

Guiding Principles

DRAFT - For Consideration at the Work Session of September 28, 2006
and Use in Regional Master Plan

Executive Summary

While the Highlands Act establishes certain goals and requirements, in most instances it empowers the Highlands Council to determine how these goals and requirements will be met. Staff has developed a set of guiding principles designed to summarize the approach the Council is taking to meet the mandates of the Act. Staff anticipates that the discussion and inclusion of these principles into the Plan will assist the development of the Plan and the understanding of readers of the Plan. Staff has organized the guiding principles into three categories:

- Regional Protection Principles
- Regional Conservation Principles
- Regional Development Principles

The principles are often interrelated and are not presented in any priority order-- they are all important in carrying out the purposes and intent of the Act.

Staff is presenting the guiding principles today to get feedback on comprehensiveness and general guidance. We encourage Members to email us with specific language suggestions after the work session.

After obtaining feedback from Members, staff anticipates that the principles will be amended and then included in the draft Policy Guidance Element that Members will review in an upcoming work session before public release of the draft Plan.

Regional Protection Principles

Protect, restore and enhance drinking water resources. Focus regional, county, and municipal planning and protection on the significance of the Highlands Region as the essential source of providing clean and plentiful drinking water and incomparable water resources for the State of New Jersey.

Protect the legacy of the Highlands region. Approach resource protection and enhancement from a regional perspective in order to protect the natural beauty and public trust values of the Highlands Region and to avoid the individual and cumulative adverse impacts to Highlands resources.

Protect and enhance Highlands resources. Protect and enhance the significant values of Highlands resources including surface and ground waters, clean air, contiguous forest lands, woodlands, wetlands, pristine watersheds, habitat for fauna and flora, endangered and threatened animals, plants, and biotic communities, vegetated stream corridors, steep slopes, environmentally sensitive lands, as well as aesthetic, cultural, historic, open space, agricultural, horticultural, and outdoor recreation resources of the Highlands Region.

Promote the sustainability of the Highlands ecosystem. Determine the amount and type of human development and activity which the ecosystem of the Highlands Region can sustain while still maintaining the overall ecological values of the Highlands Region.

Encourage State funding for land preservation and stewardship. Encourage strong and significant commitment by the State for a stable fund for the acquisition, restriction, and stewardship of exceptional Highlands resource value lands.

Promote the identification of significant Highlands resources as a planning tool. Identify and assess significant Highlands resources through the evaluation of resource integrity, value, condition, extent, and contiguity.

Identify areas not significantly constrained by Highlands resources. Identify areas which are not significantly constrained with Highlands resources that may serve as appropriate development opportunities.

Promote ecological approaches for water supply management. Insure the protection of ground water and surface water supplies with respect to maintaining aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem integrity.

Involve the community. Encourage community participation in the development of a community vision for the future of the Highlands Region.

Regional Conservation Principles

Promote resources management and land stewardship. Approach the management of Highlands resources within a regional context that utilizes sound science to direct resource protection strategies, restoration targets, and balance eco-tourism and growth opportunities.

Promote agricultural and horticultural sustainability. Preserve and promote the agricultural and horticultural industry as a vital component of the economy, welfare, and cultural landscape of the Highlands Region.

Promote green policies. Promote green building practices for development and redevelopment within the Highlands Region.

Promote resource efficiency. Promote the siting, design, and construction of energy efficient buildings to protect, enhance, and conserve Highlands resources.

Design with nature. Promote low impact development, ecologically sensitive and restorative design principles and objectives.

Conserve resources. Promote resource conservation measures and techniques at both a local and regional scale.

Regional Development Principles

Adopt a regional perspective. Approach land use planning decisions, infrastructure investments, and economic development initiatives from a regional perspective.

Advocate for mixed use development. Support the integration of mixed land uses into communities as a critical component of creating compact or walkable neighborhoods that provide opportunities for residential, commercial, and industrial development as well as opportunities for recreation, education, and economic viability and development.

Encourage center-based growth. Direct development and redevelopment to existing communities that can be served by existing or planned infrastructure.

Encourage compact building design. Encourage compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development.

Discourage inappropriate development patterns. Discourage piecemeal, scattered, and inappropriate development patterns throughout the Highlands Region.

Provide for full range of housing. Provide quality housing with a variety and choice of housing options for people of all income levels.

Promote a sound transportation system. Promote transportation systems that support smart growth, green policies, transportation choices, connections to pedestrian and bicycle networks, and mobility options.

Promote remediation opportunities. Provide tools for the identification of remediation and redevelopment opportunities at contaminated sites.

Encourage inter-municipal cooperation. Encourage opportunities for shared services and inter-municipal agreements that reduce repetitive service provisions and capital outlays.

Be innovative. Incorporate innovative and alternative approaches as a means for achieving regional planning goals.