
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES PLAN ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Borough of Highlands Master Plan is intended to guide the growth and development of the Borough over the course of the next 6 years. The Municipal Land Use Law requires that all Master Plans contain a statement of principles, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the constituent proposals for the physical, economic and social development of the municipality are based. The Goals and Objectives Element of the Master Plan satisfies this requirement and provides the foundation for the other components of the Plan.

THE PROCESS

The process to update Highlands' Master Plan officially began in February 2002. Subsequently, the Borough created a Master Plan subcommittee comprised of residents and individuals representing the following groups: Township Council, Planning Board and the Economic Development Committee. The Master Plan subcommittee was in charge of directing the Smart Growth Plan process.

The Subcommittee and the Planning Board was charged with creating a future vision for the Borough and building consensus to implement the Plan. This Master Plan provides a long-term guide for the Borough's future and stresses positive and pro-active cooperation among residents, business owners, and the Borough to achieve the objectives of the Plan. The Plan serves as a policy statement and provides a framework for the Borough's implementation ordinances.

The Master Plan is the result of a consensus-based process that included interviews with major stakeholders in the community. This process included the creation of a community survey and interviews with several Borough Council members, municipal boards, and groups and officials.

The intention was to prepare a plan based upon participation from community stakeholders. As a result, this Plan is more likely to inspire a sense of ownership and is more likely to be implemented. As implementation efforts move forward, it was critical that this project employ as many outreach strategies as possible to ensure a maximum level of understanding and participation by the residents and business owners.

The following strategies were employed to pursue a broad-based representation throughout the planning process:

Public meetings

A public visioning meeting was held on July 10, 2003. The public meetings were the most active forums for individuals to become a part of the planning process. Every effort was made to notify interested parties of the upcoming meeting. Resident participation was encouraged during all meetings. Approximately 35 participants attended the visioning session. A sample flier for the public meeting is attached in Appendix A.

Questionnaire

A Master Plan questionnaire was created and distributed during the planning process. In the early part of the planning process, the questionnaire was delivered to all stakeholders and passed out at the public meeting. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix B.

Posters

Posters announcing the meeting time were displayed at commercial establishments throughout the Borough, at the municipal building, and at several other locations.

Public Notices

All meetings were advertised in the Asbury Park Press and the Courier newspapers.

The Plan is the result of almost a year of public input. After the Public Visioning session, a second public meeting was held to obtain feed back regarding draft recommendations and conclusions. The pertinent sections of the Draft Plan were revised based upon these comments and a Final Plan was prepared.

THE BOROUGH VISION FOR 2020

As a result of current efforts, Highlands in 2020 will be a thriving village with a more diversified economy, significant employment, modern infrastructure and an expanding tax base. The Bay Avenue Business District (CBD) will be revitalized as the Borough's retail, service and entertainment hub with a low vacancy rate, an enhanced streetscape and lively street activity. The waterfront will

continue to attract a variety of restaurants, a new municipal marina and a partnership with a New York City ferry operator to create new mixed use development.

The Borough's economic revitalization will result in a significant employment increase by 2020 fueled by the redevelopment of the waterfront and the Bay Avenue Corridor. The Borough continues to work with infrastructure providers to increase the Borough's attractiveness to service businesses that rely upon modern communications and data transmission infrastructure. As a result of the Borough's growth, the tax base will be expanded and the tax burden on residential property owners will be reduced. The result will be an improved local quality of life by enhancing residential stability for existing and new residents.

Elements of this Vision are a Borough that is/has:

1. Unique
2. Provides an alternative to suburban shopping
3. A neighborhood serving shopping district combined with a tourism commercial destination center
4. Clean and safe
5. Friendly/personable
6. A place where people linger because they like to spend time
7. Ample parking in a pedestrian friendly environment.
8. A place where the business community proactively works together for mutual benefit and is involved.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

General

1. Physically - to meet the needs of the Borough with the creation of mixed use development of exceptional design quality, a waterfront destination for activity and relaxation.
2. Socially - a redeveloped community offering homes, employment, services, civic spaces and leisure in a quality environment which will form part of the established communities of the Bayshore Region.
3. Naturally - to protect the existing resource base through sensitive design, energy efficiency, sustainable waste management and to minimize the impact on the local environment.

4. To create a balanced Borough - residential, business/employment, retail, community and leisure.
5. Strive to increase the percentage of owner-occupied housing in the Borough.

Residential

1. Preserve and protect the existing residential character of the Borough. Require that infill development be compatible with the neighborhood and conform to the setbacks of existing buildings on the block.
2. Limit new development and infill development that increases the intensity of neighborhood land and property use.
3. Ensure that public and quasi-public land use remains compatible with the needs and character of adjacent neighborhoods.
4. Prevent non-residential uses from locating on residential streets or in residential areas.
5. Limit developments that would generate a high volume of traffic on local and collector streets.
6. Encourage the maintenance and preservation of residential properties.
7. Identify sources of funds for rehabilitation of residential dwellings and provide assistance to property owners in procuring funds.
8. Promote preservation and restoration of housing that has historical significance when feasible.

Commercial

1. Strengthen commercial districts, especially the Bay Avenue Central Business District, by encouraging a mix of uses that provides employment, retail opportunities, services and entertainment.
2. Continue the improvement of commercial properties in the Borough.
3. Strive to enhance and retain existing businesses and promote new business development along Bay Avenue from Valley Street to the Bay Avenue/Shrewsbury Avenue intersection, and recommended redevelopment areas.
4. Provide for adequate parking to serve established residential and commercial areas. Incorporate adequate parking into new developments.
5. Require buffering around commercial properties to soften the visual and functional impact of their design and use.
6. Create a program to implement strict enforcement of sign regulations.

7. Update ordinances to streamline the development review process for improvements such as use changes, redevelopment, expansions, and developments.
8. Encourage redevelopment of commercial properties that need rehabilitation or improvement.
9. Encourage upgrading of commercial properties and their surroundings.
10. Encourage the development of small-scale commercial and office uses and encourages the design of buildings with a residential scale.
11. Create attractive gateways at the principal entrances to the Borough through upgraded land uses, streetscape improvements and signage.
12. Prohibit the construction of parking structures within 400 feet of the waterfront.

Circulation

1. Promote the creation of a fully intermodal transportation system that enhances local circulation, increases regional access and provides links to regional destinations. Coordinate land uses with transportation investments to promote intermodal connections and encourage alternatives to driving such as mass transit, ferry and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
2. Increase bicycle/pedestrian safety and circulation by improving traffic signals at key intersections, utilizing traffic calming measures and providing bike lanes that connect activity centers throughout the Borough.
3. Evaluate and implement methods of providing adequate parking to serve existing development and proposed redevelopment. Consider facilitating lease parking options between private sector business operators to take advantage of low peak parking demand.
4. Ensure a well maintained and safe circulation system.
5. Coordinate maintenance and improvement actions with neighboring communities and Monmouth County.
6. Monitor areas with high traffic accident rates and develop improvement programs.
7. Discourage developments that do not meet minimum frontage requirements on public or private roads.
8. Encourage circulation patterns that are compatible with land use goals and public safety.
9. Monitor private roads to ensure that the maintenance and safety needs continue to be satisfied.
10. Improve the appearance of intermediate and major thoroughfares, such as Route 36 and Bay Avenue.
11. Encourage landscaping along intermediate and major thoroughfares to buffer residential and non-residential land uses from the noise and pollution of vehicular traffic.

12. Cooperate with NJ DOT and adjacent communities to improve the appearance of entranceways into the Borough from Route 36.
13. To improve public access to the waterfront.
14. To encourage pedestrian and bicycle access through redevelopment projects, parkland and civic spaces to the waterfront.
15. Provide clear signage to parking facilities.

Economic Development/Redevelopment

1. Encourage the development of a diversified economic base that generates employment growth, provides increased tax ratables, increases income levels and promotes the reuse of underutilized properties.
2. Focus economic activity in the Borough's economic centers including Bay Avenue and commercial waterfront areas. Recognize the unique character of each area and promote development that will strengthen and reinforce market niches.
3. Capitalize on the Borough's competitive advantages for economic development purposes including its location in the New Jersey/New York City region, extensive transportation and utility infrastructure, land available for redevelopment, stable labor force and quality of life.
4. Promote the revitalization and aesthetic appearance of the Bay Avenue CBD through the public-private partnership between the Borough and the Business Improvement District (BID) with a focus on niche retail, specialty services, restaurants and entertainment uses. Consider the development of small scale anchor uses to make the CBD a destination and attract shoppers as well as visitors.
5. Encourage selected retail, marina and office mixed use development along the Sandy Hook Bay waterfront that take advantage of extensive waterfront frontage and regional access. Target the corridor for uses that complement Bay Avenue rather than compete with it.
6. Encourage redevelopment in areas that need rehabilitation or improvement.
7. Work with the Business Improvement District (BID) and the economic development committee to extend the existing peak summer season.
8. Capitalize on the economic resources represented by Sandy Hook, Route 36, the Twin Lights, the New York Ferry and the physical attractiveness of the area.
9. Investigate the creation of mixed-use marine development at targeted locations.

Housing

1. Protect and preserve established residential character through zoning and rehabilitation, where necessary.
2. Provide a balance of housing options to meet the needs of all residents including low and moderate-income housing, middle-income housing and market rate or luxury housing.
3. Consider re-establishing the Borough's residential rehabilitation program to improve substandard housing units and preserve neighborhood stability.
4. Continue to monitor and address the need for a broad range of senior citizen housing including independent living, assisted living and congregate care housing.
5. Acknowledge the Highlands Housing Authority as a provider of housing in the Borough.
6. Enforce the property maintenance code to improve the aesthetics and image of the Borough.

Landscaping/Hard Landscaping

1. To provide a marine landscape setting; to maximize public access to both informal and formal spaces; to capitalize on the Veterans Park formal play area and to develop areas of public art.
2. To encourage use of high quality landscaping design - to enhance dramatic views to the bay, to develop civic space and public art, to develop and to screen and integrate development.
3. To encourage the use of low maintenance, hard-wearing materials in parks and public places.
4. To minimize visual intrusion through the development of car parking under buildings or landscape courts.

Community Facilities and Utility Infrastructure

1. Provide adequate sewer and water services to meet the demands of proposed economic development and a growing population in a manner that will limit sprawl and promote concentrated development.
2. Improve storm water management along the bay front, roads and intersections through effective infrastructure, maintenance, and replacement.
3. To achieve the storm water quality standards established by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.
4. Preserve and upgrade the existing utility infrastructure including water, stormwater management and wastewater treatment. Continue rehabilitation programs while pursuing

selected replacement and expansion projects in order to accommodate growth and redevelopment.

5. Continue to investigate the consolidation and privatization of municipal services.
6. Encourage regularly scheduled infrastructure maintenance consistent with long range plans to avoid system failures.
7. Study and periodically review future service needs and implementation methods.
8. Continue trash reduction, reuse and recycling efforts in cooperation with appropriate County, Regional, and State agencies.
9. Maximize the use of existing and planned facilities consistent with the efficient use of public funds.
10. Maintain facilities that are in current use and renovate or reuse obsolete facilities for other uses.
11. Cooperate with surrounding communities, County, and State organizations to make the best use of available public facilities.

Open Space and Recreation

1. Provide adequate park, open space, and recreational facilities for all Borough residents.
2. Cooperate with public and quasi-public institutions to utilize and maintain their undeveloped land for open space or recreation.
3. Consider enhancing regulations to assure that quality open space is provided and maintained as redevelopment occurs.
4. Provide through block pedestrian paths to parking and recreation facilities.

Community Identity

1. Develop and effectively communicate a strong and appealing identity for the Borough.
2. Create attractive, memorable "gateways" into the Borough.
3. Develop and implement streetscape projects for major public thoroughfares.
4. Preserve and protect historic and major natural features in the Borough.
5. Enhance and maintain the appearance of community facilities and Borough owned properties.
6. Recognize excellent building and landscape design aesthetics with awards.
7. Encourage higher quality architectural and landscape design through the use of design standards.

8. Encourage neighborhoods to improve their aesthetic appeal and identity.
9. Publish information regarding Borough regulations, issues, and agendas on the Borough Web site.

Cultural

1. To encourage sensitive design in the conversion and re-use of the buildings and their environment and to mitigate the effect of adjoining developments.
2. Expand recreational and cultural facilities and services.

**STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES OF THE BOROUGH IDENTIFIED BY
STAKEHOLDERS AND THE COMMUNITY (not listed in any specific order)**

Strengths

1. Waterfront development planning on underutilized parcels.
2. Strategic location
3. Amenities of the landscape
4. An active community center
5. Community events
6. Magnificent view
7. Public access to the waterfront
8. A small town feel
9. Accessibility to NYC
10. Excellent Restaurants
11. Good fishing, clamming
12. Proximity to Sandy Hook (Very well known area)
13. Municipal administration
14. Garden Club Plantings

Weaknesses

1. High tax rate
2. Maintenance of parks
3. Percentage of Borough that is flood prone
4. The existing commercial business area does not have the “critical mass” necessary to function as a thriving downtown

5. Lack of open space planning
6. Lack of sizable play fields
7. Missing or lack of businesses in the downtown, i.e., barbershop, baker, cleaners, etc.
8. Lack of parking in mid-town
9. Many narrow side streets – potential transportation safety hazard
10. Minimal public transportation
11. Reports of slow medical emergency response
12. Lack of large tax ratables
13. Perceived or reported lack of code enforcement
14. Neighborhood character – many new houses are out of scale with existing development
15. Inadequate water pressure in some areas of the Borough
16. Stormwater drainage
17. Bulk pickup only four times per year maybe leading to unsightly yards
18. Lack of parking at a few bay front restaurants
19. Many residential properties maintained poorly
20. A need for general road repair

**OPPORTUNITIES/CONSTRAINTS OF THE BOROUGH IDENTIFIED BY
STAKEHOLDERS AND THE COMMUNITY (not listed in any specific order)**

Opportunities

1. A better defined commercial district
2. A quaint thriving Village Center
3. A community center with active recreation space
4. The implementation of a thriving waterfront development businesses coupled with active recreation
5. Completion of bike trail from Gateway National Park to Keyport
6. Upgrades to the municipal complex and emergency services building
7. Creation of a local open space tax – increasing open space in the Borough.
8. Creation of a community library
9. More downtown festivals and activities
10. The placement of historic placards on buildings where appropriate.
11. Improved downtown parking
12. Increased tax incentives for businesses

13. Improved traffic flow - Investigate one way traffic on Shore Drive or Bay Avenue (may improve traffic circulation and increase on-street parking). Investigate a one-way circulation system on narrow residential streets.
14. Additional cultural opportunities (Investigate utilizing the Twin Lights)
15. Improved school facilities
16. Increase in tourism related activities
17. Increase biking opportunities
18. Water taxi, jitney, biking or other connection with Sandy Hook to bring traffic into town
19. Improve net capture of ferry passengers, i.e. spend additional monies in the Borough
20. Additional parking near waterfront restaurants.
21. Improved public beach access and facilities
22. Regionalization of services, i.e., schools
23. Better utilization of the Twin Lights (NJ State Historic Site)
24. A better mixture of shops and missing services in the downtown, i.e., a medium size food store, hair salon, etc.
25. A residential height regulation that permits the construction of a garage beneath the unit (attic could be used for storage) in areas with limited parking or flood conditions
26. Investigate creating an ordinance to permit mother-daughter homes
27. A boardwalk with a marina and commercial uses
28. Design guidelines to regulate new development
29. Additional community activities for the elderly
30. Employment opportunities in the downtown
31. Entertainment on the waterfront coupled with new restaurants

Constraints

1. Limited available vacant land
2. Perceived high tax rate
3. Flood prone areas/FEMA program
4. Established development pattern
5. Absentee landlords