



State of New Jersey

Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council

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GOALS AND ELEMENTS OF THE HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN

Goals of the Regional Master Plan

The Highlands Council is mandated to develop a Regional Master Plan by June 2006 for the Preservation Area and the Planning Area. The primary goal of the Regional Master Plan for “the entire Highlands Region shall be to protect and enhance the significant values of the resources thereof.” The Highlands Act sets for the following goals for the Preservation Area and the Planning Area.

Preservation Area Goals

- protect, restore, and enhance the water quality and quantity
- preserve extensive and contiguous areas of land in its natural state
- protect the resources of the Highlands (contiguous forests, wetlands, stream corridors, steep slopes, scenic resources, and critical habitat for fauna and flora)
- preserve farmland and historic sites and resources
- preserve outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing, on publicly owned land
- promote conservation of water resources
- promote brownfield remediation and redevelopment
- promote compatible agricultural, horticultural, recreational, and cultural uses
- prohibit or limit to the maximum extent possible construction or development which is incompatible with preservation of this unique area

Planning Area Goals

- protect, restore, and enhance water quality and quantity
- preserve environmentally sensitive, recreational, and conservation lands
- protect and maintain the essential character of the Highlands environment
- preserve farmland and historic sites and resources
- promote and expand of agricultural, horticultural, recreational, and cultural uses
- preserve outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing, on publicly owned land
- promote conservation of water resources
- promote brownfield remediation and redevelopment
- encourage appropriate patterns of compatible residential, commercial, and industrial development, redevelopment, and economic growth, in or adjacent to areas already utilized for such purposes
- discourage piecemeal, scattered, and inappropriate development
- promote a sound and balanced transportation system

Elements of the Regional Master Plan

The Highlands Council is required to hold at least five public hearings and consult with agencies, public officials, advisory groups, and interested organizations prior to the adoption of the Regional Master Plan. The Highlands Council must also review existing scientific studies of the Highlands Region as well as local and regional plans developed by the 88 municipalities, the 7 counties and the State Plan itself. In addition to the Preservation Area and Planning Area goals listed above, the Highlands Act includes the following specific elements and assessments that must be completed during the development of the Regional Master Plan:

Resource Assessment

- Determine the amount and type of human development and activity which the ecosystem of the Highlands Region can sustain while still maintaining the overall ecological values thereof.
- Assess the scenic, aesthetic, cultural, historic, open space, farmland, and outdoor recreation resources of the Highlands Region, together with a determination of overall policies required to maintain and enhance such resources.

Financial Assessment

- Detail the cost of implementing the Regional Master Plan including property tax stabilization measures, watershed moratorium offset aid, planning grants and other State aid for local government units, capital requirements for the TDR bank, payments in lieu-of-taxes, projections for 2009 and 2014 of acquisition of fee simple or other interests in lands for preservation or recreation and conservation purposes, compensation guarantees, general administrative costs, and any anticipated extraordinary or continuing costs.
- Detail the sources of revenue for such costs, including, grants, donations, and loans from local, State, and federal departments, agencies, and other governmental entities, and from the private sector.

Local Government and Public Input Component

- Provide for the maximum feasible local government and public input into the Highland Council's operations.
- Include a framework for developing policies for the Planning Area in conjunction with the municipalities and counties in the Planning Area who choose to conform to the Regional Master Plan.

Coordination and Consistency Component

- Detail the ways in which local, State, and federal programs and policies may best be coordinated to promote the goals, purposes, policies, and provisions of the Regional Master Plan.
- Integrate the Regional Master Plan with the land, water, and structures managed by governmental or nongovernmental entities

Transportation Component

- Plan for transportation system preservation including all federally mandated projects or programs.
- Promote a sound, balanced transportation system.
- Ensure that transportation projects and programs are reviewed and approved by the Highlands Council in consultation with the Department of Transportation.

Smart Growth Component

- Prepare a Land Use Capability Map.
- Identify existing developed areas capable of sustaining redevelopment.
- Identify undeveloped areas in the Planning Area, which are not significantly constrained by environmental limitations, are not prime agricultural areas, and are located near existing development and infrastructure, that could be developed.
- Assess, based upon the resource assessment, the opportunities for development, redevelopment, and economic growth, and a TDR program.
- Consider public investment priorities, infrastructure investments, economic development, revitalization, housing, transportation, energy resources, waste management, recycling, brownfields, and design such as mixed-use, compact design, and transit villages.
- Identify transportation, water, wastewater, and power infrastructure that would support or limit development and redevelopment in the Planning Area. This analysis shall also provide proposed densities for development, redevelopment, or voluntary receiving zones for the TDR program.
- Identify potential voluntary receiving zones in the Planning Area for the TDR program through the appropriate expansion of infrastructure or the modified uses of existing infrastructure
- Issue model minimum standards for municipalities and counties in the Planning Area, including density standards for center-based development to encourage the adoption of such standards.
- Identify special critical environmental areas and other critical natural resource lands where development should be limited.
- Identify areas appropriate for redevelopment and set appropriate density standards for redevelopment.

Preservation Area Requirements

- Prepare a comprehensive statement of policies for planning and managing the development and use of land based upon the environmental standards adopted by NJDEP and the resource assessment prepared for the Regional Master Plan.
- Provide for the implementation of the Regional Master Plan by the State and local government units in the Preservation Area in a manner that will ensure the continued, uniform, and consistent protection of the Highlands Region.
- Identify zones within the Preservation Area where development shall not occur in order to protect water resources and environmentally sensitive lands and which shall be permanently preserved through use of a variety of tools, including but not limited to land acquisition and the transfer of development rights.

Develop minimum standards governing municipal and county master planning, development regulations, and other regulations concerning the development and use of land including standards for minimum lot sizes and stream setbacks, construction on steep slopes, maximum appropriate population densities, and regulated or prohibited uses for specific portions of the Preservation Area.