

RPA HOSTS A RETREAT OF NORTHEAST STATE PLANNING DIRECTORS

In early March, RPA, along with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the New Jersey Office of State Planning, co-sponsored a retreat which invited 13 northeastern state planning directors. Ten representatives from Maryland to Maine were able to attend this day and a half of intense discussion ranging from scrutiny of internal state policies to the possibility of regional networking and cooperation.

The goal of the meeting was to bring together for the first time, individuals in the northeast who direct planning and growth management for their respective states. Often, directors and officials involved in statewide planning do not know their counterparts in contiguous states, let alone those elsewhere in the northeast.

Commissioner Jane Kenny of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs welcomed the group on the first night. She said that "It's important that we get together and share our common victories and challenges, and learn from each other." Commissioner Kenny went on to address the conditions of New Jersey, and the nation as a whole in terms of errant planning. She spoke about the economic, environmental and social impacts of sprawl, setting the stage for the following day of discussions.

Henry Richmond, Executive Director of the American Land Institute in Portland, Oregon opened the morning agenda with his critique of smart growth efforts across the nation. Richmond provided a sobering assessment of land use policy in the United States. According to Richmond, "Thirty-nine states have

done nothing to address the problems of haphazard development and non-reinvestment into urban centers. Of the remaining eleven states, in the seven that have recently tried, nothing has really clicked." In order to give this problem proper attention and take steps toward success, Richmond emphasized the need for state legislatures to take this issue as their responsibility. He noted that the federal government is also important, but if there is not a land use system state-wide, no other policies will prove very effective.

Roundtable discussions followed, led by various planning directors from around the northeast. Ronald Kreitner, Director of the Maryland Office of Planning, opened the discussion on reaching consistency in the implementation of state plans. Kreitner highlighted the difficulty of acknowledging the different cultures of local government and promoting consistency with state initiatives.

John Lipman, Massachusetts' Director of Growth Planning, tackled the issue of working with other state agencies and the implications of "turf wars" when it comes to state and local policymaking. Greg Brown, Commissioner of Housing and Community Affairs, noted that in Vermont, a tradition of Executive Orders from the Governor's office has promoted consistency among state agencies in terms of growth planning and policymaking.

Herb Simmens, Director of the New Jersey Office of State Planning, initiated a discussion on the internal workings of each representative's office. A dialogue followed regarding the successes and difficulties of creating a vision for an entire state. The group also touched upon the political and logistical processes of their "respective fit" within the structure of state government and the implications of such positioning in achieving the executive's and state planning

office's goals.

Stuart Meck, Principal Investigator of the American Planning Association's Grow Smart Project, led the final roundtable discussion by giving an overview of "Growing Smart" legislation being implemented across the nation. Meck reviewed the progression of planning legislation, and its current status, concluding that in order to make procedural and substantive changes, legislators and planners must deal with the details. Paying attention to the "big picture" is not enough.

The day concluded with a planning exercise using the New Jersey State Plan as a contextual framework. The planning directors collectively worked on a hypothetical issue for a site in central New Jersey. Ideas and critiques were brought to the table regarding the consistency of the hypothetical development with the NJ State Plan. The participants listed many issues that should be considered in the attempt to reach consistency with state plans and/or principles. For instance, how much should the state invest in terms of financial support and tax incentives? How adaptable is the project/site for a different future development if there is migration?

In the closing session, the participants recapped the importance of the two-day retreat. Greg Brown of Vermont felt that the NESF Retreat should continue in years to come. "[As state planning directors], We're short-termers ... the new guys will need the same [help] that we do." Ron Kreitner also suggested that the next gathering take a look at federal policy and involvement to cultivate a push for national recognition of state planning issues.

The group agreed to continue meeting at least annually and to begin addressing common issues. The next meeting of northeast state planners is scheduled for next year in Cambridge, MA. •

Blueprint

The RPA Newsletter
212-253-2727
www.rpa.org
e-mail: mail@rpa.org

H. Claude Shostal
President

Robert D. Yaro
Executive Director

Karen Chin
Editor

©1999 Regional Plan Association
All rights reserved.

Printed on recycled paper.

**SUPPORT RPA AND THE
THIRD REGIONAL PLAN**
*Renew your
membership today.*

*For membership information,
contact RPA's Vice President
of Program Development,
Aram Khachadurian, at 212-
253-2727 x310, or send an e-
mail to aram@rpa.org.*

BAYE WILSON, NEW JERSEY DIRECTOR

Baye Wilson has been appointed as RPA's New Jersey Director. Baye was previously Staff Attorney at Essex-Newark Legal Services, where he has been for the past two years. He also worked as an intern at a number of planning, community development and housing organizations. In addition, Baye is involved in a number of civic and volunteer activities in Newark.

Baye grew up in Paterson, NJ and obtained his Bachelors degree at Rutgers University. He received a Masters in Regional Planning from Cornell University and a Law Degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1997. He was admitted to the New Jersey Bar last year.

Baye will be responsible for overall direction of the New Jersey office, including planning and analysis, policy implementation and maintaining relationships with state and local governments. Currently, the New Jersey office is involved in several projects, including using community design workshops to target brownfields development; creation of an arts and cultural district to jump-start economic development in Newark; working on the state planning process; and with a select group of New Jersey's premier mayors, identifying the major problems and solutions to common issues.

Baye can be reached at 973-623-1133, or via e-mail at baye@rpa.org. For more information about these projects, contact the New Jersey Office at the above number.

• • •

Richard M. Aks, Vice President, Municipal Finance at Goldman Sachs & Company, has been elected to RPA's **Board of Directors**.

RPA Blueprint

The Newsletter of Regional Plan Association

Spring 1999

BRINGING SMART GROWTH TO THE TRI-STATE REGION

... in this issue ...

- GUEST COLUMN: *Herb Simmens and Thomas Wright on Smart Growth in the Region: An Update on New Jersey's Plan*
- *Northeast State Planners Retreat*
- *RPA Regional Y2K Initiative*
- *New Jersey Director*

What is "Smart Growth?" On April 29th, Regional Plan Association's Regional Assembly will explore this issue, and what we can learn from the national smart growth movement.

Across the country, community groups, environmentalists and a growing number of business leaders and developers are engaging in what Time Magazine recently called "The Brawl over Sprawl." Three decades after RPA first rallied the Tri-state region against urban sprawl, we are being joined by many other groups here and across

the country in a national "smart growth" movement that has the goal of creating alternatives to sprawl.

The term "smart growth" was first used in Massachusetts in the late 1980s to describe proposals to improve its state and regional planning system. Rather than managing or restricting growth, as earlier growth management systems did, smart growth promotes growth—particularly in and adjoining existing city and town centers. Smart growth also promotes more compact, more transit- and pedestrian-friendly, and less resource-, energy- and land-consuming patterns of development. In the past few years, several states, including Maryland, Tennessee, Minnesota and in January of this year, Utah, have adopted new smart growth programs. These join New Jersey and eight other states that had adopted state growth management programs in the 1970s and '80s.

RPA's 1968 Second Regional Plan represented the first concerted effort to control sprawl in a metropolitan region anywhere in the United States. Even three decades ago it was clear to many in the region that the continued movement of residents, jobs and services to fast-growing suburbs would threaten the well-being of its cities and countryside, and ultimately threaten the quality of life of the suburbs themselves.

RPA's anti-sprawl strategy at the time was to promote suburban development in a network of eleven planned regional downtowns



Large-lot, single-home subdivisions eat up open space

We appreciate your questions or comments. Write us, or send an e-mail to mail@rpa.org.

SMART GROWTH

- continued from previous page -

linked by a revitalized regional rail network. The Second Plan also called for a "Race for Open Space," that would protect hundreds of thousands of acres of open land from development. Today, the regional downtowns, including Trenton, Newark, White Plains, Hicksville, Downtown Brooklyn, Stamford and New Haven, contain nearly one million jobs—approximately one-tenth of the total regional employment—and our revitalized rail network now carries six million passengers daily, up by nearly one-third in the past decade. The metropolitan open space system now contains more than one million acres of protected lands.

Despite these important achievements, the region still continues to sprawl, creating widespread public concern over sprawl and its impacts. Here—as in other major US metropolitan areas—the rate of urbanization is proceeding at a rate several times the rate of population growth or new household formation, with several important unintended consequences:

- Open space—including farms and forests, wildlife habitats and recreational and scenic landscapes—are being consumed by large lot subdivisions, strip malls and office parks from Central New Jersey to Eastern Long Island.
- Traffic congestion on suburban arterials and interstate highways is reaching the "gridlock" stage as automobile registrations and vehicle miles traveled inevitably increase.
- Inner cities and older suburbs and their growing minority and immigrant populations have become increasingly isolated from new job and housing opportunities in the outer suburban ring.
- Metropolitan regions are forced to build new infrastructure and

schools in the outer ring, even as these resources are being abandoned in the inner ring.

- Air pollution and "non-point source" water pollution are resulting from increased automobile use and paving of vast areas of the growing suburban ring, undercutting the quality of life for all metropolitan residents.

In response to these concerns, the national "smart growth" movement has emerged to curb sprawl and promote more effective spatial planning. Several states have adopted new or strengthened incentive-based state smart growth management systems, totalling 13 of the 50 states with state planning programs. These include: Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Utah, Minnesota, Tennessee, Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Maryland, Georgia and Florida. Legislation to create similar systems is pending in several other states, including Iowa and Massachusetts. Most of these programs include the following features:

- A set of goals or principles to guide state and municipal plans and investments;
- A requirement that state agencies prepare functional plans designed to achieve these goals;
- A set of strong incentives designed to encourage regions and municipalities to adopt plans and regulations consistent with state goals that would generally include

grants to prepare plans and regulations, priority for state discretionary grants for construction of schools, roads, water and sewer systems, etc.;

- A process for certification of regional and local plans and regulations as being consistent with state goals.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman has announced her support for strengthening New Jersey's state plan. In New York State, legislation is now pending in Albany to create a new smart growth program for the state. In Connecticut, action has been taken in recent years to strengthen the state's advisory Conservation and Development Plan, but there are no incentives for communities to adopt plans and regulations consistent with the state plan.

In addition, several states (including New York, New Jersey and Connecticut) have adopted new conservation land acquisition programs, totaling several billion dollars. In the November, 1998 elections, voters approved 240 initiatives totaling \$7.5 billion. In the largest of these, New Jersey voters approved a \$1-billion program to preserve nearly one million acres of farm and forestland. Other voter initiatives created urban growth boundaries and other growth management controls in municipalities across the country. •



Shopping malls and scattered suburban office buildings lead to paving over the landscape.

Remember RPA in your estate planning. Visit our website, or call Aram Khachadurian at 212.253.2727 x310.

GUEST COLUMN: HERB SIMMENS AND THOMAS WRIGHT ON SMART GROWTH IN THE REGION: AN UPDATE ON NEW JERSEY'S PLAN

On March 31, 1999, the New Jersey State Planning Commission approved the release of a new Interim State Development and Redevelopment Plan, moving forward the reauthorization of New Jersey's Plan. The Interim Plan, the result of hundreds of Cross Acceptance discussions with counties, municipalities and civic groups, will be examined in an Impact Assessment report, leading to adoption of a new State Plan in December. The Interim Plan reaffirms the core philosophy and concepts of the 1992 Plan, but provides clearer guidance for state agencies and the public on its goals and objectives.

The New Jersey legislature adopted the State Planning Act in 1986, creating a 17-member State Planning Commission charged with preparing a State Plan. The initiative for the Act was a series of court decisions, collectively known as Mount Laurel, requiring municipalities to provide opportunities for affordable housing. The Act initially responded to the need to have a more accurate and inclusive planning process to guide the location of affordable housing.

However, in the research and adoption of the Plan, it grew to incorporate a comprehensive set of regional growth issues and strategies. Responding to concerns about dwindling open space and struggling cities—and the vocal leadership provided by RPA and other concerned civic and environmental organizations—the Plan addressed investment and development throughout the state. The guidelines that resulted, now often called "Smart Growth," set a higher goal for New Jersey's Plan: to enhance and preserve our quality of life by protecting open space, preserving a viable agricultural industry and building "communities of place." It established procedures and policies for coordinated planning by municipalities, counties and state agencies, and proposed that growth should be directed to places that have existing or appropriately planned in-

frastructure. These concepts, which have been at the core of RPA's mission for decades, made the Plan a significant departure from business as usual. While it was supported by subsequent administrations and legislators, it never became a "front burner" issue in the eyes of the public.

That is until January of 1998, when at her second inaugural address, Governor Christine Todd Whitman declared that implementation of the State Plan would become a top priority of her administration. As she stated at the Smart Growth Conference in Austin, Texas last December, "So often, what was natural land two or three years ago is now a shopping center or a housing development or an office building. As governor, I spend a lot of time in a car going from one part of the state to another. Spending the past five years seeing New Jersey roll by has given me a sense of urgency about our future."

Governor Whitman has become a national spokesperson for these issues. And New Jersey has moved ahead aggressively to refine and implement one of the most ambitious and comprehensive state growth management systems in the country. The pressure for action has been growing. New data suggests that we have been consuming open land at a rate of 16,000 acres a year from 1985 to 1995. And a new recognition of the connection between suburban sprawl and quality of life has been moving across the country, as states enact growth management laws to control and focus development patterns.

Through the Cross Acceptance process, over 200 new Centers have been proposed for consideration by the State Planning Commission, in addition to more than 50 communities whose plans have already been endorsed. Under the Governor's direction, over a dozen state agency programs give priority to these endorsed plans. Significant regulatory

reforms, particularly in the coastal area and in the permitting of wastewater services, are currently underway. State agencies are establishing implementation teams that bring the Plan's goals more directly into the regulatory and funding process, helping these agencies implement the Plan from within. And last year New Jersey approved the most aggressive environmental referendum in the country, dedicating \$100 million annually from general funds to preserve a million acres of open space—half the undeveloped land left in the state.

The Interim Plan also goes beyond simply saying where development and investment should occur, and includes policies on design. These design policies, another first for New Jersey's Plan, will demonstrate the state's commitment to attractive, livable communities. They provide a tool for planners and citizens in the fight to improve our communities. Fundamental design decisions—the way buildings address a street or plaza, the scale and orientation of public spaces, and the attention to streetscapes and amenities—are not matters of taste, but empirically-driven planning tools to help achieve the same goals that the rest of the Plan is dedicated to.

With all this momentum, there are still considerable obstacles to changing the status quo and implementing the State Plan. New Jersey's citizens have demonstrated their support for these concepts time and again. But the State Plan still needs an active and energized constituency, supplied by RPA and other civic groups, to support these initiatives.



Herb Simmens (l) is Director, and Thomas Wright is Deputy Director at the New Jersey Office of State Planning.

RPA REGIONAL Y2K INITIATIVE

The "Y2K problem" denotes the inability of certain computer hardware, software and embedded processors to function properly when faced with dates past 1999. This problem could have serious impacts on the public infrastructure systems that are the underpinning of the regional economy. While much work has been done in both the public and private sectors to mitigate these risks, there remains sufficient gaps and misunderstandings to warrant reasonable concern and prudent action.

RPA has launched its Regional Y2K Initiative to help minimize the negative consequences of the Y2K computer "bug" on the economy and quality-of-life of the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut metropolitan region through resource and information sharing and public education. RPA's work is being overseen by a Task Force composed of business and civic leaders and Co-Chaired by Brendan Dugan, President of European American Bank and Bishop Joseph Sullivan of the Diocese of Brooklyn.

The Regional Y2K Initiative:

- is an advocate for full disclosure and region-wide contingency planning and priority setting on the part of public officials and infrastructure providers in a process which is open and objective;
- is raising public awareness and understanding of Y2K; and
- is bringing the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut metropolitan region's non-profit sector into a state of Y2K preparedness so that the needs of people served by this sector are met without significant interruption.

Last fall, RPA held a series of meetings with corporate Y2K executives to tap into their research on Y2K and to learn which areas their organizations are most concerned about. Their principal concerns were of the preparedness of basic infrastructure systems such as transportation, power, water and telecommunications. Participants also singled out the small and medium enterprises (SME), non-profit service delivery,

and state and local government sectors as areas of questionable Y2K preparedness.

In early February, RPA held an all-day conference examining key areas of the region's infrastructure: electricity, water supply and waste water disposal, and the three state governments and the New York City Mayor's Office of Emergency Management.* RPA will soon be announcing additional forums on other key infrastructure areas, including telecommunications, transportation, banking/finance and health care.

RPA is focusing its remaining work on Y2K on the areas where we feel we can make the most useful contribution:

- Continued examination of our infrastructure systems;
- Providing reliable, accurate information to the public;
- Helping the non-profit sector prepare itself to continue to function effectively despite any Y2K-related disruptions.

At a special Y2K session at RPA's Regional Assembly, the Regional Y2K Initiative will be releasing preliminary findings in connection with studies on health care, transportation and water supply and waste water disposal systems. It is our hope that these studies will form the basis for a more informed public discussion of the real Y2K risks the region faces in these areas, and what kinds of contingency planning, if any, must be done to mitigate and prepare for these risks.

Between now and the end of the year, in cooperation with a group of major non-profit umbrella organizations, RPA will be engaged in an effort to raise the level of awareness of Y2K in the non-profit sector and to put non-profits in touch with the resources they need. A prime goal of this program will be to get the message across that each organization has a responsibility to continue to fulfill its mission regardless of Y2K-related disruptions. To meet this objective, in addition to addressing their internal Y2K issues, organizations will need to develop realistic contingency plans based on a thorough

appreciation of the external systems upon which they depend.

Finally, a subcommittee of the Y2K Task Force will be working with leaders in the health care sector to develop an accurate picture of the status of this key area, identified in a recent Senate report as one of the weakest links in the nation's Y2K preparedness. RPA will be working with organizations and institutions in this sector to pinpoint remaining vulnerabilities and to ensure that the necessary resources are made available to address them. •

* Most of these presentations are available on RPA's web site at www.rpa.org.

For further information on RPA's Regional Y2K Initiative, contact Aram Khachadurian at aram@rpa.org, or call him at 212-253-2727 x310. To join the e-mail list to receive frequent Y2K updates, visit our website or send an e-mail to christian@rpa.org.

GOVERNORS ISLAND WALKING TOURS

RPA and the General Services Administration are offering free walking tours of Governors Island the following dates: May 5, June 16, July 14, August 11, September 15. *Preregistration is required.* The tours depart at 10am from the Battery Maritime Building Coast Guard waiting room, located immediately north of the Staten Island Ferry Terminal at the foot of Whitehall and South streets in Manhattan. To register, call 212-253-2727 x393; e-mail your response to ray@rpa.org; or fax your name and telephone number to 212-253-5666, attn: Ray, at least two days before the date you wish to attend.

The tour is a rigorous 1.5 mile walk. There are no restroom or medical facilities available on the Island. Participants do so at their own risk. Heavy rain cancels the tour. If you are in doubt, call Big Onion Walking Tours after 9:00 AM on the morning of the tour at 212-439-1090 to listen to the recorded message.

For more information on Governors Island, visit our website.