

The Star-Ledger/**Eagleton-Rutgers Poll**

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CONTACT: MONIKA McDERMOTT
OR CLIFF ZUKIN

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A story based on the survey findings presented in this release and background memo will appear in the Sunday, February 25 Star-Ledger. We ask users to properly attribute this copyrighted information to "*The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll.*"

THE NEW JERSEY STATE PLAN

Residents Support the Principles, But Question the Progress

As the State Planning Commission prepares to adopt an updated version of the New Jersey State Plan this week, residents rate the existing version of the plan as largely ineffectual. While New Jerseyans feel that the goals of the State Plan are very important, after nearly a decade under the Plan they see little, if any, progress. When asked to rate the Plan's success overall, a mere 6 percent of residents say the plan has been successful, while the rest feel it has either met with mixed success, or been unsuccessful. And when it comes to specific plan goals, residents think the Plan has fallen short on revitalizing urban centers, decreasing traffic congestion and stopping suburban sprawl. On two other issues – promoting economic growth and preserving open spaces – residents feel there has been some, although not a lot, of progress.

Most New Jersey residents are aware that their local governments have control over land use decisions, and they would like to keep it that way. But residents put the state government in a tough position: while two-thirds support the Plan's tenet of "home rule" – letting localities choose whether to follow the Plan's guidelines – when it comes to laying blame for the Plan's lack of success, they point the finger squarely at state government.

Other important findings of the most recent Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll include:

- Economic growth and easing traffic congestion are two of the most important State Plan goals for residents, while stopping suburban sprawl is the least important.

The Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics

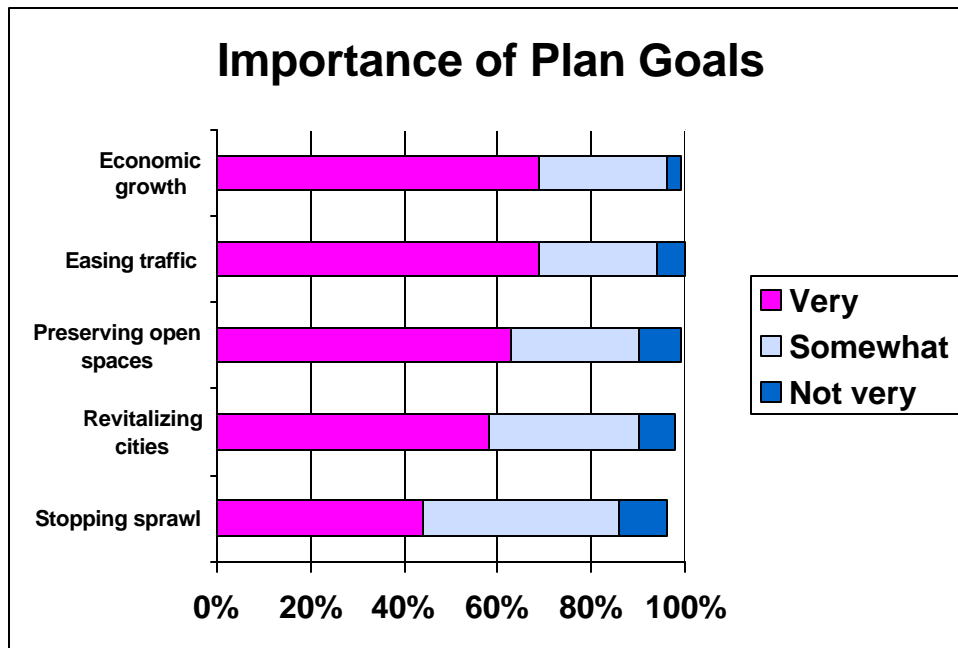
191 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Phone: 732-932-9384 - Website: <http://slerp.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-6778

- Residents think helping already developed areas that are in trouble – such as inner cities – should be more of a priority in New Jersey than buying up and preserving open spaces.
- Residents support the State Plan’s attempts to steer new growth and development toward existing population centers, rather than toward open space and farmland.
- And while they have definite opinions on land use issues in New Jersey, most residents report never having heard of the “New Jersey State Plan.”

The Poll was conducted by telephone with a scientific sample of 803 New Jersey residents between January 24 and 30, 2001. The sampling error for the full sample is \pm 3.5 percentage points.

Residents say the goals of the State Plan are important to them. Of those goals included in the survey, the two highest rated are promoting economic growth and easing traffic congestion. Sixty-nine percent of New Jersey residents rate promoting economic growth as “very important,” and another 27 percent rate it as “somewhat important.” Only three percent think promoting economic growth is not important. An equal 69 percent rate easing traffic congestion “very important” and 25 percent call it “somewhat important.” Not surprisingly, easing traffic congestion is most important to northern New Jersey residents, 77 percent of them say it is “very important.”



Preserving open spaces and revitalizing inner cities are also seen as very important goals. Sixty-three percent of residents think that preserving open spaces is a “very important” goal, and another quarter of residents rate it as “somewhat important.” This goal is most important to those residents who have less open space: 67 percent and 70 percent respectively of northern and central New Jersey residents rate preserving open spaces as “very important,” compared to 54 percent of residents in the southern part of the state. Vibrant cities are also important: overall, 58 percent of New Jerseyans feel that revitalizing city centers is “very important” and 32 percent think it is “somewhat important.”

The only goal included in the survey that does not rate as very important is stopping suburban sprawl. A relatively low 44 percent of residents feel that stopping sprawl is a “very important” goal. Another 42 percent rate it as “somewhat important,” and one-in-ten New Jerseyans say stopping sprawl is “not very important” to them. Those least affected by sprawl – southern New Jersey residents – are also the least concerned: only 38 percent rate sprawl as a very important goal.

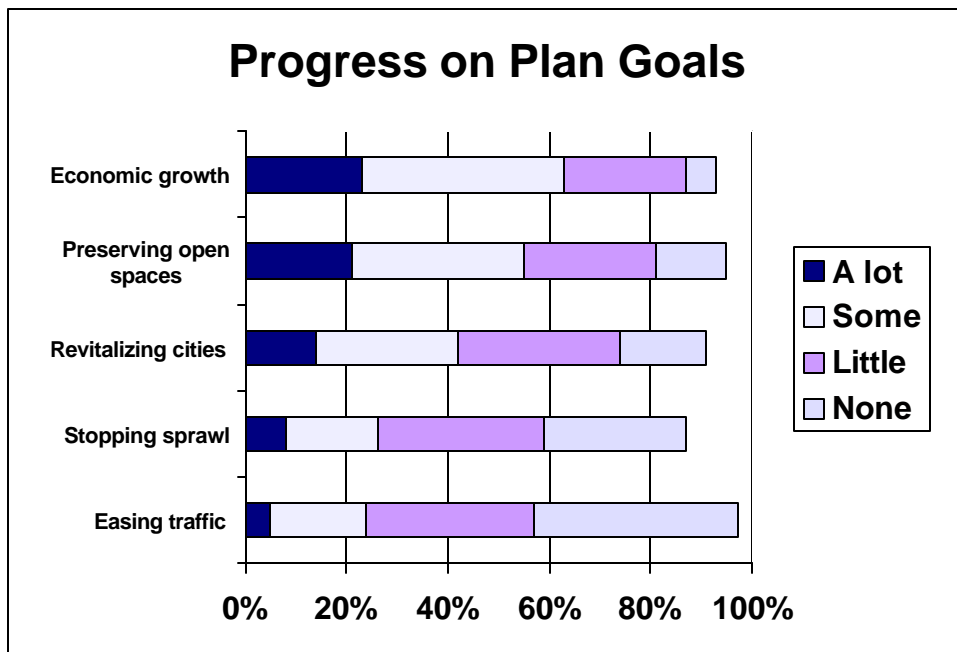
While residents rate preserving open spaces as slightly more important to *their* interests than revitalizing inner cities, when it comes to which should be a bigger priority for the *state*, cities win hands down. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of Garden State residents say that investing in already developed areas that need repair, such as inner cities, should be a bigger priority in New Jersey than buying up and preserving open spaces. Only 23 percent of residents feel that open spaces should take precedence.

Perhaps toward this end, residents also support a central aim of the State Plan to steer new development toward existing population centers rather than open spaces and farmland. Sixty-seven percent of residents approve of directing growth and development to population centers, such as cities and towns, while only 22 percent disapprove of this.

Overall, few residents are familiar with the Plan by name, but most still have opinions on the its effectiveness to date. Just over one-fourth of residents have heard of the “New Jersey State Plan,” while two-thirds say they have never heard of it. This unfamiliarity is spread among all groups in New Jersey. But when told the Plan was created “to provide development and planning guidelines that would stop suburban sprawl and manage growth in New Jersey,” they rate the plan’s success as middling to

poor. About half of residents say the plan has met with only mixed success, and another 23 percent rate the Plan as unsuccessful. Only 6 percent of residents rate the Plan as successful, and another 23 percent don't have an opinion on the plan's success.

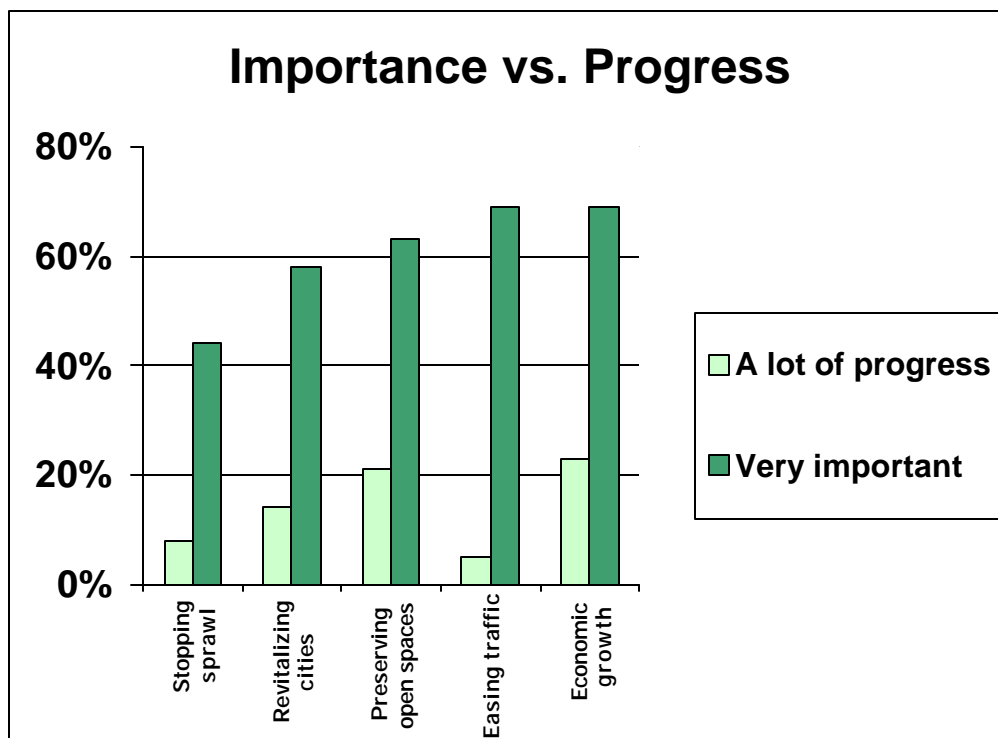
Specifically, residents feel that on two goals – promoting economic growth and preserving open spaces – there has been at least some progress in their communities over the past ten years, but on other goals, they see little or no progress. Nearly one-quarter of residents feel that there has been “a lot” of progress over the past ten years in promoting economic growth, and another 40 percent see “some” progress. Around one-third see little or no progress in promoting economic growth. When it comes to preserving open spaces, 55 percent of residents say they have seen either “some” or “a lot” of progress in their areas over the past decade, while 40 percent cite “a little” or “no progress at all.” Northern New Jersey residents have seen less benefit from open space initiatives – only half say they've seen at least some progress, compared to three-in-five residents to the south of them.



Opinions are divided over progress on revitalizing city centers. Forty-two percent of residents feel there has been “some” or “a lot” of progress revitalizing cities in their communities, but 49 percent say there has been only “a little” or “no progress at all.”

Residents' opinions are partially dependent on where they live: 47 percent of northern residents feel there has been at least some progress in revitalizing cities, but only 31 percent of southern residents agree. Associate director of the Poll, Monika McDermott, explains: "Residents judge progress by what they know. Northern New Jersey residents can look to productive efforts to redevelop Newark and Jersey City and see positive results, while southern New Jerseyans are more familiar with the travails of Camden."

Two goals on which residents feel there has been little or no progress at all are easing traffic congestion and stopping suburban sprawl. One-third of residents say their areas have seen only "a little" progress in stopping sprawl, and another 28 percent say there has been "no progress at all." Only 18 percent of Garden Staters see "some" progress on preventing suburban sprawl, while 8 percent see "a lot." Residents are most pessimistic when it comes to traffic: a 40 percent plurality say there has been "no progress at all" in reducing traffic congestion in their communities over the past decade. Another third say there has been only "a little" progress, and less than a quarter of residents feel there has been at least "some" progress. Here again, geography matters: one-third of southern state residents have seen at least some progress in easing traffic in their communities, versus only 18 percent of northerners.



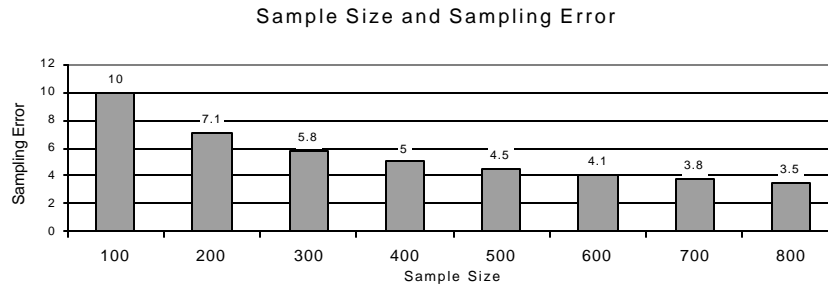
Residents blame the New Jersey state government for the State Plan's lack of success to date, even while acknowledging that local governments have final say in development and planning decisions. Among those who say that the State Plan has been either unsuccessful or met with only mixed success, 59 percent feel the state government, rather than local governments, is to blame. Only one-quarter of New Jersey residents blame local governments for the Plan's lack of success. Residents hold the state responsible even though local governments have the power: 57 percent of residents correctly state that local governments have more control than the state government over development decisions.

McDermott points out that, despite the Plan's lack of success, New Jerseyans are not willing to change the balance of power in the state when it comes to development and planning decisions: "New Jersey residents have always had a firm attachment to the idea of home rule, or local control, and this extends to land use issues. As a result, even though they think the State Plan has fallen short with local governments in the driver's seat, they don't want to cede power to the state in these decisions."

Over two-thirds of residents feel that local governments *should* have more control over planning and development issues. And another two-thirds approve of the State Plan's "home rule" provision, which gives local governments final say in land use decisions. Those least supportive of local control are groups who are more likely to live in urban areas: 35 percent of young residents (ages 18-29) and one-third of minority residents think the state should have more control than localities, but majorities of both of these groups still support local control. Residents of rural areas are the most supportive of local control: 76 percent think local governments should have more power than state government in land use decisions.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP130-7), SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2001

The latest *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers Poll was conducted between January 24-30 with a scientifically selected random sample of 803 New Jersey adults interviewed by telephone. The figures in this release are based on this sample size. All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for registered voters is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey residents were found to favor expanded environmental protection one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 3.5) had all New Jersey registered voters been interviewed, rather than just a sample. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported for Republicans, Independents or Democrats, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error.



Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. The verbatim wording of all questions asked is reproduced in this background memo. The sample has been stratified based on county and the data have been weighted on age and education to insure an accurate proportional representation of the state. The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

“On another subject, in New Jersey, who do you think currently has more control over planning and development decisions – that is, decisions about where new homes and businesses are located, and how land should be used: the state government or local governments?” (SP1)

	<u>State government</u>	<u>Local governments</u>	<u>Both equal / share (vol.)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	32%	57%	2%	8%	99%	(803)
<u>By Urbanity</u>						
--Suburb	30	63	3	4	100	(198)
--Small City/Town	36	53	3	8	100	(423)
--Rural Area	21	69	--	10	100	(106)

“Who do you think SHOULD have more control over planning and development decisions in New Jersey: the state government or local governments?” (SP2)

	<u>State government</u>	<u>Local governments</u>	<u>Both equal / share (vol.)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	23%	68%	4%	4%	99%	(803)
<u>By Urbanity</u>						
--Suburb	25	67	4	5	101	(198)
--Small City/Town	24	68	3	4	99	(423)
--Rural Area	14	76	7	3	100	(106)
<u>By Race</u>						
--White	20	70	5	4	99	(579)
--Black & Hispanic	33	62	3	2	100	(159)
<u>By Age</u>						
--18-29	35	62	2	1	100	(156)
--30-49	23	71	3	3	100	(345)
--50+	19	67	8	6	100	(270)

“If you had to choose, which do you think should be a bigger priority in New Jersey – buying up and preserving open spaces, or investing in already developed areas that need repair, such as inner cities?” (SP3)

	<u>Preserving open spaces</u>	<u>Repairing developed areas</u>	<u>Neither (vol.)</u>	<u>Both equally (vol.)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	23%	65%	1%	8%	3%	100%	(803)
<u>By Urbanity</u>							
--Suburb	21	68	2	10	--	101	(198)
--Small City/Town	23	65	1	7	4	100	(423)
--Rural Area	28	61	--	4	6	99	(106)

“Have you ever heard of something called the ‘New Jersey State Plan?’” (SP4)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	28%	68%	4%	100%	(803)

“The New Jersey State Plan was introduced in 1988 to provide development and planning guidelines that would stop suburban sprawl and manage growth in New Jersey. From what you know, do you think the plan has been successful, or has it been unsuccessful, or has it met with mixed success?” (SP5)

	<u>Successful</u>	<u>Unsuccessful</u>	<u>Mixed success</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	6%	23%	48%	23%	100%	(803)
<u>By Heard of Plan</u>						
--Yes	6	26	59	10	101	(230)
--No	7	23	43	28	101	(573)
<u>Past surveys</u>						
November 1999*	9	25	30	35	99	(403)

* Varied Wording: Please tell me if you think the state plan for development to stop suburban sprawl and manage growth has been successful, not successful, or has been met with mixed success?

(Asked of those respondents who said the plan had been unsuccessful or a mixed success.)
 “Who do you think is more to blame for the Plan not being more successful – the state government or local governments?” (SP6)

	<u>State government</u>	<u>Local governments</u>	<u>Both equal / share (vol.)</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	59%	25%	9%	7%	100%	(586)
<u>By Urbanity</u>						
--Suburb	55	28	7	9	99	(151)
--Small City/Town	61	23	10	6	100	(303)
--Rural Area	59	31	7	3	100	(81)
<u>By Heard of Plan</u>						
--Yes	60	24	13	4	101	(199)
--No	59	26	7	8	100	(387)

“The New Jersey State Plan seeks to steer growth and development to existing population centers, such as towns and cities, in order to limit growth and development in farming communities and open spaces. Do you approve or disapprove of this part of the plan?” (SP7)

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	<u>DK</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
January 2001	67%	22%	10%	99%	(803)
<u>By Urbanity</u>					
--Suburb	72	18	10	100	(198)
--Small City/Town	68	23	9	100	(423)
--Rural Area	70	19	11	100	(106)

“The New Jersey State Plan is based on the idea of “home rule” – that is, that local government officials get to make planning and development decisions for their communities, and they can choose whether to follow the State Plan or not. Do you approve or disapprove of this part of the plan?” (SP8)

January 2001	<u>Approve</u> 67%	<u>Disapprove</u> 26%	<u>DK</u> 7%	<u>Total</u> 100%	<u>(n)</u> (803)
<u>By Urbanity</u>					
--Suburb	65	29	5	99	(198)
--Small City/Town	64	29	7	100	(423)
--Rural Area	74	18	8	100	(106)

“I’m going to read you some of the goals of the New Jersey State Plan. Please tell me whether you think each goal is very important, somewhat important, or not very important to you.” (SP9)

	<u>Very</u> <u>Important</u> 69%	<u>Somewhat</u> <u>Important</u> 25%	<u>Not very</u> <u>Important</u> 6%	<u>DK</u> 1%	<u>Total</u> 101%	<u>(n)</u> (408)
Easing traffic congestion	69%	25%	6%	1%	101%	(408)
<u>By Region</u>						
--North	77	19	4	--	100	(174)
--Central	64	30	7	--	101	(115)
--South	63	28	8	2	101	(114)
Stopping suburban sprawl	44	42	10	4	100	(408)
<u>By Region</u>						
--North	44	40	10	5	99	(174)
--Central	48	45	6	--	99	(115)
--South	38	44	11	7	100	(114)
Revitalizing city centers	58	32	8	2	100	(408)
<u>By Region</u>						
--North	60	29	8	3	100	(174)
--Central	53	41	6	--	100	(115)
--South	60	31	9	1	101	(114)
Preserving open spaces	63	27	9	1	100	(408)
<u>By Region</u>						
--North	67	24	7	1	99	(174)
--Central	70	22	8	--	100	(115)
--South	54	34	11	2	101	(114)
Promoting economic growth	69	27	3	1	100	(408)
<u>By Region</u>						
--North	72	24	2	2	100	(174)
--Central	63	35	2	--	100	(115)
--South	72	24	4	--	100	(114)

“I’m going to read you some of the goals of the New Jersey State Plan. Please tell me whether you think there has been a lot of progress, some progress, a little progress, or no progress at all in reaching each goal in your community over the past ten years.” (SP10)

	A lot of progress	Some progress	A little progress	No progress at all	DK	Total	(n)
	5%	19%	33%	40%	3%	100%	(395)
Easing traffic congestion							
<u>By Region</u>							
--North	2	16	32	46	4	100	(187)
--Central	4	19	31	44	2	100	(97)
--South	11	22	37	27	2	99	(105)
Stopping suburban sprawl	8	18	33	28	12	99	(395)
<u>By Region</u>							
--North	7	20	30	28	14	99	(187)
--Central	7	17	35	36	4	99	(97)
--South	11	17	36	22	15	101	(105)
Revitalizing city centers	14	28	32	17	9	100	(395)
<u>By Region</u>							
--North	14	33	32	15	7	101	(187)
--Central	14	31	28	22	5	100	(97)
--South	13	18	36	18	14	99	(105)
Preserving open spaces	21	34	26	14	5	100	(395)
<u>By Region</u>							
--North	20	29	28	18	4	99	(187)
--Central	19	42	20	15	3	99	(97)
--South	23	37	26	8	6	100	(105)
Promoting economic growth	23	40	24	6	6	99	(395)
<u>By Region</u>							
--North	20	36	26	10	8	100	(187)
--Central	34	38	21	3	4	100	(97)
--South	23	46	22	3	6	100	(105)