

**New Jersey Highlands Council
Land Use Planning
Technical Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
2 August 2005**

Summary:

On Monday, August 2, 2005, the Land Use Planning 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. Council staff members present at the meeting were: Steve Balzano, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Chuck Gallagher, and Tom Borden. Technical advisors present at the meeting included: Wilma Frey, Keith Henderson, Sandy Uργο, Art Bernard, Candace Ashmun, Sharon Maclean, George Kimmerle, Helen Heinrich, Brian Schilling, Robert Fallone, John Schilp, Jeff Magdon, Frank Banisch, Heidi Minuskin, Dave Maski, Noelle Reeve, Shana Crane, David Keller, Thomas Dallessio, and Robin O'Hearn.

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler began the discussion by pointing out that the Highlands Council has a unique opportunity to do regional planning, with an emphasis on water protection. She invited all attendees to think of this process as an opportunity for innovation and creativity going forward.

Those in attendance introduced themselves and commented on what they hoped to have achieved in the development of the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

Maryjude then explained that this TAC would be looking at what the Highlands Council should be doing, specifically; what sort of policies should be looked at, what sort of innovative regional concepts should be focused upon, and what opportunities should be incorporated into the Regional Master Plan that the Highlands Council will be adopting.

The following are the ideas and thoughts that were shared by the members of the TAC:

- We should do a sustainability analysis, focusing on water and wildlife resources, and make sure that it is as accurate and comprehensive as possible.
- There should be as large a preservation area as possible, achieved both through regulations and substantial acquisitions.
- The approval process needs to be streamlined and simplified. Home rule should be reevaluated, while acknowledging the importance of local involvement.
- Any decisions or policies of the Council should be stated simply. Predictability is critical in helping landowners understand how they are affected.
- The possibility of an inter-municipal agreement, possibly on the county level, should be explored; streamlining the approval process, while not requiring municipalities to give up approval authority.
- How the Highlands fits into the Northeast megalopolis should be considered, with emphasis placed on the region's employment and population projections.

- Trends and pressures should be considered individually, by age group, with an understanding that many of the demands in the Highlands region will have to be handled in the Highlands region.
 - For example, understand that urban redevelopment won't appeal to certain demographic groups, and therefore, targeting cities to meet housing needs may be insufficient.
- Consider how the Highlands legislation will put pressure on the regions immediately outside of the Highlands (e.g. Pennsylvania, Northwest Suffolk County).
 - For example, will it push development into areas without the infrastructure (e.g. roads) to handle the development? Even Salem and Cumberland Counties in southern New Jersey have been experiencing increased development pressures.
- We need to accumulate resource data that will tell us what sorts of land uses will be appropriate in different areas.
- We must acknowledge that current zoning is often inappropriate, and should not be replicated in the Regional Master Plan.
 - Many municipalities have too much land zoned for commercial development.
- Data (e.g. capacity and demand) needs to be developed and looked at before decisions about density are made.
 - For example, employment, household, and population projections should be examined.
 - This data then needs to be mapped out.
 - We also need to understand that data of this type is often flawed and inaccurate.
 - For example, growth projections haven't properly considered the pressures of second home purchases.
- The pressures will often be different across the different parts of the Highlands.
 - This will require a sub-regional approach.
 - For example, developers in the Northern Highlands are scouring the tax records for infill and tear down opportunities.
- The problem of finding areas willing to accept higher density developments will be a great challenge.
- The Highlands are a diverse area. A regional view versus the local vision must be considered.
- We have to highlight the positive effects of density, such as those seen in New York City or Princeton, showing municipalities why they might want more density.
- A better phrase than "receiving zone" should be used for those areas that will be designated appropriate for receiving density – the term has negative connotations.
- The fact that some of the growth pressure might come from advertising by developers should be considered, while still understanding that demand is very real.
- Greyfield sites should be looked at as opportunities and areas for growth -- identify both current and future greyfield sites.

- The affects of demand that is met via low density sprawl, rather than higher density developments, need to be considered.
 - Consider the inefficient per capita land consumption that comes from sprawl.
- The regional master plan, and other related plans, should be presented in ways that people can visualize and understand.
 - A guidebook for municipalities to illustrate a positive vision for higher density would be a useful tool.
 - This will increase the likelihood of acceptance of higher densities.
 - The master plan should include a visual element in order to give an image of what density will look like on the ground.
- Real-world examples should also be provided (e.g. Princeton, older major European cities, such as London and Paris, which have designated farmland just outside their urban centers).
- There shouldn't be high density development in every town in the Highlands.
- Urban Land Institute articles, discussing how foreign nations have dealt with these problems, and with density creation, should be examined.
- Providing the necessary roadway infrastructure will be one of the greatest obstacles to creating areas with greater density within the Highlands.
 - A sub-issue is that there is no effective Highlands mass transit for people who both live and work within the Highlands.
- Townspeople in the Pinelands, who have been given the chance to envision and choose from different density models, have been more receptive to taking on density. This same method should be emulated within the Highlands.
 - This has to be done from the beginning of the Highlands Regional Master Plan development process. You can't wait to do this until after the process is already underway.
 - Let townspeople know there are multiple alternatives on the table, from the start, or you won't get any buy-in.
 - It would also help if municipalities were given some money to help with the implementation.
- The Council should work with other State agencies to help municipalities overcome the negative perception of increased development densities.
 - Smart growth grants are one example of this.
 - Package growth opportunities and coordinate with the other State agencies to accomplish the objectives.
- Consider where other state agencies, such as the DOT, have already spent money when determining where growth areas should be located.
 - Municipalities that have received increases in capacity via these State agencies shouldn't be allowed to flatly turn away growth.
- The Council should be conscious of the difference between leading and trailing indicators, when looking at growth capacity and infrastructure.
- Educational facilities, such as colleges, are another kind of infrastructure that might indicate an area where more affordable housing and a greater variety of housing would be appropriate.

- The Council should make natural resource protection, rather than the fear of development, the guiding factor when determining which specific lands should be preserved.
 - Conservation value should be given primacy.
- Municipalities that have opted into the Preservation Area shouldn't be effectively penalized for this by losing out to Planning Area municipalities when funding is given out by the State and by private groups.
- Preventing development shouldn't be viewed as the only solution to the Highland's land use issues. We should also look to the type of growth and the density of growth, and alternative government funding sources, as creative solutions to solving these problems.
- Look for other mechanisms to protect the water resources, such as innovative wastewater treatment facilities.
- Look for innovative methods for protecting resources. Focus on conservation, as well as preservation.
- The Pinelands does sub-regional planning – exploring hypothetical land use situations where there is a certain amount of capacity and asking the question: how much can the land support?
 - Do the planning upfront so landowners don't have to do the planning on a site by site basis.
 - Build a forum with the local Universities to help articulate the findings.
- Begin the process of “visioning” to help produce changes in attitudes about higher densities and how towns would like to look.

Next Steps:

Maryjude explained that TAC members will receive an email as a follow-up to this meeting. As soon as the minutes of this meeting are available they will be emailed to each of the TAC members. TAC members should feel free to share their ideas via email.

The Highlands Council would like to thank everyone who participated in this opening meeting of the Land Use Planning TAC. We greatly appreciate any follow-up comments and questions about this summary report. Please contact Maryjude Haddock-Weiler via email: maryjude.haddock-weiler@highlands.state.nj.us. Notice of future meetings will be provided to the public on the Highlands Council website, www.highlands.state.nj.us, and via email to Committee participants.