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FINAL DRAFT
CONSISTENCY REVIEW
AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

PETITION FOR HIGHLANDS CENTER DESIGNATION
BOROUGH OF ALPHA, WARREN COUNTY

Prepared by the State of New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and
Planning Council in Support of the Highlands Regional Master Plan

APRIL 6, 2023

**FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE APRIL 2023 MEETING OF THE
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
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INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (“Highlands Council”) approved the Borough of Alpha’s Petition for Plan Conformance on August 3, 2011, by adoption of Resolution #2011-26. The Borough’s conformance area is for the entire municipality and consists of 1,098 acres in the Planning Area. Since the time of Highlands Council approval, the Borough has made progress towards completion of required Plan Conformance implementation tasks, as set forth in the Highlands Implementation Plan and Schedule. The Borough has completed a Planning Area Petition Ordinance, a Highlands Environmental Resource Inventory, a Land Use and Circulation Plan element, a Redevelopment Investigation and Plan for the eastern Quarry (Block 99, Lot 2), a Master Plan Reexamination Report, and a Zoning Map Update. The Borough will undertake additional land use and resource management planning tasks associated with Center planning, climate resiliency, and environmental justice as conditions of this Petition approval. Due to the State Planning Commission’s endorsement of the Regional Master Plan (RMP), this Highlands Center will also qualify as a State Planning Center.

In early 2021, the Borough conducted a Feasibility Study to consider whether an adjustment of Center Boundaries of the existing center designation would be feasible. The Borough would like to adjust the center designation boundary to be more inclusive of the business district, incorporate smart growth development throughout, and enhance quality of life for residents and the business community. Upon conclusion of the feasibility study and its finding that an expanded Center could be supported by available infrastructure, the Borough developed a Highlands Center Designation Plan (“Plan”) (see Appendix A). The resulting Plan details a proposal to expand the Center designation to include all parcels within the Borough except the R-1A Agricultural District Zone, located in the southwestern corner of the Borough. This Consistency Review and Recommendations Report (“Report”) has been prepared by Highlands Council Staff for consideration by the Highlands Council as to the consistency of the Center Designation with the Regional Master Plan.

Alpha Borough is one of the smaller municipalities in the Highlands Region and is the second smallest municipality in Warren County. In 2020, the population was approximately 2,368 people. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) noted that the Borough is expected to increase to a population of 2,850 by 2035, indicating small, slow growth. In expanding the center designation, Alpha wishes to continue to grow, and improve quality of life for residents and businesses alike. The center designation expansion would assist a small borough such as Alpha to better plan for its future and ensure its viability and success for current and future generations.

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REPORT SUMMARY

Municipality: Borough of Alpha, Warren County

Date of Petition: 06/30/2022

Date Deemed Complete: 12/08/2022

Highlands Center Proposal: Amended Petition with Center Designation

Staff Recommendation: Approval subject to conditions

PLAN CONFORMANCE STATUS UPDATE

Implementation Task	Completion
1. Petition for Plan Conformance	Approved by Highlands Council 8/11*
2. Planning Area Petition Ordinance	Adopted 10/25/11
3. Master Plan Reexamination Report	Adopted 05/2019
4. Highlands Environmental Resource Inventory	Adopted 5/2012
5. Land Use & Circulation Plan Element	Adopted 12/2013
6. Redevelopment Investigation & Plan for Alpha Quarry	Adopted 5/2015
7. Highlands Center Designation Study	June 2022
8. Zoning Map Update	Adopted 10/2014
9. Wastewater Management Plan (WMP)	In Progress

*Indicates the prior Center Designation approval date.

A. REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUBMITTALS

1. Highlands Center Designation Plan, June 2022

B. SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW

The Borough of Alpha completed a Highlands Center Designation Plan (“Plan”) which would result in expansion of the existing Center within the municipality. The Highlands Center Designation Plan dated June 2022, provides a thorough analysis of Alpha Borough through a review of past planning documents, discussion of current properties of importance, analysis of the center expansion, and incorporation of public feedback into best planning practices. Ultimately, the Center Designation Plan delineates five sub-areas for the expanded center designation and provides recommendations for each sub-category intended to improve the area for current and

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future populations. The Plan also makes note of public feedback, and emphasizes the need for place making, improved recreation/community areas, and enhanced transportation options. Upon review of the Plan, staff found the Petition to be supportive of an expanded Center designation, subject to certain conditions regarding wastewater and other infrastructure requirements. The Highlands Center Designation Plan is attached as Appendix A.

A Highlands Center is an area within a municipality where development and redevelopment is encouraged and fostered. Highlands Centers are intended to support economic balance in the Highlands Region, providing for sustainable economic growth, while protecting critical natural and cultural resources.

With the implementation of a Highlands Center, the Land Use Capability Zones within the boundaries of the Center are replaced by zones that result from a comprehensive planning process, designed to identify the goals and best uses for the lands within the Center. The process is community-driven, allows flexibility in creating a tailored development plan for the Center, and should result in a healthy, active community with opportunities for growth and development consistent with the goals and principles of the Highlands Act and the RMP.

Lands within a Highlands Center benefit from the detailed site-specific planning associated with center planning and may also be eligible for an expedited process toward inclusion in a sewer service area. The concept of Highlands Centers is similar to State Plan Centers but are not subject to expiration. Highlands Centers remain intact unless a specific action by the municipality causes their elimination. Like other land within the municipality, Highlands Centers may receive grant funding to implement important aspects of the center plan.

As the Borough developed the Highlands Center Designation Plan, they undertook a public outreach effort to inform the community about the planning process and solicit feedback from local residents. The planning team attended the Borough's first annual Fall Fest in November 2021 and surveys were distributed to fest attendees. Additionally visitors were engaged in conversations about open space and bicycle/pedestrian safety. The conversations highlighted the specific planning needs that residents felt were important to address. Additional survey responses were gathered through the Borough's website. The survey responses and the public input was incorporated into the Plan which was submitted as part of the Borough's Petition for Center Designation.

1. Proposed Boundaries.

Boundary Summary: The Borough of Alpha is located entirely in the Planning Area. It is the second smallest municipality in Warren County at 1.7 square miles with a population of 2,368 as of the 2020 Census.

The Borough of Alpha prepared a Highlands Center Designation Plan to ensure smart growth development throughout the municipality. The expanded Center designation will allow Alpha to identify areas for infill and redevelopment, incorporate various smart growth strategies, and improve management of their open spaces and natural resources. The Plan includes expanded

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infrastructure capacity, improved walkability and connectivity, and incorporation of more recreation opportunities to enhance the quality of life for Alpha residents as well as enhance the business community. As noted in the Plan, the proposed Center designation will cover 1,089 parcels, and approximately 859 acres in land area, roughly 78.35% of the Borough's land area. The Center would include all residential, commercial, recreational, industrial and non-categorized areas within the Borough. The remaining parcels, not proposed to be included in the Center designation, are approximately 269.05 acres or 24.51% of the Borough's land area and is designated for farmland/agriculture. The Borough consists of five (5) sub areas: Central Business District, Quarry/Industrial, Quarry/Recreation, Neighborhood Residential, and Farmland (which is not included in Center Designation).

The Highlands Center Designation Plan and Feasibility Study note the following goals, policies, and objectives that the proposed center designation will report in relation to the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

Policy 5A4: To provide for safe and efficient pedestrian connections including features such as sidewalks, proper lighting, signage, shelters, and green street initiatives consistent with the NJDOT's Pedestrian Safety Initiative.

Policy 5A5: To promote safe routes for children to travel to and from school in support of the NJDOT's Safe Routes to School Program.

Policy 5C4: To support economic development by ensuring that transportation planning and improvements support regional development, redevelopment, and tourism opportunities.

Policy 5E1: To promote land use patterns that support a balance of jobs to housing as a means of reducing average trip lengths.

Policy 5E3: To promote land use patterns which facilitate use of alternative modes of transportation including walking and the use of bicycles.

GOAL 6E: Incorporation of Regional Development Patterns and Related Environmentally Sensitive Areas within Existing Community Zones.

Goal 6F: Support of Compact Development, Mixed Use Development and Redevelopment and Maximization of Water, Wastewater, and Transit Infrastructure Investments for Future Use of Land and Development within the Existing Community Zone.

- To promote compatible development and redevelopment.
- To ensure that development and redevelopment are compatible with the existing community character.
- To ensure that development activities are subject to standards and criteria which ensure that development and redevelopment incorporate smart growth principles and do not adversely affect natural resources.

Policy 6H6: To integrate public parks and green spaces into development and redevelopment projects and ensure restoration of impaired natural resources to the extent required by law, at a minimum, and where feasible to a greater extent to maximize long-term value of the project.

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Objective 6H8a: Development and redevelopment initiatives shall encourage the use of HDC as a means to enhance the existing or adjacent community while protecting local and regional natural resources.

Policy 6H9: To incorporate smart growth principles and green building design and technology in development and redevelopment initiatives.

Goal 6N: Use of Smart Growth principles, including low impact development, to guide development and redevelopment in the Highlands region.

Goal 6O: Market-rate and affordable housing sufficient to meet the needs of the Highlands region within the context of economic, social, and environmental considerations and constraints.

Goal 8A: Sustainable economic development in the Highlands region.

Goal 8C: Expansion of compatible and sustainable tourism and recreation within the Highlands Region.

Goal 8D: Expansion of innovative technology and entrepreneurial businesses including home office, energy efficiency, and resource conservation enterprises in the Highlands Region.

Goal 8E: Estimate and track over time the costs and benefits associated with plan implementation and the protection of critical resources of the Highlands region.

Goal 10A: Maximize municipal participation to ensure the regional master plan achieves its long term goals of protecting, enhancing and restoring Highlands resources and maintaining a sustainable economy in the Highlands region.

The expansion of Alpha’s designated Center will allow the Borough to better meet current and future community needs. Much of the Existing Community Zone (ECZ) extends beyond the current designated Center. Additionally, a number of the proposed areas of the expanded center are located within existing Water and Sewer Service areas. Both the Land Use Capability zoning and the presence of water and sewer, support the center expansion. The center designation expansion will provide the necessary planning tools to preserve Alpha’s small-town character while expanding the business community and providing necessary improvements for quality of life.

Highlands Implementation Plan & Schedule: The municipality shall complete all Plan Conformance updates and activities listed in the attached Implementation Plan & Schedule (Appendix C) and summarized below. The Highlands Council is available to provide technical assistance and guidance through the adoption of any of the below listed plans.

1. **Highlands Master Plan Update/Land Use Plan Element-** Provide update of the Master Plan to accommodate the findings in the Center Designation, and as required by the Municipal Land Use Law. Additionally, the Land Use Plan element shall include a Resiliency component as required in the MLUL (40:55D-28(b)(2)(h))to address climate change and the hazard vulnerability assessment.

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2. **Update Land Use Ordinances** – Update of Ordinances to reflect recommendations made in the Center Designation and based on conditions made in the Consistency Review and Recommendations Report.
3. **Update Circulation Plan Element** – Should include review of transportation and a Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Component.
4. **Update Open Space & Recreation Plan** – Update Open Space and Recreation plan based on findings in Center Plan.
5. **Water Use and Conservation Management Plan** – Preparation of a Water Use and Conservation Management Program.
6. **Redevelopment Study** – Redevelopment study should be completed on the Quarry located at Block 97, Lot 2.
7. **Center Planning 2023** – Develop placemaking strategies, increase walkability/bikeability, streetscapes, wayfinding, streetscapes, and public art.

C. FINDINGS

In accordance with the adopted Plan Conformance Procedures (2019), the following criteria are used to determine if a proposed center is consistent with the goals, policies, and objectives of the RMP. Findings related to each criteria are provided below.

- 1) The proposed Highlands Center is located in an area with sufficient water availability, water supply, wastewater, and transportation capacity and is appropriate for increased land use intensity;
 - 2) The proposed Highlands Center is consistent with the resource protection standards of the Regional Master Plan, in accordance with the intent and purpose of the Highlands Act;
 - 3) The proposed Highlands Center is consistent with the Smart Growth and Low Impact Development (LID) standards of the Regional Master Plan; and
 - 4) There is a need for land uses within the community that may be met by the Highlands Center, particularly those that complement local and regional (or sub-regional) socio-economic needs, provide for affordable housing, increased transit opportunities, and the potential use of Highlands Development Credits.
- 1) Sufficient Infrastructure: Finding - Alpha Borough has sufficient infrastructure capacity regarding Water & Wastewater Service Areas, Transportation, and other resources to sufficiently expand their existing center designation.

Water & Wastewater Service: Alpha Borough has noted that it has sufficient capacity in regard to Water & Wastewater capacity within the expanded Center designation area. The Borough has noted two parcels: Block 100.01, Lot 10, and Block 98, Lot 2 as prime areas for redevelopment, however they are not within the existing Sewer Service Area. As a result of the 2018 Master Plan Reexamination, the Borough wished to expand their sewer service area to include additional parcels. The borough has applied to the NJDEP to expand their sewer service area. As part of that application, they are requesting to amend the existing Center Designation, to support the expansion. The Borough has provided data for the proposed expansion of wastewater and sewage usage for the expansion of the Center, particularly in certain identifiable industrial areas.

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Alpha Borough has an allocation of *0.432* mgd potable water from the Alpha Municipal Water Works and *400,000* gpd allocation for sewage treatment at the Phillipsburg Sewage Treatment Plant. In 2005, Alpha Borough entered an agreement with the Town of Phillipsburg, allotting capacity for sewage treatment. The Borough currently consumes on average *0.189* mgd of water and *116,627* gpd of sewage capacity. The Borough has analyzed additional capacity, which would be an additional *83,508* gpd of wastewater and *0.084* mgd of potable water. These increases would result in an estimated water usage demand of *0.344* mgd and wastewater demand of *200,135* gpd. This is well under the allocation available to Alpha Borough for both potable water and sewage treatment. Although the area is in a net water availability deficit, water is supplied through Alpha Municipal Waterworks and no increase in any water allocation is proposed to service development in the Center. Based on these facts, the Borough has adequate capacity to support development/redevelopment within the proposed center.

Transportation

Alpha is not currently served by public transportation options but is located next to (and bisected by) Interstate Route 78. There is a connection from Industrial Drive in Alpha that connects to Route 78 via Route 122 and Route 22. This extension provides an access from the industrial area in Alpha to major highways. The roadways throughout Alpha are primarily classified for local based travel need. County Routes 519, 641, and 642 provide regional access. As noted in other studies conducted by the Borough, there is a desire to improve Industrial Drive and have it extended to allow access to additional developable land in the Industrial Park and have it connect to an existing railroad crossing and improve the connection with State Route 122. There is a need for improved transportation in Alpha to provide multi-modal, accessible transportation that serves the community. This would include incorporating more walking/bicycle lanes along main corridors, and other necessary connections. Furthermore, the Borough has indicated their desire to establish more multi-modal forms of transportation and improved accessible transportation options, including walking, biking, and other modes of transportation. As a condition, more information/detailed studies should be pursued to better understand transportation options and ultimately improve circulation and accessibility within the community.

- 2) Resource Protection Standards: Finding - The proposed center boundaries will be appropriate for increased land use intensity provided the stated conditions are met (see Section D).

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Block 97, Lot 2

Alpha Borough contains two quarries. Both quarries are no longer functioning quarries and are in need of redevelopment and rehabilitation. Block 97, Lot 2 is privately owned and is to be included in the proposed Center Designation. The property is unique in that part of the parcel is currently used for industrial use and storage of equipment, however, a portion of the parcel is adjacent to Alpha Memorial Park and existing farmland. Directly across Vulcanite Street from the quarry parcel are a number of single-family homes. This parcel and its surrounding area should be analyzed and a redevelopment plan established that takes into consideration the resources on site and surrounding uses. In the 1970s, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) conducted a responsible party study and concluded that there is contamination on the site. Further environmental assessments should be undertaken to analyze the contaminants on site and establish a plan for mitigation.



Block 99, Lot 2

Block 99, Lot 2 contains the easternmost quarry located in Alpha and is located in the current Alpha Highlands Designated Center. The property is owned by the municipality and was the subject of a redevelopment study conducted in 2018. The quarry is located on Industrial Drive and is located in an industrial zone.



The 2018 Redevelopment plan noted that there are recommendations for road improvements along Industrial Drive, and the extension of roadway from its current terminus southward to a potential rail crossing. It was suggested that this extension would result in potential access to additional development opportunities in the Industrial Park. The 2018 Redevelopment Study notes that this quarry site could support industrial uses. These existing studies regarding the size and type of industrial uses particular to this area should be reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate and

sustainable uses are pursued. There may be a need for some level of environmental remediation due to potential presence of contaminants at this site. Although noted in the center study and included in

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the 2018 Redevelopment Study, this property is located in the existing center and no modification to that previous inclusion is proposed at this time. This site is the location for two (2) closed landfills (North Cell & South Cell). In 2019 the Borough conducted a minor disruption (permitted by the NJ DEP) to assess impacts to soil, air, and groundwater from the legacy landfill operations at the site. The Borough plans to proceed with a Landfill Closure Plan in the next 12 to 36 months to allow for future redevelopment of the site.

Formerly Block 96, Lot 5 (Blocks 96.01, 96.02, 96.03, 96.04)

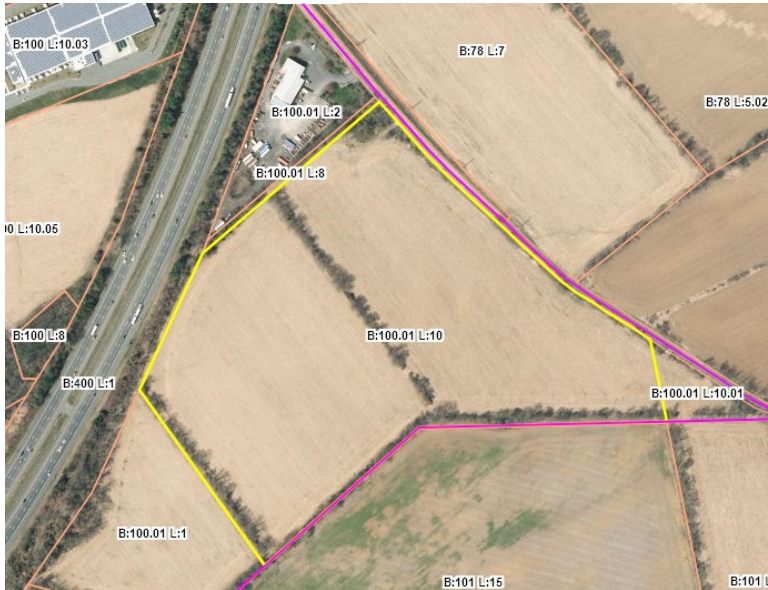
Block 96, Lot 5 was subdivided into a 108-unit inclusionary housing development (92 market based single family units and 16 affordable housing units). The parcel itself is approximately 25 acres and is within the Affordable Housing District. Per the Center report, the property has not begun construction to date. The Borough has entered into a Settlement Agreement with Fair Share Housing Center that recognizes that the Borough has a zero affordable housing obligation per the Third Round requirements. The site is located in an area with Important Farmland soils, and the Land Use Capability Designation is Protection Zone. The property is located in the Sewer Service Area and the site received preliminary and final site plan approval in 2007 for 92 market single family homes and 16 affordable housing units. The development of the site as affordable housing would be consistent with the goals of a Highlands Center.



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Block 100.01, Lot 10

Block 100.01, Lot 10 is described in the Center Report. as currently used for agriculture. The property is currently located in the Conservation Zone and Conservation – Environmentally Constrained



Subzone and is located in an Agricultural Resource Area. The property contains Important Farmland soils but is zoned for industrial activities and has been for many years. No other environmental resources are identified on the property. It is approximately thirty-seven acres and is located adjacent to Route 78. Access to Route 78 is provided via Edge Road and Industrial Drive. Improvements have been made to Edge Road and Industrial Drive to increase access to this property. Although the property is not currently located within a sewer

service, the Borough has applied to the NJDEP for this parcel to be included in the sewer service area. The properties will be serviced by public water and wastewater within their existing capacities.

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Other Resource Issues

It was reported in Alpha’s 1998 Master Plan and 2018 Re-Examination Plan that ground and surface water protection are important to the eventual development or redevelopment of industrial areas, as the Borough’s soils are characterized by Carbonate Rock Areas that may allow groundwater to be more susceptible to contamination. Any development/redevelopment proposals should involve a review and analysis of soil conditions to ensure protection of water resources.

- 3) Smart Growth/Low Impact Standards: Finding: The proposed Highlands Centers are consistent with the RMP Goals, Policies and Objectives regarding Smart Growth and Low Impact Development.

RMP Goal 6N and subsequent policies address the approach to planning and land management where growth and development are concentrated and organized around centers to achieve improved protection of environmental resources. While the desirability of this type of development is conducive to affording future development some level of flexibility in site design; it must be balanced by minimum standards for water conservation, stormwater management, and resource protection as well as mitigation requirements.

Where the designation of the Center is inherently aligned with Smart Growth, the guiding principle shall be low impact development. Low Impact Development (LID) encompasses a broad array of development and management techniques and can be implemented in resource management practices, stormwater management methods, and low impact “green” construction activities. Activities such as the implementation of a Water Use and Conservation Management Plan to promote water efficient landscaping, rain collection systems, use of gray water, and water efficient irrigation shall be required, specifically in areas facing severe deficits in water availability. Where disturbance of Highlands resources is proposed, including but not limited to steep slopes, forest resources, critical habitat, Highlands Open Waters, and riparian areas, and prime ground water recharge areas, future development shall, to the maximum extent feasible, maintain the quality and value of such resources through site design and, where necessary, mitigate those disturbances off-site at a level commensurate with the level of disturbance proposed.

The Center designation provides areas of infill development and redevelopment that are both consistent with available water supply and wastewater treatment capacities and are designed in accordance with smart growth development standards. Based on the Borough’s Center designation study, the areas sited have low-level Forest Integrity, and outside of the quarry, the properties are not located in a Highlands Open Water Buffered area and are not in riparian areas. The entirety of the center designation is located in a Moderately Valued HUC14 watershed with a moderately valued riparian integrity. There are no significant steep slopes nor are any locations within a critical wildlife habitat area. Most of Alpha is already built with neighborhood characteristics, and most likely would continue similar growth and development based on pre-existing conditions. However, Alpha should continue to analyze Block 97, Lot 2 as an area that should be redeveloped in a sustainable manner, that will enhance the natural resources existing on site.

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- 4) Community Land Use Needs: Finding: The proposed Highlands Center addresses the need for land uses within the community and complement local and regional needs.

The Alpha Borough Center Designation Study indicates a need for various land uses within Alpha Borough to both help bolster the community and the region. The neighborhoods within the Borough are well defined, however there are opportunities in other portions of town to maintain and enhance the character of the existing neighborhoods. The Borough intends to utilize smart growth principles within the main corridors and industrial areas. Within the commercial district, there is a need to protect existing businesses and to attract new businesses that would be an asset to Alpha's small town character. In the industrial district, it is noted that various businesses are outgrowing their storage capacity, and there may be better ways to support proper infill development. The proposed Center designation will support sustainable growth and help meet both current and future needs of the community.

The proposed Center will incorporate all neighborhood, business, and industrial areas of the Borough. The 2020 Warren County Industrial Study was noted that two (2) sites within Alpha Borough would be prime for industrial type uses. These sites were located within Alpha's Industrial zoned area, located towards the eastern part of the Borough. Despite the parcels not being particularly identified, they were noted as having approximately 71.6 acres and 239 acres respectively.

Additionally, the Center designation could help establish a stronger park system with more passive recreation opportunities and benefit the quality of life for local residents. The Borough reported that Alpha residents have expressed the need and desire for more bikeable, walkable and recreation areas. These ranked especially high on the Community Feedback conducted as part of their Center designation study. Better transportation options and transportation connections were also identified as local needs. Center planning should include connectivity of transportation networks, increased walking and biking opportunities throughout town, and enhanced options for elderly/disabled residents.

Alpha Borough is entirely located in an Agricultural Resource Area. RMP Goal 3A and the policies and objectives therein state that non-agricultural uses shall be limited within Agricultural Resource Areas and that prime farmland soils should be protected. The inclusion of Block 100.01, Lot 10 and Block 96, Lot 5 into the Center must address these RMP requirements to comply with center guideline #4 related to community land use needs. While there is adequate infrastructure to support the development of these sites, the development would encroach into the Agricultural Resource Areas and potentially disturb prime farmland soils. This would require the mitigation of any proposed development in this area and the disturbance of prime farmland soils by limiting development elsewhere in the Agricultural Resource Area, preferably within the same subwatershed. This may be done through the use of Highlands Development Credits, through land preservation, or through another method that would be identified at the time a development proposal is drafted.

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D. STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND CONDITIONS

The approval of Alpha Borough’s Petition for Center Designation is recommended with the following conditions:

- 1) Adherence to the Plan Conformance Implementation Tasks set forth in the Implementation Plan and Schedule (IPS) (Appendix C). The Council’s approval of the Borough’s Highlands Center designation would specifically include grant funding for those items listed in Fiscal Year 2023 of the IPS. Funding for items beyond Fiscal Year 2023 are subject to future Highlands Council approval.
- 2) Completion and adoption of a municipal wide Water Use and Conservation Management Plan.
- 3) An analysis of Block 97, Lot 2 shall be conducted to study various uses that may be appropriate for both commercial and recreational uses, with particular attention to natural resources on site.
- 4) Adequate wastewater management, stormwater management, and sewer service shall be incorporated into all Center planning.
- 5) Transportation infrastructure options and capacity shall be incorporated into all Center planning.
- 6) Follow the guidelines provided in the “Policy Standards for Warehousing in the New Jersey Highlands Region.”
- 7) Any warehouse development consisting of 100,000 square feet or larger shall conduct a post-development occupancy traffic count. The details of the count may be decided at a later date, however, it should be conducted in hourly intervals and cover a seven day classification of trucks and car when the building reaches at least 50% occupancy. Warehouse type and tenant should be documented along with the direction and type of traffic flow.
- 8) Any new warehouse development consisting of 100,000 square feet or larger is subject to N.J.S.A. 52:27D-123.19. Solar-ready building, warehouses, which requires that at least 40% of the roof of such warehouses shall be solar-ready.
- 9) Any new warehouse development consisting of 100,000 square feet or larger and occurring on former farmlands shall devote the portion of the site that is to remain undeveloped for farmland if feasible. If not feasible, the remaining lands shall be devoted to meadow, forest, habitat restoration or another use that supports water resource protection.
- 10) An analysis of the proposed industrial areas surrounding and including Block 99, Lot 2 shall be conducted to review existing conditions, identify possible contaminants, and evaluate industrial space capacities.
- 11) Industrial traffic should be limited to Edge Road and shall not utilize Still Valley Road. Appropriate signage shall be installed to this effect.

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- 12) Any land within an approved Highlands Center which upon development would result in the loss of agricultural lands in an Agricultural Resource Area must provide for mitigation or an offset through the purchase of equivalent Highlands Development Credits (HDCs) or preservation of comparable farmland. The extent of any mitigation shall be based upon the areas of existing agricultural uses and important farmland soils. As per N.J.S.A. 13:20-6 “Powers, duties, and responsibilities of council,” the Council is authorized to “work with interested municipalities to enter into agreements to establish, where appropriate, capacity-based development densities.” An agreement detailing the specifics of the mitigation requirements will be entered into between the Borough of Alpha, the Highlands Council and the owner/developer of the property prior to the issuance of building permits.
- 13) Continued development of strategies to identify areas and establish incentives to encourage Downtown Planning/Placemaking to encourage walkability, bike ability, streetscapes, etc.
- 14) An updated Master Land Use Plan should be implemented reflecting both the necessary updates based on the Center Planning Study. Additionally, the Land Use Plan element shall include a Resiliency component as required in the MLUL (40:55D-28(b)(2)(h)) to address climate change and the hazard vulnerability assessment.
- 15) The entire process Center planning process is intended to be community-driven, with a substantial public outreach component. The Borough shall develop and implement a Public Outreach Plan to seek input from the local community, which includes the following elements: outreach goals, identification of audience/stakeholders, identification of strategies/communication methods, plan timeline, and evaluation of outreach program/next steps.

E. INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA), the Highlands Council provided a copy of the Alpha Borough Petition for Center Designation to the OPA for comment. OPA, in a formal response, expressed support for Alpha Borough’s Petition for Center Designation noting that since the Borough achieved initial Plan Conformance in October of 2011 it has made steady progress toward the completion of all required Plan Conformance implementation tasks.

F. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Draft Consistency Review and Recommendations Report was posted to the Highlands Council website and made available at the Highlands Council offices in Chester, NJ, for review and comment by the general public.

A number of comments were received during the period established by the Highlands Council for receipt of written public comment (January 12 – February 11, 2023). The comment/response document is attached to this document, at Appendix D.

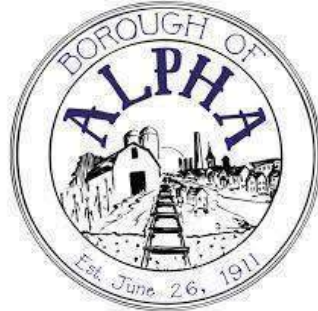
**FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE APRIL 2023 MEETING OF THE
NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL
Petition for Highlands Center Designation –Consistency Review and Recommendations Report**

APPENDIX A

HIGHLANDS CENTER DESIGNATION STUDY

Borough of Alpha, Warren County

Borough of Alpha, Warren County
HIGHLANDS CENTER DESIGNATION PLAN



June 2022

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HIGHLANDS CENTER DESIGNATION PLAN

ALPHA BOROUGH, WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Alpha Planning Board

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Vice Chairman Christopher Dragotta
Mayor Craig Dunwell
Councilman Louis Cartabona
John Fritts
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INTRODUCTION

Alpha is a borough in Warren County, New Jersey, United States. As of the 2010 United States Census, the Borough's population was 2,328, reflecting a decline of 154 (-6.6%) from the 2,482 counted in the 2000 Census, which had in turn declined by 48 (-1.9%) from the 2,530 counted in the 1990 Census.

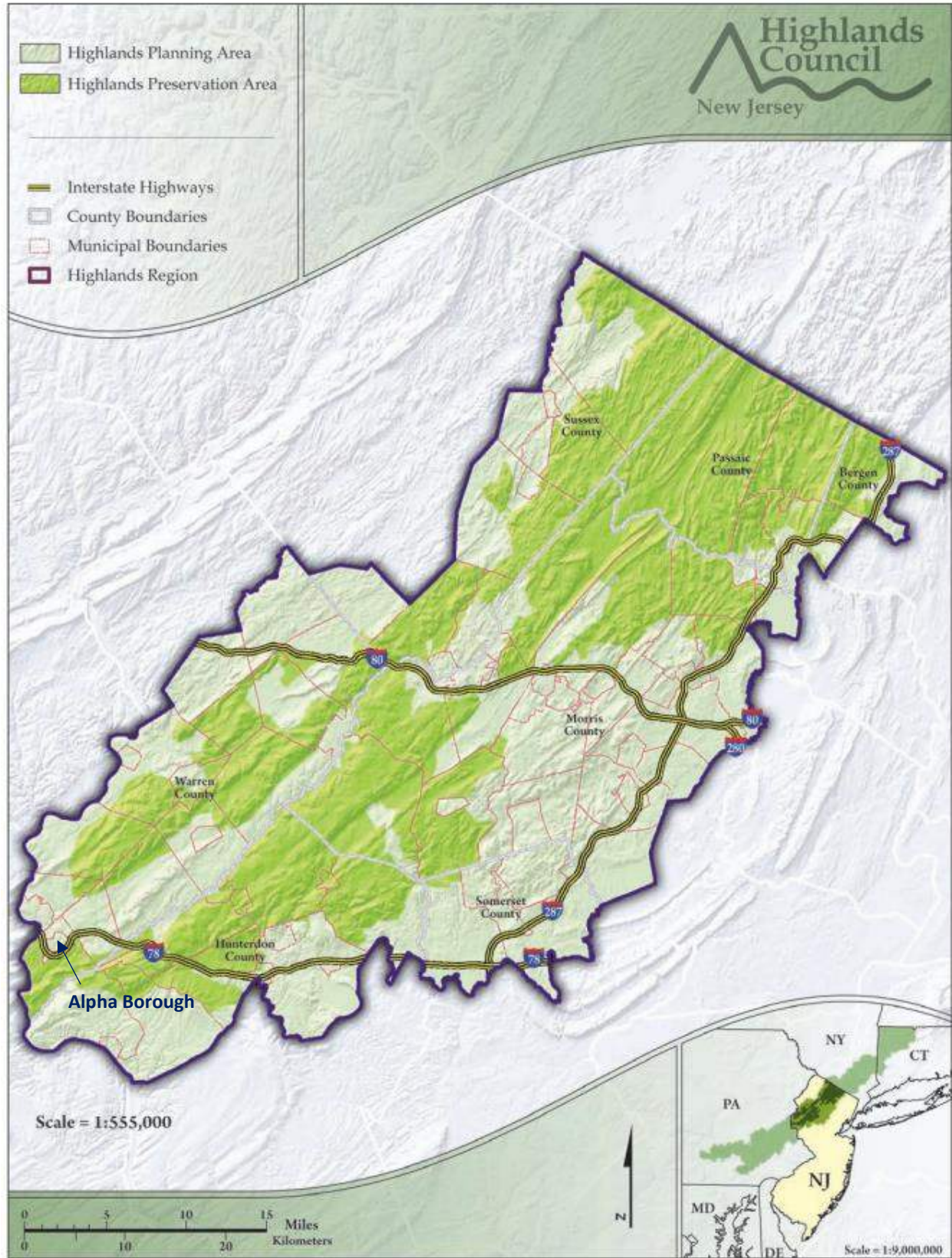
It is one of 88 municipalities protected by and subject to the provisions of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act ("Highlands Act," N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et seq.). The Highlands Act was enacted by the State Legislature on August 10, 2004 for the purpose of protecting, enhancing, and restoring Highlands natural resources, in particular water resources, which provide drinking water to over 5 million New Jersey residents. The Highlands Act created the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (the "Highlands Council") and charged it with crafting a comprehensive master plan for the Highlands Region. To complete that task, the Highlands Council engaged in a four-year planning process involving extensive scientific and technical analysis of the Region, along with an intensive program of public outreach and participation.

The Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) was adopted by the Highlands Council on July 17, 2008, and became effective on September 8, 2008. As the product of a long-term, participatory, and region-wide planning effort, the RMP is representative of the collective response of the wider community to the Legislature's call for a Highlands comprehensive master plan. The Borough places value in the regional planning process that was undertaken to fully develop the RMP and acknowledges its role in furthering the vision that it represents.

The New Jersey Highlands is 1,343 square mile area in the northeast and lies within seven counties (Hunterdon, Somerset, Sussex, Warren, Morris, Passaic and Bergen) and includes 88 municipalities. The Highlands Act establishes major subareas within the Highlands region – the Preservation Area and the Planning Area (see Highlands Region Map on the next page).

The Highlands Act designated specific boundaries for the Preservation Area, which consists of nearly 415,000 acres located in 52 municipalities within the seven counties. The Planning Area consists of nearly 445,000 acres located in 83 municipalities including Alpha. The Borough of Alpha is located fully within the Planning Area and affirmatively seeks to align its land use planning program with the provisions of the RMP. The Borough's Center Designation is intended to be a cohesive element of the Borough's Master Plan and consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

In 2010 the Borough's Petition for Plan Conformance was accompanied by a request for a Highlands Center Designation which, after review and discussion with the Borough, resulted in the Highlands Council Staff recommending the Highlands Council approve the designation of a Highlands Center for a portion of the Planning Area, conditioned upon the completion of a planning process to refine the proposal. This Plan addresses the expansion of the Center to include all parcels within the Borough except the R-1A Agricultural District Zone, located in the southwestern corner of the Borough and speaks to the Goals and Objectives of that expansion.



Highlands Region

Public Outreach Strategy

In accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law, each Master Plan Element will be publicly noticed and will provide the public an opportunity to provide comments and feedback on each Plan Element. This also applies to any ordinance revision that will be publicly noticed and adopted by the Borough Council. For this project and for other such Highlands' related projects, specific tasks in the Implementation Plan/Schedule may require additional public outreach and public outreach may include community visioning events, information sessions, and meetings with stakeholders, as needed.

To inform the community about this project, and to obtain feedback on it, planning consultants from Van Cleef Engineering participated in the Borough's first annual Fall Fest on November 4, 2021. It is estimated that about 500 to 600 people attended the event as this was first of its kind. Food, beverages and toys for kids were sponsored by many organizations that are located in the town or have an interest in the community. As part of the public outreach strategy, surveys were distributed to fest-goers and the planners engaged with the public on the topics of Open Space and Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety in the town. This activity brought about awareness among residents and visitors about the distinct planning needs of various areas throughout the town. Between the face-to-face conversations and the surveys, which were also linked on the Borough's website, public outreach resulted in about 50 responses.

People from varying age groups responded to both surveys. With regard to active transportation, survey participants were concerned about multiple safety aspects for both biking and walking, including the lack of safe routes to school. Among the open space responses, respondents' two favorite parks were identified as Alpha Park and Alpha Memorial Park because of the variety of activities, the open areas, and pavilion. The most valuable recreation programs among survey participants are Adventure and Outdoor activities. The survey asked "What would make Alpha's parks better?" Respondents agreed on improvements such as "walking trails all around parks and fields, new playground equipment, restrooms, Dog Park, repaired basketball courts, better parking, and more equipment".

These survey responses will help to guide the Planning Board and Council on prioritizing projects as funding becomes available for implementation. A complete summary of the survey responses can be found in Attachment A of this plan.

Planning Background

The planning of future land use decisions can inform goals for economic development and promote sustainable development within the Borough. This plan seeks to identify ways to improve the diversity of development, promote place making strategies and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in the Borough. All of which should improve economic development in the business corridor and promote the conservation of important environmental resources.

A review of past planning efforts assists in directing future land use decisions. Alpha's last comprehensive master plan update was prepared in 1998 and consisted of a land use element and housing element. A stormwater management plan was added in 2006 and an open space and recreation plan was added in 2007. Reexamination Reports were prepared in 2005 and in 2018, where improvements in the business corridor and redevelopment options were prioritized. A Quarry Redevelopment Plan was also adopted in 2015 to outline potential future uses of the "eastern" quarry once it fully closes. The Borough considers it a high

priority at this time to continue support for these issues in the Borough while expanding future planning efforts to include growth directed to existing developed areas, protecting the environs, and promoting a walkable and bike-able town with updated and improved streetscapes and place-making elements.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Since the 2018 Reexamination Report, the nation engaged in the latest Census count (2020). In preparing this Center Designation Plan, we have summarized this data in order to help plan for future growth in the Borough.

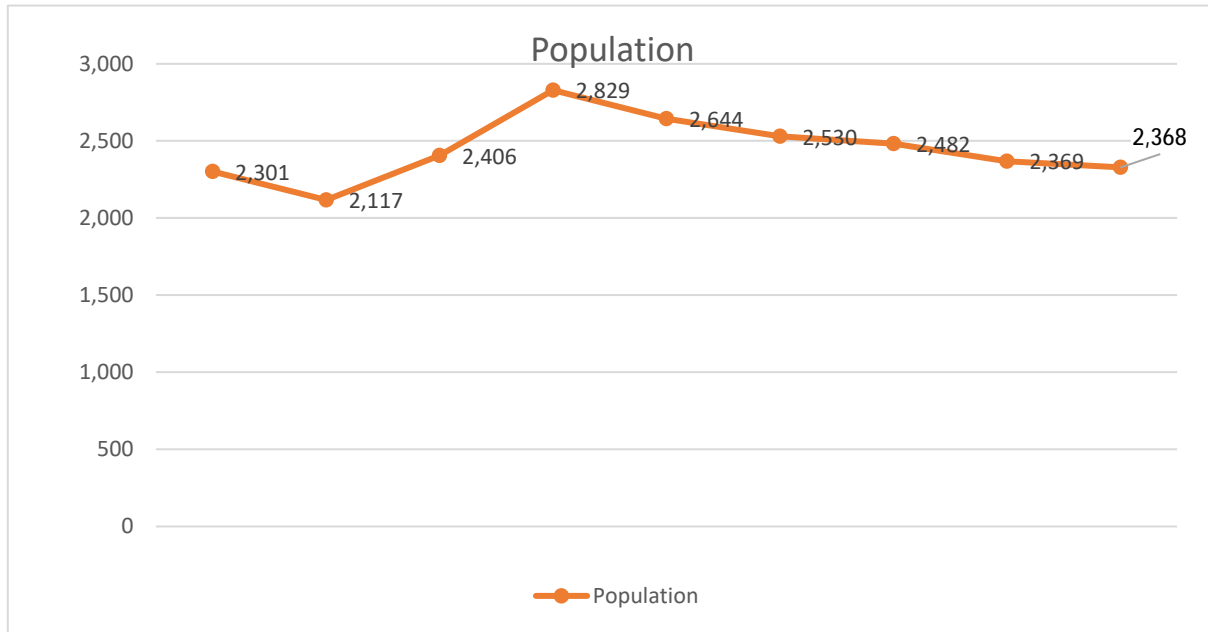


Figure 1: Total Population

Alpha’s population in 2020 is 2,368 which is almost the same as the 2010 population of 2,369. This continued a steady decline from the 1970 population of 2,849 (see Figure above). That being said, however, Alpha’s population has remained relatively stable over the last 70 years, fluctuating by only 712 people.

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) issued population and employment projections on August 24, 2009 (pre-2010 Census). As reported by NJTPA, the number of residents in Alpha was expected to increase to 2,850 by the year 2035 (see Table II-1), which would equal the Borough’s 1970 population.

From these numbers we can see that Alpha has not been a growing community in the past 20 years. The Borough has enjoyed a small town character for decades and intends to keep that character. This plan – and others – aims to help the town maintain its identity as a small town while supporting the existing businesses and neighborhoods to continue to thrive at their current scale.

Density

Alpha Borough covers 1.7 square miles. It is the second smallest municipality in Warren County after Belvidere, which is 1.35 square miles. Alpha was the fifth most densely populated municipality in Warren County in 2010 at 1,316 persons per square mile (PPSM) (see **Table 1**) and one of only six municipalities in the county with a population density greater than 1,000. The Borough's density contributes to its quaint nature and also makes it a walkable town. This plan recommends strategies for safer pedestrian and bicycling options.

Phillipsburg was the most densely populated municipality at 4,672 PPSM and Hardwick was the least densely populated at only 45 PPSM. The overall density in Warren County was 298 PPSM, which is representative of the largely rural nature of the county. The statewide density was slightly lower than Alpha at 1,007.

Municipality	Persons Per Square Mile
1. Phillipsburg	4,672
2. Washington Borough	3,313
3. Hackettstown	2,778
4. Belvidere	1,986
5. ALPHA	1,316
6. Lopatcong	1,076
7. Greenwich	512
8. Oxford	405
9. Washington Township	372
10. Independence	277
11. Pohatcong	257
12. Mansfield	253
13. Liberty	245
14. Allamuchy	213
15. Blirstown	193
16. White	171
17. Franklin	131
18. Knowlton	120
19. Harmony	111
20. Hope	102
21. Frelinghuysen	94
22. Hardwick	45
Warren County	298
New Jersey	1,007

Age

Median age in Alpha, as illustrated in Tables 2 and 3, is on par with the county and state. The median age increased between 2000 and 2010 in keeping with the county and statewide trends. Table 4 shows the ratio of male to female residents.

Table 2: Age (Borough & County)			
Alpha Borough		Warren County	
Age group	#	Age group	#
0-19	406	0-19	62,513
20-44	566	20-44	69,891
45-64	675	45-64	64,693
65+	435	65+	45,950
5 to 19	273	5 to 19	49,298
<i>Source : US Census 2006-2020 ACS, DP03</i>			

Table 3: Median Age			
	2000	2010	2020
Alpha	37.7	40.6	46.5
Warren County	37.6	41.5	44.2
New Jersey	36.7	39	39.5

Table 4: Gender Ratio	
Total Population	2,328
Male	991
Female	1091
%	89.4
<i>Source : US Census 2006-2020 ACS, DP03</i>	

In Table 2 we can see that a larger set of the population are between the 45 to 64 age group and there are about 273 people in the school age group. In Table 3 we can see that in 2010, Alpha had a lower percentage of residents under age 20 than the county and the state. On the other end of the age spectrum, Alpha had a higher percentage of residents 65 and older than the county and state. Alpha ranked slightly lower than the county and state in terms of school aged children. All but the 45 to 64 age group dropped as a percentage of the population between 2000 and 2010. The 45 to 64 cohort experienced a fairly substantial increase.

These tables indicate a need for the Borough to continue planning for its aging population and provide services geared toward this group. In addition, amenities like benches along the business corridor or near parks and open spaces make those areas more accessible for people of all abilities.

Income

Income is based on two standard measurements of income – median household and per capita. Alpha’s median income ranked lower than the county and the state in 2010, as did the Per Capita income (see Table 5).

Table 5: Income		
	Per Capita	Median Household
Alpha	\$28,567	\$63,953
Warren County	\$32,985	\$71,364
New Jersey	\$34,858	\$69,811
<i>Source : US Census 2006-2010 ACS, DP03</i>		

Resident Occupation

Table 6 provides an overview of the industries where Alpha residents work. More than three-quarters of Alpha’s workforce are employed in the private sector, which is on par with the county and state. The three leading industry types employing Alpha residents are (1) manufacturing, (2) educational services, health care and social assistance, and (3) retail trade. The highest ranked industry group in both the county and state is educational services, health care and social assistance.

In 2010, the management, business, science, & arts occupations ranked first among Borough, County, and State residents although to a lesser degree in Alpha. Alpha residents reported a higher level of sales and office occupations and production, transportation, & material moving than county or state residents as a whole (see Table 6).

Table 6: Occupation					
	Management, business, science, & arts	Service	Sales and Office	Natural resources, construction, & maintenance	Production, transportation & material moving
Alpha	29.5	15.8	28.8	9.0	16.9
Warren County	37.2	15.7	25.8	10.0	11.4
New Jersey	39.4	15.8	26.5	7.8	10.4
<i>Source: US Census 2006-2010 ACS, DP03</i>					
<i>”Occupation” is the kind of work a person does to earn a living; ”Industry” is the type of activity at a person’s place of work.</i>					

MASTER PLAN & 2018 REEXAMINATION REPORT

The 1998 Master Plan focused on a variety of issues that faced the Borough with respect to an influx of industrial development in the town, and in nearby towns, and the impact that the growth of industrial uses could have on the community. Traffic and circulation were addressed as important to ensure the character of the neighborhoods would not be compromised, especially with regard to large trucks and the frequency of their trips into and out of the town. Similarly, ground and surface water protection were also important factors in the conversation of developing industrial uses in appropriate locations. The Borough's soils are such that groundwater is more susceptible to contamination in most areas and needs to be considered in siting intense uses. Given these conditions, the Borough sought to concentrate development and create a business district that services the Borough's residents as well as nearby communities.

In 2005 the Master Plan was reexamined but with little to no recommendations for zoning changes, it left much of the Land Use Ordinance unchanged from earlier years. The 2018 Reexamination Report identified the Borough's petition for Plan Conformance with the Highlands Council, which was approved in 2012. The Master Plan Reexamination Report reviewed the Borough's 1998 Master Plan for consistency with the Highlands Regional Master Plan and identified the planning tasks which needed to be completed to conform to the Highlands RMP including development of the initial Center Plan and adoption of ordinances to implement resource protections. The report noted that while changes to zoning had been initiated in the business corridor, additional upgrades to aesthetics and streetscapes along much of the main business corridor needed to be completed. The report also identified the priority of maintaining the small-town, village character of the Borough, which this Center Designation Plan seeks to do.

The report also identified several properties as "areas of interest" for potential redevelopment sites.

- Block 97 Lot 2 – This parcel is located at 801 Vulcanite Street and is currently developed with a single-family structure and frame shed. The parcel had been subdivided as part of a Last Will and Testament of the owner and therefore available for development. It is located in the R-4 Zone. Development on this lot would have to either comply with those development regulations of the zone or be subject to a Redevelopment Plan, should one be authorized.

- Formerly Block 96 Lot 5 – This parcel is approximately 22 acres in size and was subdivided into a series of Blocks and Lots to accommodate an affordable housing, townhouse development. The subdivided lots make up the AH (Affordable Housing) district in the Borough which permits single-family detached and attached units, townhouse units (not to exceed 6 units per acre), multi-family dwellings (not to exceed 12 dwelling units per acre), senior housing, parks and playgrounds and public or private schools and day-care facilities. Construction on this housing development has yet to begin and is therefore available for development or redevelopment. The subdivision includes:
 - Block 96.01 Lots 5.01 through 5.40;
 - Block 96.02 Lots 5.53 through 5.82;
 - Block 96.03 Lots 5.55 through 5.61;
 - Block 96.04 Lots 5.83 through 5.92;
 - Block 96.05 Lots 5.41 through 5.94.

- Block 100.01 Lot 10 – This parcel is 37 acres in size and is bounded by I-78 to the north, Edge Road to the east, an inactive rail line to the west, and the border with Pohatcong Township to the south. It is

located in the I (Industrial) district of the Borough which permits a number of industrial, light manufacturing, agricultural, scientific / research, and warehousing uses, among other similar uses (§410-20 Zoning). It is currently in agricultural uses, is not preserved, and is therefore available for development. The property is also not in a sewer service area and therefore any proposed development would be limited in intensity, unless a sewer connection could be obtained. As of the drafting of this plan, the Borough has applied to the NJDEP for this parcel to be included in the Sewer Service Area.

- Not Mentioned in 2018 Reexamination Report: Block 98, Lot 2 – This parcel was not mentioned in the 2018 Reexamination report but is zoned Industrial, located in the Center Designation, but is not currently within the Sewer Service Area.

Land Use and Planning Strategies

This Center Designation Plan also supports and promotes the purposes of the Borough’s Land Use Ordinance planning strategies, especially in relation to the possibility for redevelopment and the areas identified above. This plan affirms and restates the following Land Use and Planning Strategies:

- Identify opportunities to improve Center zoning for increased development in the Center and as recommended by Center sub-areas.
- Update Master Plan to incorporate recommendations from this Plan.
- Update ordinances to incorporate recommendations from this Plan.
- Update Open Space & Recreation Plan.
- Incorporate Placemaking Strategies:
- Identify opportunities for public art and events.
- Identify opportunities for place making through municipally-sponsored activities, grants and public-private partnerships.
- Develop gateway features into the Center.
- Sponsor and work with local businesses to encourage Pop-Up events/uses;
- Continue work on streetscapes.
- Identify opportunities to widen sidewalks, encourage outdoor dining.
- Develop wayfinding signage.

With the Center now incorporating all parcels within the Borough except the R-1A Agricultural District Zone, located in the southwestern corner of the Borough, these reaffirmed strategies will apply throughout the town.

Highlands Regional Master Plan

The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act passed in 2004 with an overarching goal to protect drinking water resources, along with open space and natural resources. The act was followed by adoption of the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) in 2008, which laid out the goals and policies for the Highlands Region.

The Highlands Region is divided into the Planning Area and the Preservation Area. The Borough of Alpha is located completely within the Planning Area. Further, the Highlands Regional master Plan identifies the Borough of Alpha as a “Center” in its Planning Area. “Centers” in the RMP are defined as “an area where development and redevelopment is planned and encouraged”. Highlands Centers are intended to support

balance in the Highlands Region by providing for sustainable economic growth, while protecting critical natural resources. The Borough of Alpha identifies with the following RMP Goals, Policies, and Objectives:

- **Policy 5A4** To provide for safe and efficient pedestrian connections including features such as sidewalks, proper lighting, signage, shelters, and green street initiatives consistent with the NJDOT's Pedestrian Safety Initiative.
- **Policy 5A5** To promote safe routes for children to travel to and from school in support of the NJDOT's Safe Routes to School Program.
- **Policy 5C4** To support economic development by ensuring that transportation planning and improvements support regional development, redevelopment and tourism opportunities.
- **Policy 5E1** To promote land use patterns that support a balance of jobs to housing as a means of reducing average trip lengths.
- **Policy 5E3** To promote land use patterns which facilitate use of alternative modes of transportation including walking and the use of bicycles.
- **GOAL 6F and All 6F Policies** Support of compact development, mixed use development and redevelopment and maximization of water, wastewater and transit infrastructure investments for future use of land and development within the Existing Community Zone.
- **Policy 6H6** To integrate public parks and green spaces into development and redevelopment projects and ensure restoration of impaired natural resources to the extent required by law, at a minimum, and where feasible to a greater extent to maximize long-term value of the project.
- **Objective 6H8a** Development and redevelopment initiatives shall encourage the use of HDC as a means to enhance the existing or adjacent community while protecting local and regional natural resources.
- **Policy 6H9** To incorporate smart growth principles and green building design and technology in development and redevelopment initiatives.
- **GOAL 6N** Use of Smart Growth principles, including low impact development, to guide development and redevelopment in the Highlands region.
- **GOAL 6O** Market-rate and affordable housing sufficient to meet the needs of the Highlands region within the context of economic, social and environmental considerations and constraints.
- **GOAL 8A** Sustainable economic development in the highlands region.
- **GOAL 8C** Expansion of compatible and sustainable tourism and recreation within the Highlands Region.
- **GOAL 8D** Expansion of innovative technology and entrepreneurial businesses including home office, energy efficiency, and resource conservation enterprises in the Highlands Region.
- **GOAL 8E** Estimate and track over time the costs and benefits associated with plan implementation and the protection of critical resources of the highlands region.
- **GOAL 10A** Maximize municipal participation to ensure the regional master plan achieves its long term goals of protecting, enhancing and restoring Highlands resources and maintaining a sustainable economy in the Highlands region.

CENTER AREA DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Highlands Designated Center (HDC) is to identify certain areas within the Planning Areas where growth in the form of infill and/or redevelopment, improvement of open spaces, and other smart growth strategies are focused. The Borough of Alpha's original Center generally encompassed the business district along the length of Route 519 and industrial areas to the east of the major business corridor.

Figure 1



Through a series of conversations between the Borough and the Highlands Council, the Borough has opted to expand the Center to include most of the Borough's parcels, bringing the boundary in line with the Borough's municipal borders with the exception of a few farmland parcels to the southwest (**Figure 2: Proposed HDC Boundary**). The main reason for this expansion is to ensure smart growth development is promoted throughout the town and that uses are situated appropriately to their locations. This updated Center Designation Plan recognizes the expanded boundary limits and offers analysis and recommendations on how to address any outstanding items from the previous Center Designation Plan.

These provisions will override most of the current Highlands Master Plan Element with respect to proposed development and redevelopment activities within the designated portion of the Borough, with retention of applicable and appropriate Conservation Plan language regarding protection of Highlands's resources, as applicable.

Figure 2

Overview

The Center Designated area covers 1,089 parcels and approximately 859 acres in land area, roughly 78.35% of the Borough's land area. The newly expanded Center will include a mix of uses to reflect current conditions: small neighborhood commercial, large scale commercial, industrial, offices, quarry, multifamily and single-family residential, parks, playgrounds, the school and municipal offices. The larger scale developments, quarries and industrial uses are located to the outer boundaries of the Center and in some cases closer to major roads, although not all accessible to I-78. The small neighborhood commercial and offices are located closer to the center of town while the residential, parks, playgrounds, and the school flank the business corridor, providing opportunities for walkability.

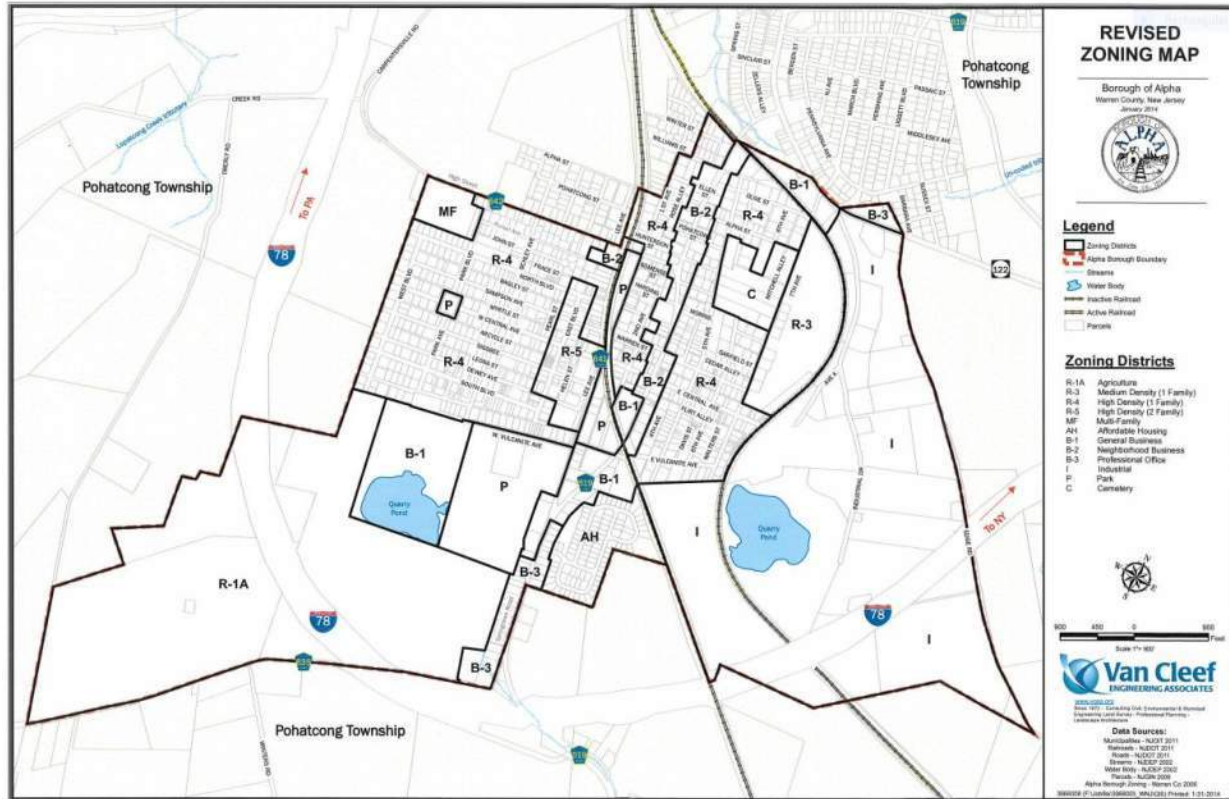
The redevelopment areas of interest are scattered throughout the Borough and additional areas may be considered to support redevelopment of dilapidated sites.

It is noted that, per N.J.A.C. 7:15, the amendment to the Highlands Master Plan Element and Highlands Center Designation Plan could also modify the sewer service area in the area-wide Water Quality Management Plan.

CENTER ZONING

The zoning for the Center is dominated by residential (29.84%) and industrial zones (24.51%), with the remaining areas in Commercial Zones. Agricultural uses dominate the south-western portion of the town, but the Borough does not have agricultural zoning and thus it falls within residential zoning.

Figure 3



Analysis of Existing Land Uses

The Center can be organized into five (5) sub-areas for ease of further study: **Central Business District**, **Quarry/Industrial**, **Quarry/Recreation**, **Farmland (Not Included in Center Designation)** and **Neighborhood Residential Areas**. Although we have identified the Farmland Subarea as part of the study area, it is for context purposes only. The Borough does not have a desire to change any part of the agricultural areas. They are currently zoned for residential development, however the Borough considers them farmland.

Subarea	Acreage	% Acreage
Neighborhood Residential	327.62	29.84
Central Business District	96.47	8.79
Quarry / Parks	82.61	7.52
Quarry / Industrial	269.05	24.51
Farmland (Not Included in Center Designation)	269.05	24.51
Non-Categorized Areas	53.06	4.83
Alpha Borough	1,097.86	
Total		100

Central Business District

Figure 5

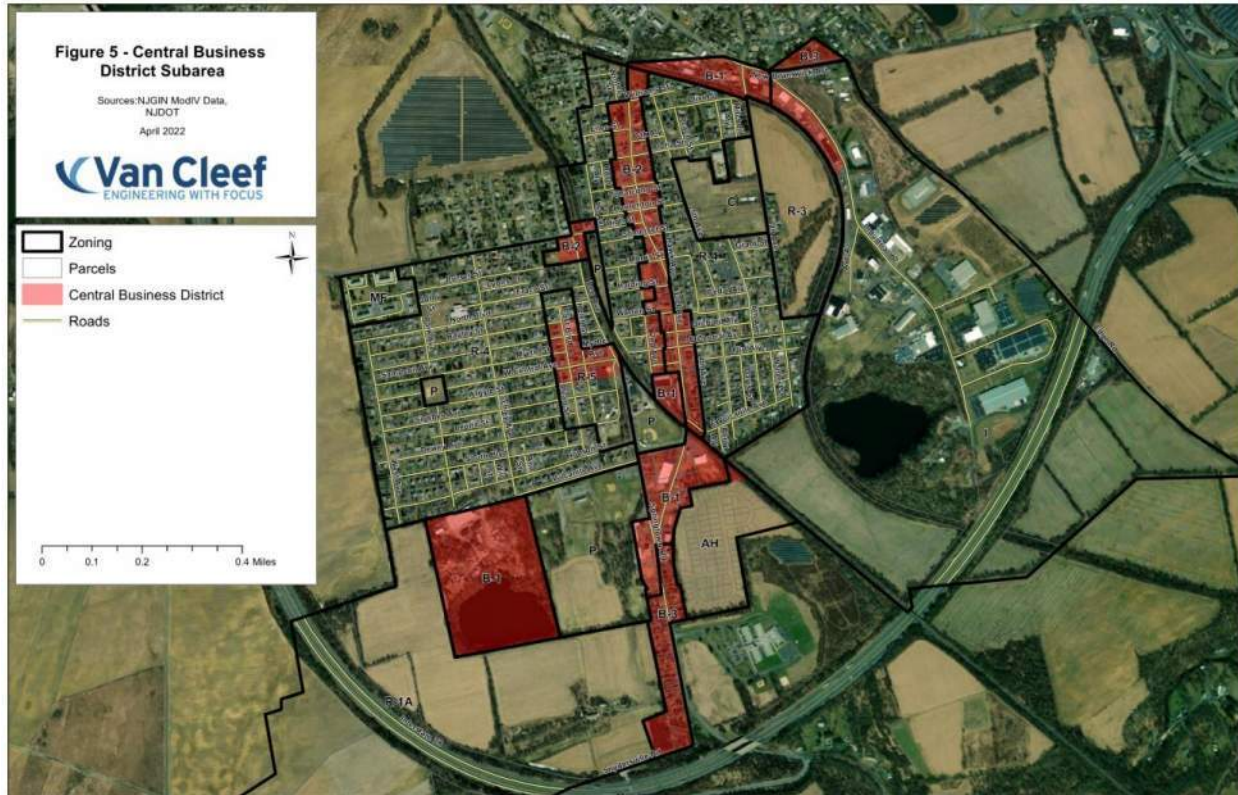


Figure 5, showing properties in red as business district

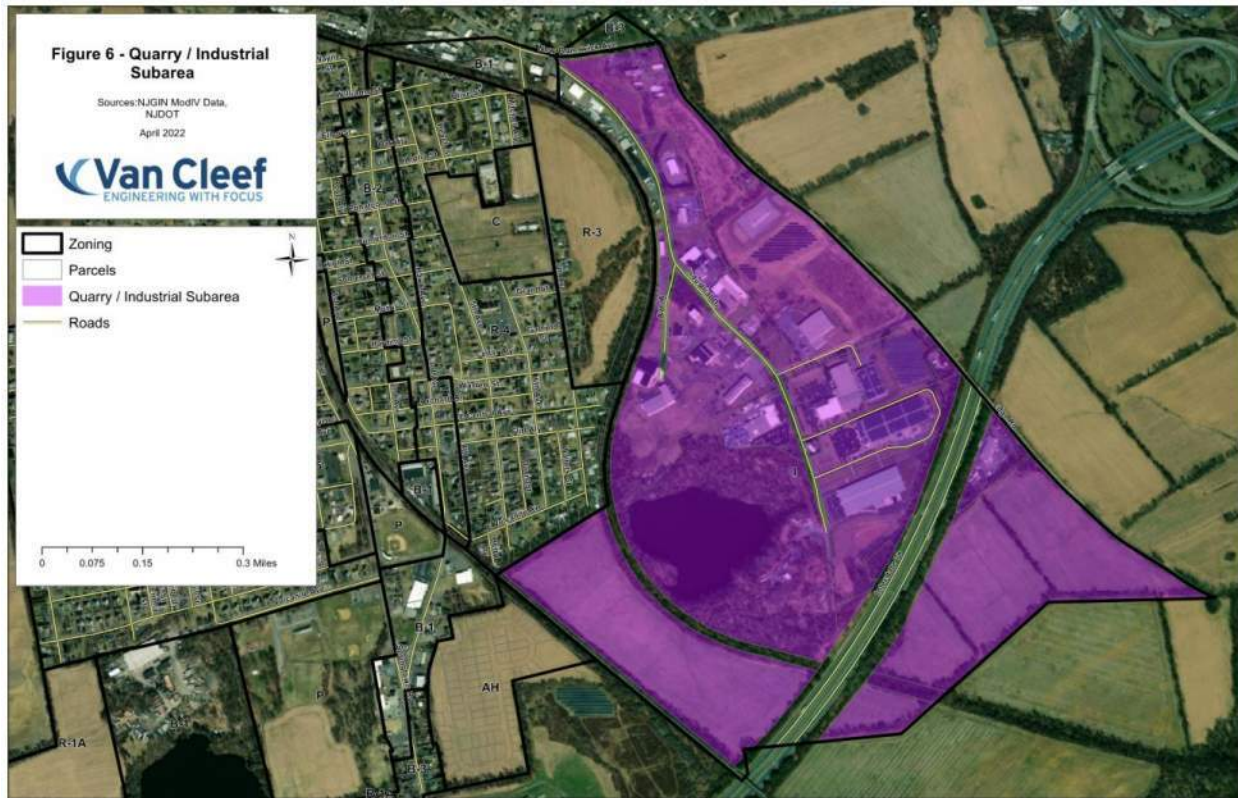
The Central Business District Subarea consists of properties along the Route 519 “spine” of the central business district in the Borough. The area is flanked by residential properties, making for a very walkable “downtown” area. Properties in the Central Business District Subarea are a mix of small neighborhood commercial/retail, office, and light industrial. This area stretches almost the entire length of the borough from north to south and includes the B-1, B-2, and B-3 zoning districts. Improvements to the Central Business District Subarea could include the addition of crosswalks, streetscapes, outdoor dining, and wayfinding signage to local businesses, parks, and areas of interest.

The Central Business District Subarea contains single-family residential properties that creates a disjointed aesthetic along the streetscape.



The photos above show typical land uses in the area, including the mix of residential and commercial uses.

Quarry / Industrial
Figure 6



The Industrial / Quarry District has many industries that are sustainable and energy efficient. These industries together form a strong sense of revenue generation for the Borough. The industrial district includes vehicle and storage areas that are part of the industrial uses. Alpha has always been welcoming warehouses and renewable energy facilities in its industrial district. The accessibility to I-78 and residential neighborhoods have helped flourish the industrial zones.

A wide variety of industries are coming forward to be a part of Alpha Borough. Industries like warehouses and renewable energy facilities are becoming a trend in Warren County and are both growing industries. Through this plan the Borough is identifying the areas where this type of use would be appropriate.

The photos below show the typical industrial land uses in the Borough.



Quarry / Recreation
Figure 7

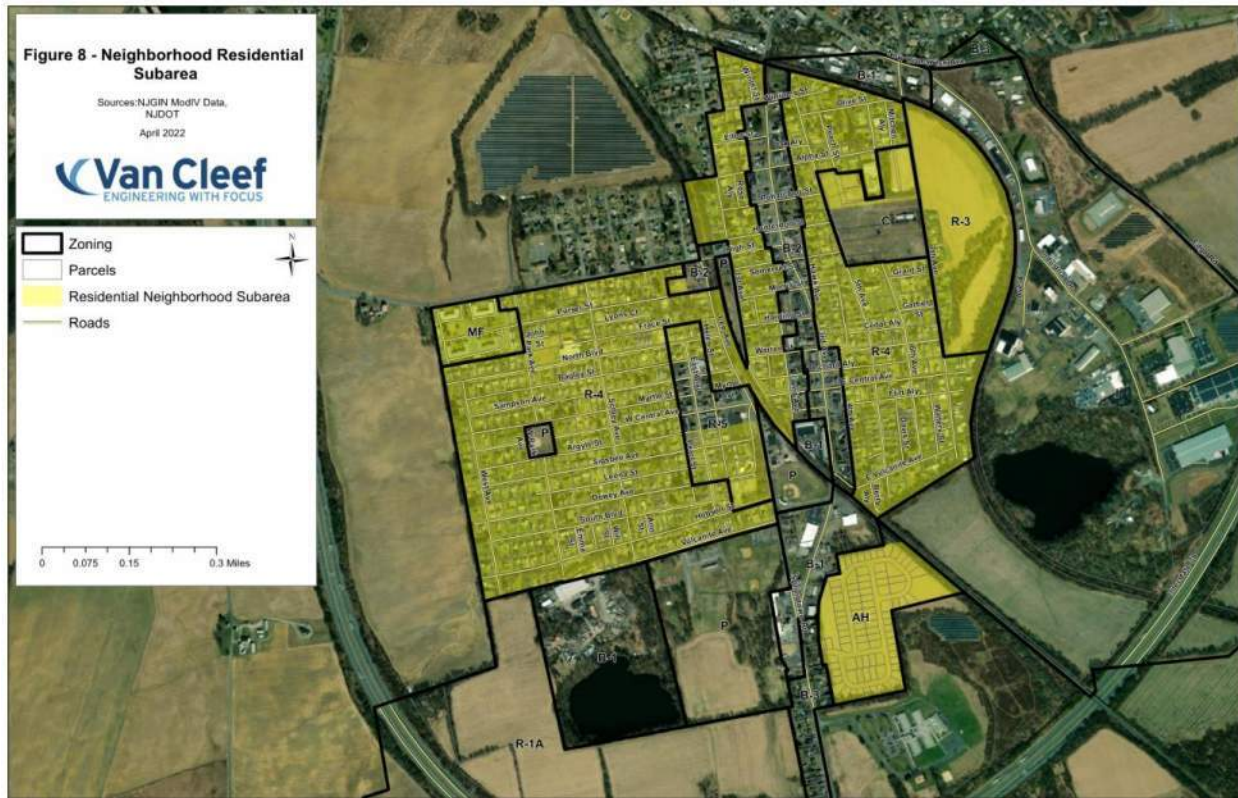


Alpha has many parks including, Alpha Memorial Park, Alpha Park, and several playgrounds and ballparks. Alpha Park is the most popular and is where the Borough recently held their first Fall Fest, a community event meant to bring the borough together and introduce residents to local businesses and organizations. Residents of Alpha use their parks for sports, events and community activities. Alpha Park has a playground and baseball field, while Alpha Memorial Park has benches for people to relax and enjoy nature.

The parks are generally used for recreation activities although, in our open space survey, it was seen that residents of Alpha Borough use the parks for biking (about 20%). Supporting this idea, festival-goers also commented that they would like to see more active transportation like biking throughout town. The Borough should plan appropriate routes and connections and potentially build infrastructure for this purpose. Similarly, amenities such as bike racks, wayfinding signs, and facilities for long-distance cyclists coming into town would help to improve on the influx of people biking.



Neighborhood Residential
Figure 8



Properties in the residential neighborhood subarea consist of both single family and multifamily housing. Evergreen Village has 98 apartment units which is the only multifamily residential development in the Borough. The Neighborhood Residential Subarea stretches across the Borough from east to west of Alpha, and occupies the largest land area of the Borough.

In order to maintain the quaint, small-town character of the residential neighborhoods, the Borough should consider creating design guidelines to improve the architectural details of existing housing, as well as any new development. As the business district grows and thrives, it will attract more people to the residential districts.

The photos below show typical housing units in the Borough. There is a variety of styles including: Cape Cod, Colonial, and Farmhouse style homes.

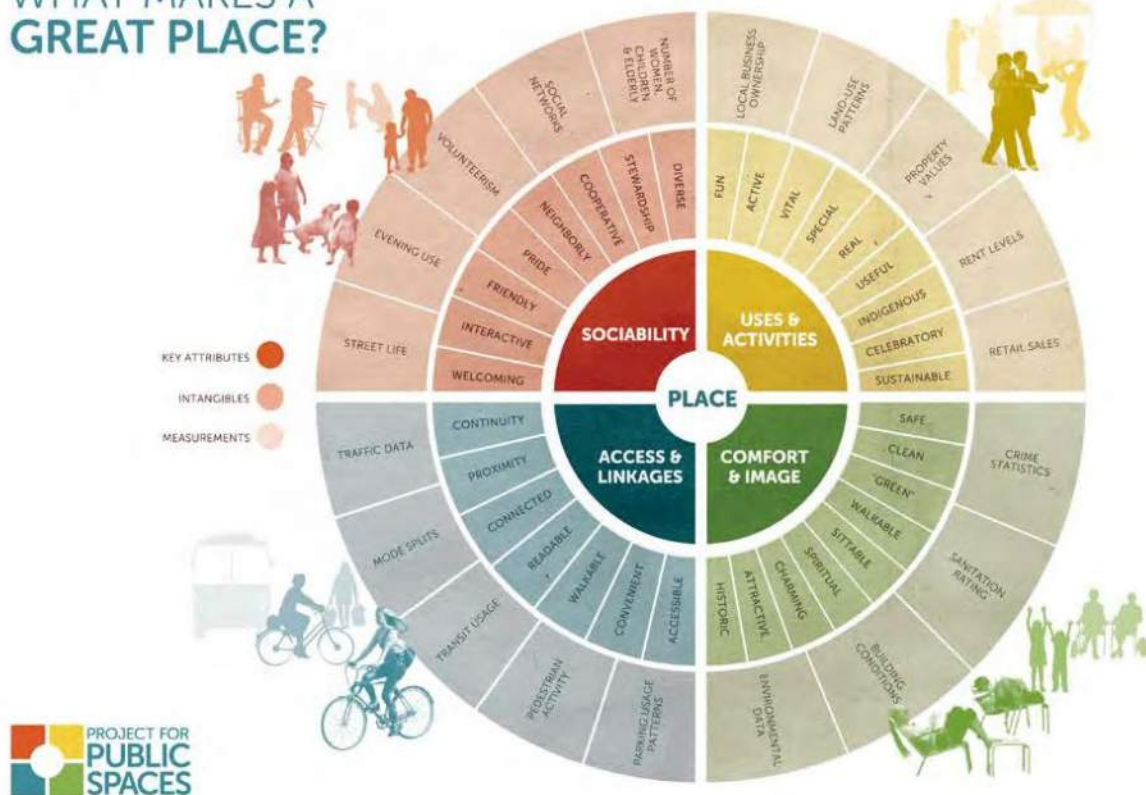


PLACEMAKING

Each sub-area of the Center Designation Plan hosts opportunities for placemaking in some form: Wayfinding, Streetscapes, Public Art, and Walkability / Bike-ability. These distinct locations can be seen as providing opportunities for Alpha to increase the unique sense of place associated with each of the Center Areas. Using tested and proven concepts from urban design outlets across the country as a guide, the following recommendations for improvements in each of the Center Areas area presented below. We also recommend revisiting previous recommendations from the Land Use & Circulation Plan which provided options for pedestrian safety in the Business Corridor as viable projects for improving safety and accessibility.

“WHAT IS PLACEMAKING? As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.” –Project for Public Spaces.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



Placemaking in Alpha



Businesses along the main commercial corridor can add sidewalks, landscaping, and outdoor seating appropriate to the scale and context of the use.

- *The picture on the top lacks safe access for pedestrians due to the lack of sidewalks, vehicles parked directly against the side of the structure on the right and parking stalls that exit directly onto a roadway.*
- *The bottom picture shows a sidewalk for safe pedestrian access and landscaping to buffer pedestrians from vehicles in the parking lot.*

Streetscape Improvements



This is an example of a Business Corridor with enough “pause points” that can make a difference to pedestrians. It gives enough spaces to people shopping in the business district to sit down and have a rest, and increase engagement with people and the community.

The business district can be occupied with commercial, retail or other approved uses to encourage pedestrian-scale activity. Outdoor dining and seating is encouraged within the business district.

A minimum of six foot clear zone must be maintained within the building setback in order to allow adequate pedestrian flow. The streetscape should be designed with a similar palette of materials and standards in order to portray a cohesive district.

Most municipalities have ample amount of space available for the use of parklets, which are intended to serve as an extension of a sidewalk. The parklet programs in Princeton and Jersey City have gained a lot of attention. A parklet can occupy one to three parking spaces and serve pedestrians looking to eat, socialize and people-watch in the business district. Below are some examples.



Sidewalk, crosswalk, pedestrian plaza



Complete Streets are streets designated and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. This is the most efficient roadway design guidelines that helps all ages and abilities. All corner should have an open landscape area should include an open landscape area. The Borough should consider design for all crosswalks.

Complete Streets are streets designed for all users, all modes of transportation, and all ability levels. They balance the needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, emergency responders and goods movement based on the local context. A Complete Streets workshop is another way to get the community to take charge of road design and road safety. It's a fun activity that would engage the community and bring more awareness about road safety to Alpha Borough.

Public Art

Public art should be accessible and tied to the history of Alpha Borough and if possible should be created by local source and include water, seating, planting, decorative architectural elements or plaza space designs. Public art should be visible, but not interfere with pedestrian circulation or create a traffic hazard; made of durable, weatherproof materials; and should be designed to avoid physical hazards.



Signage



Signage is a great way to communicate with travelers, they make connectivity through business corridors efficient. Keeping the architectural intent, we can use more vintage look to the signage. Signage in the business district can make the pedestrian flow smoother.

Community Events



Community events like the Borough's Fall Festival brought people together and created fun activities for all ages. It was estimated that 500-600 people attended. Local businesses donated toys, books, games, and local organizations like the PTO and the fire department added fun activities like the Bake Sale and the Bonfire. These types of community events bring people together and encourage interaction. The Borough should look to hold at least one annual event so that the community can come together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This Center Plan offers the following recommendations for the Borough to further consider in its future planning throughout the entire town:

Land Use and Planning Strategies:

- Review the business corridor for redevelopment opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to improve Center zoning for increased development in the Center and as recommended by Center sub-areas.
- Update Master Plan to incorporate recommendations from this Plan.
- Update ordinances to incorporate recommendations from this Plan.
- Update Circulation Plan element with Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety component.
- Update Open Space & Recreation Plan.

Placemaking Strategies:

- Identify opportunities for public art and events.
- Identify opportunities for placemaking through municipally-sponsored activities, grants and public-private partnerships.
- Develop gateway features at identified gateways into the Business Corridor.
- Hold additional community events and work with businesses to encourage pop-up events/uses.
- Continue work on streetscapes, Safe Routes to School, and Recreational trails.
- Identify opportunities to widen sidewalks, encourage outdoor dining in the business corridor.
- Develop wayfinding signage.

This Center Plan also identifies four primary sub-areas where growth, appropriate to that area, can be directed, streetscapes can be improved to enhance the aesthetics of the sub-area, and bicycle and pedestrian safety can be incorporated into any future designs or development.

Recommendations for Business District

In order to diversify the Borough's economy, this plan recommends focusing on enhancing existing businesses and attracting new businesses that are complementary to the existing. Incorporating Alpha's cultural heritage and enhancing outdoor recreation / tourism will help in this effort. Additionally, ongoing improvements to the transportation network in and around the business corridor will assist with attracting businesses that are in keeping with the character of the area.

Recommendation for Residential Neighborhood Districts

The Borough's residential neighborhoods have not changed for decades and the Borough has expressed a desire to maintain its small-town feel. This plan recommends enhancing each neighborhoods' streetscapes, sidewalks, and connectivity to parks, schools, and the business corridor. It is also recommended the town identify meaningful opportunities to provide affordable housing in the town.

Recommendation for Quarry/Industrial Districts

The "eastern" Quarry and Industrial Districts have a place in the Borough as a meaningful tax base, an opportunity to attract diverse talent/workforce, and an opportunity to create a niche for sustainable industries with sound revenue generation. Proper traffic circulation will be imperative as new and expanded industries locate within the town and should be made a priority with any new industrial development. This plan also recommends prioritizing the recommendations from the Borough's Quarry Redevelopment Plan to determine the next feasible steps in the process.

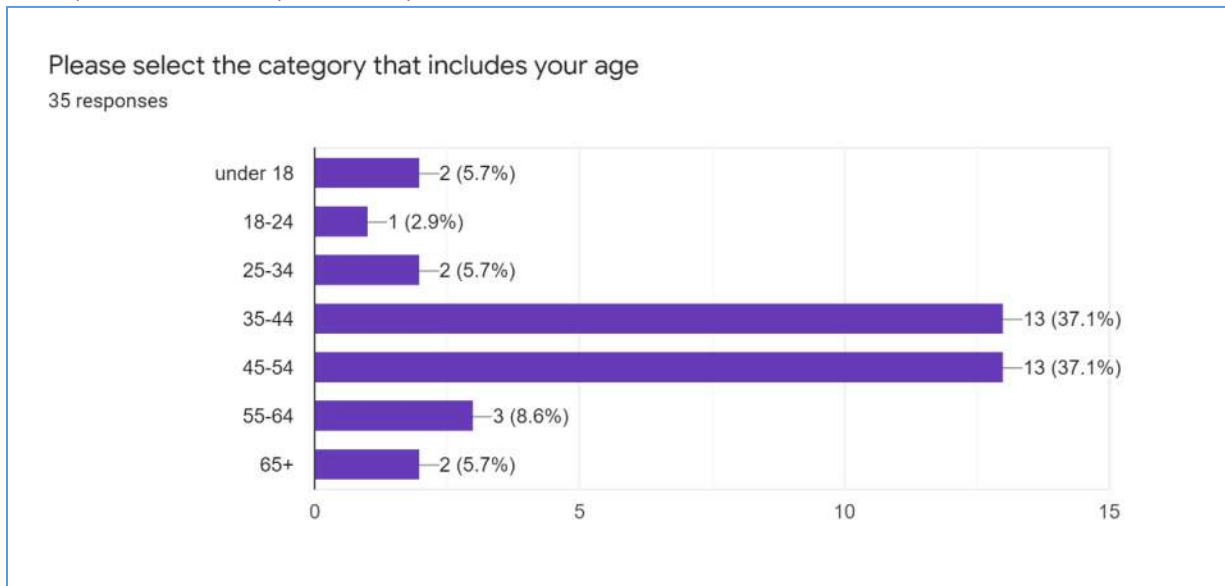
Recommendation for Quarry/Recreation Districts

The Borough's "western" Quarry and Recreation areas have potential to enhance the recreation experience in the town. This plan recommends improving and adding facilities at neighborhood parks where feasible (ie. Restrooms, water fountains, lighting, signage, etc) to enhance the user experience at these places. Public outreach indicated that residents would like to see more passive recreation opportunities which could be a good fit for this district. In particular, a biking trail circumventing the town was mentioned. Additionally, smaller gathering spaces within the larger parks would offer a variety of recreational activities in one space and would attract a greater diversity of users.

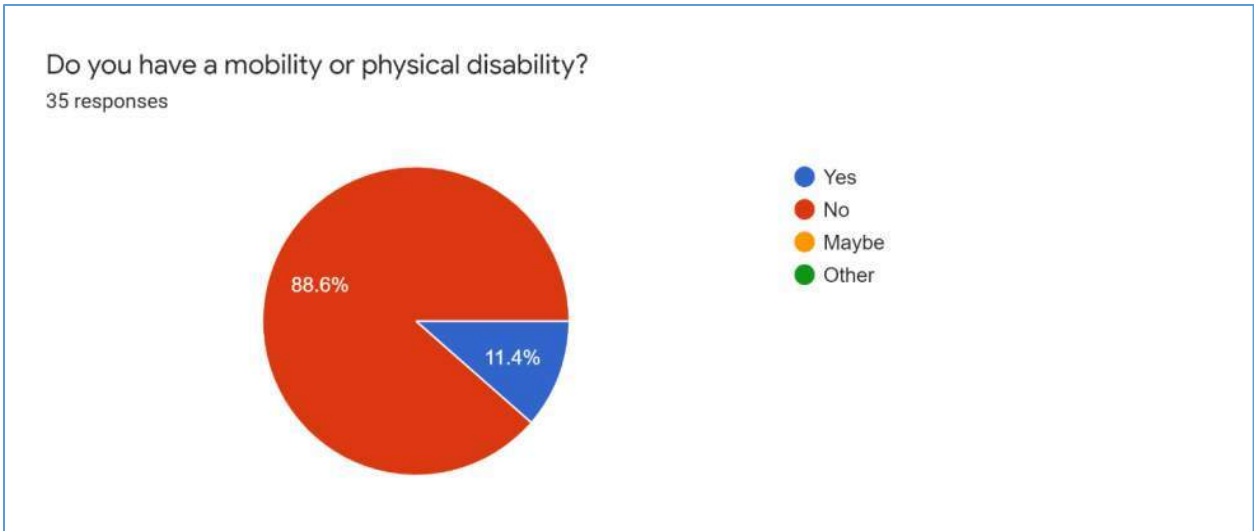
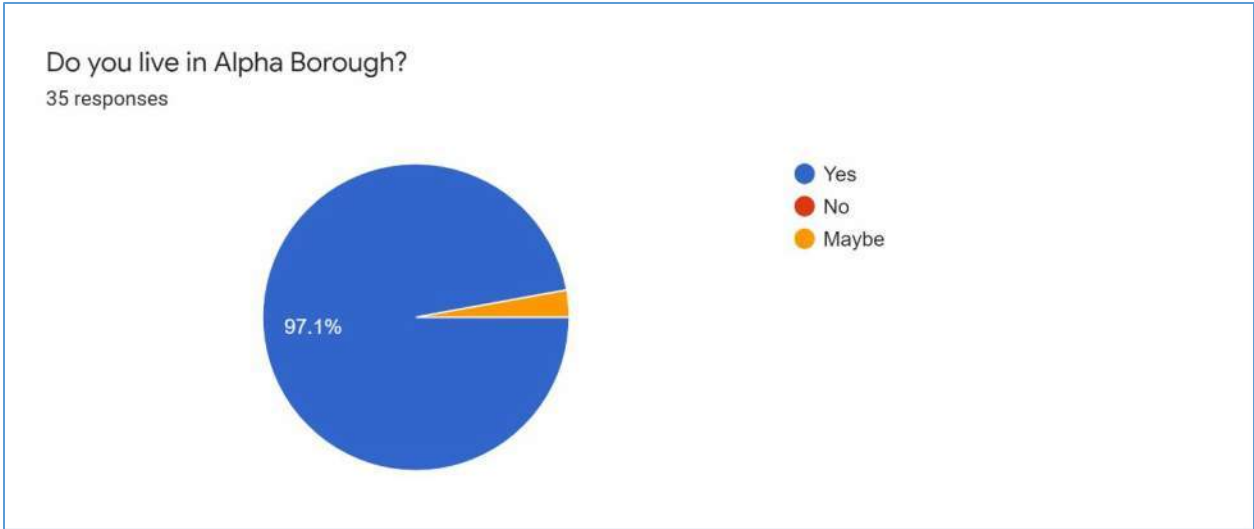
ATTACHMENT A: Borough of Alpha – Highlands Center Designation Plan Public Outreach Survey Summary

The surveys were posted on the Borough website for several weeks and distributed through the school PTO. They were also distributed at the Borough’s Fall Fest (held November 4, 2021) and a presentation board explained the project. Overall, 36 responses came in for both the open space survey and active transportation survey. They are summarized below:

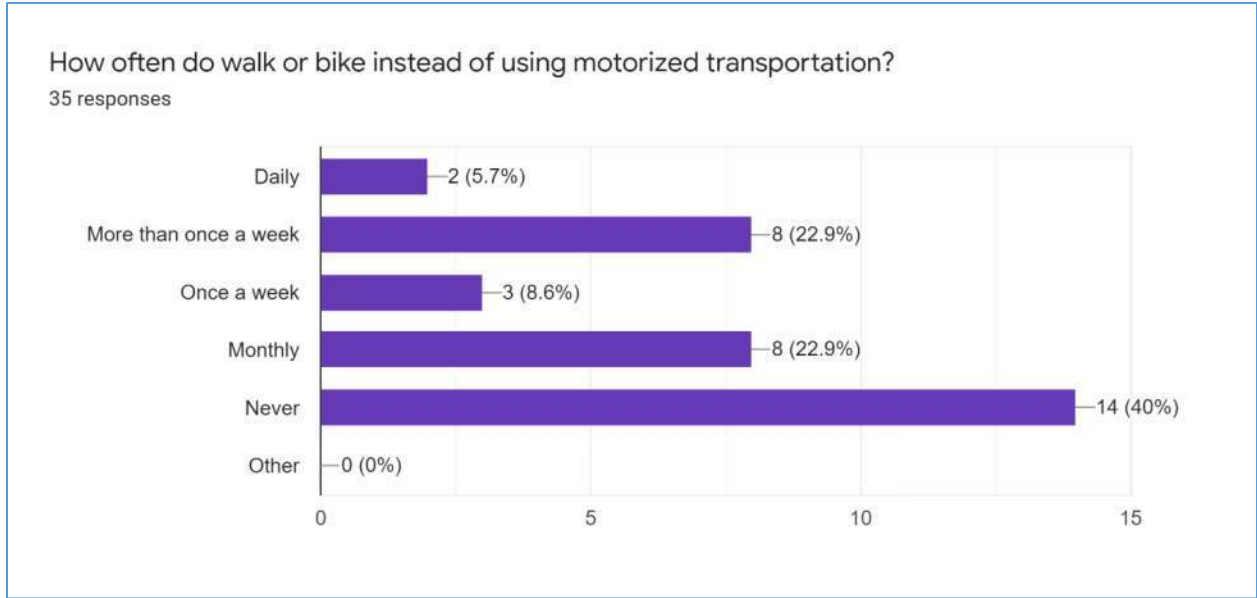
Transportation Survey Summary



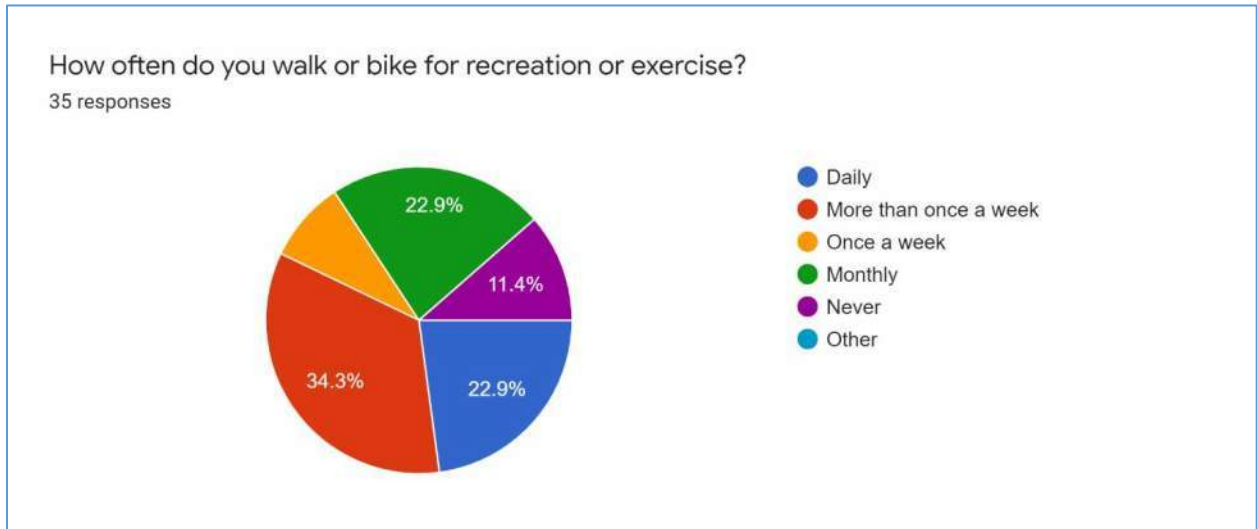
The majority of respondents are in the age group 35-54 (74.2 percent of all respondents). 5% of the respondents were under the age of 18 and 5% were over the age of 65. The age of the remaining respondents varied. The age of the remaining respondents varied within the rest 25.8%. 97% of respondents live in the Borough.



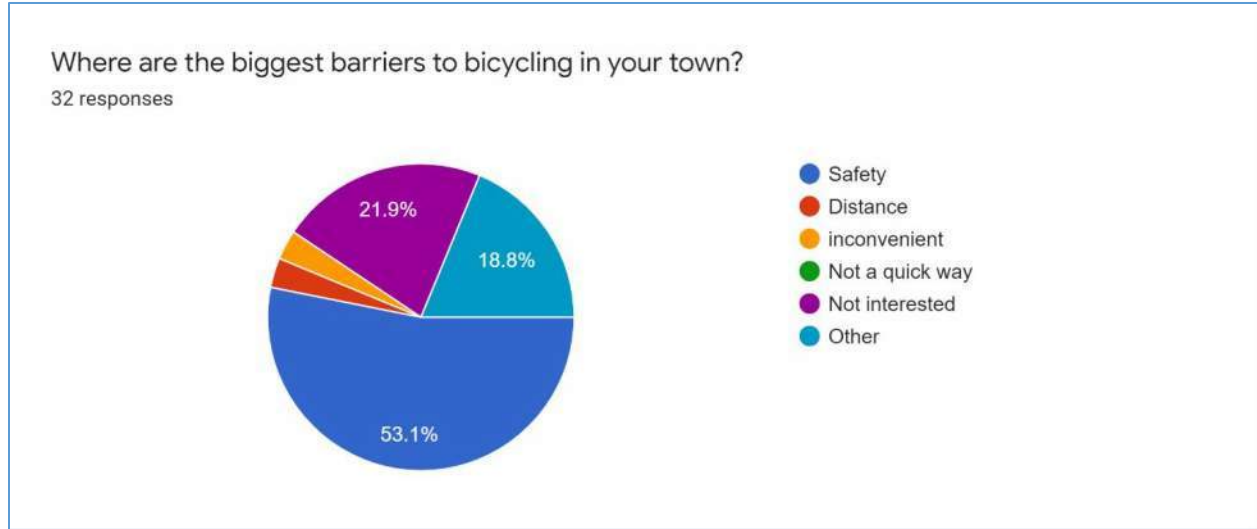
11.4% of people who responded identified themselves as having a physical disability. This is important to know as we plan for all mobilities.



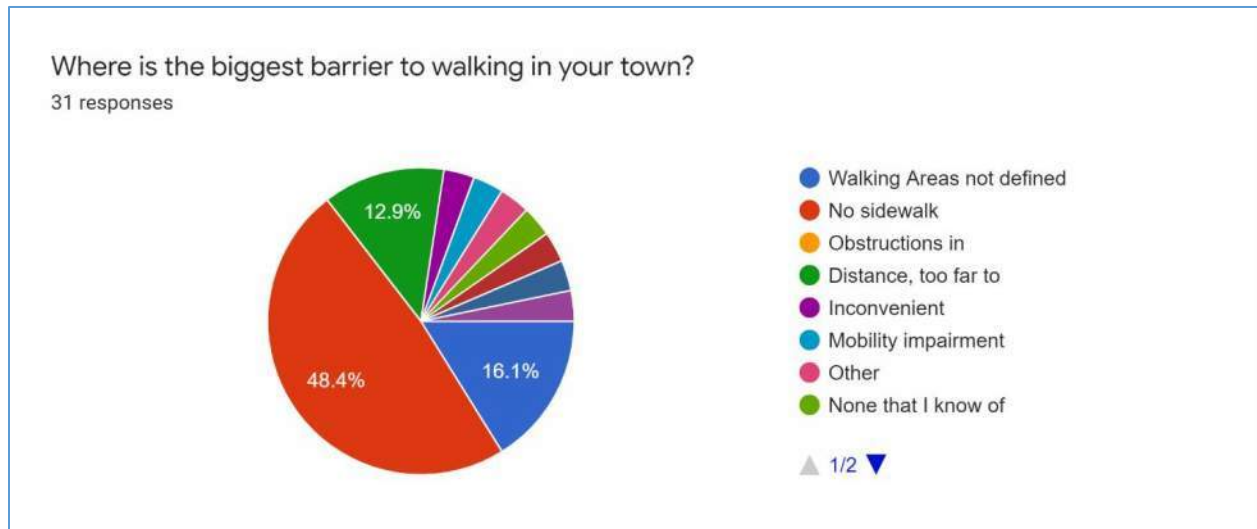
40% of people never walk or bike around town and only 5.7% of people bike or walk daily. The majority of respondents bike or walk less often, but more than once a week (23%) and at least monthly (23%).



A larger section of survey respondents (34.3%) bike more than once per week and 23% bike at least daily for exercise or recreation. Comparing this to the age of respondents, we can surmise that a higher number of younger to middle-aged people are biking more frequently around town. This information benefits the town in its planning for bike infrastructure and to promote active transportation. The Borough can encourage the business district to install bike racks, create separate sidewalks for running and also develop parks with better infrastructure facilities.



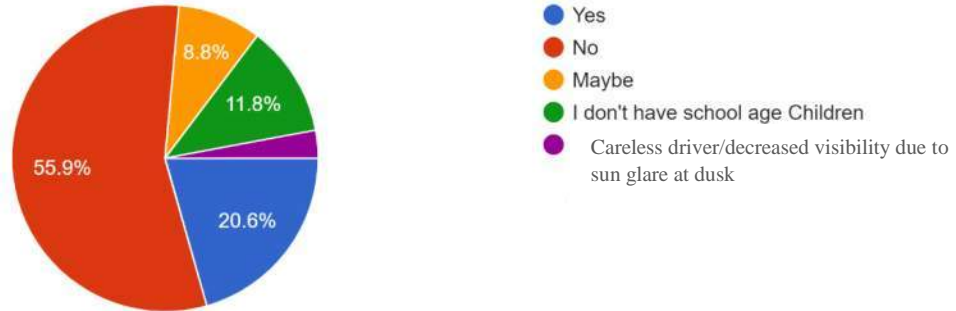
Safety is the biggest barrier for bicycling in the town, yet just under a quarter of the respondents said they are just not interested in bicycling. The Borough can use this information to assess where more and safer crossings are needed and where sidewalks and intersections can be improved to increase safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. The State’s Complete Streets program as highlighted in this document, is a great place-making tool that helps in road safety design, and which helps to remove any barriers to active transportation. For those who responded “not interested”, the town can plan events around bicycling that will help to create more awareness and gradually increase interest in biking.



In this survey 16.1 percent of respondents stated that areas for walking are not defined. Having a good defined pedestrian walkway is crucial to pedestrian safety and for ease of access to locations around the town. The community has realized the need for better walkways, crosswalks and sidewalks, which will encourage more walking and biking.

If you have school-age children, do you feel that there are enough safe routes to walk or bike to school?

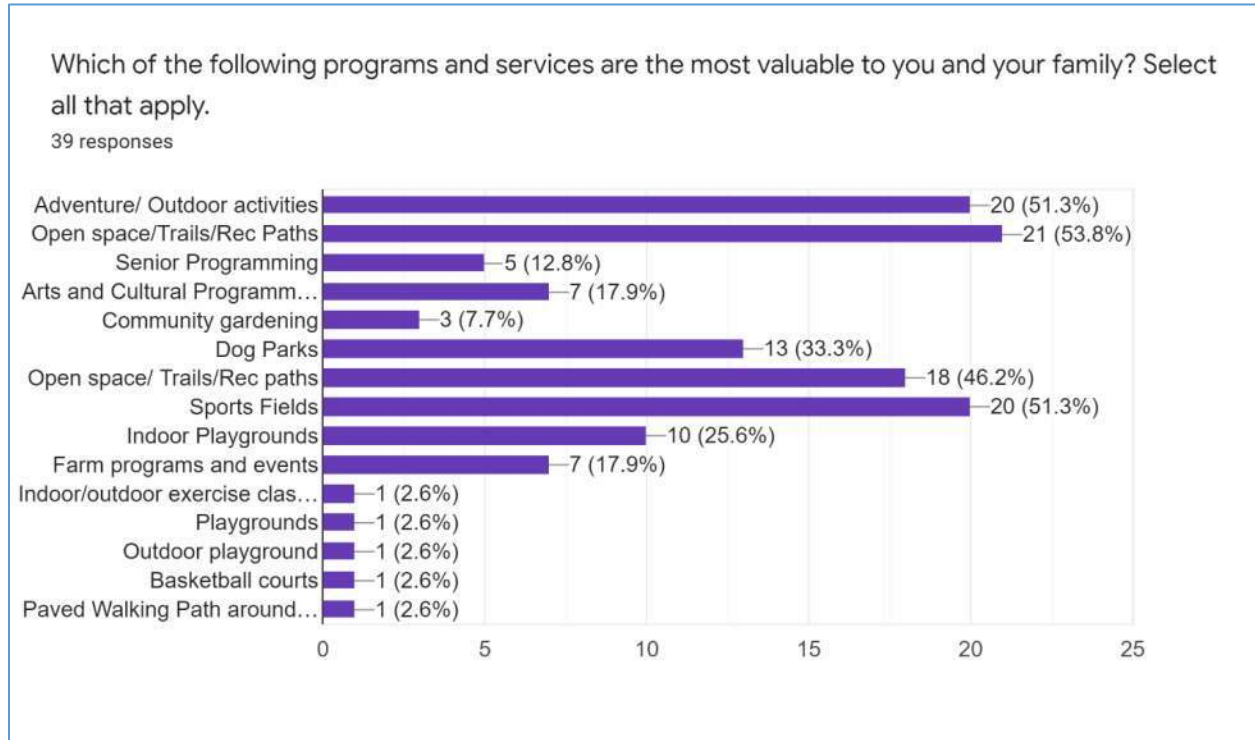
34 responses



55% percent of respondents said that there aren't enough safe routes to school for biking and walking. The NJDOT's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is an approach that promotes **walking and bicycling** to school through infrastructure improvements, enforcement, tools, safety education, and incentives to encourage walking and bicycling to school. Nationally, 10%–14% of car trips during morning rush hour are for school travel. SRTS initiatives improve safety and levels of physical activity for students.

Community Parks Survey

Alpha Park and Alpha Memorial Park are the two most popular parks (52.8% and 11.1%, respectively). It is likely the reason these two are the most popular parks is because of the amenities. Alpha Park has playground equipment and sun/shade areas, basketball court and soccer pitch. Alpha Memorial Park has a lot of space, walking trail, and benches for resting.



Respondents felt that the most important recreation programs and services for the community are open spaces, trails, recreational paths, adventure and outdoor activities, and sports fields. More specifically, people felt that better amenities are needed in the existing parks and playgrounds, for example inclusive playground equipment for all abilities, active uses for organized sports and paid programs through user fees, restrooms, walking trails all around parks and fields, trails to ride bikes, improved basketball courts, a fenced dog park and better parking.

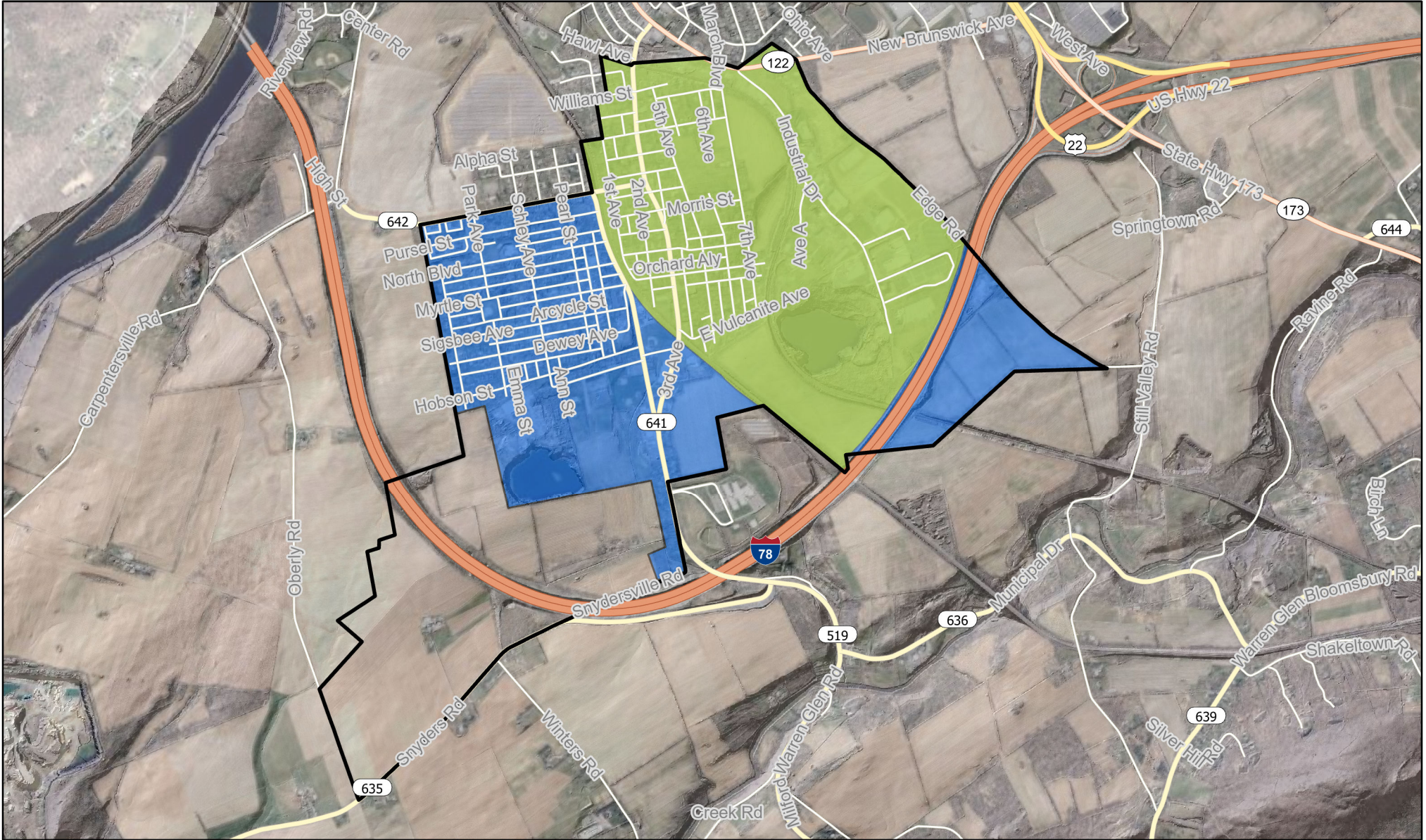
All of these recommendations from the community will become important as the Borough plans for future improvements and uses of their parks and open spaces.

**FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE APRIL 2023 MEETING OF THE
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APPENDIX B

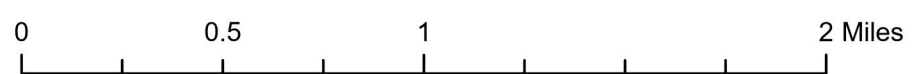
Map of Current & Proposed Center Designation, GIS

Borough of Alpha, Warren County



- Current Center Boundary
- Proposed Center Boundary

Alpha Borough Boundary



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APPENDIX C

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND SCHEDULE

Borough of Alpha, Warren County

Alpha Borough, Warren County, New Jersey
HIGHLANDS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND SCHEDULE

Grant Agreement Task #	PLAN CONFORMANCE TASK	Previously Allocated Funding	New FY2023 Funding	FY2024 (proposed)	Completion Date	Status and Comments
1	Housing Element & Fair Share Plan (Module 3)	\$5,000				
2	Highlands Environmental Resource Inventory (Module 4) – Adopted	\$2,000			5/16/2012	Complete
	Highlands Element of Municipal Master Plan (Module 5) – Amended and Adopted					
	a. Prepare and adopt Reexamination Report and applicable mapping				Adopted 5/15/19	2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report Complete
TBD	Municipal Master Plan Elements (as applicable)		\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00		Preparation of updated Master Plan elements, including resiliency and hazard vulnerability assessment as required by MLUL
3	a. Land Use Plan and Circulation Element	\$73,720			Adopted 12/11/13	Land Use and Circulation Plan Complete
	b. Open Space and Conservation Plan Element					
	c. Circulation Plan Element					
	d. Land Preservation and Land Stewardship Plan Element					
4	e. Agriculture Retention/Farmland Preservation Plan Element	\$0				
	f. Community Facilities Plan Element					
5	g. Sustainable Economic Development Plan Element	\$0				
	h. Historic Preservation Plan Element					
6	Highlands Land Use Ordinances (Module 6) – Amended and Adopted					
6a	a. Adopt Planning Area Petition Ordinance (If Applicable)	\$500			10/25/2011	Complete
6b	b. Adopt Municipal Referral Ordinance	\$1,000				
	c. Amend LUO to incorporate Alpha Highlands Center Designation and all applicable components		\$5,000.00			Amend Land Use Ordinance to effectuate Center Planning
8	Zoning Map Update – Adopted (Update to reflect Highlands Center)	\$3,938			2/14/2014	Complete
	Resource Management Plans and Programs					
TBD	a. Water Use and Conservation Management Plan			\$40,000.00		
9	b. Habitat Conservation and Management Plan	\$13,248				
10	c. Wastewater Management Plan	\$3,000				
	d. Septic System Management/Maintenance Plan					
	e. Municipal Stormwater Management Plan		\$25,000.00			
TBD	Redevelopment and Brownfields Opportunities		\$ 50,000.00			Redevelopment and economic development to address both site remediation/redevelopment in the context of smart growth concepts
11	Highlands Center Petition	\$39,094				Petition Submitted for Amended Center 2022, awaiting additional invoices
TBS	b. Highlands Center Planning 2023		\$ 50,000.00			Center Planning including downtown planning/placemaking to encourage walkability, bike ability, streetscapes, etc
10	Submission of Municipal Planning and Regulatory Documents	\$0				
12	Attendance at Highlands Council Training Sessions	\$ 1,500				
		\$143,000	\$150,000	TBD		

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APPENDIX D

PUBLIC COMMENTS/HIGHLANDS COUNCIL RESPONSES

Amended Petition for Plan Conformance

Borough of Alpha, Warren County

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PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED

Written comments regarding Alpha Borough's Amended Petition for Plan Conformance were accepted by the Highlands Council for a period of 30 days through the close of the Public Comment period on February 11, 2023. Comments were provided by the following individuals/entities:

- 1) Jonque (no last name provided)
- 2) Jean Public
- 3) Judith Green, North Jersey Sierra Group
- 4) Laura Bagwell
- 5) Sharon Herson
- 6) Donald Colombo, Lambertville, NJ
- 7) Maria Buniva, High Bridge, NJ
- 8) Nancy Hemingway
- 9) Anne Rogers, Phillipsburg, NJ
- 10) Bill Beren, Upper Montclair, NJ
- 11) P. Brukart, Alpha, NJ
- 12) Judy Liptak
- 13) Dylan Medici, Highlands Coalition
- 14) William F. Harrison, Esq. (on behalf of Alpha property owner)
- 15) Carol A. Staten, Bloomsbury, NJ
- 16) Jason Menegus, White Township, NJ
- 17) Laura Oltman, Phillipsburg, NJ
- 18) Vikram Sikand
- 19) Maureen Pontecorvo
- 20) Rebecca Canright
- 21) Renee B. Bain
- 22) Rajdeep Usgaonker

PUBLIC COMMENT/RESPONSE SUMMARY

- 1) **Comment:** A number of commenters expressed opposition to warehouses in general.
Response: Highlands Council acknowledges the comments. Warehouses are a necessary use but should only be located in appropriate areas in the Region.
- 2) **Comment:** One comment expressed full support for the Center Designation Petition and noted that it is consistent with the Highlands Council's planning objectives and in the best interest of the Alpha community.
Response: Highlands Council appreciates the comment and this report recommends the approval of the Center Designation Petition finding it consistent with the goals of Alpha and the RMP.
- 3) **Comment:** One comment described Alpha Borough as a small, self-contained, multi-generational community that is currently bifurcated by the existing center designation, pointing out that the

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proposed center boundaries would serve to unite the Borough as initially planned, designed, and developed while preserving family farms in one area of the municipality.

Response: Highlands Council appreciates the comment and this report recommends the approval of the Center Designation Petition finding it consistent with the goals of Alpha and the RMP.

- 4) **Comment:** One comment asserts that the proposed Center Designation Petition will promote and assist the historic cement town to continue its compact mixed use characteristics.
Response: Highlands Council appreciates the comment and this report recommends the approval of the Center Designation Petition finding it consistent with smart growth principles.
- 5) **Comment:** One comment points out that the Borough’s only affordable housing neighborhood is located within the expanded center boundaries.
Response: Highlands Council acknowledges the comment. Inclusion of the affordable housing site is consistent with the RMP and the purposes of center designation.
- 6) **Comment:** One comment explains that the Borough’s industrial park is nearly fully developed and the Center Designation Petition will help facilitate the Borough’s longstanding plans for its ultimate development.
Response: Highlands Council acknowledges the comment. The center amendment is consistent with the long term goals of the Borough in permitting limited but needed industrial areas within its boundaries.
- 7) **Comment:** One comment noted that Alpha Borough has sufficient water and sewer infrastructure to support the anticipated growth and the Borough has recently completed road improvements to provide adequate access.
Response: Highlands Council agrees and, based on information provided by Alpha Borough, finds that there is sufficient capacity in regard to water & wastewater capacity within the proposed Center.
- 8) **Comment:** One comment expressed support for the idea of using development credits to help preserve family-owned farms in the Borough.
Response: Highlands Council supports the use of Highlands Development Credits to offset the development of farmland in Agricultural Resource Areas.
- 9) **Comment:** One comment noted that development of the remaining industrial district would provide employment opportunities within a short commute for Alpha residents, thus reducing employee traffic on the roads.
Response: The Highlands Act recognized that areas are necessary for sustainable economic growth within the region to provide for employment opportunities. Designation as a Highlands Center identifies those areas that can support such growth.
- 10) **Comment:** One comment explained that the Borough has made significant roadway and sidewalk improvements to facilitate pedestrian access to public destinations throughout the Borough. As part of these improvements, the Borough has acquired open space properties with the goal of

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interconnecting municipal parks and facilities. Expansion of the Alpha Center will support these planning efforts.

Response: Highlands Council appreciates the comment. Highlands Center designation will enable the Highlands Council and Alpha Borough to conduct additional center planning work to facilitate such improvements.

- 11) **Comment:** One comment suggested that when landowners are allowed to develop their property for financial gain property owners in the Preservation Area should receive compensation.

Response: Highlands Council acknowledges the comment.

- 12) **Comment:** A number of comments expressed concern that expansion of the Center would result in the loss of ecological and agricultural resources.

Response: The expansion of the center is limited to those areas appropriate for additional growth within the Borough, areas of agriculture in the southwest area of the Borough have been excluded from the center.

- 13) **Comment:** A number of comments expressed concern that warehouse as a land use has potential negative impacts.

Response: The Highlands Council agrees that uncontrolled warehouse development has the potential for negative impacts and seeks to direct such development to areas with access to infrastructure necessary for such uses, including Highlands Centers.

- 14) **Comment:** One comment urged the Highlands Council to approve the Center Designation Petition stating that the proposed expansion of the Center is fully consistent with the goals of the Regional Master Plan and the proposed Center is located in an area with sufficient wastewater, transportation capacity, and water availability and supply.

Response: The Highlands Council agrees and the findings in this report support that the area is appropriate for designation as a Highlands Center.

- 15) **Comment:** One comment expressed concern that the approval of the Center Designation Petition would result in development of warehouses on land that is currently in farming or is designated Protection or Conservation Zone. Also noting that warehouse development brings tractor trailer traffic and consequent safety issues.

Response: The Highlands Council acknowledges that the designation of the area as a Highlands Center may include the development of warehouses in areas already zoned by the municipality for such uses. The Highlands Council seeks to direct such development to areas with access to infrastructure necessary for such uses, including Highlands Centers.

- 16) **Comment:** One comment expressed concern for the industrialization of Alpha Borough and the possible impacts to ground and surface water as well as run-off and soils.

Response: Any new development will have to comply with the resource protection standards of the Regional Master Plan as well as the recently adopted NJDEP stormwater management rules that require extensive use of green infrastructure to limit impacts from stormwater run-off.

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- 17) **Comment:** One comment expressed concerns regarding the two quarries in the Borough and the need to address soil contamination on both sites before any project is undertaken.
Response: Highlands Council is aware of the potential contamination at the quarries and any development would be subject to remediation as necessary.
- 18) **Comment:** One comment questioned whether the Borough's has adequate water and sewer capacity.
Response: Alpha Borough has presented evidence that they have both water and sewer capacity to support development within the proposed Center.
- 19) **Comment:** A number of comments expressed concern that Alpha is located on karst limestone.
Response: Alpha Borough is located in an area of Carbonate Rock. Prior to construction, these areas require a geotechnical site investigation to locate any potential karst features.
- 20) **Comment:** One comment expressed opposition to the Center Designation Petition because it is inconsistent with the goals and objectives of the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP).
Response: The Center Designation Petition outlines the criteria for determining if a proposed center is consistent with the goals, policies, and objectives of the RMP and comes to a finding that with specific conditions the Petition is indeed consistent.
- 21) **Comment:** A number of comments took issue with the inclusion of Block 100.01, Lot 10 in the center boundaries because it contains Important Farmland Soils.
Response: Highlands Council acknowledges the concern with the loss of Important Farmland Soils and has included a condition in the Petition approval that requires mitigation should the parcel be developed.
- 22) **Comment:** A number of comments expressed concern for the clustering of warehouses in the Phillipsburg, Lopatcong, Pohatcong, Alpha area.
Response: Highlands Council acknowledges the concern and notes that the recently adopted State Planning Commission Warehouse Siting Guidance recommends that warehouses be located in a compact form within designated growth areas. The Highlands Council has developed Highlands specific standards for warehouse development within the Highlands Region and is intended to be used as an addendum to the state guidance.
- 23) **Comment:** One comment stated that Alpha Borough is not a conforming municipality and should not receive the benefits of plan conformance.
Response: Alpha Borough is a conforming municipality, having received approval of their Petition for Plan Conformance in August 2011.
- 24) **Comment:** One comment commended the Highlands Council on their support of legislative bills which are directed at a regional approach to warehouse siting.
Response: Highlands Council appreciates the comment.