

II. Introduction

All levels of government should conduct planning. It is important that the State, counties, and municipalities establish goals and objectives for the future. Planning provides a rational framework for decision-making among the many competing infrastructure and other land development related investments that will be needed in New Jersey over the next 20 to 25 year period. Proper planning will enable the selection of the best possible infrastructure investments for implementation into the future.

In order to be effective, planning must be focused on the areas, and the issues in those areas, that if addressed will achieve the greatest benefit in terms of resources conserved and public needs met. This is strategic planning: the direction of limited resources to address the most important needs of the neighborhood, community, and region. Unfortunately, newly developing communities and declining communities, which most need to do planning, often have the least capacity to pay for it. For this reason, a regional approach to strategic planning is appropriate.

Middlesex County has identified seven regions of the County as Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs). (See Map 1). These areas have been and are expected to continue to be the major growth areas of the County. Plans for these areas are being developed by the County with the participation of the municipalities and the public. They also conform to the major transportation corridors in Middlesex County. Transportation of goods and people is one of the major determinants of land development and economic activity. Access to major transportation routes is the primary consideration for location of industry and commerce and also defines the relationship of housing to jobs (employment opportunities). Growth patterns established by the regional transportation network tend to drive all other infrastructure investments.

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) is one tool by which the State of New Jersey may guide State infrastructure investments. The SDRP emphasizes the division of the entire State into “planning areas” that are broadly defined delineations of land development generally tied to density characteristics. The planning areas and Designated Centers are shown on the State Plan Policy Map (SDRP, March 1, 2001, Page 182). Map 5 in this Report identifies the State Plan Policy Map delineations for the Arthur Kill-Raritan and Metropark SPAs. The SDRP recommended that future growth be promoted within “Center Boundaries” and that “... growth should be guided in the following [planning area] order: Metropolitan [PA1], Suburban [PA2], Fringe [PA3], then Rural [PA4] or Environmentally Sensitive [PA5]”

An additional factor that influences the growth potential of Middlesex County is its location in the larger Northeastern United States and that region's relationship to the global economy. The State and regional (through the Port Authority of NY and NJ) commitment to the maintenance of the major port facilities in the metropolitan area assures that New Jersey and Middlesex County will continue to have significant growth. New Jersey lies within the Washington, D.C., to Boston corridor, and with adjoining states (New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware) must respond to the growth pressures and economic influences generated by the major metropolitan areas within that corridor.

The two SPAs covered by this planning document are the Metropark and the Arthur Kill-Raritan River-Raritan Bay areas. These areas constitute the northeastern portion of Middlesex County including all or part of Carteret, Woodbridge, Edison, Metuchen, Perth Amboy, Sayreville, South Amboy and Old Bridge.

