

BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK

Middlesex County

New Jersey

**PERIODIC REEXAMINATION REPORT
OF THE
MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

**APPROVED BY THE BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK PLANNING BOARD
ON JANUARY 21, 2010**

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BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK

Periodic Reexamination Report of the Master Plan and Development Regulations

A. Introduction

The Borough of Highland Park, 1.9 square miles in area, is situated in the western portion of Middlesex County. The Borough is adjacent to the City of New Brunswick to the South, Edison to the North and East, and Piscataway to the North and West. It is proximate to the NJ Northeast Corridor line station in New Brunswick which allows for commuting to either New York City or Trenton. Unlike most municipalities in New Jersey, Highland Park has a downtown which makes for a more vibrant living experience.

The current Master Plan of the Borough of Highland Park was adopted May 5, 2003. A previous Master Plan had been adopted in 1995 with a Reexamination report completed June 2001. Prior to 1995 there had been a Master Plan prepared in 1980 and one in 1960.

B. Process

A Master Plan Reexamination Subcommittee was appointed to coordinate and provide guidance in the preparation of this Reexamination Report. The subcommittee consisted of the following members:

Jon Carnegie, Chairman of the Planning Board; Padraic Millet, Planning Board Member and Borough Council Member; Karen Waldron, Borough Administrator; Joshua Fine, Planning Board Member and Environmental Commission Member; Teri Jover, Zoning Board Member; and Randy Solomon, Sustainable Highland Park.

Further outreach to solicit input on Community Services was made via interviews with the following individuals:

Chief of Police Stephen Rizco, and Lt. Joseph Vassallo; Donald Rish, Director of Public Works, Sheila Flamm, Director of Community Services; Scott Luthman, Director of Code Enforcement; Keith Thedinga, Fire Official, Jane Stanley, Director of the Library; James McCrone, Executive Director of Main Street Highland Park; Stephen Nolan, Chairman of the Redevelopment Agency, Randy Solomon and Ann Barron of the Sustainable Highland Park; Michael Rosenberg, Chairman of the Environmental Commission; Eric Weinberg, Chairman of the Recreation Advisory Board; and Bruce Koch, Borough Engineer.

The Master Plan Reexamination Subcommittee met on April 29, May 20, September 9, September 29, and October 20, 2009.

C. MUNICIPAL LAND USE LAW REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 of the Municipal Land Use Law, this "Master Plan And Development Regulations Periodic Reexamination Report" includes an addressment of the following five (5) items:

- a. The major problems and objective relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- b. The extent to which such problems and objective have been reduced or have been increased subsequent to such date.
- c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, dispositions and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.
- d. The specific changes recommended for the Master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
- e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L.1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality."

As required by the Municipal Land Use Law, the Borough of Highland Park Planning Board authorized the preparation of this "Reexamination Report" in order to continue the efforts of the Borough to both protect its environmental resources and to promote sound land use planning and development.

D. MAJOR PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Municipal Land Use Law, enacted by the State Legislature on January 14, 1976, empowers municipal governments with the right to control the physical development of the lands within their bounds. N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2 of the Municipal Land Use Law, as amended, lists fifteen (15) general purposes regarding the local planning process which are as follows:

- a. To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare;
- b. To secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other natural and manmade disasters;
- c. To provide adequate light, air and open space;
- d. To ensure that the development of individual municipalities does not conflict with the development and general welfare of neighboring municipalities, the county and the State as a whole;
- e. To promote the establishment of appropriate population densities and concentrations that will contribute to the well-being of persons, neighborhoods, communities and regions and preservation of the environment;
- f. To encourage the appropriate and efficient expenditure of public funds by the coordination of public development with land use policies;
- g. To provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial, and industrial uses and open space, both public and private, according to their respective environmental requirements in order to meet the needs of all New Jersey citizens;
- h. To encourage the location and design of transportation routes which will promote the free flow of traffic while discouraging location of such facilities and routes which result in congestion or blight;
- i. To promote desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangements;
- j. To promote the conservation of historic sites and districts, open space, energy resources and valuable natural resources in the State and to

prevent urban sprawl and degradation of the environment through improper use of land;

- k. To encourage planned unit developments which incorporate the best features of design and relate the type, design and layout of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational development of the particular site;
- l. To encourage senior citizen community housing construction;
- m. To encourage the coordination of the various public and private procedures and activities shaping land development with a view of lessening the cost of such development and to the more efficient use of land;
- n. To promote utilization of renewable energy source and;
- o. To promote the maximum practicable recovery and recycling of recyclable materials from municipal solid waste through the use of planning practices designed to incorporate the State Recycling Plan goals and to compliment municipal recycling programs.

Consistent with these general purposes of the Municipal Land Use Law, which the Borough embraces, the Borough has certain specific overall objectives and goals for its future land use development in order to prevent future problems and to create a desirable living and working environment.

These current Master Plan goals and objectives are as follows:

Goals:

The goals of this Master Plan are:

- To preserve and enhance the character and small town feel of the community;
- To ensure a vibrant downtown and commercial corridors;
- To protect the Borough's environmentally sensitive areas and;
- To promote a high quality of life for all residents.

Land Use Objectives:

- Minimize conflicts between residential and nonresidential uses;
- Identify opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization to enhance the economic diversification of the Borough and the Borough's tax base;
- Incorporate the existing natural and historic features in the Borough's future development and revitalization;
- Continue to provide a variety of housing types for a diverse population;
- Expand opportunities for mixed-use development in the downtown, including ground floor retail with housing and professional offices on upper floors;
- Ensure new development, expansions and renovations of commercial, residential and public uses meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the New Jersey Barrier Free Access Code;
- Continue to define the Borough's downtown gateways by enhancing the Raritan Avenue and Woodbridge Avenue entries with attractive signage, landscaping, and streetscaping amenities;
- Promote a vital Central Business District through revitalization, redevelopment and development of a comprehensive vision and marketing strategy;
- Improve connections between the Woodbridge Avenue and Raritan Avenue commercial areas by implementing compatible, yet unique streetscape elements;
- Coordinate local, county and state planning efforts to revitalize underutilized commercial and industrial sites, especially along Raritan and Cleveland Avenues;
- Improve coordination with surrounding communities and Rutgers University to achieve regional recreation, transportation, economic development, and land use goals;
- Encourage in-fill development that is compatible with the scale, density and design of the Borough's existing residential neighborhoods and historic development patterns and;
- Recognize the Raritan River as an important natural, recreational and educational resource within the Borough.

Economic Plan Objectives:

- Identify opportunities for revitalization, redevelopment and in-fill development in the Borough's non-residential districts;
- Integrate the downtown revitalization planning process commencing for the downtown (Main Street Program) with other Master Plan recommendations to support future planning efforts;
- Continue and expand successful incentive programs such as the Façade and Awning Improvement Program;
- Encourage expansion of traditional retail uses in the Central Business District;
- Encourage residential units in the downtown above stores;
- Cultivate partnerships with Rutgers University, Johnson & Johnson, the City of New Brunswick, the Main Street Program and the Fund for Highland Park, to aid in redevelopment efforts and ;
- Seek plan endorsement from the reconstituted Office of Smart Growth to assist with plan implementation and to position the Borough for priority funding by state agencies.

Circulation Objectives:

- Provide road and intersection improvements to address identified safety hot-spots and to improve circulation for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Coordinate with NJDOT and the County to ensure that any roadway improvements will be context-sensitive and consider all modes of transportation, especially pedestrian mobility;
- Improve pedestrian safety and mobility throughout the Borough;
- Designate bikeways and bike routes;
- Identify funding sources for pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements on the Borough's main arteries;
- Identify key locations for traffic calming improvements, especially in residential areas, and in close proximity to schools and other community facilities;
- Examine CBD parking supply and parking requirements.

Municipal Services Objectives:

- Ensure all areas of the Borough receive adequate municipal services;
- Continue to maintain and upgrade Borough infrastructure in a systematic fashion and;
- Identify funding sources to help address service and equipment needs.

Conservation, Open Space, and Recreation Objectives:

- Preserve and protect important natural features such as the Raritan River, Mill Brook and Buell Brook;
- Provide mini-parks within ¼ mile of residential neighborhoods;
- Promote expanded recreational opportunities for all segments of the community in both local and regional parks;
- Develop linkages and expand passive recreational areas along the Raritan River Greenway;
- Incorporate public spaces into future downtown redevelopment projects;
- Identify and plan to acquire open space through a variety of techniques, including acquisition with NJ Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres funds and Middlesex County open space funds, conservation easements and cluster development;
- Execute and expand street tree planting program in the Borough's commercial districts, especially along Raritan and Woodbridge Avenues and;

Historic Preservation Objectives:

- Identify historic districts and structures to protect and enhance the architectural fabric of the community;
- Retain and protect historic features in new projects, as well as in rehabilitation and redevelopment projects;
- Encourage land use and revitalization strategies that are consistent with and preserve the architectural and historical integrity of the community;

- Encourage in-fill development and rehabilitation projects to respect historic features of existing neighborhoods and incorporate those features as the basis for design;
- Expand public education on the benefits of historic preservation;
- Include historic information in the environmental education center's interpretive markers;
- Study feasibility of a historic commission and ordinance, as contemplated by the Municipal Land Use Law and;
- Pursue funding sources to assist in preservation efforts, including surveys and educational outreach.

E. The Extent to Which the Identified Problems and Objectives Have Been Reduced or Have Increased

The Borough of Highland Park strives to achieve the overall goals and objectives stated in its Master Plan in order to create a desirable living and working environment, to protect its environmental resources, and to promote sound land development.

Many of the recommendations noted in the Action Plan of the 2003 Master Plan have been implemented:

Land Use, Economic Development and Redevelopment:

- The Borough's Land Development Ordinance (LDO) was revised as to require a minimum building height of two stories and a maximum height of four stories in the CBD and to permit apartments on the upper floors of office buildings and single and two family houses as primary uses in the Professional Office district.
- In June 2005, the planning board completed a redevelopment determination of needs study for Raritan Avenue between South First and Fifth Avenues. The study recommended a number of properties along this corridor be designated in "need of redevelopment." Subsequently, the Borough Council accepted the planning board's recommendations and commissioned the preparation of the "Highland Park Downtown Redevelopment Plan" which was completed in September 2005. Since that time, the Planning Board, Redevelopment Agency and Main Street have coordinated efforts and used their respective design and development review processes to promote an architecturally interesting and vital CBD along Raritan consistent with the Redevelopment Plan.

- The Borough's façade improvement program has been expanded by Main Street and is funded in part by the Borough's Community Development Block Grant program.
- The planning board and Redevelopment Agency have promoted the use of shared parking in the Redevelopment area of the CBD and have sought to eliminate curb-cuts along Raritan Avenue wherever feasible to improve pedestrian safety.
- A redevelopment determination of needs study was completed for the former Midland Ross (now Honeywell) and Illuminating Experiences properties located on Cleveland Avenue.
- A Business Improvement District (BID) was established in the CBD which helps to fund specific services for downtown businesses. The BID is administered by Main Street for their programs as well as providing a source of funding for Façade Improvements.

Circulation:

- The Borough Police Department has updated its processes for recording and tracking crashes. Crash reports are now filed electronically to identify crash "hot spots" and determine a course of action(s) to reduce the number of crashes.
- The Borough developed a Streetscape Plan for Raritan Avenue consistent with the Redevelopment Plan. The initial phase of Streetscape implementation which included the installation of new street lights, traffic signals and pole banners were recently completed. Subsequent phases are planned for Spring 2010.
- Traffic calming speed humps were installed as part of the reconstruction of North and South Second Avenue and Lincoln Avenue.
- New pedestrian crossing signals have been installed along Raritan Avenue and at the intersection of River Road with Harrison and Cleveland Avenues; and new crosswalk striping has been added at various locations.

Municipal Services:

- In 2008, an architect was hired to do a needs assessment of the police and fire building and has prepared design options for an addition to the building.
- The Borough Public Works Department has developed a schedule for the maintenance of public facilities.

- The Code Enforcement Department now proactively informs the public about barrier free design requirements when building permits are taken out as part of the Uniform Construction Code.

Conservation, Open Space and Recreation:

- The Borough has adopted ordinances limiting development on steep slopes and protecting stream corridors from nearby development.
- A walking path was installed on the property adjacent to the Public Works Department. This path provides a connection to Donaldson Park.
- Improvements, including the installation of outdoor amenities, gardens and sitting areas, were made to the Senior/Youth Center.
- The long-awaited Environmental Education Center located on River Road was constructed as a focal point to the Raritan River Greenway; a new “gateway park” named Centennial Park in honor of the Borough’s 100th anniversary was constructed at the intersection of River Road and Raritan and Lincoln Avenues; and play equipment was installed at Molimock Graff Park (formerly Karsey Park).
- A loop trail has been completed in the Meadows utilizing a National Recreational Trails Grant.

F. Significant Changes in the Assumptions, Policies, and Objectives

Since the 2003 Master Plan was adopted, the Borough has continued to strengthen its focus on environmental sustainability. This growing emphasis is evidenced by a variety of on-going initiatives including the establishment of the “Green Communities Working Group”, now called Sustainable Highland Park. In addition, the Borough has proactively pursued redevelopment planning as tool to revitalize its central business district. Finally, it should be noted that in 2008 the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing amended its regulations governing affordable housing requirements and municipal responsibilities. As part of a separate planning effort, the Borough is currently preparing a revised Fair Share Plan and Housing Element. This may necessitate additional Master Plan, Land Development, and Zone Plan changes not reflected in this reexamination report. These changes will be subject to public review and future planning board action as needed.

G. Recommended Master Plan and Development Ordinance Changes

Given the Borough’s focus on the importance of environmental sustainability and redevelopment to the future of Highland Park, the planning board recommends that Master Plan be expanded and enhanced to incorporate a “Green Buildings and

Environmental Sustainability Plan Element” as permitted by the Municipal Land Use Law. The Highland Park “Green Community Plan 2007” prepared by the New Jersey Sustainable State Institute for Highland Park and “Highland Park 2020: A Sustainable Community – The First Five Years” documents can form the basis for such an element.

In addition, the planning board recommends that the Highland Park “Streetscape Program and Plan” prepared by Wallace, Roberts and Todd, be formally incorporated as an element of the Master Plan. This will help to better foster community identity and design uniformity.

The planning board further recommends that the 2003 Master Plan Goals, Objectives and recommendations be readopted with the following additions, deletions and changes:

Land Use, Economic Development and Redevelopment:

- The 2003 Master Plan recommendation regarding the creation of a new Research and Development District along River Road should be deleted. It was felt to be more appropriate to maintain these areas for residential development.
- The adoption of infill residential design standards in the RA and RB districts should be deemed a high priority. The standards should be drafted to more fully integrate new infill housing with the established character of the neighborhoods in which such housing is proposed to be located.
- A comprehensive revision to the Borough’s Land Development Ordinance (which includes procedures, use standard regulations, and design standards) should also be deemed a high priority. The revisions should include new regulations and guidelines related to sustainable development and “Green Building.” This should include, as appropriate, additional checklists as well as site development standards that are allowable under applicable laws. Alternate energy structures such as wind turbines and solar panels should be permitted as conditional uses subject to appropriate performance standards in the revised ordinance. In addition, consideration should be given to incorporating mandatory open space requirements for residential developments including the provision of public sitting spaces, pocket parks and opportunities for trails to interconnect open spaces where feasible.

Conservation, Open Space and Recreation:

- The Conservation, Open Space and Recreation objectives and recommendations set forth in the 2003 Master Plan should be enhanced and supplemented to incorporate the following

- Preserve Borough character through open space.
- Make neighborhood open space accessible to all residents by providing pedestrian access to neighborhood open space within ¼ mile of any residential concentration and dedicating appropriate municipal “vacant” or underutilized” properties for this purpose.
- Create a green buffer around Highland Park’s riverfront and woodland areas and ensuring that connectivity between existing open space and natural areas is preserved, maintained, or enhanced.
- Make nature areas permanently available and attractive to Highland Park residents.
- Provide natural lands for environmental education and nature activities.
- Provide safe, convenient, and attractively vegetated bicycle/pedestrian paths.
- Designate the Borough-owned property on Cleveland Avenue adjacent to Mill Brook as passive parkland.
- Clean up and preserve as natural open space the three borough-owned lots on South Sixth Avenue at the head of the Buck Woods property (Block 43 Lots 3-5 0.0691 Acres on Tax Sheet 11) as well as Block 75 Lot 7 (Road) leading to WTC tower.
- Designate the “paper street” portion of South Fourth Avenue between Donaldson to Valentine as parkland and use it as a natural path to Donaldson Park.
- Rezone Block 47 Lots 76-81 (Southside Bikeway Lower Portion) for Conservation. Investigate the possibility of re-zoning Lots 30-33,41-43, and 54-56 for Conservation.
- Retain the current conservation/recreation designation for Block 75 Lot 6 (Woods and Fields) and pursue grant funding to create a recreational trail on this property.
- Pursue various combinations of acquisition, easement, zoning changes and owner agreements to preserve major “at risk” natural areas such as Kilmer Woods, natural portions of the Honeywell property and other land along the Amtrak railroad corridor, Ayres Beach (formerly Red’s

Marina/Barwood property), and the Buck Woods/Meadows complex in the southeastern corner of the Borough.

- Create a secure method of storing kayaks and canoes along the river so that it will be more convenient for residents to access their watercraft rather than having to continuously bring them from home to the river.
- Explore forming a partnership with Rutgers University to provide greater access to or create new playing fields for Highland Park.
- An Open Space Plan that would be sufficient for grant purposes should be adopted by Council and the Planning Board.

Additional detail on these recommendations is provided in the Appendix under the Environmental Commission report.

Circulation:

- Initiate a comprehensive program to stripe and enforce no parking zones and crosswalks at all street intersections to improve motorist, pedestrian and bicyclist safety .
- Conduct a comprehensive review of all unprotected intersections located in the Borough to determine what, if any, traffic control devices should be installed to improve vehicular, pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

Municipal Services:

- Investigate longer lasting and more durable methods for road striping, including the acquisition of new striping equipment.
- Acquire a new garbage truck to replace an existing 15 year old vehicle.
- Conduct a comprehensive examination of the Borough's existing storm sewer and sanitary sewer systems to determine what repairs and/or replacements are necessary.
- Consider replacing the Fire Department's ladder truck and a 20 year old rescue vehicle.
- Enforce the Borough's Zoning and Property Maintenance Code in a more comprehensive and vigorous manner.
- Consider the creations of a computer lab for after school programs run by the library at an appropriate location.

- Conduct a review of pedestrian lighting conditions at key intersections throughout the Borough, including but not limited to the intersections adjacent to Irving Primary School, Bartle Elementary School, the Middle/High School, the Library, Senior/Youth Center, Borough Hall, and other locations that have a high level of pedestrian activity.
- Conduct a comprehensive parking study to determine what if any parking management strategies can be used to address problem areas such as student and commuter parking along Harrison and Cleveland Avenues and along streets that intersect with Raritan and Woodbridge Avenue business districts and other locations as needed.

H. Recommendations of the Planning Board Concerning the Incorporation Of the Redevelopment Plan into the Land Use Element of the Master Plan

The Planning board recommends that the “Highland Park Downtown Redevelopment Plan” prepared by Wallace Roberts and Todd also be incorporated as a Master Plan Land Use Element. The Borough Land Development Ordinance should be concurrently amended to incorporate the bulk and yard requirements noted in the Redevelopment Plan and to make specific reference to the Block and Lot numbers of properties included in the Redevelopment Plan.

APPENDIX

This Appendix consists of the results of interviews with various departments and commissions chairmen as part of a community services component of the reexaminations.

Code Enforcement

The 2003 Master Plan noted that the Construction Office had a staff of 4 part time inspectors and a full time technical assistant. At the present, there are three full time (including a Director) and 3 part time employees in the Construction Office of the Department of Code Enforcement.

All of the recommendations made in the 2003 Master Plan report have been accomplished with the exception of making the Technical Review Committee a required step of the development review process.

This department, in addition to reviewing construction plans, also inspects 1 and 2 family rental units on an annual basis.

At the present time, the Property Maintenance Code is enforced on a complaint basis. In the future, thought should be given to enforcing the Property Maintenance Code in a more comprehensive manner.

Community Services

This new department combines the activities offered by the Department of Aging and Recreation, with community-wide events added.

Headed by the Director of Community Services, this department is responsible for providing residents of all ages with a varied and comprehensive set of recreational, educational, social and cultural programs and services, with a special interest in community-building and bridging gaps within the diverse, culturally rich population of Highland Park.

Examples of these services include sports programs, art programs, guest speakers, trips, summer camp, outreach services and senior transportation services. Coordination of major community events such as our annual Memorial Day parade, and programs such as youth Halloween festivities and kite flying events are also coordinated.

The Director of Community services had examined the Conservation, Open Space, and Recreation Element of the 2003 Master Plan and noted that there had been some changes since 2003.

A park formerly identified as Karsey Park has been renamed Molimock Graff Park. The active recreational inventory still remains the same, despite the name change. The Environmental Education Center is owned by the Borough but operated by the Environmental Commission.

In terms of a desired Raritan River Greenway, a trail has recently been installed between the Department of Public Works and Donaldson Park.

In examining the Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation Recommendations it was noted that the following had taken place:

- a. The Raritan Gateway Park was purchased and completed.
- b. The Woodbridge Avenue Playground was constructed (next to the Irving Primary School)
- c. The path adjacent to the Public Works Department was completed.
- d. Improvements to the existing Service Center/Recreation Center were completed.
- e. The Bartle School basketball court was constructed.
- f. Play equipment was installed at Molimock Graff Park (formerly Karsey Park).

The Department of Community Services is in agreement with the other recommendations of the Conservation, Open Space, and Recreation Element. These include:

- a. North Eleventh Avenue – create a park on one of two Borough owned properties (parcel are .06 and .02 acres in size).
- b. Downtown Pocket Park – one should be established.
- c. Acquisition of the Buck Woods property.
- d. Acquisition of the Barwood/Gutman property.
- e. Establish a Raritan River Greenway.
- f. Acquisition of the Upper Meadows.
- g. Establish a Bike Route System

- h. Examine Paper Streets for the potential of a path system.
- i. Improve foot paths in the Valley Place Ravine.
- j. Develop the North Eighth Avenue Median strip with additional landscaping and occasional seating opportunities.

Both the Director of Community Services and the Director of the Library thought that the Old Senior Center should be rehabilitated as a youth center and a computer learning center. This would free up the existing recreation/Senior Center for only Senior use and would allow the Library additional space in its building and have a satellite program to help children in their computer skills afterschool.

Department of Public Works

This Department has modestly increased from 16 full time employees in 2003 to 20 full time employees in 2009. In terms of the 2003 Master Plans description of this Department, it should be noted that garbage collection occurs 2 times a week in the CBD rather than 3 times as had been reported. Bulk trash collection has been reduced from weekly to once a month.

Litter control in the CBD is done by Community Service Workers (prisoners on a work program) and a part time person funded under the Clean Committee Grant.

Tree maintenance is primarily done on a complaint basis. Any street tree removed must be replaced by the homeowner requesting the removal.

In 1999, Middlesex County took over recycling functions. It was noted that there has been some cost savings as a result.

In terms of other functions, the Public Works maintains all Borough buildings and grounds. The Library is cleaned and minor repairs are made by Public Works to this building. Major repairs and grass cutting are handled by the Library.

Storm sewer cleaning is done by a contractor who T.V.'s the lines annually.

Spray painting of stripes in the roads is done by Public Works. It was felt that more help would be needed to stripe so as to create no parking zones at street corners. It was felt by both Public Works and the Police that such no parking zones would help in traffic safety as views of streets at intersections would be less obstructed by vehicles parking too close to the intersections.

Public Works addresses potholes on a complaint basis. Street repairs and/or reconstruction are proposed by Public Works in conjunction with the Borough Engineer. When those streets to be repaired and/or reconstructed are decided upon, the Engineer then prepares plans for bid, and the work is done by outside contractors.

Public Works has no sign making capability and purchases all signs. We would note that today there are rather sophisticated yet easy to operate sign making machines that do traffic signs as well as all other signs including banners - - which over time could save money.

It was felt that Public Works could use more modern equipment. A new garbage truck is needed to replace one 15 years old.

It was also felt that the storm sewer system needs to be comprehensively examined for either repairs and/or replacement.

Fire Protection and Prevention

The Fire Official is full time and is assisted by a full time fire inspector. There are also 8 part time paid fire personnel. There is also need for clerical staff in the Fire Official's office.

In 2003, the Fire Department responded to 400 calls that year. That number has increased to 500 calls a year in 2008. There are 30 to 40 volunteers. The Fire Department has Mutual Aid Agreements with New Brunswick, Edison, and Piscataway.

The Fire Department has 3 engines and a 100ft. ladder truck. The ladder truck is in need of replacement. A 20 years old rescue vehicle is no longer in use and needs to be replaced.

In terms of Fire Prevention, the 2003 Master Plan indicated that the Fire Official conducts fire safety inspections of rental housing structures of 3 or more units. This, however, is handled by code enforcement. The Fire Official does inspect the common areas of multiple housing structures. Inspections are also made of all businesses. Also smoke detector certifications are done by code enforcement.

Site plan reviews are done by the Fire Official with respect to Fire Lanes, suppression systems, hydrant locations, Knox box provisions, etc. Construction sites are also inspected in terms of Fire Prevention.

Investigations into the cause and origin of fires are also conducted by the Fire Official.

A 1200 gallon pumper truck has been replaced as per a recommendation in the 2003 Master Plan.

Main Street

The Main Street program is administered by a Board of Directors with a Director of the daily operations. The NJ Department of Community Affairs no longer administers this program. The goals of the program have not changed since the Master Plan of 2003. Main Street strives to stimulate commerce and evoke civic pride in Highland Park. Since 2003 the program has been reformatted to include:

Cooperative and widespread advertising for the downtown business district, support, training, and advocacy for businesses, and a liason to municipal government.

Event management including a Street Fair, Farmer's Market, Autumn Fest, and Holiday Shopping promotions.

The Master Plan had recommended that a Business Improvement District (BID) be established. This has been established and a source of funding through a special assessment has also been established. The BID is administered by Main Street to further its goals. It nets +/- \$150,000.00 per year.

Through the Community Development Block Grant, a successful Awning and Façade improvement program has been established and is administered by Main Street. The annual budget is +/- \$21,000.00. Grants of up to \$3000 are given to a tenant and/or upon the approval of a design committee.

Main Street recommendations include:

1. Main Street should be notified of any hearings before the Planning or Zoning Boards pertaining to any properties within the Main Street District.
2. Main Street should provide their own review of applications with recommendations (which are nonbinding) to be made to either the Planning or Zoning Board.
3. The Streetscape Program and Plan should be incorporated as an element of the Master Plan. This is the plan prepared by Wallace Todd Roberts.
4. There should be better coordination between the Redevelopment Agency, Main Street, and the Borough.

5. In terms of signage, Main Street used to review signs, awnings, facades, etc., for all properties within the Main Street area. Now, however, such reviews only happen when an applicant applies for a grant.

While the Zoning Officer sends sign applicants to Main Street and likes to have Main Street approve the proposed signage, many times an applicant will return to the Zoning Officer without an approval as they do not want to wait for the design committee to meet. The committee meets once-a-month which may be problematic for a business owner with a conforming sign (conforming to the Zoning Ordinance) who wants the sign immediately, and does not want to wait.

Police Department

The 2003 Master plan noted that the Police Department had a 31 member police force consisting of 28 full time officers, 2 full time dispatchers, and one part time dispatcher. Currently, there are 27 full time officers and 4 civilian dispatchers, and 3 civilian employees. There are also 8 school crossing guards supervised by the Police Department.

While the Borough has an Emergency Response Team, it does not have a Hostage Response Team. In terms of vehicles, the Borough has 9 marked cars, 3 unmarked cars, 1 motorcycle, and 1 bike.

As noted in the 2003 Master Plan, the Police Department needed more space. This is still the feeling of the Police Department. An architect has been hired and has done a needs assessment of the police and fire building and has prepared design options for a building addition.

In terms of the Circulation Element of the Master Plan, the Police Department was in agreement with many of the recommendations that had been made.

They did take exception to changing the road cross section on upper Raritan Avenue. It was felt that if anything, speed reduction should take place. In addition, they did not believe that it would serve any purpose to reconfigure Cedar Lane as had been proposed given the traffic volumes on this road.

Since 2003, the Police Department has computerized the accident reporting system. This will now help the Department to pinpoint high accident locations. It has been suggested that this be done on an annual basis. Where continuing patterns of accidents are revealed, discussion could be initiated first between the Police and the Borough Engineer to determine if there are physical conditions that might be able to be

easily changed. In addition, internal studies could be taken by the Police to see if there are other measures that could be taken.

It was noted that there are a number of unprotected intersections which should be evaluated to determine what, if any, traffic controls should be placed at such intersections. It would seem that such intersections should be identified and studied at this time.

In terms of pedestrian safety, the Police Department did not believe that curb extensions should be considered along Raritan Avenue. It was also felt that mid-block crossings on Raritan Avenue were neither desirable nor safe.

While to do so would be a major undertaking, it was felt that the alignment of River Road near the arch in the railroad bridge should be reevaluated.

One thing noted by the Police as well as by Public Works, is the lack of uniform parking restrictions at street intersections. The parking restrictions would be striping at least 25 ft. from the intersections. Such parking restrictions could easily be implemented and would help in traffic safety as drivers at stop signs would have a more unobstructed view of the streets.

Recreation Element – Recreation Commission

In terms of recreation, it was felt that the goals and objective of this section of the Master Plan are still appropriate. The Action Plan as encountered in the Master Plan should be pursued.

It was felt that given the limited availability of land in the Borough, focus on providing recreational facilities in nearby adjoining municipalities should be considered. This is a concept that while not commonly pursued has been used to a degree of success in communities similarly constrained by the lack of land for recreation. The City of Trenton, for example, has extensive baseball facilities on land which had been purchased in adjacent Hamilton Township.

More specifically it was suggested that a sports complex could possibly be constructed on a +/-13 acre tract of land located in Edison on Cedar Avenue thought to be owned by Rutgers University. This could result in a collaborative effort with Rutgers for joint utilization of facilities constructed on this site by Rutgers as well as by Borough residents and leagues. Or, it could be solely in the ownership of the Borough. This of course would all depend upon what Rutgers Master Plan is for this area and available funding.

It was also thought that this might be profitable for the Borough if facilities were available for lease to outside organizations. Tournament play could also occur which would also bring revenue to the Borough.

In terms of the newly refurbished football/soccer field(s) at the high school, it was felt that if fees are to be charged for the use of this field, they should be reasonable and should be affordable to residents of the Borough. It was also felt that there are opportunities to make these fields profitable by also having tournaments take place at these fields. If money is to be realized at this site, it should be at the expense of outside users, not Borough residents.

It was felt that the baseball field at the high school was in need of regrading as well as new lighting so that better utilization of this facility could take place. It was also thought that redevelopment of this field could possibly be done with the combination of a baseball and small soccer field.

In looking at the Raritan River as a recreational resource, it was thought that more advantage could be taken of it. One thought was to provide a secure method of storing kayaks and canoes along the river so that it will be more convenient for residents to access their watercraft rather than having to continuously bring them from home to the river.

Environmental Commission

The Environmental Commission appears to be in agreement with the Conservation, Open Space, and Recreation Element of the 2003 Master Plan. With the completion of the Environmental Center on River Road, the Commission has a venue from which various educational and planning activities can occur. As part of this center is a park with an interpretative trail.

The commission agrees that the Raritan River is one of Highland Park's greatest natural assets and is an advocate for the completion of the Raritan River Greenway Plan. The commission also conducts advisory reviews on applications before the Planning and Zoning Board.

The Commission also helps to administer grants. One of these, a \$15,000 NJDEP trails grant saw the completion of a pedestrian path from Valentine Street to Donaldson Park on the grounds of the Department of Public Works in 2004.

A number of items proposed in the Master Plan, and advocated by the Environmental Commission have been accomplished, i.e. a steep slope ordinance with a sliding scale for development, a stream corridor protection ordinance, requiring an Environmental Impact Statement for all major development, etc.

The Commission would like to see consideration of a cluster development ordinance for residential zones and open space requirements for developments including provisions for paths and trails to connect open spaces where feasible.

While certain properties recommended in the Master Plan for open space acquisition have been acquired (Ayres Beach, Reds Marina, portions of Raritan Gateway Park, development of the Woodbridge Avenue Playground, the Lower Meadows), the Commission believes that the other properties noted should be acquired:

- a. Buck Woods
- b. Barwood/Gutman Property
- c. Upper Meadow
- d. Completion of the Raritan River Greenway

The Commission takes no exception to the various other recommendations made in the 2003 Master Plan. The Commission is concerned with the vacant Y site and hopes that any development of it will allow for public access along the Raritan River.

It should be noted that the Environmental Commission had produced a Draft Open Space Plan in June 2002, from which a number of suggestions on the 2003 Master Plan appear to have been derived from. Some of the other suggestions in this Plan may be worth considering.

The Goals of this Open Space Plan are as follows:

- Preserve Borough Character Through Open Space.
- Make Neighborhood Open Space Accessible to All Residents. Provide pedestrian access to neighborhood open space within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of any residential concentration, as provided in the 1995 Master Plan, including dedication of appropriate municipal "vacant" or underutilized" properties for this purpose.
- Create a Green Buffer around Highland Park's Riverfront and Woodland Areas. Connectivity between existing open space and natural areas shall be preserved, maintained, or enhanced.
- Make Nature Areas Permanently Available and Attractive to Citizens. Pursue various combinations of acquisition, easement, zoning, and owner agreements to preserve natural habitat and public enjoyment of major "at risk" natural areas such as Kilmer Woods, natural portions of the Midland-Ross/Grimes Aerospace property and other land along the Amtrak wildlife corridor, Ayres Beach (formerly Red's Marina/Barwood property), and the Buck woods/Meadows complex in the southeastern corner of Highland Park.
- Provide Natural Lands for Environmental Education and Nature Activities.

- Provide Safe, Convenient, and Attractively Vegetated Bicycle/Pedestrian Paths.
- Protect Natural Habitat and Coordinate Open Space Planning through Accord among the Master Plan, Zoning, State and County Plans, and Modern Environmental Science. All Highland Park Borough planning documents shall reflect the mounting public concern with open space preservation.

The Open Space Plan also pinpoints additional properties either for development (park), acquisition or rezoning. These include:

- **Cleveland Ave. Municipal Property on Mill Brook.** At the avenue's dead end, few residents realize the land is public. Designating it a park would encourage use. Block 192 Lot 1 wooded 0.0304 Acres, Block 154 Lot 5 substation 0.2164 Acres, and paper street. (Tax Sheets 30 & 31).
- **Crowells Road and South Eleventh.** This tiny municipal plot is a narrow point of lawn and oak trees where Crowells Road meets South Eleventh at a sharp angle. It is indistinguishable from the lawn of the apartment complex, but adding a seat and a sign identifying it as neighborhood open space would give passersby a public spot to rest. Block 66 Lot 2 lawn 0.0394 Acres (Tax Sheet 3.06).
- **North Eleventh Avenue.** Of these two thin plots on the east side of North Eleventh south of Park Avenue, the northernmost is large enough for a minipark, the other for a bench. Block 133 Lot 49 0.0671 Acres, and Lot 54 0.0264 Acres (Tax Sheet 19).
- **South Sixth Municipal Land at the Head of Buck Woods.** These three lots line the west side of the stub end of Sixth Avenue below Mansfield. They could be cleaned up and marked as the only public natural space in easy walking of adjacent senior housing and Bartle School. Block 43 Lot 3-5 0.0691 Acres (Tax Sheet 11).
- **Volkert/South Ninth.** This surprising municipal open space with large grassy area and grove of trees is inconspicuous because of a narrow entry. It should become a restful park barely a block from busy Woodbridge Avenue. Block 61 Lot 25 0.0876 Acres, Block 62 Lot 4 0.2296 Acres, and Block 62 Lot 11 0.0574 Acres (Tax Sheets 11 and 12).
- **South Fourth (Paper Street: Donaldson to Valentine).** This slope is used as a natural path to Donaldson Park. Park status, native plantings, and a sign would encourage use for more than passage. It gives an exceptional park and river view. Plant signs could aid the environmental education centers project. (Tax Sheet 3.01)

- **Other Small Municipal Properties, Paper Streets, and Rights of Way.** These can be considered as future opportunity arises, after the above.
- **Rezone for Conservation the Entire Meadows/Southside Bikeway Complex.** "The Meadows," east of Donaldson Park, runs up from the river past the Southside Bikeway into Buck Woods Ravine. The lowest 16 acres of flood plain is already zoned conservation/recreation, the rest residential (in conflict with the 1995 Master Plan). All should be zoned conservation, supporting the greenway and environmental education centers. The marsh is on contiguous WCTC land (Block 75 Lot 8) and county park land (Lot 11). Block 75 is on Tax Sheet 3, Blocks 47, 48, and 49 on 3.04. All municipal parts are listed, though the first three keep current zoning:
 - **Block 75 Lot 6 (Woods and Fields).** The 16 acres (largely flood plain) should stay conservation/recreation, with trail improvement by a Recreational Trails Grant.
 - **Block 75 Lot 9 (DPW Garage and Stream Corridor).** The portion east of the garage should be managed as stream buffer and trail to Donaldson Park.
 - **Block 75 Lot 7 (Road).** This road to the WCTC tower is municipally owned and should remain in use but managed for nature, without dump piles, which pollute wetlands.
 - **Block 47 Lots 76-81 (Southside Bikeway Lower Portion).** Rezone these lots by South Fifth and the Southside Bikeway as crucial to its park-like ambiance. Remove dump piles or screen them with plantings and keep a stream buffer.
 - **Block 48 Lots 30-33 (Southside Bikeway Upper Portion).** Rezone woods by bikeway, Seventh Avenue end. Approximately 0.9 A (four lots at 0.2296 each.)
 - **Block 49 Lots 41-56. Meadows Upper Plateau (East of Paper Sixth, below Donaldson).** Rezone (as per the 1995 Master Plan) this former dump, now recovering successional woods and fields. The ends are most crucial as the immediate natural setting for the bikeway, stream, woods, and proposed trails of the environmental education centers project: Lots 41-43 and 54-56 by bikeway, and Lots 48 and 49 buffering the impressive stream gorge below Crowells Road. A possible intermittent stream (unmapped) runs along the downhill side of the bikeway. If the borough continues allowing construction staging on Donaldson Street, it should be restricted to the central portion, screened by plantings and with strict rules protecting trees and wetland, with meadow restored after use. Approximately 3.8 Acres.
- **Create Bicycle/Pedestrian paths Linked to Open Spaces.** Provide native plantings and environmental education signage at appropriate points (such as

in parks) along routes planned for Highland Park in the Middlesex County Bicycle Pedestrian Plan (Draft of November 2001). Paths in Johnson Park and up Cedar lane will be designated segments of the East Coast Greenway, and our greenway should be designated a spur of that national Millennium Trail. CS (County Seat) 201: Waterfront path from Johnson to Donaldson Park via streets. CS 202 and 203: street bicycle lanes accessing Donaldson Park, Southside Bikeway, and the Native plant Reserve (River Road.)

- Barwood Property (March, Woods, and Upland). The lower strip below the rear property line of homes on Skyview Terrace is called "Middlesex County Conservation Area" in the 2001 tax list, giving some form of protection under a 1993 memorandum of the Highland Park Planning Board. The line is not field-marked and needs to be surveyed and staked. The upland portion of the same lot has no protection yet is important as the last spot where the river bend can be looked down onto from the public street; adding a house here would destroy the remnant of what was perhaps Highland Park's finest public river viewscape. A path by the woods and freshwater wetland would support the greenway and environmental education centers project, and the upland would give the area an entry and view, so that the entire property should be acquired. Block 75 Lot 15.02, 5.2 A (Tax Sheet 3).
- **Acquire "Buck Woods" or a Conservation/Public-Access Easement.** The longest wooded ravine remaining in the developed part of Highland Park has municipal land at both top and bottom and should be acquired as connecting open space if funds can be found. If development must occur, a recent (2001) rezoning allows a cluster option. There are municipal lots at both the upper and lower ends. The goal would be to connect these upper and lower public lands in the ravine by natural habitat with public access either on the full ravine width or at least on road and path if some housing must be built. If the route is not cut off by private housing lots, retaining walls, or detention structures, seniors in the apartments and students at Bartle School just uphill would have a safe and attractively natural pedestrian route down to the Southside Bikeway, The Meadows, and Donaldson Park. This ravine was already noted as a desirable spur for the riverside greenway in the 1992 Natural Resource Inventory (p. 37).
- **Buck Woods (Private Land).** Block 47 Lots 27-75, 4.0849 Acres (Tax Sheet 3.04)
- **Municipal Portions Above and Below:** See the discussion above of suggested neighborhood open space for the upper municipal lots along the spur of South Sixth, Block 43 Lots 3-5 0.0691 Acres (Tax Sheet 11); See The Meadows for municipal lots at the foot, Block 47 Lots 76-81 and all of Blocks 48 and 49 (Tax Sheet 3.04)

- **Preserve Wildlife Corridor Along Rail Embankment/Cleveland Avenue.** These wooded strips behind industrial or former industrial sites make an important wildlife corridor along the rail embankment. It connects to woods and wetlands extending far into Edison. In Highland Park, wildlife include deer, wild turkey, and heron (a sign of possible wetland).

Library

The Director of the Library takes no exception to the description of the Library system in the 2003 Master Plan. She does indicate that the standard noted in the report which equates to the amount of library space a community should have based upon its population is not used in the Library community.

A major expansion to the library had been completed in 1992. The Library is run by a Library Board with funding coming from the Borough. The library has maximized the usage of the lot that it is on with no room for further expansion. It's meeting room can not meet the demand from local groups, and more space is needed in that respect.

The Library is widely used by the community and has expanded its public internet access from 6 computers in 2003 to 20 computers in 2009.

The staff consists of 8 full time and 10 part time employees. The Library would like to create a computer lab for more after school programs, and felt that the old Senior Center might be a good venue. The director of Community services also concurred with this idea.

Redevelopment Agency

The 2003 Master Plan recommended that the Borough should fully explore the use of New Jersey's Local Redevelopment Statutes, including the creation of a redevelopment body to coordinate and oversee revitalization efforts.

Orth-Rodgers then produced a report entitled Downtown Study Area Determination of Needs Reports which recommended those areas and properties deemed in need of redevelopment as per the State's Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL) (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.) The Planning Board recommended the results of this study to the Borough Council who in turn adopted the report which in effect established the Downtown Redevelopment area.

This area generally encompasses Raritan Avenue from its intersection of South Adelaide Avenue to Fifth Avenue. Selected properties which meet the definition of being in need of redevelopment were included in this area.

The firm of Wallace Roberts Todd (WRT) was then commissioned to develop a plan for this area. On September 13, 2005, WRT produced the document known as the Highland Park Downtown Redevelopment Plan. This plan is consistent with the goals of the current master Plan.

This report proposed land use controls to reinforce current zoning while providing guidelines for the types of areas the Borough would like to see.

Any proposed subdivisions or site plan must be submitted to the Planning Board to determine compliance with the Redevelopment Plan. This is accomplished by an applicant first submitting an application and plans to the Borough's Zoning Officer who forwards these documents and plans to the Redevelopment Agency which had been created to implement the Redevelopment Plan.

The Agency reviews the application and plans, meets with the applicant to work out any issues, and contracts with the applicant in the form of a performance agreement.

Once this is accomplished the plans and agreements are returned to the Planning Board where a subdivision and/or site plan review takes place.

The Master Plan had also recommended that the area of Cleveland Avenue be examined for redevelopment. While the Borough Council had approved such a designation for the properties known as Illuminating Experience and Midland Ross, no Redevelopment Plan was executed.

The Redevelopment Agency, at this time, prefers to concentrate on the redevelopment of the Downtown rather than move further afield to the Cleveland Avenue area. A Redevelopment Plan for that area has therefore not been contemplated.

The Agency is interested in making the Raritan Avenue Downtown more attractive to people and hopes to see an increase of foot traffic on this street. It sees the area between 1st and 2nd Avenue as a key block for redevelopment. One thing the Agency would also like to see is a streamlining of the Main Street Program Review and the Redevelopment Agency Review. It is thought that perhaps the two reviews could be done simultaneously.

Four of the more notable accomplishments in the Downtown Area are as follows:

1. The conversion of the Old Borough Fire House into a Pilates studio and clothing store.
2. The construction of the Rite-Aid.

3. The redevelopment of the former Bernstein's dress shop into a professional office and retail optical shop.
4. The conversion of our older hardware store into a complex housing Dunkin Donuts and other retail and personal service shops.

Sustainable Highland Park

The 2003 Master Plan did not directly address the issue of a "green or sustainable" Highland Park. A Green Communities Work Group (now called Sustainable Highland Park) had been subsequently established by the Mayor in 2003 to more thoroughly address the issue. As a result of their efforts, Highland Park Green Community Plan 2007 was prepared by The New Jersey Sustainable State Institute.

This Green Community Plan outlined five primary goals and an action plan on how to achieve these. The goals are as follows:

Goal 1: Healthy Environment

Goal: An environment consisting of healthy ecosystems, clean air and water, and preserved environmentally sensitive areas that conserve the finite resources upon which our quality of life depends.

Goal 2: Healthy People

Goal: A healthy community that is active and physically fit, with access to quality healthcare and strong police, fire and ambulance services, and where residents are protected from exposure to toxic contaminants in the home and in the environment.

Goal 3: Strong Community

Goal: A walkable community with a vibrant downtown where residents can socialize and celebrate, with green businesses that meet local needs, and a responsible and efficient government that ensures the provision of community and municipal services for residents of all ages.

Goal 4: Convenient Transportation

Goal: A transportation system with minimal negative environmental impacts, that allow residents to live without automobiles and promotes the health and social benefits of safely walking and biking in Highland Park.

Goal 5: Fairness & Equity

Goal: A community that has a mix of housing with services, recreation, and shopping nearby, where all residents have equal educational and recreational opportunities, and are engaged in Highland Park's sustainability initiatives.

It was also noted that the Mayor had also produced a paper entitled "Highland Park 2020: A Sustainable Community – The First Five Years." This document is essentially consistent with the Green Community Plan.

The Chairman felt that it was important that a green buildings and environmental sustainability Master Plan Element, which shall provide for, encourage, and promote the efficient use of natural resources and the installation and usage of renewable energy systems; consider the impact of buildings on the local, regional, and global environment; allow ecosystems to function naturally; conserve and reuse water; treat storm water on-site; and optimize climatic conditions through site orientation and design be adopted in the Master Plan as allowed for under the Municipal Land Use Law.

It would seem that the green Community Plan 2007 and the Mayor's paper could form a foundation for such a Master Plan Element.

The group expressed other concerns with regards to limiting carbon emissions by the planting of trees and the preservation of open space. In regards to open space preservation, the desire to retain the Buck Woods property was noted.

The group was also interested in having Highland Park certified as a sustainable community as defined by Sustainable Jersey.

Sustainable Jersey™ is a certification and incentive program for municipalities in New Jersey that want to go green, save money, and take steps to sustain their quality of life over the long term. Sustainable Jersey will have required and elective "actions" that municipalities can implement to receive the verification. The actions address issues such as global warming, pollution, biodiversity, buying locally, community outreach, green building, and sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable Jersey is an initiative of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities' Mayors' Committee for a Green Future, the Municipal Land User Center at the College of New Jersey, The New Jersey Sustainable State Institute at Rutgers University, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, the Rutgers Center for Green Building, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, and a coalition of NJ non-profits, state agencies, and experts in the field.

The Mayors' Committee for a Green Future and NJ State League of Municipalities will provide recognition to "sustainable communities" – those communities that adopt, support, and implement a specified set of sustainability and greening initiatives. After the first year, the project partners will release a second round of actions, tools, and incentives, raising the bar and moving municipalities further down the road to a green future. The process is intended to be a long term effort that builds on past success and becomes a staple among local greening and sustainability efforts in New Jersey.

This objective is entirely consistent with the Mayor's 2020 Plan.

In conclusion, Sustainable Highland Park felt that the Master Plan Reexamination report should suggest that the Planning Board create a new Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Master Plan Element; support the designation of Highland Park as a sustainable community, and pursue efforts to maintain open space and tree planting as part of the reexamination objectives.