



American Planning Association  
**New Jersey Chapter**

*Making Great Communities Happen.*

August 16, 2018

The Honorable Phil Murphy  
State of New Jersey  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

On behalf of the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association, we would like to commend you and your administration for your leadership on rebuilding New Jersey's Innovation Economy. The comprehensive steps you are taking to address this issue from different perspectives – education and training through the Apprenticeship Network; the Innovation Challenge grants to support community planning; the Innovation Hub in New Brunswick, which can serve as a model for other centers of innovation in the state; as well as grants to support business incubators and the entrepreneurs who use them – will ensure that New Jersey regains the competitive advantage it deserves. We were particularly pleased to see that you have directed your Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council to create an inter-departmental plan to set the strategic direction for future state investment and support of the programs you have introduced thus far.

It is this strategic planning effort that has spurred us to reach out to you. We urge you and your team to incorporate a larger statewide land use planning component into your strategies. The goals of the Council to generate ideas for developing thriving and connected urban areas and to make commitments to inclusive growth for under-resourced and under-represented residents are definitely on the right track. An essential element in building the state's innovation ecosystem is identifying those areas of the state with the capacity to accommodate this new growth and to build communities that provide the quality of life that today's innovators and entrepreneurs are seeking, in an efficient, effective and equitable manner. This, too, requires inter-departmental coordination and investment. The process for accomplishing this has been in place for decades, although it was completely dismissed during the prior administration: The State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

You have correctly noted that infrastructure drives growth. The State Development and Redevelopment Plan was created to drive infrastructure decisions; however, it has not been formally updated since 2001. We believe that an updated State Plan will prove invaluable to the Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council and we are requesting that your administration take action in the following manner:

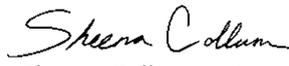
- 1. Issue a Clarion Call for Better Planning:** For the past decade, our state has languished in part because we lack a clear vision and direction. We urge you to use infrastructure and economic growth as the key elements for stronger planning initiatives and direct the Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council and other agencies to work with the State Planning Commission to create and implement a new vision for our state. We would be more than happy to work with your staff to craft an executive order and strategy for returning New Jersey to the forefront of planning and in the vanguard of places people want to live, work and raise a family.

2. **Fill appointments to the State Planning Commission:** Since January of this year, six meetings of the State Planning Commission have been cancelled due to the lack of a quorum. There are three public member positions and two local government appointments that remain vacant. It is critical to fill these vacancies in addition to the eight state agency members and charge them with reviewing and revising the State Plan in a timely manner. We are happy to assist you in identifying qualified individuals for your consideration.
  
3. **Reconstitute the Office of State Planning under the Office of the Governor:** Since the adoption of the State Planning Act in 1986, the staff of the State Planning Commission has been placed in three different agencies – the Office of State Planning in the Department of Treasury, the Office of Smart Growth in Department of Community Affairs, and the Office for Planning Advocacy in the Department of State. Staff have consistently provided critical information to the State Planning Commission, other State, county and local governments, businesses, civic organizations and the public. We propose that this most important function lie directly under the Office of the Governor, which is done in several states across the nation. Through budget cuts and inattention, the once nationally-renown staff has been decimated and cannot currently execute the duties called for by law and regulation, let alone need. A strong State Planning Office with the right leadership and support staff will not only ensure compliance with the State Planning Act and other laws and regulations regarding land use in New Jersey, but also provide critical information and assistance to the Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council and guarantee that our cities and towns have the resources to grow equitably and inclusively.

As you know, APA New Jersey represents over 1,000 planning professionals who provide leadership at the regional, state and local level in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in planning, promoting education and citizen empowerment, and providing the tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change. We were truly honored to have you address our membership at our statewide planning conference in 2017 and felt energized by your commitment to strategic planning – an area where prior administrations have fallen considerably short. We look forward to the opportunity to continue the conversation we started back then. We join you in your optimism and in believing that New Jersey's best days are before us and that our future is unlimited.

Sincerely,

  
Charles Latini Jr., AICP, PP  
President

  
Sheena Collum, MPA  
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Sheila Oliver, Lieutenant Governor  
Joe Kelly, Deputy Chief of Staff for Economic Policy, Office of the Governor  
Tim Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer, New Jersey Economic Development Authority