



## State of New Jersey

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## Highlands Center Designation approved for Chester Borough *Advances important municipal goals*

CHESTER, N.J. — At its most recent meeting, the Highlands Council voted to designate Chester Borough as a Highlands Center. A Highlands Center is an area within a municipality that the town and the Highlands Council have jointly determined is appropriate for development. Chester Borough's Highlands Center designation includes the entire municipality.

“Chester Borough's unique character and history have already clearly established it as a center in the traditional sense,” notes Carl Richko, Highlands Council Chairman. “The benefit of designating a *Highlands* Center is that it provides the town with a planning process that supports development and redevelopment, while remaining consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.”

Chester Borough is located entirely within the Planning Area of the Highlands region, where conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) is voluntary. In 2016, the Highlands Council approved the Borough's petition for Plan Conformance. For a municipality like Chester, with a well-established, historic downtown, conformance with the RMP provides access to a wide variety of planning grants and expertise from the Highlands Council staff. Accordingly, Chester's approved petition includes funding for grants to support sustainable economic development planning, historic preservation initiatives, and infrastructure planning related to water, wastewater and stormwater.

“In the course of working with the Borough on projects in its approved petition, it became clear that a Highlands Center designation would help advance a number of the town's strategic goals,” explains Lisa Plevin, Highlands Council Executive Director. “We worked with municipal officials to craft a scope of work for a Highlands Center study to determine the best path forward.”

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The majority of the proposed Highlands Center is currently developed. Undeveloped areas within the Borough that contain Highlands resources will be protected within the parameters of a “Highlands Environmental Resource Zone” (HERZ). The delineation of the HERZ recognizes that a designated Center, while generally suitable for future development and redevelopment, may contain areas of sensitive resources that may require additional protections.

Well-known for its historic downtown, Chester Borough first sought separation from Chester Township nearly a century ago due to increasing development that had led to water supply issues. Today, public water and wastewater challenges remain top municipal priorities. Chester’s Highlands Center Designation study revealed that designation would support the Borough’s long-term planning objective to protect the character and scale of existing residential and non-residential areas.

“For many years now, Chester Borough has been working to proactively address its complex needs,” says Plevin. “We’re very happy to be working with them and look forward to working together to also address the Borough’s water and wastewater challenges, for the benefit of both the municipality and the Highlands region.”

Additional details about Chester Borough’s work with the Highlands Council, including petition materials and conformance documents adopted by the municipality are available on the Chester Borough page of the Highlands Council website:

[www.nj.gov/njhighlands/planconformance/chester\\_boro.html](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands/planconformance/chester_boro.html).

*The Highlands Council is a regional planning agency established in 2004 with the passage of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act and charged with implementation of the Act. More information is available at [www.nj.gov/njhighlands](http://www.nj.gov/njhighlands).*

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