



Color Our World

If you're not particularly happy with the direction in which New Jersey is moving, then CUPR's impact assessment of the state plan is a must read. *By Bill Glovin*

As the man behind a new study that will help determine the future of New Jersey, Robert Burchell often finds himself talking about alleviating chronic congestion and preserving open space in the Garden State. In meeting after meeting, he's heard a worn refrain: the state's problems are unsolvable.

But Burchell isn't buying any of it. After spending a good part of the last nine years gathering data and analyzing what might happen if the New Jersey State Plan were to be implemented, he should know. "For starters, New Jersey is one of only 14 states that has a plan to control growth," says Burchell, co-director of the Center of Urban Policy Research

(CUPR) at Rutgers' Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. "No state has ever tried to implement such a plan and, compared to other states, we're considered a land-use marvel. New Jersey has voter approval to buy one million acres of undeveloped land, we require that municipalities zone land for affordable housing, and we now have a plan that promotes smart growth."

Someone reading a recent report on density might be surprised to find that parts of New Jersey are as dense as Tokyo and Calcutta. Still, out of the five million total developable acres in the state, 1.9 million remain undeveloped. With the state slated to purchase one million of those acres as part of the open-space referendum, another 900,000 are up for grabs.

That's where the state plan comes in. By itself, the plan has no authority to block development. But it can influence the state and federal regulators who grant development permits, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas. Says Burchell, "The way to promote implementation is to put aside pots of money and say to municipalities, 'If you behave the way we want you to behave, then you can get access to this pot of money.'"

To help local planning boards and developers follow the plan, CUPR's impact assessment study includes a color-coded policy map divided into five areas—metropolitan, suburban, fringe, rural, and environmentally sensitive—and five center types—urban, regional, town, village, and hamlet. To create the map, the state's 21 counties and 566 municipalities reviewed their own land-use plans, ordinances, and regulations. Before they were finished, Burchell's team had negotiated more than 1,000 policy compromises and map changes between the State Planning Commission and local governments.

"Deep pink means the area has potential for development; light yellow is where development should not take place," says Burchell. "If Merrill