

# SANDYSTON TOWNSHIP

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## VISION STATEMENT

July 2010



### ***Sandyston's Master Plan Vision:***

*“Retain its rural and small town character, agricultural community, and abundant open space; conserve its natural resources; maintain a high quality, active life for it's citizens; provide adequate and affordable housing for its citizens; and provide a feeling of purpose, place, and belonging for its citizens; and, in cooperation with the state and federal land management agencies, develop an economic base tailored to agricultural and natural resources tourism.”*



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SANDYSTON TOWNSHIP VISION STATEMENT  
Township of Sandyston. Sussex County, New Jersey

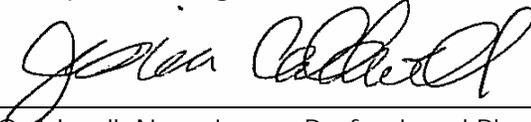
Acknowledgements:

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The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12.



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## *Introduction*

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Sandyston Township received Center Designation for the Villages of Layton and Hainesville from the State Planning Commission on April 23, 2003, which expired on April 23, 2009. In anticipation of the expiration, the Sandyston Township Committee contacted the Office of Smart Growth and requested a pre-petition meeting for Plan Endorsement, which was held on January 27, 2009. Additionally, the Committee appointed a Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee, as required by the Plan Endorsement guidelines, to create a Municipal Self Assessment Report. The Municipal Self Assessment Report was completed and submitted to the State Planning Commission in June 2009. Following, the Office of Smart Growth prepared an Opportunities and Constraints Analysis, which was sent to the Township in December 2009. The Township Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee reviewed the Opportunity and Constraints Analysis with the Planning and Zoning Board in February 2009 and outlined a plan for visioning based on that document. The Township then held three workshops at the Township Municipal Building. This report, or Vision Statement, summarizes the results of those three sessions and provides an account of the myriad of issues and ideas that were discussed and put forward as part of the Sandyston Township Vision Sessions. This Vision Statement will be submitted to the State Planning Commission as part of Sandyston Township's petition for Plan Endorsement.

## *Vision Sessions*

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In order to complete the Visioning Step of Plan Endorsement, Sandyston Township held three public sessions to discuss the vision for the future of the Township. The first two sessions were charrette style sessions held on Monday, April 12, 2010 and Thursday, April 29, 2010. Both sessions were well attended with 30-40 residents participating from the Township and several local, state and federal officials representing their respective agencies. The sessions were held as joint meetings of the Township Committee and Planning and Zoning Board in order to allow for attendance by all members of the Committee and the Board. The sessions were advertised in the two papers of record for the Township, the New Jersey Herald and the New Jersey Sunday Herald. Personal invitations were sent to all stakeholders including farmers and all business owners in the Township. Personal invitations were also sent to the state parks, federal parks, and state agencies including the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Environmental Protection and Office of Smart Growth. County agencies were also invited including the County Agriculture Department and County Planning and Engineering Department. The local State Legislators were contacted and invited along with private open space groups such as the Nature Conservancy. Representatives from all agencies invited did attend at least one of the two sessions. A third session which summarized the findings of both sessions was also held before the Planning and Zoning Board at its regular session on Monday, June 7, 2010. This provided the Planning and Zoning Board and members of the public an opportunity to comment on the findings of both sessions and provide feedback on a draft Vision Statement.

## Monday, April 12, 2010 – Visioning Session #1: The Future of Farming, Open Space and Recreation

The first Vision Session focused on Farming, Agriculture, Open Space and Recreation in the Township. The session was well attended with approximately 40 residents participating. The majority of the Township Committee and Planning and Zoning Board attended. Representatives from Stokes State Park, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the Nature Conservancy, State Department of Agriculture, NJDEP, Office of Smart Growth and County Department of Agriculture were all in attendance. The session began with an opening by Planning and Zoning Board Chair Keith Utter and a welcome from Mayor George Harper, Jr., which included introductions of all agency representatives in attendance. Following, Jessica Caldwell, P.P., A.I.C.P., gave an introduction and background on Plan Endorsement and why the Township was undertaking visioning at this time. She then read the following Vision Statement that was developed by the Township Planning and Zoning Board in 2008 as part of the Master Plan update process:

*“Retain its rural and small town character, agricultural community, and abundant open space; conserve its natural resources; maintain a high quality, active life for its citizens; provide adequate and affordable housing for its citizens; and provide a feeling of purpose, place, and belonging for its citizens; and, in cooperation with the state and federal land management agencies, develop an economic base tailored to agricultural and natural resources tourism.”*

The larger group then split into two groups by topic area, one focused on open space, parks and recreation and the other on farming and agriculture. The groups were asked to discuss the issues, opportunities and challenges related to those topics within the Township. The following tables provide a summary of what was discussed.

## Parks, Open Space, and Recreation

| Issues                                                                                      | Challenges                                                                     | Opportunities                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Concerns about number of building lots based on zoning                                      | Keeping the rural quality of Sandyston                                         | Carbon Banking could be instated to control development                                                                                        |
| Invasive plant species are over running the landscape of Sandyston                          | Controlling invasive plants                                                    | Volunteers could start work days to go in and remove some invasive species; better management of the land                                      |
| Deer browsing destroying native vegetation                                                  | Keeping up with deer populations                                               | Rework hunting regulations so more deer can be harvested                                                                                       |
| Less deer for hunting due to increase in bear population                                    | Finding a balance for Deer and Bear population, as well as a hunter population | Possible State Bear Hunt will reduce number of Bear which will intern give more opportunities for deer harvesting                              |
| Declining Outdoor Education                                                                 | Keeping people interested in Outdoor Education                                 | Look for more volunteers; start volunteer groups up in the Township                                                                            |
| Aquatic Vegetation Problem                                                                  | Hard to control without high cost                                              | Look at low cost alternatives or new technologies                                                                                              |
| Reduction of carrying capacity for wildlife                                                 | Controlling strains on the environment/ controlling wildlife numbers.          | Working with The Parks Service, Fish and Wildlife, and the Township to find a balance between development, open space, and wildlife management |
| Lack of Forest Management on State Lands                                                    | Stop the Deterioration of Forest Health                                        | Privatization would boost the local economy through job creation                                                                               |
| Boundary between public land management agencies is not seamless                            | Establish a system of uniform and less confusing regulations                   | Public lands would become more user friendly and boost eco-tourism                                                                             |
| Stop Trout stocking in the Big Flatbrook and establish a brook native trout only population | Establish and market the Big Flatbrook as a trophy brook trout fishery         | Boost to eco-tourism                                                                                                                           |

A combination of the need for management of existing open space, limiting development and increasing access to and use of open space and parks were the major issues touched on by participants in the parks, open space and recreation

vision session. Members of the group discussed the need to manage invasive species and deer and bear populations, while maintaining the overall rural character of the Township. The need to work with the state and federal parks agencies to become involved with and promote proper management of these lands was very important to residents. Increased access and use of the lands was also discussed, particularly with respect to access to the Delaware on the New Jersey side of the river.

## Farms and Agriculture

| Issues                                                                                     | Challenges                                                                                 | Opportunities                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Residents do not want to see farms being developed                                         | There is not a lot of government money available at the moment for Farmland Preservation   | Farmers can make their voices heard to the County and the Township for what they want                   |
| Wildlife such as bear and deer destroy crops                                               | There are a lot of regulations for value added products and how they can be made           | The State Provides Grants to help farmers                                                               |
| Finding ways to increase the Agricultural industry in Sandyston                            | There are a lot of state regulations that make sustaining farming hard on farmers          | The County offers courses and a location at Vo-Tech to develop and make value added products            |
| Getting information to farmers about value added products and farmers markets              | Finding certified kitchens to make value added products                                    | A County farm commercial building could be started to assist in selling of produce/value added products |
| Current land regulations put stress on farming practices                                   | There is no place in the County for medium/large scale value added product production      | More farmers could be part of the Sussex County Farmer's Market                                         |
| There is no place for any kind of large scale value added product production in the County | The price offered for Farmland Preservation is sometimes not as high as farmers would like | A Township farm stand could be established to help farmers sell their products                          |
| Making sure information is available for applying for Farmland Preservation                |                                                                                            | Certified Kitchens could be shared by small farming operations that could not otherwise afford one      |
| Separation of Tillable land and wooded lots when it comes to development                   |                                                                                            |                                                                                                         |

## **Farms and Agriculture**

The potential value of farm land and appraisals done through the farmland preservation program was a major issue discussed during this session. Farmers were interested in ways to maximize the value of their property for sale through the farmland preservation program and had noted that in the past, appraisals were not high enough to entice them into selling their development rights. Maintaining some reasonable densities on the land in question was desirable in order for farmers to maintain and maximize the value of their land for potential sale in the farmland preservation program. A variety of methods was discussed that would provide additional products for farmers to sell and additional venues for them to sell those products in. Of particular interest was farmer's ability to make value added goods like jams, jellies, pies, etc. on the farm. New Jersey State law requires the use of a commercial kitchen for the processing of value added goods. The Sussex County Agriculture Department has partnered with the Sussex County Technical School to provide commercial kitchen facilities for farmers to use. Some are taking advantage of this situation but the word needs to be spread. Participants were also interested in developing something in town to provide the same function. Some discussion focused on the ability to use the kitchen at the municipal building for such purposes. Also participants discussed expanded agricultural production facilities that could produce goods at a larger scale. Discussions have been ongoing with the County on this idea but have not yet come to fruition. Some discussion also centered on cooperative locations to sell farm goods, either inside at a storefront location in one of the villages or along Route 206 in a large farm stand. The idea of creating a farmer's market and/or cooperative in Newton along their Main Street also came up as a way to create another market for farm goods from Sandyston.

**Thursday, April 20, 2010 – Visioning Session #2: The Future of the Villages of Layton and Hainesville and Economic Development in Sandyston Township**

The second Vision Session focused on the Villages of Layton and Hainesville and overall methods for improving economic development in the Township. The session was well attended with approximately 30 residents participating. The majority of the Township Committee and Planning and Zoning Board attended. Representatives from Stokes State Park, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District offices, State Department of Transportation, Office of Smart Growth and County Planning Department were all in attendance. The session began with an opening by Planning and Zoning Board Chair Keith Utter and a welcome from Mayor George Harper, Jr., which included introductions of all agency representatives in attendance. Following, Jessica Caldwell, P.P., A.I.C.P., gave an introduction and background on Plan Endorsement and why the Township was undertaking visioning at this time. She then read the following Vision Statement that was developed by the Township Planning and Zoning Board in 2008 as part of the Master Plan update process:

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The group was then asked to discuss the issues, opportunities and challenges related to the villages and economic development within the Township. The following tables provide a summary of what was discussed.

## Village Centers

| Issues                                                                                   | Challenges                                                                                              | Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Too much commuter traffic in Layton                                                      | Feasibility of bypass<br>Bypass would divert customers                                                  | Add sidewalks<br>Pursue the by pass road<br>Create a business route if bypass is constructed                                                                                                                       |
| Visitors can't find points of interest in Township/ Don't know where they are in Centers | Cost                                                                                                    | Wayfinding Signage<br>Welcome/Village Center Signage<br>Interpretive Signage<br>Create a map of area and points of interest                                                                                        |
| Visitors aren't frequenting local businesses                                             | How to get the word out?                                                                                | Linger Longer approach ties in recreation areas with local businesses<br>Provide signage at recreation areas that identifies places to go<br>Provide bus tours of area—historic tours and stop at local businesses |
| Need more pedestrian traffic in centers                                                  | Requires more development<br>Requires more business attractions                                         | Ask people who visit what businesses they want to see<br>Create marketing material to distribute at parks<br>Develop more business opportunities in the Township                                                   |
| Need more businesses                                                                     | Expansion and creation of business is expensive<br>Regulations are difficult<br>Businesses are seasonal | Township could assist businesses through regulatory issues<br>A business association could assist business development<br>Home occupations could permitted more easily to provide a less expensive business option |
| Need places to stay for travelers – reasonable cost /family oriented                     | Locations<br>Zoning                                                                                     | Review zoning to see what is permitted<br>B & B's are permitted /get the word out                                                                                                                                  |

**Economic Development**

| Issues                                                                                   | Challenges                                                                                                                                                                 | Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No place for visitors to get information about facilities and businesses in the Township | Cost and location to provide information                                                                                                                                   | Create visitors center<br>Develop marketing material for businesses<br>Create kiosks that promote businesses<br>Directional signs at intersections in centers                                                                                                                                                            |
| Need organization for business in the Township                                           | No formal organization exists and no funding is currently available                                                                                                        | Create a business association in Sandyston<br>Develop a list of businesses in township<br>Identify opportunities to expand and develop new businesses<br>Pub business plan on website<br>Utilize Township website to link to businesses and provide information<br>Link Township website to state and fed. Park websites |
| Need ways to expand business opportunities in the Township                               | Seasonality of tourism<br>Cost to begin businesses<br>Regulations make it difficult/expensive to start or expand business<br>Milford attracts tourists away from Sandyston | State parks will host bus tours to local businesses and points of interest from Stokes<br>Parks need local firewood / business opp.<br>Live/work opportunities for houses on 206<br>Connect to Peters Valley                                                                                                             |

## **Village Centers & Economic Development**

The primary issues raised regarding the village centers were: too much traffic in Layton; need for more businesses; the need for a small sized hotel and/or Bed and Breakfasts; ways to connect park visitors to the centers; and the need to increase overall pedestrian traffic in the villages. The Layton Bypass proposal was discussed at great length and nearly all participants supported the bypass. The only concern over the bypass proposal was the fact that it may draw customers away from Layton. A business loop possibility was discussed to direct those who would like to frequent the businesses into Layton while those just passing through could use the bypass. With that caveat, all participants supported the idea. The representative from the Delaware Water Gap Recreation Area said that the park was keeping an open mind on the bypass idea. The county planner noted that the County is working with the Township on preliminary ideas that could make the bypass a workable idea. The need for additional sidewalks, streetscaping and parking was noted for the Village of Layton to make it more accommodating to pedestrians. The need to expand business opportunities in the village along with the addition of a small family oriented hotel or bed and breakfast was also discussed. The corridor along Route 206 in Hainesville was discussed as an area that had opportunities for live/work situations or home occupations to utilize the existing residences to provide more commercial and business opportunities. The need to evaluate zoning in order to permit small hotels and home occupations and/or live work situations was also discussed.

A variety of ideas were raised as to methods for improving economic development in the Township. The primary idea was to link the recreational tourism in the area to the businesses in the Township in a more direct way. The idea of creating a visitor's center in the Township was focused on as a critical element in bringing tourism into the Township and linking it with businesses in the Township. A "linger longer" technique used in other states was suggested that would provide signage and information for businesses in the Township directly with interpretive signage at the parks. The park representatives were receptive to this idea. The Stokes State Forest representative also noted that Stokes has been looking for a vendor to provide bus tours around the area as an added recreational opportunity for parks visitors. They

offered to link the bus tours to stops in the village centers providing for increased use and access of local businesses by visitors to the parks. As part of these efforts a business association or group is needed to catalogue and promote the local businesses. Additionally marketing materials and maps were noted as being highly necessary in directing people to areas of interest and businesses. Methods to expand the number and type of local businesses was also discussed including connecting with the park to provide goods and services such as local firewood, providing assistance during the approval process to new businesses or businesses looking to expand and connecting with Peter's Valley art colony to provide cross marketing between the centers in Sandyston and visitors to Peter's Valley.

**Monday, June 7 2010 – Visioning Session #3: Summary & Review of Vision Session #1 and #2**

The third session was held on Monday, June 7, 2010 before the Sandyston Township Planning and Zoning Board. Jessica Caldwell, P.P., A.I.C.P., presented a summary and review of both sessions to get feedback on a draft vision statement as well as gather additional ideas regarding the visioning process, vision statement and other ideas presented thus far. The board members reviewed the summary documents and offered changes and revisions.

## ***Vision Statement***

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*“Sandyston seeks to retain its rural and small town character, agricultural community, and abundant open space; conserve its natural resources; maintain a high quality, active life for its citizens; provide adequate and affordable housing for its citizens; and provide a feeling of purpose, place, and belonging for its citizens; and, in cooperation with the state and federal land management agencies, develop an economic base tailored to agricultural and natural resources tourism.”*

Sandyston Township is set apart in northwestern New Jersey. Home to Stokes State Forest, portions of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area and large expanses of open space and farmland, the Township offers a high quality of life to its residents and a high quality recreational experience to visitors of the parks and open spaces. The vast expanses of open spaces and farms are among the Township’s greatest assets. With over 70 percent of the Township in public ownership, cooperation and coordination with the public agencies in charge of the open space is also a challenge.

The mountains, streams and forests provide the backdrop for a high quality of life for township residents and a rewarding recreational experience to visitors. Set in the ridge and valley province of northern New Jersey, Sandyston’s scenic ridgelines and stream-lined valleys provide for year-round recreational opportunities amidst the rich natural environment. Sandyston Township residents enjoy a high quality of life with scenic beauty, clean air and water, rich cultural and historic resources and an excellent school system.

Eco-tourism and agricultural tourism are the main industries in the Township and Sandyston seeks to build a diverse and stable economic base as an outdoor recreational community. Sandyston envisions connecting the more than 40,000 visitors to local parks each year to expand and promote business in the Township. The Villages of Layton and Hainesville

offer natural commercial focal points for a burgeoning recreational and agricultural tourism industry. The Township envisions expanding the number and types of businesses within the centers to provide a strong economic base of goods and services for residents and visitors alike.

Residents of Sandyston Township are practical, creative and industrious, with a great sense of pride and commitment toward improving their community. Residents engage in civic participation and promoting the ideals of the community: natural resource, open space and farmland protection; beautification; access to recreation; economic development; government efficiency; and a high quality public school system.

In order to preserve these rich traditions and quality of life, residents strive to effectively manage change. The community works to enhance the Township's identity and foster a strong local economy. Township leaders strive to preserve open space for recreation, farmland and environmental conservation and make development decisions based upon sound planning principles. Their efforts help to maintain the high quality of life in the Township.

Sandyston seeks to maintain and improve its greatest assets— its scenic landscapes, historic, natural and cultural resources, homegrown businesses, strong community participation and leadership – which reflect not only the positive investments of the past, but pave the way for a thriving future.

## *Summary*

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Sandyston Township conducted three vision workshops as part of the Plan Endorsement process with the State Planning Commission. The first two sessions, held on April 12 and 29<sup>th</sup>, respectively, were charrette style workshops that provided residents with the opportunity to give input and help shape the vision of Sandyston with respect to specific topic areas. The first session focused on farming, agriculture, open space and recreation. The second session focused on the village centers and economic development. Both sessions were well attended with 30-40 residents at each session and a half dozen county, state and federal representatives also participating. The sessions were unique in that visioning was not so much for dramatic change but how to preserve, protect and enhance the many positive aspects of the Township. The third session was a presentation of a summary of both sessions to the Planning and Zoning Board and public for feedback and additional comments. The results of all three sessions were compiled into this vision statement for submittal to the State Planning Commission as part of Sandyston's petition for Plan Endorsement. While this statement summarizes the thoughts and ideas projected during the three workshops, it cannot completely convey the great sense of community cooperation and participation that occurred because of these sessions. The Sandyston Township community showed its dedication, ingenuity and commitment to proper planning and implementation of its overall vision as articulated within this Vision Statement.