

DRAFT – FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE JUNE 5, 2008
MEETING OF THE HIGHLANDS COUNCIL

Smart Growth and Community Design Handbook

Issue Overview

The Highlands Act notes that, “the existing land use and environmental regulation system cannot protect the water and natural resources of the New Jersey Highlands against the environmental impacts of sprawl development.” (Section 2).

The Regional Master Plan guides new growth and development to areas of existing development and requires that community development and redevelopment be carefully tailored to ensure that new growth is compatible with the existing community character. In addition, the Plan contemplates that Highlands Development Credits will be transferred to receiving zones where appropriate. The Highlands Act requires that this Plan’s smart growth component include an assessment, based upon the resource assessment, “of opportunities for appropriate development, redevelopment, and economic growth, and a transfer of development rights program which shall include consideration of public investment priorities, infrastructure investments, economic development, revitalization, housing, transportation, energy resources, waste management, recycling, brownfields, and design such as mixed-use, compact design, and transit villages.” (Section 11.a.(6))

The Highlands Act requires the RMP to promote smart growth practices in the Highlands Region, particularly with regard to development in the Existing Community Zone and in areas appropriate for redevelopment.

Program Summary

The Highlands Council will work with state and local agencies and technical and planning experts to prepare a handbook on smart growth and community design to be utilized for community development and redevelopment within the Highlands Region.

RMP Policies and Objectives Addressed

Policy 6H1. To promote compatible development and redevelopment within the Existing Community Zone.

Policy 6H3. To ensure that development activities within the Existing Community Zone are subject to standards and criteria which ensure that development and redevelopment incorporate smart growth principles and do not adversely affect natural resources.

Policy 6H5. To ensure that development and redevelopment in the Existing Community Zone are compatible with existing community character.

Policy 6I1. To encourage new growth, where desired by the municipality, and development in the Existing Community Zone is in the form of center based and mixed use development.

Policy 6N1. To establish smart growth programs and low impact development (LID) principles for use within the Highlands Region to guide and control development and redevelopment throughout the Highlands Region.

Highlands Smart Growth and Community Design Handbook

The Highlands Council working in partnership with agencies and development partners will prepare a Highlands Smart Growth and Community Design Handbook for use by municipalities and counties in their planning, design and

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review processes. The handbook will address a broad range of issues potentially including but not limited to the following:

- Mixed use development guidelines
- Infill development practices and standards
- Historic building and feature development practices
- Scenic resource protection design elements
- Techniques for community character analysis
- Economic development techniques (including Downtown Business Districts, home office operations, Bed and Breakfast operations, tourism, historic preservation and recreation connections)
- Traditional design practices for communities
- Location efficiency
- Resource efficiency
- Green building technology, including water conservation and energy efficient practices
- Innovative building practices and techniques
- Site layout and design techniques
- Cluster, lot-averaging and conservation development techniques
- Promoting a better jobs to housing balance
- Redevelopment and revitalization techniques
- Addressing affordable housing and community facilities
- Connecting transportation, transit and land use planning
- List of state and national smart growth publications and resources

Municipal Outreach

The Highlands Council will distribute the Highlands Smart Growth and Community Design Handbook to all Highlands Region municipalities. It will establish an outreach program to engage professional planners, landscape architects, architects and property owner/developers implementing smart growth practices in the Highlands Region. Finally, the Council will provide technical and planning assistance and planning grants to municipalities with regard to the use of the Handbook.