



State of New Jersey

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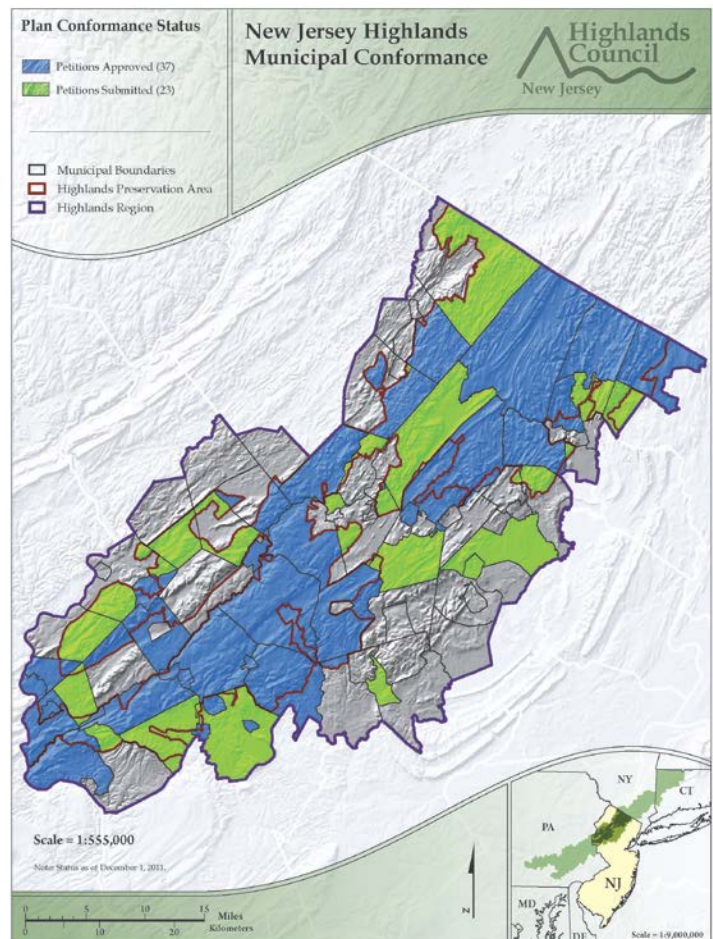
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Highlands Council's 2011 Year in Review

CHESTER, N.J. — At the December meeting of the Highlands Council, petitions from four more Highlands towns were approved bringing the total to 37 municipal petitions and 2 county petitions that the Highlands Council has approved as conforming to the Highlands Regional Master Plan. In 2011 alone, the Highlands Council approved 30 petitions for Plan Conformance to protect the significant environmental and agricultural resources of the Highlands and also has approved 8 Highlands Centers to encourage growth and sustainable economic opportunities

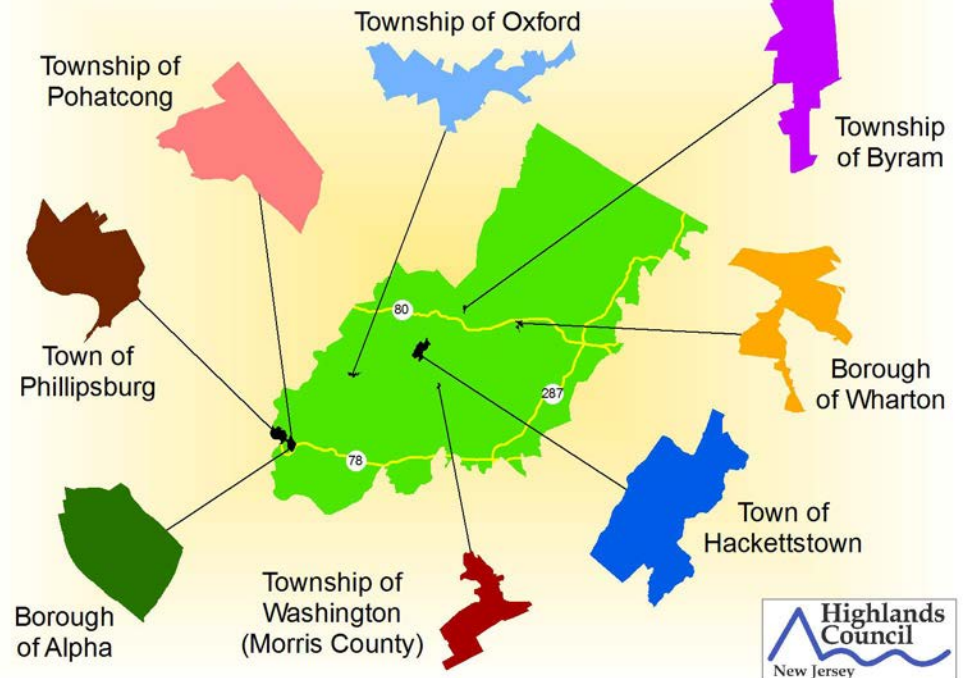
To date, 60 of the 88 Highlands municipalities have submitted a petition to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan. This results in a 97-percent conformance in the Preservation Area (401,903 acres) and 32-percent conformance in the Planning Area (142,422 acres) where Plan Conformance under the Highlands Act is entirely voluntary. Importantly, more than half of the municipalities with lands in both the Preservation and Planning Areas (24 of the 47) have submitted petitions to include Planning Area lands. In addition, 9 municipalities that are entirely in the Planning Area have submitted a Petition for Plan Conformance.



To date the Highlands Council has designated 8 Highlands Centers to fulfill the Regional Master Plan’s commitment to plan for sustainable economic development and redevelopment in or adjacent to areas with the infrastructure capacity for growth. The designation of Highlands Centers provides a focus for economic development opportunities and simultaneously discourages growth in sensitive areas designated for environmental protection and agricultural viability.

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

Designated Highlands Centers



Also in 2011, seven of Governor Chris Christie’s appointments to the Highlands Council were approved and Jim Rilee, the Mayor of Roxbury Township in Morris County, was appointed as new Chairman of the Highlands Council. Chairman Rilee joined the Highlands Council along with the following new members:

- ❖ Timothy P. Dougherty, the Mayor of Morristown
- ❖ Michael R. Dressler, Bergen County Surrogate
- ❖ Bruce James, Passaic County Freeholder
- ❖ James E. Mengucci, a Councilman in Lopatcong Township
- ❖ Robert G. Walton, Hunterdon County Freeholder
- ❖ Michael J. Sebetich, Professor of Biology at William Paterson University

Regarding land preservation under the Highlands Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program, the Highlands Development Credit Bank was provided \$10,000,000 in initial capital funding and, in 2011, the Bank completed the third round of its initial purchase program. Through this program the HDC Bank has approved offers in the amount of \$6,452,000 to thirteen owners of land in the Preservation Area to acquire the development rights on their properties. Information regarding the activities of the [Highlands Development Credit Bank](#) and status of the [Transfer of Development Rights Program](#) is available on the Council’s website.

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In 2011, the Highlands Council also provided extensive assistance to the municipalities in the Highlands Region including technical assistance and grant funding to complete environmental inventories, build-out analyses, wastewater management plans, affordable housing plans, and designated Highlands Redevelopment Areas to allow for growth in the Preservation Area.

“We endeavor to deliver the statutory requirements of the Highlands Act and provide planning support to Highlands municipalities with a small but dedicated professional staff” said Executive Director Eileen Swan. “We are most proud of the excellent working relationships we have developed with the various municipalities in the Highlands.”

In honor of this partnership between the Highlands Council and Highlands municipalities, Byram Township and the Highlands Council were selected as one of the eight winners of the 2011 [New Jersey Future Smart Growth Award](#). The New Town Center Plan award was given for the Byram Highlands Village Center recognizing Byram Township and their officials and staff, their professional planners at Heyer Gruel & Associates, and the Highlands Council.

Lastly, in 2011 the Highlands Council continued and enhanced the strong commitment to public transparency. Information about the Highlands Council is shared through its [website](#), at regularly scheduled meetings on the [calendar page](#), through [Interactive Mapping](#) tools, materials related to [Plan Conformance](#), and information on [projects reviewed by the Highlands Council](#).

The Highlands Council will begin a productive 2012 with a full agenda at their meeting on January 19, 2012 at 4 p.m and the agenda is anticipated to include a proposed Highlands Center for [Lopatcong Township](#), a Petition for Plan Conformance submitted by [Montville Township](#), a proposed exemption determination for [Tennessee Gas Pipeline](#) and a Highlands Redevelopment Area designation for [Mount Olive Township](#).