

**New Jersey Highlands Council
Regional Development and Design
Technical Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
July 13, 2005**

Summary:

On July 13, 2005, the Regional Development and Design 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. Adam Zellner, Executive Director of the Highlands Council, welcomed the members of the Technical Advisory Committee and thanked them for their willingness to offer their expertise to the Council in preparation of the Regional Master Plan. Council staff members present at the meeting were: Steve Balzano, Ross MacDonald, and Maryjude Haddock-Weiler. Technical advisors present at the meeting included: Michael Finelli, Jim Hall, Deborah S. Hoffman, Matt Krauser, Ted Maglione, Noel McGuire, Cathy Vicker, Mike Morel, Stanley T. Omland, David Peifer, John Schilp, Julia Somers, Mark Lohbauer, Eloise Salmon and Rick Ferrell.

The discussion began with an overview of the purpose of this particular Committee. The Committee will consider each of the features, resources, constraints and pressures within the Highlands and will consider each from a regional perspective. The committee will also consider how to foster a sustainable built and natural environment across the region as a means to foster local culture, character and resources. The Committee will consider regional impacts related to environmental, social and financial conditions and trends across the Highlands Region.

- Maryjude Haddock-Weiler gave an overview of the Highlands Act requirements relevant to this Committee such as the environmental and social implications of the legislation. The schedule and process for the development of the Regional Master Plan were also discussed.
- Ross MacDonald proceeded to elaborate on economic development and financial components relevant to the objectives of the Committee. In addition to the fiscal impact analysis and long-term economic monitoring programs, alternative economic development strategies should be pursued such as eco-tourism, agro-tourism and the general economic benefits of regional open-space preservation.
- Steve Balzano stated that the “scope” and “charge” of the Committee will be to provide advice with regard to development and design standards to provide more efficient uses of land would.
- Frequency of Meetings – Steve Balzano detailed the frequency with which the Committee will meet as two to four times over the course of the following eight

months. The stipulation was that as the deadline for the Regional Master Plan would approach, the number of meetings would be adjusted accordingly.

- Steve Balzano pointed out the differences in growth potential between the preservation and planning areas within the highlands. The preservation area will be a limited growth area and emphasis will be placed on redevelopment opportunities. The Act allows a more flexible growth environment in the planning area.
- During a conversation about how the Council will need to “promote” this regional master plan to the Planning area towns, Rick Farrell inquired if the towns themselves have had an opportunity to specify what exactly they want from this regional master plan. Balzano reviewed the “Partnership Program” where all towns participated in a series of meetings designed to identify key issues surrounding existing conditions and potential effects of the Highlands Act.
- In discussing the fiscal impact analysis, David Peifer indicated a need for a “life cycle” component to this analysis, as it relates to the ongoing (and increasing) infrastructure maintenance costs.

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler then highlighted some key issues that were then further discussed:

- Opportunities and constraints for regional approaches to land use, economic development and public services. Shared services and region-wide inventories of available land and infrastructure were mentioned, as well as a standard set of rules and regulations within the region to offer more predictability to developers. The question of tax-sharing on a regional level was raised. Ross MacDonald used the Meadowlands Commission as an example of how this idea can be put into practice. He continued by stating that it can be part of a long-term economic model and probably more of a long term issue.
- Methods to sustain economic growth opportunities exploring the validity of the “ratable chase” and discussing alternative development strategies, i.e., eco-tourism. Steve Balzano spoke of the desire to explore the concept of a “clean ratable” which includes: mixes, timing of growth and intensity of growth to evaluate the local cost of growth. Maryjude Haddock-Weiler opened up the discussion on the validity of the “ratable chase.” Is there a correlation between increased ratables and respective hikes in property tax rates? Is this phenomenon myth or reality? Several TAC members shared their opinions, with an overall acknowledgement that new measuring techniques and monitoring models would be helpful in determining the true value of development projects pursuant to ratable income

- What existing models or new tools and techniques might be needed to conduct a fiscal impact analysis? The Council has received MOD IV data, Census, and basic data sets from the State Data Center.
- Economic benefits and opportunities for regional open space preservation. Julia Somers provided information on publications pertaining to this topic.
- Criteria for identification of regional growth areas. In the Preservation area, only Brownfields and sites with more than 70% impervious cover can be considered as appropriate for development, re-development or in-fill. The procedures to identify these “sites” are still pending. Regardless, the transportation component was cited as a critical component that should be considered in determining these sites.
- An attempt should be made at limiting the inconsistencies within municipalities over time. Frequent changes in administrations can lead to conflicting interests and objectives on almost a yearly basis. Some basic fundamental objectives should remain constant. Therefore, the committee should try to be regional and long-term in thinking.
- Deborah Hoffman stated that from an economic perspective, it might be easier if the Committee were to break down the region into different local markets rather than one entire Highlands Region. Trade Areas could be based on eco-tourism, bricks and mortar, or other subsections.
- Steve Balzano remarked that the growth potential will need to be determined, but that the market will carry the plan. A discussion of this prompted many to agree it was important to devise development programs and long-term goals directly from the community and not from developers
- In discussing the benefits of open space on a regional scale, the Adirondacks State Park was suggested as a potential resource. It was also suggested that the Council look at the town in West Virginia that down-zoned to R25 – to see what type of economic analysis and justification was used to make this determination.
- The possibility of an artificial-type economy manifesting in the region could surface as a threat. John Shilpe declared the need to address this possibility with the continuing movement of industry westward and into Pennsylvania. How can we keep companies and employees from fleeing to Pennsylvania?
- Julia Somers affirmed that the most critical element to the success of the Regional Development and Design component is redevelopment potential.
- We were also told that there must be some long-term tracking data and analysis for open space evaluation.

- Deborah Hoffman highlighted the importance of establishing these critical areas, i.e., blighted or underutilized land that could be suitable for redevelopment.

Maryjude Haddock-Weiler went on to detail the steps that will become significant to the committee moving forward:

1. Are there any other key experts who should serve on the TAC? This TAC is quite full, but key players may be added at the discretion of the Council staff.
2. What are the key databases, reports, etc., that address these issues? As stated, we have some basic info datasets and models, but we are looking for new models and suggested data that would expand upon “economic analysis 101”. Any information or data you can provide for this will be greatly appreciated.
3. Which of these issues can most readily be solved during a six to eight month process, primarily using assessments of available data? We look forward to receiving your comments regarding this.
4. Which of these issues must be addressed over a longer schedule, and which of those must be based on newly acquired data? We must separate the short-term and long term goals for economic analysis and monitoring models. Again, your comments will be appreciated.
5. Which longer-term issues will pose the greatest constraints on having a complete and defensible Regional Master Plan adopted by June 2006?