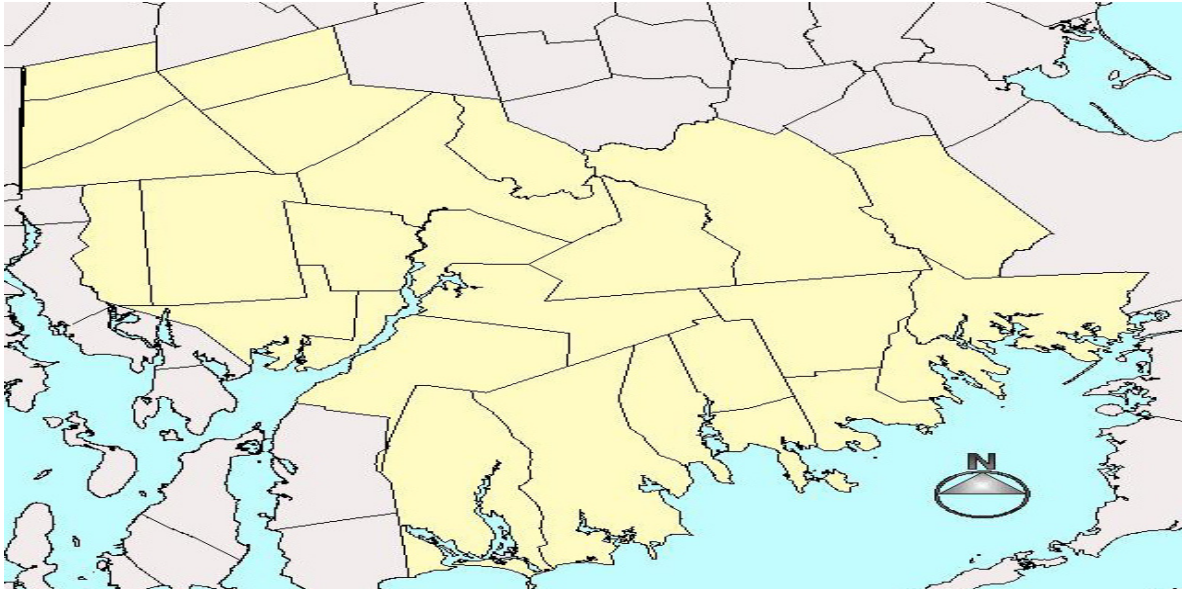


# **REGIONAL LAND USE:**

**ROLES, POLICIES, AND PLAN OUTLINE FOR SOUTHEASTERN  
MASSACHUSETTS  
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## **PREFACE**

Home rule powers give cities and towns in Massachusetts the authority to plan and regulate land use within their borders. As the regional planning agency for southeastern Massachusetts, SRPEDD represents the collective will and regional perspective of its member cities and towns. In this capacity, there is a role for SRPEDD in land use issues. This document spells out the regional role. This Policy Plan outlines how SRPEDD can enhance local land use planning and regulation through technical assistance, conflict resolution, advocacy and regional planning. It defines land use policies that are an appropriate guide to development from a regional standpoint. And it proposes tools that can assist the cities and towns to pursue responsible land use policies and planning. It is not the role of SRPEDD to supersede local land use authority, and this plan does not propose that. But as the collective voice of the cities and towns of southeastern Massachusetts, SRPEDD does have an obligation to speak out on issues of regional importance.

The Policy Plan is supplemented by SRPEDD's Regional Transportation Plan (1993) and the Overall Economic Development Program (1996). It is further intended to support the Governor's Executive Order No. 385, "Planning for Growth," which requires state agencies to give "full consideration (to) local or regional growth management plans" in the discharge of their duties.

### **REGIONAL LAND USE POLICY PLAN**

## **I. THE ROLE OF SRPEDD**

SRPEDD may become involved in regional and local land use issues in different ways that are described below:

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Provide technical assistance to cities and towns on land use and related issues. (Technical assistance may be provided within SRPEDD's municipal assistance program or by means of a contract for services. Technical assistance may cover items such as site evaluations, traffic impact analyses, subdivision reviews, zoning ordinance/bylaw assistance, master planning, growth management and capital improvement programming.)

### **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

In the event of a disagreement 1.) Between municipalities or 2.) Between a developer and a municipality or 3.) Between a state agency and a municipality: Provide objective technical information to facilitate a resolution. (Technical assistance and information is principally a staff function, with commission assistance as appropriate. It may take the form of a traffic count, groundwater flow analysis or fiscal impact analysis.

Provide mediation on land use disagreements between communities, or between communities and project proponents (when agreed to by all parties). SRPEDD's position in mediation is to represent the interests of the region. (Mediation is principally a Commission/Committee function, with possible outside professional assistance. SRPEDD's role would be to meet with the impacted parties and provide objective third party assistance toward settling a disagreement.)

### **ADVOCACY**

Act as an advocate for responsible development within the region. (Advocacy is a Commission and staff function.)

### **REGIONAL PLANNING**

Prepare and maintain a regional policy plan for land use, transportation and economic development that articulates a regional vision for southeastern Massachusetts.

## **II. POLICIES:**

Policies define what SRPEDD stands for. Policies are to be applied when SRPEDD follows the roles of technical assistance, dispute resolution (facilitation and mediation), advocacy and planning.

SRPEDD prefers development in areas supported by underutilized infrastructure including land and buildings; transportation facilities; water, sewer and drainage facilities; etc. (For example, redevelopment of an existing site for an industrial use is preferred land use to conversion of farmland for industrial use.)

SRPEDD has responsibilities for enhancing the quality of life in the region including economic opportunity and environmental quality. ("Quality of life" refers to both pastoral open land and a low unemployment rate. With proper planning of our land, we believe that these concepts are compatible.)

SRPEDD supports housing diversity throughout the region including a broad range of housing types for households of all income levels. (For example, single family homes, in-law apartments, condominiums, clusters, triple deckers, and apartment buildings, when property planned and located, are all assets to our region.)

SRPEDD encourages land uses that will enable the region to optimize its natural, cultural and historic resources, such as its coast, cranberry bogs, golf courses and village centers. It is these resources that distinguish southeastern Massachusetts from other regions and make us unique. (For example, SRPEDD generally supports the creation of new cranberry bogs, and SRPEDD generally

supports maximum public access and use of coastal areas). SRPEDD encourages all municipalities to plan for their future. (Land use planning defines our vision of the future use of land in southeastern Massachusetts and provides a blueprint for achieving it. However zoning must be compatible with planning to provide a useful blueprint for achieving that future. Planning done at the local level best reflects the vision and desires of our citizens.)

### **III. REGIONAL PLAN OUTLINE**

SRPEDD supports its roles and policies with a regional land use plan that designates specific areas most suitable for development and most appropriate for protection. This plan will consist of two major sections.

#### **DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITIES MAP**

Regional maps define areas of development suitability based upon land capability and infrastructure capacity as described below. These maps are not a replacement for local planning or zoning - local comprehensive plans represent local planning while permitted land uses are governed by local zoning. The development capabilities maps depict at a regional scale those areas considered to be most and least suitable for development and are intended as a supplement and a tool for local planning.

The development capabilities maps are to be considered as a guide and a geographic interpretation at a regional scale of the policies of this plan. High Priority Development Areas: Those areas of land within southeastern Massachusetts that should be developed first based upon their location, physical characteristics and amenities as defined in the SRPEDD land use policies.

#### **GUIDELINES:**

Public water service areas (Sources: 1990 Census; population served by public water by block group and local sources); and

Municipal sewer service (Source: 1990 Census and local sources); and

Excellent transportation access: Land within ½ mile of a limited access highway interchange (Source: SRPEDD GIS)

Moderate Priority Development Areas: Those areas of land within southeastern Massachusetts that have a lower priority for development.

#### **GUIDELINES:**

Public water service areas (Sources: 1990 Census; population served by public water by block group and local sources); and

Good transportation access: Land within 1 mile of a state highway

(Source: SRPEDD GIS)

Low priority Development Areas: Those areas of land in southeastern Massachusetts that have the lowest priority for development.

**GUIDELINES:** All other areas not delineated in categories 1, 2 & 4.

No Development Areas: Those areas of land within southeastern Massachusetts that should not be developed without compensating mitigation, but should be left open to protect the health, safety and welfare of our citizens.

**GUIDELINES:**

Public open space (defined as public land "in perpetuity"); or

Zone 1 aquifer areas (land within a 400' radius of a municipal well); or

Wetlands and intertidal areas

Locally nominated priority development areas and unique regional places - SRPEDD's regional land use plan contains parcels/areas of land proposed for development or protection by the cities and towns. SRPEDD will solicit nominations from the municipalities for specific sites/areas to be selected by the commission in two categories:

Local priority development areas - Areas most suitable for development that are proposed by the cities and towns and selected by the Commission on the basis of SRPEDD's development policies. These areas would be promoted by SRPEDD as the best and most suitable regional development sites in its plans (or in a brochure or comparable means).

Unique Regional Places - Areas that are proposed by the cities and towns and selected by the Commission on the basis of SRPEDD's development policies. Areas designated as appropriate for protection or special recognition would include "regional treasures" of natural, historic or cultural significance.

**IV. IMPLEMENTATION**

Steps to be taken/issues to be resolved to complete and implement this plan and its policies.

**ROLES**

Technical Assistance - SRPEDD's technical assistance program must be reviewed to determine the level of service that can be provided and how the policies should be applied to set priorities for technical assistance.

Dispute resolution (Facilitation and mediation) - This is a new role for SRPEDD. Issues to be resolved include:

Will SRPEDD provide these services directly or will SRPEDD act to secure professional dispute resolution services?

Will Commission volunteers provide "mediation by peers"; if so, this will require some training and a significant volunteer contribution by the Commission.

Is SRPEDD seeking to implement its policies through the facilitation/mediation process? Or is SRPEDD simply a neutral party?

**PLAN**

Development Capabilities Map - Must be prepared and refined with local data, especially more precise information on the location of public water and sewer lines. Wetlands and some open space data are not available.

Application of Development Capabilities Map - The issue of what type of development is preferred in the high, moderate and low priority development areas must be addressed (on a generic, not specific level).

Priority Development Areas/Unique Regional Places - The process of soliciting and judging nominations must be conducted.