



State of New Jersey

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Highlands Council Continues Successful Regional Planning with Phillipsburg Partnership

*Phillipsburg becomes eighth
Highlands Center recognized by Council as economic driver for region*

CHESTER, NJ – Continuing the successful implementation of the Highlands Regional Master Plan's commitment to environmental protection while planning for sustainable economic opportunities; the Highlands Council designated the eighth Highlands Center at their meeting in Chester today. At the same meeting petitions for conformance to the RMP were also approved for the more rural and environmentally sensitive municipalities of Ringwood Borough and Lebanon Township.

The Council has forged ahead in meeting its mandate to protect the region with 33 municipalities now approved as conforming to the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Of the 60 municipalities that submitted a Petition for Plan Conformance, 27 other municipalities are continuing to work with the Council before they may be considered as in conformance. The goals of the Highlands Act are evident in the partnerships between municipalities and the Highlands Council as resources critical to the State's water supply are protected while development is directed to areas with the infrastructure and capacity to support such growth. Today's actions mirrored that common sense approach to the future of planning in the nation's most densely populated state.

"We will continue to plan with municipalities to encourage growth in the appropriate places" Chairman Jim Rilee stated. "The recognition of these centers will direct state support for these economic drivers of the region, with limited resources we need to be able to focus on areas that have the ability to sustain growth."

Phillipsburg is extensively developed with a mixture of existing land uses including residential, industrial, commercial, brownfields, historic sites and mixed uses. The Council will work with Phillipsburg to support existing land uses and approved redevelopment areas and as a means to allow for revitalization of the historic community. The Highlands Center is intended to spur local and regional economic development. The planning will incorporate the protection of the limited Highlands resources that exist within Phillipsburg, many of which are located within parks and other preserved lands. Planning for two redevelopment areas will fund a study of the Ingersoll Rand Redevelopment Area, which provides for a shared study with Lopatcong Township; and a study of the Riverfront Redevelopment area to assist with the redevelopment desired for the downtown.

The future planning in Lebanon Township will focus on eco-tourism opportunities and agricultural retention to support the work the municipality has done in open space and farm preservation. Ringwood Borough will focus on redevelopment opportunities adjacent to all ready developed areas that are not constrained by critical environmental resources. Both of these more rural municipalities will work with the Council to ensure continued protection of water resources upon which their residents depend for ground water wells and state residents who depend on surface waters that flow to reservoirs.

“Today’s approvals show the extent and variety of planning that is now occurring in the Highlands Region” said Eileen Swan, Executive Director. “More municipalities are choosing to work with the Highlands Council and we believe that is proof that we are being recognized as a planning partner that brings added value. We build success on trust, respect, sound information and good planning principles.”

Today’s actions by the Highlands Council do not take effect until 10 business days after a copy of the minutes of the meeting have been delivered to the Governor to allow time for his review and consideration.