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State Planning Commission
c/o Office for Planning Advocacy
Department of State
P.O. Box 820
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0820

Dear Members of the State Planning Commission:

PlanSmart NJ supports the State Planning Commission's decision today to temporarily delay adoption of the new State Strategic Plan to allow more public comment and to incorporate coastal planning in the wake of Hurricane Sandy. PlanSmart NJ, however, encourages the State Planning Commission to move quickly to incorporate necessary changes and then put the State Plan forward for final adoption.

In the meantime, we would like to offer our comments for your consideration, based on the revised version of the State Strategic Plan that was posted on the OPA website on Friday, November 9th. First, PlanSmart NJ applauds several key concepts in the revised Plan:

- **Promotion of geographic industry growth clusters based on employment sectors with high growth potential.** These sectors include: pharma/life sciences; transportation, logistics, and distribution; finance; manufacturing; technology; and health care. PlanSmart NJ and the NJ Chamber of Commerce have formed a Regional Innovation Cluster Working Group composed of leaders in these core industries to support the State Plan's economic growth goals. We welcome working with you and OPA staff to identify pilot RICs, improve conditions for sectors of statewide significance, and bring together private industry and higher education around these issues. Please consider us a resource.
- **Infrastructure investment.** The revised State Plan appropriately prioritizes infrastructure investment in our roads, bridges, tunnels, and public transportation networks, as well as in our utility infrastructure. Modernizing our infrastructure is essential to building a strong economy and vibrant regions.
- **Commitment to long-term source of funding for open space, farmland, and historic preservation.** PlanSmart NJ has long advocated for a stable source of funding to protect New Jersey's open

spaces and agricultural lands. Without state leadership, this funding will soon run out. We applaud the State's commitment to seeking renewed funding for open space preservation.

- ***Alignment of state agency regulations, policies, and funding with the State Strategic Plan.*** For the first time, the Plan requires state agencies to create Agency Implementation Plans to carry out the goals in the State Strategic Plan. We support these efforts and recommend that a public process be created for vetting these Agency Implementation Plans.

PlanSmart NJ also makes some recommendations for improvement in the following areas:

- ***Future flooding and disasters.*** In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, it is evident that decisions about how and where to rebuild and what areas to protect need to be part of our planning framework. PlanSmart NJ recommends that the State Plan include planning for climate impacts such as storms and flooding.
- ***Housing as an economic driver.*** The new State Plan makes little mention of the importance of the housing sector in revitalizing the State's economy or the importance of changing zoning policies to permit housing near jobs. A variety of housing options must be available near employment centers if the State is to reduce household commutes, lessen congestion on the roads, and improve the quality of life in local communities. PlanSmart NJ recommends that the State Plan recognize the role of the housing sector in sound regional planning and economic growth.
- ***Creating access to opportunity.*** The State Plan does not discuss the role of zoning and planning in creating access to opportunity for households at all income levels. PlanSmart NJ recommends that the State Plan include consideration of access to opportunity for all New Jersey residents.

PlanSmart NJ appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on the revised State Plan. We look forward to working with you toward expeditious adoption of this long overdue revision of the State Plan.

Kind regards,



Lucy Vandenberg, PP/AICP
Executive Director