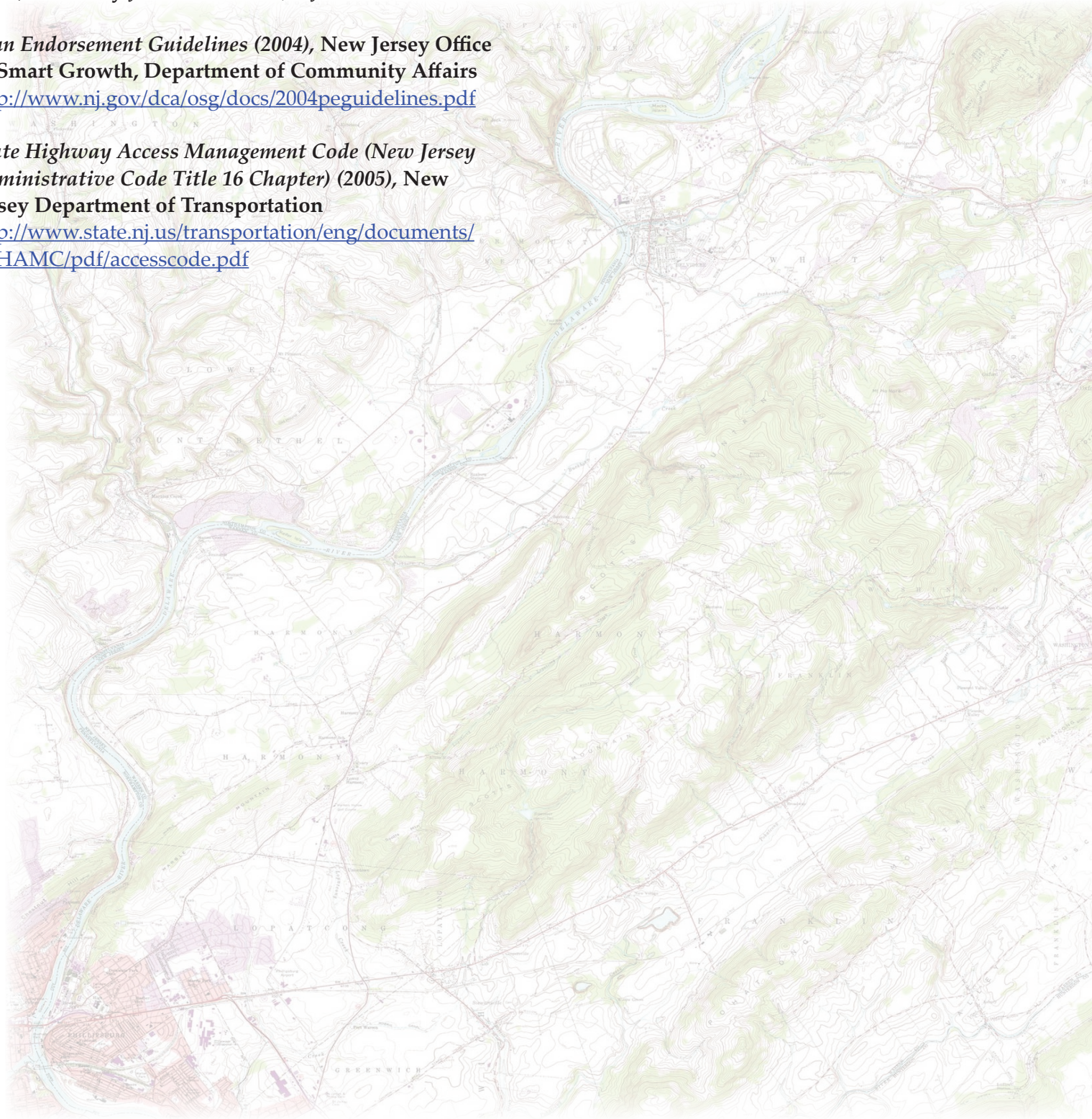


RESOURCES

Complete Guide to Planning in New Jersey (2nd edition, 2003), Edited by Jennifer L. Zorn, NJAPA

Plan Endorsement Guidelines (2004), New Jersey Office of Smart Growth, Department of Community Affairs
<http://www.nj.gov/dca/osg/docs/2004peguidelines.pdf>

State Highway Access Management Code (New Jersey Administrative Code Title 16 Chapter) (2005), New Jersey Department of Transportation
<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/documents/NJHAMC/pdf/accesscode.pdf>



Plan Endorsement is a voluntary process established at the state level in New Jersey to promote consistency between local master plans and the goals and objectives of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). The Plan Endorsement process is administered by the State Planning Commission with the participation of a variety of state agencies. Municipalities may apply for Plan Endorsement on their own, or neighboring municipalities may work together and seek Plan Endorsement as a group. The process includes opportunities for dialogue with state officials and provides for coordinated, “one-stop” access to technical assistance and funding from state agencies.

Once the Highlands Council adopts its Regional Master Plan, municipalities within the Highlands Preservation Area will be required to revise their master plans to be consistent with the Regional Master Plan. Municipalities within the Highlands Planning Area may opt in to the Regional Master Plan. Municipalities in either the Preservation or Planning areas will be able to pursue Plan Conformance with the Regional Master Plan in lieu of the State Planning Commission’s Plan Endorsement process.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PLAN ENDORSEMENT?

Plan Endorsement has both regulatory and financial benefits. It ensures greater coordination between local governments and the state agencies in the development of master plans. This coordination results in land use planning that is better integrated with regulatory decision-making at the state level, and a more streamlined approvals process from the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) for specific projects that are consistent with the SDRP.

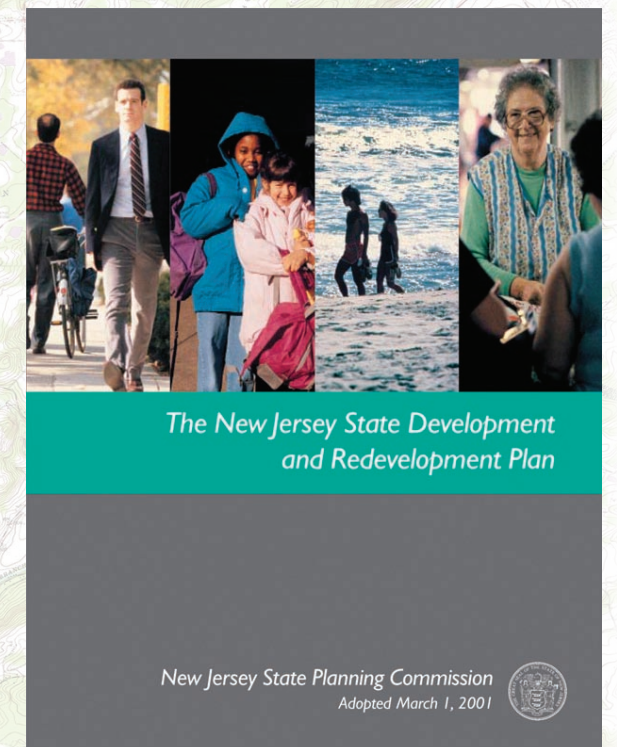
From a financial standpoint, an endorsed plan entitles a municipality or county to a higher priority for available funding and state agency technical assistance. A variety of state and federally funded programs give “priority points” in the competitive process to municipalities that are a part of the Plan Endorsement process. In addition, preparing a petition for Plan Endorsement is a

requirement for those municipalities seeking certification from the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) under the Third Round COAH rules.

Municipalities that have received Initial Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission (SPC) can opt to apply for Advanced Plan Endorsement, which automatically results in COAH certification and approval of the petitioner’s open space, habitat conservation, and water resources management plans by NJDEP.

HOW DOES A MUNICIPALITY RECEIVE PLAN ENDORSEMENT?

There are two levels of Plan Endorsement – Initial and Advanced. To apply for Initial Plan Endorsement, a municipality must attend a Pre-Petition meeting with



To receive endorsement from the State Planning Commission, a municipal Master Plan must be consistent with the goals and objectives of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP).

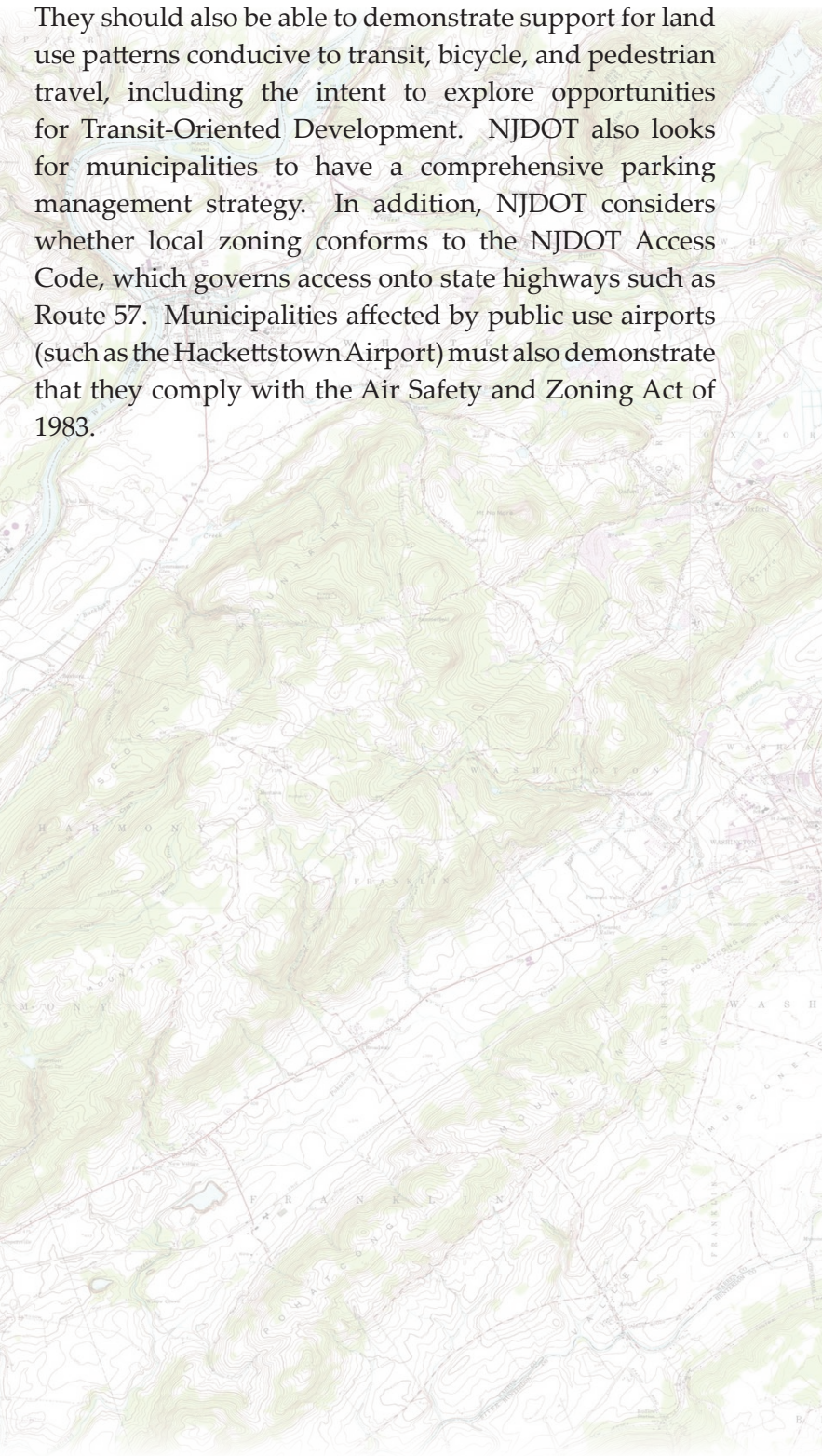
state agency representatives, prior to submitting a copy of the municipal master plan and related documents to the State Planning Commission as described below.

Each of the participating state agencies has identified several guidelines to be met during the Plan Endorsement process. For example, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture recommends that those municipalities with a strong agricultural base include an Agriculture Retention or Farmland Preservation element in their master plans. Plans and ordinances will be reviewed for evidence of a community's commitment to the local agricultural industry. For Advanced Plan Endorsement, the Department expects municipalities with an agricultural base to provide policy and financial support for farmland preservation, including a meaningful Right-to-Farm ordinance, and to have in place an Agricultural Advisory Committee to advise the local planning board.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) has additional guidelines for Plan Endorsement. For Initial Plan Endorsement, NJDEP expectations include the preparation of a comprehensive Natural Resource Inventory. The inventory should address habitats for threatened, endangered and priority species, areas of critical water supply, wetlands, open space, public lands, natural and conservation areas, and natural features, including steep slopes.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation and NJ TRANSIT also have specific expectations for municipalities seeking Initial Plan Endorsement. Municipalities should have in place either an adopted Circulation Element or a transportation overview and strategy document. The Circulation Element or strategy document should consider all travel modes, including public transit, bicycle and pedestrian mobility and the movement of freight. Parking and land use should also be addressed. In addition to an inventory of existing facilities, the document should address community goals and objectives for the transportation system, assess the current system and evaluate future needs.

NJDOT also seeks an indication that applicants for Plan Endorsement are working with surrounding communities to solve regional transportation problems. They should also be able to demonstrate support for land use patterns conducive to transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel, including the intent to explore opportunities for Transit-Oriented Development. NJDOT also looks for municipalities to have a comprehensive parking management strategy. In addition, NJDOT considers whether local zoning conforms to the NJDOT Access Code, which governs access onto state highways such as Route 57. Municipalities affected by public use airports (such as the Hackettstown Airport) must also demonstrate that they comply with the Air Safety and Zoning Act of 1983.



THE PLAN ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

Pre-Petition Meeting

- An initial meeting provides an opportunity for municipal officials to meet with the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) and representatives from other state agencies (NJDEP, NJDOT, Agriculture, Council on Affordable Housing);
- Agencies advise petitioners on the requisite planning documents that they need to submit in order to have their petition for Plan Endorsement considered by the State Planning Commission.

Stage 1: Initial Plan Endorsement Petition

- Petitioner submits crucial planning documents, including the Master Plan, to the State Planning Commission;
- Petitioner's planning documents are reviewed by OSG, which, following consultation with other State agencies, makes a recommendation to the State Planning Commission as to whether these documents are consistent with the State Plan.

Stage 2: Planning and Implementation Agreement (PIA)

- The Planning and Implementation Agreement (PIA) outlines commitments made by the State and petitioner to implement the endorsed plan;
- The PIA is submitted to the State Planning Commission for approval with the petition for Plan Endorsement;
- If the PIA and petition are approved by the SPC, the petitioner can choose to stop at Stage 2, thereby receiving Initial Plan Endorsement.

Stage 3: Plan Endorsement Contract

- After Initial Plan Endorsement, a petitioner may seek Advanced Plan Endorsement for planning efforts beyond those submitted in the Initial Plan Endorsement petition;
- The Plan Endorsement Contract is a joint agreement signed by the State Planning Commission; it initiates the Advanced Planning Endorsement process and sets forth the requirements that the petitioner must meet in order to receive Advanced Plan Endorsement;

- The Plan Endorsement Contract includes any assistance—regulatory and financial—that will be provided by State agencies once the plan has received Advanced Plan Endorsement.

Stage 4: Advanced Plan Endorsement Petition

- Following satisfactory completion and enactment of all items in the Plan Endorsement Contract, OSG makes a recommendation to the SPC concerning Advanced Plan Endorsement;
- If approved, the petitioner becomes eligible for regulatory and funding benefits stated in the Plan Endorsement Contract.

Stage 5: Bi-annual Status Reports

- The petitioner must demonstrate progress with the Planning and Implementation Agreement (PIA) and Plan Endorsement Contract by submitting status reports to the Office of Smart Growth every two years.