

**New Jersey Highlands Council  
Green Construction  
Technical Advisory Committee  
Meeting Summary  
3 August 2005**

**Summary:**

On Wednesday, August 3, 2005, the Green Construction Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held a meeting at the New Jersey Highlands Council office in Chester, New Jersey. Notice of the meeting was provided to the public on the Highlands Council's web site. The meeting was facilitated by Ross MacDonald of the Highlands Council staff. In addition to Ross, Council staff members present at the meeting included: Dante DiPirro and Maryjude Haddock-Weiler. Technical advisors present at the meeting included: Betsy Stagg, Joanne Atlas, John Ringle, Mike Bammel, Darren Port, Lyle Rawlings, Edward Seliga, and Anthony Sblendorio.

The discussion began with an overview of the purpose of the Green Construction Committee and how green building will interrelate with the regional master plan being developed by the Highlands Council. Ross MacDonald asked the TAC members to think about and discuss what green building standards and practices are available and which are currently being used.

Attendees introduced themselves and offered the following comments and examples regarding green construction and green infrastructure.

Green Construction Examples & Cost-Benefit Analyses

- The Willow School, in Bernardsville, was mentioned as an example of green construction and a LEED-certified building. LEED is the acronym for Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design.
  - The Willow School occasionally has open houses through the Green Buildings Council.
  - Green practices utilized at the School include:
    - Construction waste was recycled,
    - Watering via natural water flow,
    - Recycling water – use of gray water,
    - Avoiding landscape adjustment,
    - Solar electricity generation
  - TAC members asked whether there was a fiscal analysis done of the school. It was noted that the Willow School didn't do a cost-benefit analysis from the start of the construction process, which would be the ideal scenario for a fiscal analysis.
- Greg Katz of the U.S. Green Building Council was offered up as someone who has done many, major cost-benefit analyses of green projects across the U.S. It was noted that he will be presenting in New Jersey this September. Darren Port

agreed to keep TAC members abreast of when and where this presentation will be taking place.

- A recent study of industrial structures, done by Rutgers for the Meadowlands Commission was offered as another example.
  - A residential study will be done next in the Meadowlands.
- Green building tends to be more expensive during construction and initial design, but there is a payout over the life-cycle of the green building.
  - People have to be convinced of the benefits upfront.
  - This makes incentives to build green important.
- Green construction can be more cumbersome from building code and permission standpoint.

### The Regional Master Plan Process and Green Buildings

- The identification process is still being done by the Council and will follow a series of other steps centering upon natural resource overlay and utility, infrastructure, and transportation capacity analyses.
- The RMP may incorporate its own green building programs.
  - This will involve identifying green practices that might be incorporated into the RMP.
- The need for green standards in the RMP won't be constrained to a single building sector or a particular part of the Highlands.
  - There are single family lot exceptions within the Preservation Area.
  - Municipalities in the Planning Area might opt into the RMP by adopting sample green ordinances.
  - Green standards for commercial buildings will be needed in the Planning Area.
  - Retrofitting, brownfield remediation and redevelopment projects within the Preservation Area may utilize green standards.
- Standards should be flexible, acknowledging that green guideline acceptance involves trade-offs.
  - For example, a builder that doesn't cut down trees might not be able to use solar panels.

### Green Programs in Existence or in Development

- The LEED Home pilot (McGrann Associates) – LEED Certification
  - USGBC is the pilot program for LEED home.
- DCA's administration of the NJ Affordable Green program involves:
  - Technical assistance
  - Training (design professionals, contractors, and sub-contractors)
  - Monetary incentives
- Additional DCA programs, including a set of green building standards for the State of New Jersey (done in coalition with NAHB).
  - Standards should be available by late 2005 or early 2006.
  - Other program elements will follow release of the standards.

## Current Use of Green Building Standards and Incentives to Build Green

- Home builders are using Energy Star standards when building single-family homes.
  - Generally the savings on operation costs of these homes is 30%.
  - Monetary incentives often foster compliance with these standards.
  - There is a concern that these incentives will no longer be available in the Highlands and will only be available in smart growth areas as defined by the Office of Smart Growth.
- New incentives must be created, for example:
  - The Highlands might create a program to provide incentives after the Energy Star incentives expire.
  - A rebate to builders for incorporating energy saving devices.
  - The Council could approach BPU for funding for Energy Star incentives.
- Short-term incentives for homebuyers could be improved (e.g. approval for higher mortgage amounts when a home meets green standards).

## TAC Structure and RMP Development

- As envisioned now, the RMP will include:
  - An overview of the RMP including policy, procedures, and the planning element.
  - Multiple technical reports supporting these policies and procedures.
  - Technical white papers based on the information received from the various TACs.
- Overtime the technical reports can be added, revised, and adjusted.
- There will be some overlap and cross-pollination across the TACs.

## Sustainability – What Should It Mean?

The TAC members discussed the term “sustainability” and how that term is being used today.

- The Highlands Council should define sustainability for their purposes.
  - Many entities call themselves “green” today.
  - The Council could develop a list of items they accept as “green.”
- The United Nations has facilitated the unanimous ratification of climate protection goals by local governments throughout the world. The Highlands could emulate this approach.
- Hurdles to utilizing sustainable and green practices (e.g. resistance from zoning officers) should be eliminated.
- Distinguish between degradation, restoration, sustainability, and regeneration, and establish a system that goes beyond sustainability and promotes regeneration.
- A possible definition of sustainability: “To continue to meet the needs of current generations, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”
- Green practices during redevelopment must go beyond zoning.

- Phil McDonough's Hanover Principles (a guideline to sustainable principles) should be consulted.

### Farmland Preservation

- Farmland preservation should distinguish between organic and non-organic farming.
- Farmland preservation shouldn't be seen as just a way to create a green cover.
- Explore methods/practices which foster both the promotion of affordable, sustainable agriculture and environmentally integrated building design and construction practices

### Master Plans and New Urbanism

- Trenton is starting to look more toward new urbanism.
- The Meadowlands has used this same approach, with pros and cons attached:
  - Pros and cons:
    - Pro - Large preservation areas.
    - Con – Developer becomes a powerful entity.
  - You have to make sure that the redevelopment plan reflects what you wanted in the first place.
- Flexibility and adaptability is important when developing something like a RMP or when utilizing redevelopment.

### Incentives to Build Green

- Green building can be more difficult than conventional building (e.g. requires many variances).
- Most builders only adopt programs like Energy Star when there is some financial incentive to do so.
- Prescriptive measures should be looked at as well as incentive approaches.
  - Incentives involve choice and cost money.
  - Prescriptive approaches will more likely lead to 100% compliance, but require monitoring.
  - You don't want to be so prescriptive, that building is discouraged.
- A pilot program that integrates green construction could work as an incentive, and educate builders about green construction.

The Highlands Council would like to thank everyone who participated in this opening meeting of the Community Investment TAC. We greatly appreciate any follow-up comments and questions about this summary report. Please contact Ross MacDonald via email: [ross.macdonald@highlands.state.nj.us](mailto:ross.macdonald@highlands.state.nj.us) . Notice of future meetings will be provided to the public on the Highlands Council website, [www.highlands.state.nj.us](http://www.highlands.state.nj.us), and via email to Committee participants.