

**plansmart nj**  
**Strategic Business**  
**Plan 2012-2014**  
**Executive Summary**

**Adopted by the Board of Directors on  
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## Introduction

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In the Spring of 2011, PlanSmart NJ undertook a comprehensive strategic business planning process to guide the organization for the coming three years. PlanSmart NJ's 2012-2014 Strategic Business Plan sets forth our vision and mission, describes what we believe, and explains our unique approach to the land use planning issues confronting our state. Our Strategic Business Plan outlines PlanSmart NJ's core strategies and recent accomplishments as the framework for our 2012-2014 Work Plan. Our 2012 through 2014 Work Plan has been developed by our Board of Directors with consideration for our organizational capacity and ability to deliver on our commitments, our ability to obtain the resources necessary to carry out these initiatives, and our assessment of the viability of moving these initiatives forward.

## Who We Are and What We Believe

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PlanSmart NJ is an independent, non-profit planning and research organization committed to improving the quality of community life through the advancement of sound land use planning and regional cooperation.

PlanSmart NJ believes that our state's challenges in the areas of economic development, transportation, regional equity, and the environment are linked -- and most holistically addressed -- through the common nexus of land use.

We work with state, county and local officials who are struggling with land use decisions and how best to optimize the use of New Jersey's scarce resources. PlanSmart NJ adopts a regional planning approach to foster balance between environmental and economic interests, with the goal of creating a sustainable future for all New Jersey residents.

We bring these strengths to our work:

- ❖ Regional Perspective
- ❖ Thoroughness
- ❖ Balanced Approach
- ❖ Consensus Builder

## Our Strategies and Accomplishments

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PlanSmart NJ has over 40 years of experience as an organization in conducting research, education and outreach, public policy advocacy, and training and technical assistance.

*a) Research*

PlanSmart NJ undertakes original, in-depth research grounded in reliable data to support changes to New Jersey's land use patterns and policies. We prepare reports, studies, and maps to educate and inform policymakers and practitioners with the goal of effecting changes to land use systems to improve the quality of life for all New Jersey residents. PlanSmart NJ also creates new planning tools, strategies and conceptual frameworks to be used by policymakers, planners, and the public to better inform land-use decision-making.

*b) Education and Outreach*

PlanSmart NJ conducts education and outreach to inform a broad audience about the benefits of sound land use planning. We host an Annual Conference in the spring and an Annual Dinner in the fall. We host regional forums around the State to engage local leaders in thinking strategically about the future of their region. We produce a regular blog to educate and inform our members and supporters about timely land use issues.

*c) Public Policy Advocacy*

PlanSmart NJ advocates for better land use planning, more effective legislation and regulations, and more efficient and targeted infrastructure investments to revitalize the landscape, promote center-based development, and improve New Jersey residents' daily lives. We conduct public policy advocacy on issues such as the State Plan, economic development strategies, redevelopment policies, environmental regulations, and transportation policies. We build coalitions with non-profit organizations with allied missions and with private sector partners.

*d) Training and Technical Assistance*

PlanSmart NJ provides training and technical assistance to professional planners, public officials, private sector leaders, and members of the public around better land use planning strategies, practices and principles. We work on-the-ground within a regional context to foster innovative and participatory regional plans and to change current land use systems to promote center-based development, strengthen regional infrastructure, enhance transportation corridors, create economic development opportunities, expand housing choice, and foster regional equity.

## **Our 2012 Through 2014 Work Plan**

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PlanSmart NJ will place a renewed emphasis on working at the regional level with key regional private and public sector partners to effect changes in transportation, economic development, housing and the environment through:

- a) Reforming New Jersey's State and Regional Planning Systems
- b) Facilitating Redevelopment and Compact Development
- c) Strengthening Our State's Transportation Infrastructure
- d) Fostering Regional Equity

*a) Reform New Jersey's State and Regional Planning Systems*

PlanSmart NJ will engage in education and public policy advocacy to make substantial reforms to New Jersey's state and regional planning systems, with the aim of promoting economic growth, enhancing our transportation infrastructure, promoting social equity, and protecting the environment. We will work through coalitions to draft recommendations and engage decision-makers to reform the State Planning Act and state agency regulations to foster regional land use planning and implementation of State Planning principles.

PlanSmart NJ hosted a highly successful and well-attended conference in Spring 2011 on the connections between land use planning and economic development. A report from a focus group held in April 2011 was released at the conference describing the land use challenges business leaders believe face New Jersey as we seek to attract and retain businesses.

PlanSmart NJ will build upon these efforts in 2012 – 2014 by: establishing regional working groups in strategic growth corridors; publishing a report on proposed solutions and recommendations for land use reforms to foster sustainable economic development; and developing a broad coalition to advance needed reforms in the areas of regional land use planning, transportation, property taxation, redevelopment, and wastewater management planning.

*b) Facilitate Redevelopment and Compact Development*

There is broad consensus that much "lip service" is paid to redevelopment and compact development of centers, but too little action is taken. PlanSmart NJ will assess the multiple obstacles to redevelopment in urban areas and inner ring suburbs. We will analyze the state's aging sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure, and craft recommendations on strategies and action steps needed to make these areas attractive for development. As part of this effort, we will consider legislative and regulatory changes as well as targeted investments that would facilitate compact development and redevelopment. We will work through coalitions to advance our legislative and regulatory recommendations.

*c) Strengthen Our State's Transportation Infrastructure*

PlanSmart NJ will advocate for cost-effective regional transportation solutions in key regions of the State. We will analyze and propose solutions to New Jersey's

transportation infrastructure needs in a post-ARC environment. We will study ways to better use New Jersey's existing transportation infrastructure through land use changes that promote compact development around transit stops, maximizing ridership on underutilized lines, investing in Bus Rapid Transit, light rail, and other cost-effective public transportation alternatives. We will advocate for investments that will promote sustainable economic growth through the efficient and effective movement of freight. We will work with counties and regional entities to test ideas and launch new initiatives.

d) *Foster Regional Equity*

PlanSmart NJ understands that regional equity and opportunity are key to the development of sustainable, thriving neighborhoods and communities, and to the broader success of the state in attracting economic growth, providing quality education and protecting the environment. Regional equity means fostering land use policies that create housing choice in areas with jobs and good schools as well as promoting a more equitable and efficient system of property taxation.

PlanSmart NJ is a partner in *Sustainable Jersey*, and will chair the Diversity and Equity Task Force. This task force tackles issues of diversity on local Boards, environmental justice, and public health.

PlanSmart NJ will also work with partner organizations to advocate for strategies to reform New Jersey's property tax system to lower costs, foster greater equity and encourage more sustainable land-use policies. We will look at best practices around the country, including regional tax base sharing.

PlanSmart NJ will also continue to engage in the housing debate, drafting recommendations and engage decision-makers to achieve a balanced framework for state affordable housing policy. We will work in partnership with allied organizations in this effort.

## **Building Organizational Capacity and Visibility**

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PlanSmart NJ will invest in strengthening and expanding the organization with the support of the board and new leadership. The priorities for the next three years include increasing organizational visibility, expanding capacity and staffing, developing our board and re-engaging the advisory board, engaging current members and expanding our membership base, building strategic alliances, measuring outcomes, and building upon our annual conference and annual dinner success.