



State of New Jersey

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Byram and Highlands - Perfect Together

Highlands Council approves Byram Township's petition for Plan Conformance and designates a Highlands Center

CHESTER, N.J. – The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council unanimously approved its first Petition for Plan Conformance at today's meeting, giving Byram Township the protections of the Highlands Regional Master Plan as well as the designation of a Highlands Center aimed at spurring development and redevelopment along the Route 206 corridor.

"Today's approval is a win for the protection of natural resources in the Highlands Region and a win for economic development in Byram Township," Highlands Council Acting Chairman Jack Schrier said. "The Highlands Council and Byram Township have demonstrated that, through collaboration and careful planning, it is possible to do both."

Mayor James Oscovitch said today's approval of the Petition for Plan Conformance and the Highlands Center will allow Byram Township to protect its extensive natural resources and simultaneously reinvigorate the Route 206 corridor.

"Through the Highlands Center Designation, Byram Township will be adding jobs and new homes – while preserving Byram Township's community character and quality of life," he said.

Byram Township, known as the Township of Lakes, has a land area of more than 22 square miles (14,505 acres) with extensive high integrity water resources and forest resources. Over 75 percent of Byram Township is forested and 30 percent is preserved open space.

"Today is a victory for planning and for state and municipal coordination. The Highlands Council and Byram Township have collaborated on a plan that is a model for the State," Highlands Council Executive Director Eileen Swan said. "Today's actions will ensure the protection of natural resources for generations to come and provided for sustainable development that will be an economic engine and complement the bucolic township of Byram."

Also today, the Highlands Council approved designation of 197 acres in the Planning Area as a Highlands Center. The Highlands Center, along the Route 206 corridor, would consist of 31.1 acres of currently undeveloped lands as the Byram Village Center, 141.4 acres for development and redevelopment, and 55.6 acres of Highlands Environmental Resource Sites, which would be protected. The Highlands Center would include a Route 206 Streetscape Improvement Program with street lighting, tree plantings, sidewalks and pedestrian crosswalks; a walking/bicycle trail component; and a Lubbers Run Greenway Project to protect and restore this stream corridor.

The heart of the Highlands Center is the Byram Village Center which proposes a mixed-use core development area, with a village green, civic spaces, commercial space, retail, apartments, townhomes, multi-family homes, and single family homes. The residential component would include 26 deed-restricted low/moderate-income units (a mix of rental and for sale) to address the township's affordable housing obligation.

On December 8, 2009, Byram Township submitted a petition for Plan Conformance for both its Preservation Area and Planning Area. The petition was deemed administratively complete by the Highlands Council on February 4, 2010, and posted to the Highlands Council website 10 days later. On May 28, the Highlands Council sent a draft consistency report to the township for its review; the final draft of the report was posted to the Highlands Council website on September 1, and a 14-day public comment period began the following day. The final report was posted on September 17, and the Highlands Council voted today to approve the Petition.

Letters of support of Byram's Petition were received from the New Jersey League of Municipalities, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the Pinelands Commission, the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, and New Jersey Future. In addition, testimony in support of the Highlands Council's action was presented by the Regional Plan Association. At the Council meeting, representatives of the Highlands Council and Byram Township recognized and honored the dedication of Christopher (Chris) Hellwig who served as the Director of Planning for Byram Township and worked on this Plan Conformance petition. Chris succumbed this year after a long and valiant struggle with cancer.

More information about Byram Township's Petition for Plan Conformance can be found under today's date on the Highlands Council's calendar page:

<http://www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/about/calend/>

Today's actions by the Highlands Council do not take effect until 10 business days after a copy of the minutes of the meeting have been delivered to the Governor to allow for his review and consideration of the minutes.