewater system is not feasible)
Housing units	4,000 to 15,000	500 to 4,000	< 100	
Housing	> 3 du / ac	> 3 du / ac	> 3 du / ac	> 2 du / ac
Population				
Number of people	>10,000	1,000-10,000	< 4,500	25-250
Density	> 5,000 per sq mi	> 5,000 per sq mi	> 5,000 per sq mi	No criteria
Economy				
Employment	500 to 10,000	500 to 10,000	No Criteria	No Criteria
Jobs-housing ratio	2:1 to 5:1	1:1 to 4:1	No Criteria	No Criteria
Infrastructure				
Capacity (general)	Access to sufficient existing or planned infrastructure.	Sufficient existing or planned infrastructure.	Sufficient existing or planned infrastructure	No criteria
Transportation	Near major public transportation terminal, arterial or interstate interchange; hub for two or more transportation modes.	Arterial highway or public transit.	Reasonable proximity to arterial.	No criteria

Node Criteria & Policies

Job Creation Centers correspond to the “Node” as defined in the SDRP. The node appropriate to Sussex County is termed a “Commercial-Manufacturing Node. This is defined as; “a significant concentration of commercial, light manufacturing, or warehouse and distribution facilities and activities which are not located in a Center and are not organized in a Compact form but could meet performance standards for locating in a Center”. The commercial/industrial park facilities depicted as Job Creation Centers fall within this definition and are consistent with the SDRP. These typically benefit from highway access, lack of residential development, and access to rail service. There are some Job Creation Centers, Commerce Park in Sparta and North Church Industrial Park in Hardyston, which have matured into a functional concentration of business and industry. These are not traditional centers as outlined in the SDRP, but have an important role to play in the economic health and consequent quality of life in Sussex County.

Although these are set out as a separate landscape, they are relatively small elements within the larger, Agricultural/rural landscape. For this reason, these should follow design objectives which will allow them to blend in with the more extensive landscape.

Infrastructure in Growth Areas

Water and sewer infrastructure are the most effective means of establishing growth boundaries and timing of development. True growth management regulates both the location and sequencing of development and redevelopment. In relatively low density areas such as Sussex County, new central water and sewer services are the keys to reorienting the patterns of development away from sprawl toward more compact forms.

The County and the State recognize the need to provide infrastructure in Centers, if the conservation goals and policies of the SDRP within PA4, PA4b and PA5 are to be accomplished. The environmental features and limitations must be considered, however, in determining the growth boundaries of Centers. Furthermore, water supply and the capacity to treat wastewater are limiting factors that municipalities must consider when siting potential growth areas.

Sussex County will be submitting a draft Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) [/Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP)] in 2007 that will address infrastructure and sewer service area issues for many of the potential growth areas/centers identified in the County's Strategic Growth Plan. Because of the differing levels of planning completed for these growth areas/centers, sewer service areas can only become realistic when the municipality in which they are located can demonstrate capacity, and that environs protections have been enacted.

Municipalities with existing Designated Centers, expiring Centers, or those that would like to designate a new center, must go through the Wastewater Management planning process. It is recommended that these municipalities enter into the Plan Endorsement and Wastewater Management planning processes simultaneously to ensure consistency. Because of environmental constraints, Sewer Service Area finalized during WMP process will not necessarily be coterminous with existing Designated Center boundaries.

CONCLUSIONS

Recognizing the County of Sussex's significant planning efforts, the Office of Smart Growth recommends that the State Planning Commission endorse the County's Vision and Plan as consistent with the State Plan. The County population has grown considerably over the past four decades, a trend that is projected to continue into the near future. Plan Endorsement provides an excellent opportunity to direct that growth towards centers and other appropriate areas, while preserving natural resources and open space.

Intended to help forge a lasting partnership between the Commission, the County and its municipalities, Plan Endorsement is a two-way commitment, embodied in the PIA. The County SGP serves as a policy document to guide municipalities as they implement land use strategies. Additional planning and design work will still be required on the part of the County and its municipalities, and these efforts need to be carefully monitored by the Commission and the state agencies. From the efforts made so far to reach the present consensus, it is evident that the desire of the County to succeed is real and the Commission should support these planning efforts.

PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

A draft PIA is attached. The PIA has two definitive sections: 1) *Implementation Items by the County*, and 2) *Implementation Items by Municipalities*. The former serves as an action plan for the County and State for the implementation of the Strategic Growth Plan. The latter describes the assistance that the County and State can provide to municipalities that seek to implement the County Strategic Growth Plan through the Plan Endorsement process. The items listed in the municipal section should not be construed as exhaustive. Additional requirements for Municipal Plan Endorsement will be specified in an Action Plan, and agreed upon in a mutual MOU between the State Planning Commission and individual municipalities.

The PIA will be finalized upon adoption by the State Planning Commission.