

Office of State Planning Idea Summary

Background:

- The Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan recommends the creation of a comprehensive Office of State Planning to coordinate and add capacity to existing state agencies, regional planning efforts and local planning efforts.
- The Louisiana Legislature created the Office of State Planning Task Force to study and make recommendations for the creation of a comprehensive Office of State Planning.
- The Office of State Planning would favor incentives over regulation and would do two basic things: support local planning efforts and coordinate those efforts with state-level planning. The award-winning Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan was crafted based on the input of more than 27,000 Louisiana citizens, making it the largest planning effort of its kind.
- The Louisiana Speaks team has spent more than a year researching models of state-facilitated planning from around the country. The Task Force will review these models, explore funding mechanisms, and investigate placement of the office within our governmental structure.
- The Task Force will generate a report of its findings and recommendations, which will be available for public comment before submission to the governor and state legislature in 2008.

Why an Office of State Planning?

- In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, South Louisiana officials and citizens seized the opportunity to plan for their parishes' future in a way that had never been done before, with a focus on rebuilding safer, smarter and stronger than before. With these efforts underway and information collected, it is necessary to create the entity that will maintain and keep current hazard mitigation plans and local recovery plans in order to be well prepared for future storms.
- A state planning office could support local planning efforts with information on best practices, technical support, and in some cases, direct staff support.
- The Office of State Planning would provide a transparent and efficient process for public investment. It would encourage interagency

collaboration/coordination to yield the best value for taxpayer dollars by maximizing the benefits of funds spent on infrastructure and transportation.

- The Louisiana Office of State Planning would operate with a *carrot*, not a *stick*. Regulation and increased bureaucracy have not worked well elsewhere, and they would be wrong for Louisiana. The best state-facilitated planning in the country occurs through the use of incentives to encourage positive actions.
- Louisiana can learn a lot from states like New Jersey, Maryland, and Washington. They've all set up effective and flexible state planning systems that use *incentives* to encourage smart development and mitigate hazards, without heaping new regulation or bureaucracy on local governments.
- The state has the power to create a solid foundation for our communities by setting firm guidelines for hazard mitigation and storm protection. The state also has the power to create a transparent, predictable and flexible framework for transportation and infrastructure projects with statewide or regional impact. Together, this solid foundation and flexible framework can make Louisiana an attractive environment for private investment and stable insurance rates.
- The goal of an Office of State Planning is to make it easier to do smart development in Louisiana and to ensure the most effective use of the resources we already have. The Task Force will consider recommendations that work for everyone -- including local officials, chambers or economic development agencies, regional planning agencies, developers, financiers and others.
- State leaders and citizens alike increasingly view quality of life and quality of place as key to the long-term economic competitiveness of their communities. An Office of State Planning could provide the framework for state-level decisions to impact growth and development throughout the state in crucial ways.

How will it work?

- After extensive research and interviews with various experts, we have determined that many options exist for the placement of the Office of State Planning within the structure of state government.
 - *Independence* is important, which might argue for setting up a new office or agency. But so is *effectiveness*, which might argue for locating the planning office within an existing agency, for example, within the Department of Administration.
- The Office of State Planning will require dedicated, long-term funding.

- An office of state planning could serve as a one-stop shop for statewide data such as population and demographic forecasts, employment and housing needs, transportation, land use, and GIS data.
- An office of state planning could also assist in the creation of the two proposed state trust funds from the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan, both of which will support existing efforts to help focus development where it is most sustainable. A reinvestment trust fund would help support development along existing main streets, neighborhood centers and commercial areas. And a conservation trust fund would be used to purchase lands that are especially prone to risk, reducing future liability costs.

Inter-Agency Collaboration

- The Office of State Planning will need strong linkages to state and regional agencies that deal with transportation, economic development, coastal protection, natural resources, and infrastructure to ensure consistency and promote the regional vision outlined in the Louisiana Speaks Regional Plan.
- The Office of State Planning would not hinder the efforts of state, regional and local entities that are already doing effective planning and implementation; rather, the Office of State Planning would act to enhance these efforts through increased coordination.

Citizen-Oversight

- The establishment of a public-private board and citizens' non-profit group will take politics out of the Office of State Planning. Together these two groups will serve as the conscience of the Office of State Planning.
- These non-governmental organizations will serve numerous functions including monitoring progress toward Regional Plan benchmarks, supporting the activities of the Office of State Planning, and conducting public education and advocacy for community-planning best practices.