

**-Draft-**

# **MASTER PLAN**

**BOROUGH OF ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS**  
**Monmouth County, New Jersey**



**Prepared: October 1, 2018**

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Jon Crowley, Councilman  
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# **PLANNING BACKGROUND**

# **I. INTRODUCTION**

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The Borough of Atlantic Highlands is a small, fully developed community located on Sandy Hook Bay in northeastern Monmouth County. The Borough's size, includes 1.12 square miles in land area and another 0.5 sq. miles of riparian water (1.72 square miles total)<sup>1</sup>, places it 35th in the total land area among Monmouth County's 53 municipalities.

Atlantic Highlands has a long history dating back hundreds of years, when the Lenape inhabitants lived along its cliffs and creeks. Significant changes have occurred to the area from the time of Henry Hudson's 1609 visit and the 1664 purchase of the whole peninsula by English settlers. Now Atlantic Highlands has a reputation as an attractive, small-town residential community beside a long waterfront and large harbor.

This Master Plan represents a direction and a clear course of action to realize the future vision for Atlantic Highlands. That vision involves retaining its character as a small town and at the same time continuing to thrive as an active, livable waterfront community with diverse housing, ample recreation, a healthy environment, adequate infrastructure, and quality education, while maintaining a positive economic climate.

The Master Plan represents the collection of data produced from the efforts of diverse groups of individuals within the Borough who have produced an extensive amount of valuable research and documents. It represents a tool for the people of Atlantic Highlands to use to guide the future of their unique community.

This Master Plan represents an updating of the 2006 Master Plan. This Master Plan is divided into two parts: Planning Background and Master Plan.

The Planning Background information includes the planning history of Atlantic Highlands, historical and existing population data, projected population growth, and existing land use data.

The Master Plan establishes goals and objectives of the Borough and establishes guidelines for land use, housing, utility services, economic development, recreation, recycling, circulation, natural and cultural resources, and community facilities. The Master Plan incorporates the goals and objectives of earlier Master Plans and also takes into consideration the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, the 2016 Monmouth County Master Plan and the master plans and zoning ordinances of adjoining communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Land and water area based upon NJDEP GIS area calculations for Atlantic Highlands

## II. PLANNING HISTORY

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Prior to being incorporated into the 1975 Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), New Jersey statutes provided for the adoption of a master plan by municipal planning boards. The MLUL required that adopted zoning ordinances reflect the goals and objectives stipulated in the master plan. Subsequently, N.J.S.A. 40-55D-62 provided that after August 1, 1988 master plans must be re-examined at least every six years and a report issued. N.J.S.A. 40-55D-62 was amended in 2011 extending the reexamination period to ten years. If specific changes are recommended, then the master plan should be amended following established procedures.

In 1964, in accordance with New Jersey statutes, the Borough of Atlantic Highlands prepared its first Master Plan that was subsequently amended in 1966. In December, 1988, under Borough direction, Townplan Associates undertook a detailed study of the existing land uses in Atlantic Highlands. Tax maps, assessment data, aerial photography, and field surveys of the Borough were utilized as part of the effort to update and confirm the nature and location of land uses within the Borough. As a result of a Reexamination Report that also was adopted in 1988, the Borough's Zoning Ordinance was updated and completely revised in June, 1993.

A second Reexamination Report was completed in 1990, which recommended a new Master Plan. A new Master Plan was adopted on August 2, 1990. The new plan was revised on October 4, 1990 and again on January 3, 1991 to reflect additional data and policy changes. In 1996 the Borough's third Reexamination Report was prepared and adopted.

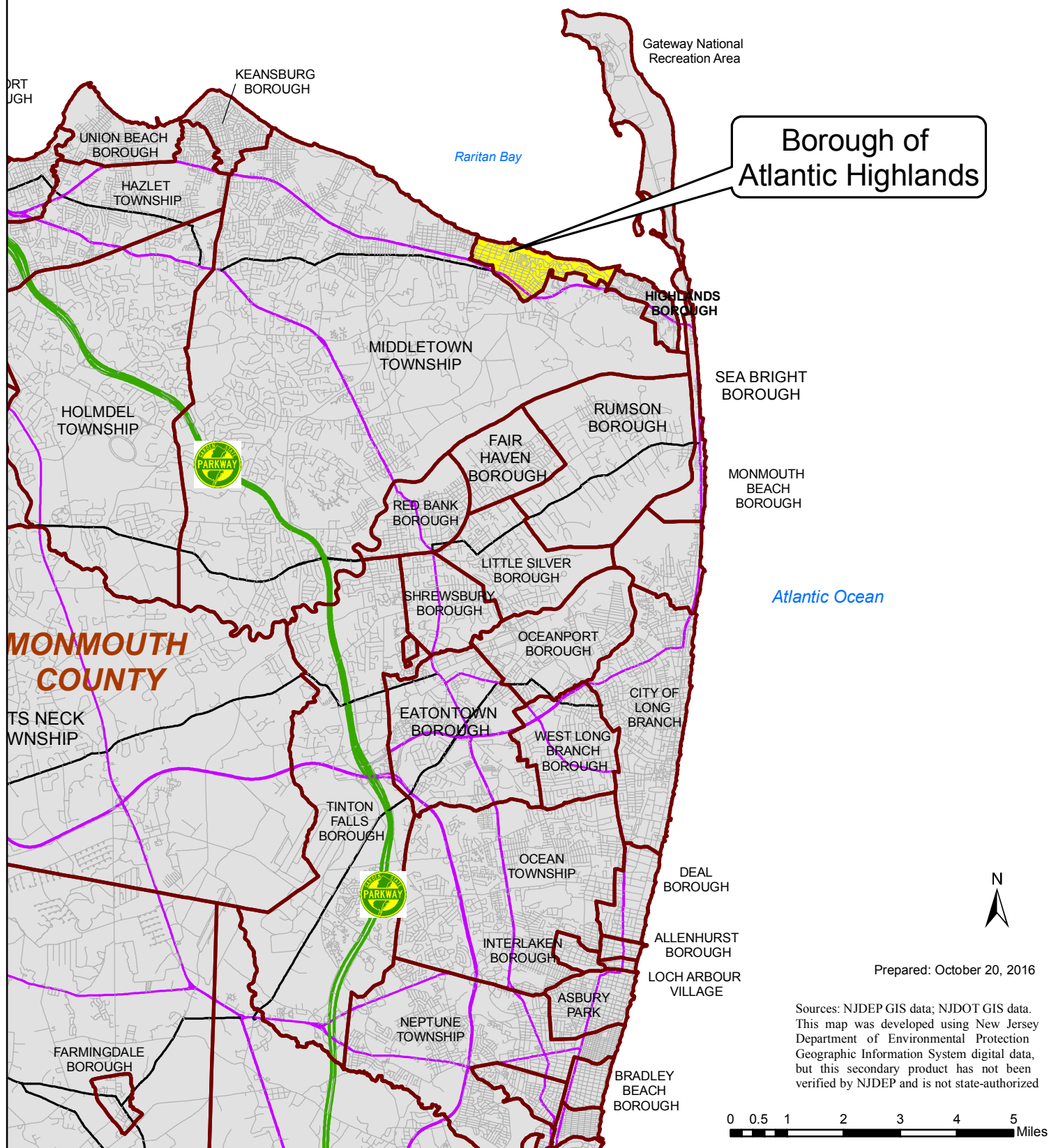
By ordinance, in 1995 the Atlantic Highlands Planning Board assumed the functions of the Zoning Board, which was abolished pursuant to a 1994 amendment to the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, P.L. 1994, C. 186, sec. 1.

A fourth Reexamination Report of the Master Plan and Development Regulations was prepared and adopted in 2002 by the Borough of Atlantic Highlands Planning Board. Although the next Reexamination Report was not due until August 2, 2008, updating of the Master Plan was recommended following receipt of the 2000 Federal Census data on housing and population. The professional planning firm, Thos. J. Scangarello & Associates, P.A., was retained in 2005 to prepare an updated Master Plan. The Master Plan was adopted in May 2006 as amended in 2007. The 2006 Master Plan consolidated the 1990 Master Plan with the 2002 Reexamination Report and identified areas that needed further clarification. On February 8, 2018 the Planning Board adopted a Reexamination Report. The next Reexamination Report is required to be adopted on or before February 8, 2028.

In 2016 the firm of Thomas Planning Associates, L.L.C. was retained to update the 2006 Master Plan as amended in 2007 to include updated 2010 and 2015 Census data, updated Geographic Information Systems (G.I.S.) mapping, recommended sustainability options, updated land use goals and objectives, and updates to each of the plan elements that considers recommendations from State, County and Borough sources.



# FIGURE II-1 REGIONAL LOCATION MAP BOROUGH OF ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS Monmouth County, New Jersey



### III. MASTER PLAN UPDATE

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This Master Plan serves to replace the May 2006 (revised August 2007) Master Plan with the exception of the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan which was adopted on December 1, 2005 and amended December 11, 2006. The 2006 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan will remain in full force and effect as an element of the Master Plan until updated in accordance with Court Order or approved by a State housing agency.

This Master Plan fully complies with the requirements provided for in N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28, Master Plan preparation; contents; modifications. This Master Plan will:

- Focus on preserving the Borough's unique historic and bayside community character, while providing a vision for the future.
- Include recommendations and data of the Recommendations Report entitled "Getting to Resilience" prepared by the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Center – January 2015
- Propose directions influenced by new concepts in planning, coupled with previous planning concerns established in the 1990, and 1996 Master Plans.
- Update the Master Plan to reflect the recently prepared and adopted September 19, 2016 Monmouth County Master Plan.
- Update the population and housing data of prior Master Plans using the latest 2010 Census data and 2015 American Fact Finder database which distributes census and survey data collected by the Census Bureau.
- Include revised language for natural resource categories already identified in the prior Master Plans.
- Revise the Land Use Element and provide districts and proposed future objectives that support the policies of this plan and are consistent with the Borough's Zoning Map.
- Include a revised Housing Plan Element that meets the statutory requirements of the Fair Housing Act (N.J.S.A. 52:27D-310, et seq.), the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28), and Fair Share Housing Center (FSHC) Settlement Agreement approved by Court Order on May 24, 2018.
- Provide GIS mapping to designate existing circulation networks and proposed circulation networks. Scenic roadways will be identified based on Monmouth County Scenic Roadway Plan standards.
- Respond to several standards and policies pertaining to environmental issues and to fair

share housing issues, which have been adopted by major State agencies that directly affect the development capabilities of the remaining vacant lands within the Borough of Atlantic Highlands.

## IV. VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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The vision of the Atlantic Highlands planning program is to retain the character of the Borough as a small town, while continuing to maintain it as an active, livable waterfront community with diverse housing, ample recreation, a healthy environment, adequate infrastructure, quality education, and a positive economic climate.

The goals and objectives set forth in this Master Plan evolved to accomplish the vision for Atlantic Highlands. They represent the collective efforts of all those Borough groups listed below to provide a cohesive plan to realize that vision. The Borough has relied on many different commissions/committees for assistance in developing a variety of plans for future planning of the Borough. These commissions/committees include the Environmental Commission, Shade Tree Commission, Historical Society (nonprofit), Chamber of Commerce, Harbor Commission, and a subcommittee comprised of municipal officials specifically designated for Reexamination of the Master Plan. Through these means, the planning process takes into account the predominate geographic, economic, demographic and other realities and needs of the Borough.

Commissions and committees made up of citizen volunteers are used extensively in the planning process. Proposals, debates and decisions in the Master Plan and Reexamination process were conducted in public meetings.

Nine municipalities comprise the Monmouth County Bayshore Region. These municipalities include Atlantic Highlands, Highlands, Keansburg, Hazlet, Union Beach, Keyport, Aberdeen, Matawan and the northern portion of Middletown Township. Having formed the Regional Collaborative, these nine municipalities have developed a plan to improve, enhance and revitalize all of their communities. The Collaborative overall plan entitled “Bayshore Region Strategic Plan” was adopted by the Monmouth County Planning Board on September 18, 2006 and focuses on enhancing the waterfront and preserving the maritime character of the region. These concerns are not only important from an environmental perspective, but also for economic development in the region. Relevant suggestions found in the Regional Strategic Plan have been incorporated into the goals and objectives set forth in this Master Plan.

### **A. HERITAGE**

#### **GOAL:**

**Maintain and enhance the Borough architectural, historic and scenic heritage as an asset for the future.**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Seek to promote well-conceived and more widespread preservation by providing practical guidance and economic incentives sought by homeowners for restoration of historic structures.

- Provide a set of principles, objectives, and policies that would provide guidance for protecting and enhancing the town's historic heritage.
- Mandate a coherent program of action.
- Revise the Borough Development Regulations to incorporate stronger policies, ordinances, guidelines, incentives and other action aimed at historic preservation and restoration, as noted above.
- Create a Historic Preservation Commission in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-107.
- Complete and update a historical building inventory and extend the inventory to include the Central Business district and the west side of the Borough.
- Update existing landmarks provisions in the Land Development Ordinance for Municipal Land Use Law conformance.
- Encourage the continuing exchange of information on restoration experiences, materials, sources and services through the Historical Society and the Older Homes Group its sponsors.
- Aid the Historical Society to collect and house reference information, historic documents and exhibits, and maintaining the Strauss Mansion Museum as a public resource on the history of the Borough and its environs.
- Focus on the preservation and physical enhancement of the historic district on Victorian Hill by means of better documentation and public interpretation. Similar efforts will be made for the Victorian architectural heritage and streetscapes on the west side of town.
- Develop preservation, restoration and re-development initiatives on a town-wide basis.

## **B. HOUSING**

### **GOAL:**

**Limit future development and population density.**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Update existing land use and housing data to determine remaining available vacant land.
- Develop town-wide policies to restrain additional housing development so as to maintain the small-town character of the Borough.
- Develop ways to discourage overdevelopment of infill lots as much as possible.

- Continue to improve the balance between housing development and open space preservation, with the aim of providing residents increased opportunities for active and passive recreation (including bay front activities, trails and greenways), maintaining natural buffers and wildlife habitat, and sustaining property values and residents' enjoyment that depend in part on these assets.
- Include housing data from future Censuses to determine future needs.
- Examine possible ordinance changes regarding existing housing and new construction to encourage single-family housing compatible with the existing historic structures and historic districts.
- Review the requirements of the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992 C. 79 (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.) as amended by P.L.2013, c.159 to determine the most efficient manner to prepare and implement any redevelopment plans the Borough may establish.
- Revise Borough's Housing Plan Element to address affordable housing obligation based upon applicable Court rulings and State requirements including the statutory requirements of the Fair Housing Act (N.J.S.A. 52:27D-310, et seq.), the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28), and Fair Share Housing Center (FSHC) Settlement Agreement approved by Court Order on May 24, 2018.
- Promote zoning that provides for the protection and enhancement of existing housing units that can serve as affordable housing.
- Promote construction codes that are in conformance with FEMA and State Emergency Management Guidelines and are consistent with sound loss mitigation practices with the goal of preserving life and property.
- Promote environmental sustainability in the development and renovation of residential property in accordance with the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED system (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) that sets standards for site development, water and energy efficiency, material selection, indoor environmental quality and other environmental design factors.

## **C. COMMERCE**

### **GOAL:**

**Encourage structural and aesthetic improvements in the business and entertainment and light industry districts to strengthen their commercial attraction, promote a viable economic base, and expand the choice of goods, services and employment available within the Borough.**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Continue to promote, protect and foster interaction of the Borough's four main geographic elements (historic district; business and entertainment district; and harbor; and scenic, natural and recreational lands). Work to continue these elements as the mainstay of the Borough's tax base, real estate appeal, employment opportunities and community life.
- Continue Borough efforts to upgrade and revitalize the business and entertainment district to attract businesses and customers, while maintaining and strengthening its characteristics - human scale and pedestrian friendliness, small-town/small-shops nature, inviting and restful traditional streetscape treatment, historic-style storefronts, low-key signage, convenient parking, litter-free environment, etc.
- Continue plans to link the business and entertainment district with the Many Mind Creek greenway, the waterfront and the harbor.
- Study redevelopment possibilities in the West Avenue corridor south of Highland Avenue and the light industry district that would improve business prospects, the mix of uses and services provided, the aesthetics of structures and streetscapes, vehicular and pedestrian access, traffic and circulation patterns, etc., while also creating the greenway along the district's "back yard" of Many Mind Creek and enhancing its streambed and bank conditions, vegetated buffer, wetland functionality, flood control, and aesthetic appearance.
- Study redevelopment opportunities in the Municipal Harbor including additional commercial space and aesthetic and structural enhancement of existing commercial structures. Consider alternatives to the current Municipal Harbor launch ramp operation with an eye toward increased pedestrian safety, optimal use of available parking and enhanced boater safety.
- Improve traffic circulation and parking provisions.
- Improve pedestrian and cyclist safety through repair, restoration, installation of sidewalks and bike lanes throughout the Borough.
- Continue to support the restoration and renovation of existing business properties for commercial use.
- Review the eligibility requirements and benefits of having the Borough designated a Transit Hub by NJDOT.
- Promote environmental sustainability in the development and renovation of commercial property in accordance with the U.S. Green Building council's LEED system (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) that sets standards for site development, water and energy efficiency, material selection, indoor environmental quality and other environmental design factors.

- Redraw the boundaries for the town center designation to emphasize the downtown business and entertainment district. Encourage restoration and revitalization rather than new development in these areas.
- Participate with other communities in the Region to develop an overall development strategy for New Jersey Route 36, focusing within Atlantic Highlands on the area at and west of First Avenue.
- Join with other municipalities in the Region and other levels of government, as well as business, environmental, and cultural organizations to promote the area as a tourist destination and also implement plans relating to economic development, waterfront and open space resources, and transportation.

## **D. LINKAGES and EDGES**

### **GOAL:**

**Seek appropriate linkage and balance of waterfront open space and recreational activities with waterfront commercial and commuter activities to enhance the character and amenities available along the Bayshore. Improve the quality of the Borough's network of roadways, trails and gateways.**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Implement the concept plan for Many Mind Creek and its greenway trail as the missing link between the Henry Hudson Trail coming from the west and planned Trail to the east, which will also provide a walking and biking connection from west side residential areas to recreation at Firemen's Field, to the business district and to the Marina.
- Pursue needed trail linkages and extensions in the Lenape Woods Nature Preserve to connect the existing east and west sections, create a trail eastward to Mount Mitchell Scenic Overlook, complete links downhill to the future Trail, and cooperate with Middletown Township on the proposed pedestrian bridge from the Preserve to the Campo Trails south of New Jersey Route 36.
- Support the maintenance and upgrading of transit connections to nearby towns and Manhattan.
- Assure continuation of the commuter ferry service by providing additional parking, working to construct a ferry terminal and ticket office, and improving passenger access, and by continuing to explore possible grants for these purposes.
- Strengthen links among the ferry system, the business and entertainment district, the local bus stop at Center Avenue, and New York commuter buses at New Jersey Route 36 including improving gateway, destination and parking signage; establishing shuttle bus service if feasible; and installing route maps at key points.
- Improve sidewalks.



- Add new bike lanes.
- Improve community preparedness in case of storms, flooding, or other disasters that have impact on the Borough.
- Improve traffic circulation and parking provisions downtown and in the Marina area. This would include performing a targeted study of parking demand and need for the downtown area with the potential of expanding the public parking options.
- Revise the Zoning Ordinance as need to strengthen off-street parking requirements for principal uses in the commercial zones.
- Support ridesharing services and new technologies that limit demand on existing parking facilities.
- Consider applying for Transit Village designation.
- Continue participation in the Regional Collaborative to support the initiatives established in the Regional Strategic Plan.

## **E. INFRASTRUCTURE and SUSTAINABILITY**

### **GOAL:**

**Maintain and improve municipal service systems where deemed necessary. Ensure that investment in infrastructure supports a sustainable pattern of land uses that builds on past public investment in roads, schools, utilities and public open space.**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Continue to identify and correct infiltration and inflow problems within the sanitary sewer system.
- Assess the existing zone with septic systems to determine the feasibility of municipal sewer based on complex issues such as topography, geological stability, technological alternatives, system layout, costs and financing methods. Alternatively, adopt a septic maintenance program with municipal oversight.
- Implement adopted stormwater management measures in order to reduce nonpoint pollution, control erosion and sedimentation, reduce flooding and gain the full benefit from wetlands and stream buffers.
- Continue to update and improve the water supply system, which has parts that are over 100 years old.

- Continue the Borough street improvement program to maintain and improve local road system.
- Work with state and county road highway departments to replace several outdated bridges.
- Identify scenic roadways for designation on updated mapping and develop construction guidelines to preserve the roadways and their public viewsapes.
- Take all necessary steps for grant-seeking, planning, remediation of contaminants, other environmental studies, public consultation and negotiations with landowners, to achieve Borough acquisition of the remaining tracts of Bayshore property, or any tracts that may become available in the future.
- Seek an appropriate linkage and balance along the Bayfront between open space, recreation, environmental conservation and public access needs, and activities related to commuting, parking, ferry operations, private-boat docking, charter boats, restaurants and other commercial activities.
- Ensure compliance with all Federal and State regulations and guidelines for coastal management.

#### **OBJECTIVES RELATED TO THE MARINA:**

- Maintain and improve the facilities and services in the municipal marina for support of boat launching, operation, docking, and storage. The aims are to enhance the quality of harbor activities, reduce environmental impacts, ensure customer loyalty, and increase revenues and the resulting town-wide economic benefits, while also meeting State objectives relating to boating, tourism, fishing, coastal management and water quality.
- Help to develop, and to implement where possible, emerging plans for Bayshore regional cooperation in dredging, remediation of dredge spoils when needed, and beneficial use of dredged materials as part of a long-term dredge management program for the Marina.
- Encourage and enforce the practices mandated in the State-wide “Clean Marina” program and the related Borough ordinance that prevent pollution in the marina on land and in the bay, expand the sewage pump-out facilities and complete other new physical installations, institute relevant contractual provisions for leaseholders, and conduct staff training required for full compliance.
- Enhance non-boating related activities in the Marina area to attract residents and visitors to the marina.
- Encourage commuters to spend additional time in the Borough by creating a more “gateway like” atmosphere at the Municipal Marina to encourage patrons and commuters to “discover” Atlantic Highlands.

## **F. COMMUNITY**

### **GOALS:**

**Retain the small-town residential character while continuing to thrive as an active, livable waterfront community.**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Maintain the delicate balance between natural, recreational, residential and commercial uses along the entire waterfront.
- Continue the Borough's commitment to open space preservation.
- Maintain pedestrian and bike friendly streetscapes where they currently exist and create additional areas where feasible.
- Obtain specific grants to support Borough objectives of community preservation and enhancement.
- Formally adopt measures for existing tree maintenance and protection, in addition to existing measures in the steep slope zone, and add language to Borough ordinances regarding planting requirements for new development.
- Preserve as much as possible of the Borough's natural landscape.
- Continue to participate with other Bayshore towns in "shared interest" of ecological and economic resources in order to promote a regional effect.
- Continue to support and participate in County, State and Federal endeavors for coastal protection including the recommendations and data of the Recommendations Report entitled "Getting to Resilience" prepared by the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Center – January 2015
- Continue with plans to acquire available vacant land to support the proposed Open Space and Recreation Plan and the goals proposed in the 5-year Action Plan listed below:
  - a. Provide increased active and passive recreation for children and adults, including active recreation programs such as ball games and swimming, and passive pursuits such as hiking and nature observation.
  - b. Offer trail access and other open space amenities to additional neighborhoods.
  - c. Help restrain development in environmentally sensitive areas in the Borough, thus maintaining both quality of life and property values.
  - d. Reduce the danger of over-intensive development along our borders.

- e. Protect natural resources such as streams and stream banks, beaches, steep slopes and slump block zones, forests and wetlands.
- f. Preserve and enhance the environment by maintaining existing buffers against highway noise and air pollution, saving natural habitat needed by birds and wildlife, and preserving tree mass that moderates temperature and wind effects.
- g. Add to natural/environmental education opportunities available to children and adults.
- h. Provide increased protection from flooding by maintaining and improving existing wetland areas that absorb storm surge and run-off.

## **G. NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **GOALS:**

**Identify all of the natural resources within the Borough and develop comprehensive plans for the conservation of those resources.**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Protect natural resources such as streams and stream banks, bay coast and beaches, steep slopes and slump block zones, forests and wetlands.
- Preserve and enhance the environment by maintaining existing buffers and establishing new buffers where necessary.
- Protection of woodlands and tree cover for the stability of both slopes and soil; the control of erosion; the reduction of sediment reaching the streams, the harbor, the bay; the retention of rain and groundwater (the source of the Borough's drinking water); the supply of nutrients needed for other kinds of vegetation; the provision of shelter and habitat needed by birds and other wildlife; the counteracting of car fumes and other air pollution; the maintenance of buffers against traffic noise, for shade relief and cooling effects in summer; for the moderation of wind effects; for privacy buffers between residences; and screening between different land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.).
- Educate Borough residents about the positive and valuable functions of freshwater and saline wetlands in flood abatement, water quality, and habitat provision.
- Strengthen monitoring and enforcement of unauthorized tree removal, slope disturbance, wetland infill and other abuses of natural resources.
- Continue the measures required under the State-mandated Borough stormwater management plan and ordinance; undertake follow-up projects recommended in the

regional stormwater management program for the Many Mind Creek watershed; and develop further ordinances as necessary for the implementation of the above objectives.

- Follow the recommendations and data of the Recommendations Report entitled “Getting to Resilience” prepared by the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Center – January 2015.

## **V. EXISTING LAND USE**

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At the time the first Atlantic Highlands Master Plan was prepared in 1964, the Borough had already developed as a suburban residential community. The first land use survey revealed that the principal land use within the Borough was single-family residential with very few multi-family units.

The majority of commercial activity was located primarily along First Avenue, between New Jersey Route 36 and the waterfront with only a few stores and taverns scattered throughout the Borough. The 1964 report observed that at that time retail sales in the Borough were declining and that local consumer spending was increasingly being lost to highway shopping centers. The report also noted that eight stores located along First Avenue were vacant at the time of the survey.

All other land use categories comprised a significantly small percentage of the total developed land area within the Borough, with the exception of vacant land. Although the 1964 report indicated vacant land comprised over 15 percent of the Borough's total land area, it noted that the majority of the vacant land was unsuitable for development.

Compared to 1964, the existing land uses in the Borough in 2006 continued to be comprised predominately of single family residential uses. In 2016 single family residential accounted for 59.2 percent of the total land area. Commercial uses, including retail, restaurants and personal services particularly along the First Avenue corridor, consist of 6.5 percent of the total land area. The other major category of land use is “public property” which consisted of 7.0 percent of the total land area. The major categories of existing land uses are described below:

### **RESIDENTIAL**

Single-family housing, houses occupied by two to four families, and apartment buildings and other large structures for multiple family uses comprised 60 percent of the total land area. Residential uses are located throughout the Borough with the exception of the frontage along First Avenue which is the commercial district.

- The dominant dwelling type in the Borough is detached single-family housing
- A small number of buildings contain two to four families, most of which were created by converting single-family dwellings.
- Larger multi-family structures, including apartment complexes, condominiums and townhouses, accounted for 2.6 percent of the total land area. This also includes Portland Pointe, an apartment building devoted to senior affordable housing (62 years and older) and contains 57 one bedroom units.

## **COMMERCIAL**

Commercial land uses include retail and personal service businesses, mixed commercial/residential uses, and professional businesses, which operate in offices or houses.

The main commercial uses, which account for 6.0 percent of the land uses or approximately 43 acres is primarily centered along First Avenue. This includes the eight block area between the shopping center at the New Jersey Route 36 intersection and Bay Avenue/Ocean Boulevard.

A wide variety of business, entertainment and professional service activities are based in this area. Uses include banks; stores for gifts, novelties, clothing, liquor and other retail items; gas stations, auto services and parts; boating supplies and services; bicycles; printers and publishers; office supplies and services; spas; electronics; laundry; upholstery; framing; hair dressers; dance studio; used books; tanning; movie theater; playhouse; restaurants and food services; pharmacy; and professional services in legal, dental, real estate, architectural and other fields.

In addition, several businesses are on land bordering the harbor, including three restaurants, a fishing supply store, the commuter ferry, and charter fishing and pleasure boats which dock at and operate from the waterfront.

## **LIGHT INDUSTRIAL**

Light industrial uses account for approximately 3.8 acres or 0.5 percent of the land uses in the Borough. These uses are mainly between West Avenue and Many Mind Creek.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES**

Public facilities include those provided by and/or used by Borough government departments and operating services, as well as public schools and postal facilities.

Public uses occupied approximately 50.4 acres or approximately 7.0 percent of the Borough land area.

Borough government departments, services and facilities include the following:

1. Borough Hall: contains municipal offices, police headquarters, public library, and auditorium/courtroom.
2. Emergency Services Building: houses the Fire Department and First Aid Services and the office of Emergency Management. The building fronts on both East Mount Avenue and East Highland Avenue east of First Avenue.
3. Borough Department of Public Works: includes water department, the

recycling center and public works garage and yard off West Lincoln Avenue.

4. Pumping station of Atlantic Highlands located on First Avenue north of Bay Avenue.
5. Atlantic Highlands Elementary School and playground located between East Washington and East Lincoln Avenues.
6. United States Post Office located off First Avenue.
7. Municipal Marina: includes pier areas and facilities leased from the Borough, the Shore Casino Restaurant and banquet facility, two smaller restaurants, and a bait and tackle shop, Sea Streak Ferry Office, Hair Salon, the Atlantic Highlands Yacht Club, and the skateboard park.

## **HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND QUASI-PUBLIC FACILITIES**

The quasi-public land uses include places of worship, private school facilities and community and fraternal organizations. These uses occupied approximately 9.5 acres or approximately one percent of the Borough land area.

- Houses of worship located in Atlantic Highlands include the following:
  1. Central Baptist Church
  2. First Presbyterian Church
  3. Kings Highway Fellowship
  4. Living Word Christian Church
  5. St. Paul Baptist Church
  6. Methodist Church
  7. Saint Agnes Church on Center Avenue
- Other quasi-public facilities include:
  1. Strauss Mansion and Museum of the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society
  2. Masonic Hall on Garfield Avenue
  3. Firemen's Field House at Washington Avenue and Avenue C
  4. Charles J. Hesse III Parish Center at 55 South Avenue. It should be noted that the attached Mother Theresa School (K-8) closed at the end of June 2016 due to declining enrollment.



## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

Park and recreational facilities include land areas owned by the Borough and the County that are preserved as open space land and devoted to active or passive recreation.

- All existing open space which is dedicated to park and recreation uses is detailed in Chapter XI of this Master Plan.
- The Borough owns the following parcels that account for 50.4 acres or approximately 7.0 percent of the total land area:
  1. Seven small parks or tot lots of a half-acre or less (2.85 acres total),
  2. One multi-use park with a beach on the bay (7.5 acres),
  3. Old railroad right-of-way between the harbor and the Highlands Borough border was completed as a Trail for hiking and biking (12 acres)
  4. In addition, the Borough owns the 51-acre Lenape Woods Nature Preserve, of which 3 acres are inside the Borough borders and 48 acres are in neighboring Middletown Township.

*Note: The playing fields of Fireman's Fields (6.8 acres) are privately owned by the Atlantic Highlands Fire Department, Inc., not by the Borough.*

Other open space and recreation areas:

The Monmouth County Park System owns the following land areas in the Borough:

1. Mount Mitchill Scenic Overlook Park (12 acres)
2. Beach, trail and wetlands along the Highlands border, which is called Popamora Point (13 acres).
3. Portion of the Henry Hudson Trail

*Note: The marina and boat basin, covering 20.8 acres including water areas around the piers, is counted under "public facilities" water area.*

Fireman's Memorial Field is owned by the Atlantic Highlands Fire Department, Inc. and is located between West Highland and Leonard Avenue just east of Avenue C and adjacent to Many Mind Creek. The facility contains a total of 7.3 acres. This facility is comprised of a 17 space parking lot, 3 baseball fields (converted to football in fall), bleachers, dugouts, electric scoreboards, PA system, night lights and a cinder track. A field house with restrooms and

concession stand is located along the western portion of the field. A tot lot located adjacent to the field at Leonard Avenue which includes a chute, slide, monkey bars, climbing, other devices.

## **VACANT PRIVATE LAND**

Vacant land in the Borough is very limited and infill development occurring in recent years has reduced it further.

- In 1964 vacant land accounted for more than 15 percent of the Borough total land area, the majority of which was "unsuitable for development" (Borough Master Plan 1996, 5-1).
- By 1988, vacant land had been reduced to 11.5 percent and was still lower by 2000.
- As of 2017, the remaining vacant land consists of small scattered lots an acre or less in size, except for one lot which is approximately 6 acres in size. Vacant land accounts for approximately 37.4 acres or 5.2 percent of the Borough land area.

**Table V-1  
Existing Land Use-2016  
Acreage and Percent of Total**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent of Total Land</b>
Residential (1 to 4 family)	411.3	56.9%
Apartment, Condominium, Townhouse	19.0	2.6%
Senior Housing	3.2	0.4%
Commercial	43.4	6.0%
Light Industrial	3.8	0.5%
House of Worship / Quasi-Public	9.5	1.3%
Public Property	50.4	7.0%
Park/Recreation and Open Space	25.3	3.5%
Public School Property	2.1	0.3%
Vacant	37.4	5.2%
Roadways (Right-of-way) approx.	117.7	16.3%
<b>Subtotal Land Acres</b>	<b>723.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Riparian (water) (Vacant &amp; Public class.)</i>	<i>185.4</i>	
<i>Water area (Classified as Public)</i>	<i>140.0</i>	
<b>Subtotal Water Acres</b>	<b>325.4</b>	
<b>Total Land and Water Area</b>	<b>1048.4</b>	

## **STREETS AND ROADWAY RIGHTS-OF-WAY**

- Streets and roadway rights-of-way account for approximately 117 acres or approximately 16.3 percent of the total land area within the Borough.

## **DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE**

Guidance for the development and redevelopment of the Borough is provided in two key documents, the Borough Master Plan and the Borough Development Regulations:

- The Borough Master Plan provides a long term vision; discusses broad goals, available options, and desirable patterns to be weighed and pursued in the future; and is reviewed and revised as necessary at least once every ten years as mandated by the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89).
- The Borough Development Regulations establish specific zones for particular types of land uses so that neighboring uses will be as compatible and harmonious as possible, and provide development specifications for land development. The regulations contain locations where land can be developed; what uses are permitted and prohibited in each zone; how intensive development may be in terms of building bulk, height, lot coverage and other measurable factors; and how to plan for drainage, off-street parking, landscaping, lighting, signage and other similar amenities and appurtenances. Also, specific requirements are shown regarding maximum building sizes, land disturbance, preservation of vegetation and other factors which are especially important in the steep slope areas comprising the eastern third of the Borough. A list and brief description of the Borough Zoning Districts is provided in Table V-2.

**Table V-2  
Zoning Districts  
Borough of Atlantic Highlands**

<b>District</b>	<b>Description /</b>
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### **RESIDENTIAL**

R-1	Detached single family residential
R-2	Detached single family residential
R-3	Detached single family residential
O-R	Detached single family residential, professional and business offices scaled to be compatible with residential design, home occupations, and conversions of dwellings to office use.
SC	Senior citizen residential
RTH	Residential townhouse and attached single family

MF-1	Multi-family garden residential
MF-2	Multi-family mid-rise

## **BUSINESS DISTRICTS**

HBD	Historic Business District on First Avenue oriented to pedestrians with off street parking consolidated in public parking areas with architectural controls coordinated with streetscape improvements. New development must demonstrate adequate capacity in off-street parking facilities.
CBD	Central Business District oriented to First Avenue with on-site parking required.
HB	Highway Business district oriented to automobile access from New Jersey Route 36.
WB	Waterfront Business district encouraging new retail and water oriented uses to link the HBD with the marina area. Pedestrian orientation, architectural, and streetscape controls required. Off-site parking to be consolidated in shared lots. Visual and physical access to the waterfront required.

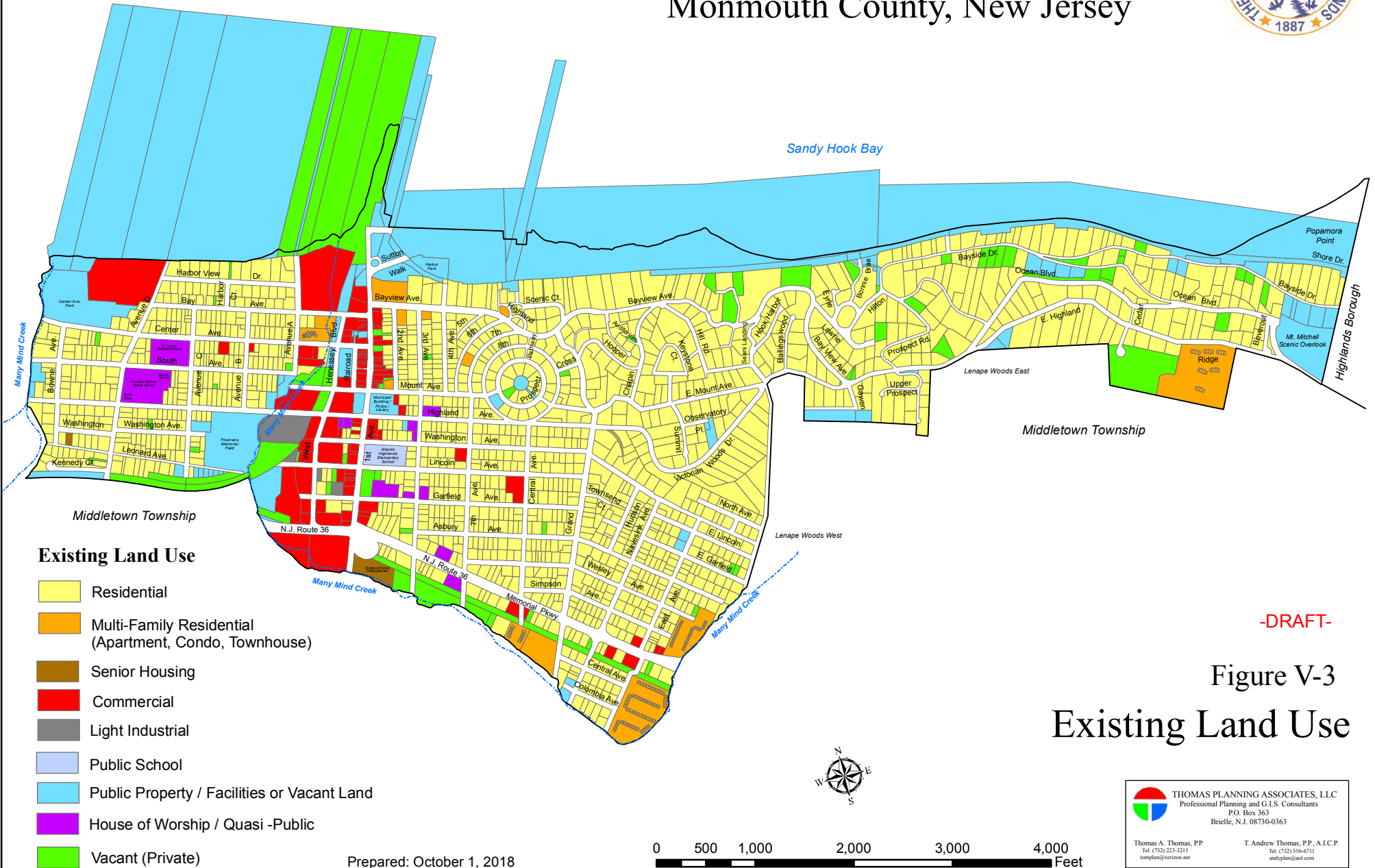
## **OTHER DISTRICTS**

LI	Light Industrial district west of West Avenue.
MR	Marine Recreation district for water dependent and water oriented uses supporting marina and recreation activity. Visual and physical access to the waterfront required.
MC	Marine Conservation Zone apply to those area that are waterward of the mean high water line. Typically these are riparian area properties
AH	The AH Zone is intended to provide the opportunity to construct affordable housing within the Borough of Atlantic Highlands

*Source: "Our Town's Environment" prepared by the Environmental Commission.  
Updated by: Thomas Planning Associates*

# Borough of Atlantic Highlands

## Monmouth County, New Jersey



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Figure V-3  
Existing Land Use

## **VI. POPULATION**

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During the period 1890 to 1970 the Borough of Atlantic Highlands experienced a steady increase in population from 945 to 5,102 with the exception of 1910 to 1920 when the Borough experienced a slight decrease. Since 1970, however, the Borough population has steadily declined from 5,102 to 4,385 in 2010. It is estimated that the Borough population peaked in about 1972.

The decline in population from 1970 through 2010 occurred from a declining birthrate, a declining household size and an increasingly elderly population with fewer children living at home. In 2010 it is estimated that 40.7 percent of the Atlantic Highlands population was aged 50 and older while 15.5 percent of the population was aged 65 and over. The Borough has experienced an increasingly aging population for the past 40 years and it is expected that this trend will continue for some time.

Population trends are influenced by a variety of factors, including national, state, and regional economic conditions, social changes and government policies. Changing birth rates, employment trends, consumer preferences, and numerous other factors can affect future development within the Borough. Atlantic Highlands, however, can guide future development and can manage growth within the Borough by establishing appropriate standards for residential types and development densities as part of its land planning effort.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SOURCES**

The demographic data used in this section are derived from a variety of sources. The U.S. Census Bureau provides data on general population characteristics including the number of persons, households and families, and housing units within the State, Monmouth County and the Borough. Historical and geographical comparisons are possible through the use of Census data. In addition, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Demographic and Economic Analysis compiles demographic data and provides estimates on population characteristics of the State, metropolitan regions, counties and municipalities.

Table VI-1, Historic Population: 1890 – 2010 compares population changes numerically and by percentage on a decennial basis for Atlantic Highlands, Monmouth County and the State. While Atlantic Highlands experienced a 6.8 percent loss in population during the last decade between 2000 and 2010, Monmouth County experienced its lowest population increase since 1880 with an increase of only 2.5 percent. The State of New Jersey also experienced a modest increase of only 4.5% which is the third lowest decennial increase since 1880. The post-World War II population growth in Monmouth County reached a peak between 1940 and 1970 and in Atlantic Highlands reached a peak between 1940 and 1960. The lack of easily developable land coupled with the environmental restrictions on development in the New Jersey Coastal Area beginning in the early 1970s will restrict major increases in population growth in the County and the Borough in the future.

**Table VI-1**  
**Historic Population: 1890-2010**  
**Atlantic Highlands, Monmouth County and New Jersey**

YEAR	ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS		MONMOUTH COUNTY		NEW JERSEY	
	CENSUS	PERCENT CHANGE	CENSUS	PERCENT CHANGE	CENSUS	PERCENT CHANGE
1880	945		69,128		1,444,933	
1900	1,383	46.3	82,057	18.7	1,883,669	30.4
1910	1,645	18.9	94,734	15.4	2,537,167	34.7
1920	1,629	-1.0	104,925	10.8	3,155,900	24.4
1930	2,000	22.8	147,209	40.3	4,041,334	28.1
1940	2,335	16.8	161,238	9.5	4,160,165	2.9
1950	3,083	32.0	225,327	39.7	4,835,329	16.3
1960	4,119	33.6	334,401	48.4	6,066,782	25.5
1970	5,102	2.4	461,849	38.1	7,364,158	2.7
1980	4,950	-3.0	503,173	8.9	7,168,164	18.2
1990	4,629	-6.5	553,124	10.0	7,730,188	5.0
2000	4,707	1.6	615,303	11.2	8,414,378	8.9
2010	4,385	-6.8	630,380	2.5	8,791,894	4.5

Source: U.S. Census: 1890-2010  
 Compiled by: Townplan Associates, 1989  
 Thos. J. Scangarello & Associates, P.A. 2006  
 Thomas Planning Associates, L.L.C. 2016

### **COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE: 1960-2010**

Population changes occur from two basic factors:

- Natural increase or decrease (births versus deaths)
- In and out migration (the movement of residents into or out of a municipality).

During the period 1960 to 1970, population growth in Atlantic Highlands resulted from both a high birth rate and an in-migration of population. In the decade that followed, 1970 to 1980, population decreased as a result of a reduction in the birth rate, a slight increase in the number of deaths and a fairly large out-migration of population. A net out-migration of population continued during the period 1980-2010 as evidenced by declining household sizes. Since the New Jersey Department of Health changed its method of recording births and deaths in the 1990s, it is not currently possible to calculate natural increases or decreases based on birth and deaths within the Borough.

## **AGE, GENDER AND RACE CHARACTERISTICS**

The U.S. Census provides population data on racial, age and gender characteristics on a municipal basis. Table VI-2 provides the data pertaining to the Borough population by race. The 2010 Census also includes a breakdown of Hispanic and non-Hispanic individual.

Table VI-3 provides age and gender characteristics for the 2010 population of Atlantic Highlands. The Borough population of 4,385 in 2010 consisted of 2,246 females representing 51.2 percent of the population while males totaled 2,139 or 48.8 percent of the population. The median age of the Borough population was 45 years in 2010. The median age of Atlantic Highlands is higher than Monmouth County at 43.9 years, the State at 45.0 years and the United States at 37.2 years.

**Table VI-2  
Population By Race  
Borough of Atlantic Highlands**

	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>NON- HISPANIC</b>	<b>HISPANIC</b>
White Alone	4,086	3,937	149
Black or African American alone	63	62	1
American Indian & Alaska Native alone	11	5	6
Asian alone	95	91	4
Some Other Race alone	55	49	6
Two or More Races	75	16	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,385</b>	<b>4,160</b>	<b>225</b>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010*



**Table VI-3**  
**Population By Sex and Age: 2010**  
**Borough of Atlantic Highlands**

<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Male Population</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Female Population</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Under 5	234	5.3%	Under 5	110	2.5%	Under 5	124	2.8%
5 to 9	231	5.3%	5 to 9	117	2.7%	5 to 9	114	2.6%
10 to 14	239	5.5%	10 to 14	118	2.7%	10 to 14	121	2.8%
15 to 19	222	5.1%	15 to 19	124	2.8%	15 to 19	98	2.2%
20 to 24	176	4.0%	20 to 24	91	2.1%	20 to 24	85	1.9%
25 to 29	224	5.1%	25 to 29	111	2.5%	25 to 29	113	2.6%
30 to 34	242	5.5%	30 to 34	113	2.6%	30 to 34	129	2.9%
35 to 39	299	6.8%	35 to 39	149	3.4%	35 to 39	150	3.4%
40 to 44	326	7.4%	40 to 44	168	3.8%	40 to 44	158	3.6%
45 to 49	406	9.3%	45 to 49	188	4.3%	45 to 49	218	5.0%
50 to 54	450	10.3%	50 to 54	244	5.6%	50 to 54	206	4.7%
55 to 59	354	8.1%	55 to 59	183	4.2%	55 to 59	171	3.9%
60 to 64	300	6.8%	60 to 64	136	3.1%	60 to 64	164	3.7%
65 to 69	229	5.2%	65 to 69	116	2.6%	65 to 69	113	2.6%
70 to 74	154	3.5%	70 to 74	69	1.6%	70 to 74	85	1.9%
75 to 79	128	2.9%	75 to 79	48	1.1%	75 to 79	80	1.8%
80 to 84	89	2.0%	80 to 84	26	0.6%	80 to 84	63	1.4%
85 & over	82	1.9%	85 & over	28	0.6%	85 & over	54	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,385</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>		<b>2,139</b>	<b>48.8%</b>		<b>2,246</b>	<b>51.2%</b>
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>45.0</b>		<b>Median Age</b>	<b>43.9</b>		<b>Median Age</b>	<b>45.8</b>	

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010*

## **INCOME LEVEL**

Table VI-4 outlines household income by income category as of 2014. The 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates reported the median household income in 2014 inflation-adjusted dollars for Atlantic Highlands as \$82,596 and Monmouth County as \$88,413. The New Jersey's median income was \$71,919 while the United States' median income was \$53,657.

Per the 2010 Census, Monmouth County residents have the fifth highest per capita income in New Jersey at \$40,976. Hunterdon County has the highest per capita income county at \$48,489.

**Table VI-4**  
**Household Income Distribution 2014**  
**American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates**

	<b>Atlantic Highlands</b>	<b>Monmouth County</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>United States</b>
Less than \$10,000	4.5%	4.4%	5.7%	7.3%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3.0%	2.9%	3.7%	5.3%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	3.4%	7.4%	8.1%	10.55
\$25,000 to \$34,999	5.8%	6.4%	7.6%	10.0%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11.9%	8.0%	10.6%	13.5%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	20.3%	14.3%	16.0%	17.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	9.8%	12.2%	12.3%	12.0%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	21.9%	18.7%	17.1%	13.1%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	12.2%	10.4%	8.6%	5.2%
\$200,000 or more	7.3%	15.3%	10.4%	5.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Median Household Income	\$82,596	\$88,413	\$71,919	\$53,657

The 2010 U.S. Census reported that 46.7 percent of the residents 16 year of age and older that were employed in 2010 had positions in finance, real estate, professional, scientific, management, administrative, educational, health care and social assistance occupations. Other major occupations included construction, manufacturing, retail trade and the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services sectors of the economy. The distribution of occupations is summarized in Table VI-5, Civilian Occupations-2010 Borough of Atlantic Highlands.

**Table VI-5**  
**Civilian Occupations - 2010**  
**Borough of Atlantic Highlands**

<b>INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	18	0.8%
Construction	165	7.2%
Manufacturing	138	6.0%
Wholesale trade	50	2.2%
Retail trade	221	9.6%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	103	4.5%
Information	89	3.9%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	230	10.0%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	426	18.5%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	418	18.2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	289	12.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,147</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**MASTER PLAN**

## **VII. PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES, ASSUMPTIONS, POLICIES AND STANDARDS**

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### **PRINCIPLES**

In order to promote the conservation of desirable community features, restrain future development on scarce un-built land, and guide preservation, restoration and redevelopment efforts, this Master Plan is based on the following principles:

1. Maintenance and enhancement of the Borough's traditional community form, characterized by its central business district, historic districts, streetscapes and buildings, waterfront orientation, residential areas, pedestrian scale, and open space and recreation areas.
2. Maintenance of the present intensity of land use, density of population, and existing lot sizes and configurations in view of environmental and other constraints, and in line with the capacity of existing infrastructure, the need to maintain satisfactory levels of municipal services, and the goal of preserving the community's traditional character and economic viability.
3. Maintenance and preservation of existing single-family neighborhoods.
4. Restricting multi-family residential use to the existing units in specifically defined locations, which have already been constructed.
5. Provide for affordable housing opportunities within the Borough in identified locations in accordance with applicable regulations and agreements.
6. Encouragement of a viable economic base.
7. Identification and conservation of environmentally critical natural features.
8. Appropriate linkage and balance of waterfront open space and recreation activities with waterfront commercial and commuter activities to enhance the character and improve the amenities centrally available along the bay.
9. Recognition and preservation of historic sites and districts and encouragement of their restoration, rehabilitation and adaptive use.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other natural and manmade disasters including the development of disaster mitigation plans in advance of need.

2. To limit future land development and population density to ensure neighborhood, community and regional well-being and protection of the environment.
3. To prevent the degradation of the environment through the improper use of land, streams and stream corridors, freshwater and saline wetlands, the bay front, and woodlands, and through reduction of tree cover and vegetation on the land.
4. To encourage bay front open space and recreational activities, adequate public services for beach use, hiking, and boating, as well as improved commercial facilities.
5. To establish new and upgrade existing municipal recreational facilities, including ball fields, trails for biking and hiking, beaches, and the Lenape Woods Nature Preserve.
6. To preserve historic sites and districts and to restore, rehabilitate and set adaptive uses for historic buildings.
7. To protect areas with scenic, cultural and recreational value, particularly along the waterfront, stream corridors, the Ocean Boulevard “scenic route” and other scenic roadways, streetscapes in historic districts, and hilly woodlands.
8. To promote a desirable visual environment in terms of open space and recreation lands, stream corridors, the bay front, the Marina, scenic roadways, landscaping, buildings and infrastructure.
9. To encourage restoration as well as redevelopment of substandard sites, buildings and streetscapes which contribute to the improvement and enhancement of the community.
10. To provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for commercial, residential, light industrial, and open space and recreational uses.
11. To maintain and attract beneficial commercial and light industrial uses in their existing zones.
12. To promote the recovery of recyclable materials from the municipal solid waste stream and encourage the conservation of energy.
13. To encourage the appropriate and efficient expenditure of public funds by coordinating public and private development within the framework of existing land use patterns and densities, redevelopment needs and conservation principles.

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

The Atlantic Highlands Master Plan is based upon the following assumptions:

1. There will be no catastrophic disruption of the existing natural and/or man-made features

of the Borough.

2. There will be continued long-term economic expansion within the region. While little or no population growth is expected in Atlantic Highlands and land use and population density are effectively at the limits of capacity, there will be opportunities to enhance the economic base of the community by virtue of its recreational waterfront and favorable access within a developing region, and by pursuing redevelopment initiatives that build on the existing appeal and advantages enjoyed by the Borough.

## **POLICIES**

The Atlantic Highlands Master Plan is based upon the following policies:

1. Provision of a variety of residential and non-residential uses which will maintain the Borough of Atlantic Highlands as an attractive community on Sandy Hook Bay.
2. Protection of the environmental quality of the Borough through measures that maintain sensitive features, especially steep slopes, landmarks, historic sites, areas containing scenic or recreational resources, woodlands, stream corridors, wetlands and natural areas on the bay shore.
3. Management of waterfront development in accordance with an overall plan to protect the amenity of a waterfront location and boat harbor, and to assure the community of physical and visual access to the bay, including access for swimming, boating, off-pier and wade-in fishing, and walking on tidelands.
4. Enhancement of the central business district and light industrial areas to strengthen their commercial attraction and to expand the choice of beneficial goods, services, and employment opportunities available within the Borough.
5. Maintenance of the liveability and value of residential neighborhoods.
6. Management of architectural elements that are seen from the bay to maintain and enhance our Victorian architectural heritage.

## **STANDARDS**

This Master Plan provides general standards for development of the Borough, including type, density and location of development, and delineation of areas that are environmentally sensitive. This Master Plan also provides recommendations for historic preservation, coastal waterfront design, park and open space, facilities, roadways. The Development Regulations of the Borough of Atlantic Highlands (Chapter 150 of the Borough Code) includes zoning, site plan, land subdivision and design regulations and provides specific standards for design, construction and development of individual land uses and development sites within the Borough. In addition, Borough, County, State and Federal regulations affecting development, the environment, and

public health and safety all have an effect on the planning and regulatory processes in implementation of this Master Plan.



## **VIII. LAND USE PLAN ELEMENT**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Land Use Plan Element guides the extent and intensity of development within Atlantic Highlands. The land use recommendations are coordinated with the other master plans elements, the basic planning studies and the statement of principles, objectives and assumptions.

The Land Use Plan Element has been based largely upon the historic development patterns, existing land use, and the need to preserve the Borough's traditional form and neighborhoods. It seeks to maintain the current intensity of land use and density of population, which are almost at the limits of capacity, so as to ensure neighborhood, community and regional wellbeing and the protection of the environment. It also continues the Borough's emphasis on preserving open space and improving recreation opportunities.

Sixteen land use districts are planned to provide a balance of residential, commercial, light industrial and marine uses. The districts listed on Table VIII-1 are overlain by designations to protect landmarks, historic areas, flood hazard areas, steep slopes, wetlands and stream corridors. It is intended to establish 50-foot stream buffers along the banks of Many Mind Creek and Wagner Creek in cooperation with Middletown Township for the banks on its side of the border. In the stream buffers, no form of construction is to be allowed, trees and vegetation are to be preserved and public access trails are to be established where feasible within the greenways.

In summary, the Land Use Plan makes recommendations based on the following planning actions:

- The small town residential character should be maintained through coordinated efforts related to revitalization of the Borough, preservation of open space and maintaining a viable coastal resource. Actions will be based on updated ordinances and zoning regulations that will allow the Borough to control the pace and direction of new projects. All proposals will be viewed in a more global perspective as the Borough continues to participate with other municipalities in strategies and plans for economic and ecological resources.
- Residential growth and development should be limited based on several factors: preservation of open space, ordinance changes that support incentives to adapt the existing inventory of historic multi-family structures into units for single family use, and policies that discourage future infill on substandard lots.
- Provide for affordable housing opportunities within the Borough to meet present and future populations and effectuate the Settlement Agreement as further described in the Housing Plan Element.

- The historic aspect of the Borough should be viewed as an asset for the future, one that should be enhanced through legal measures as well as Borough-wide initiatives. Practical guidance and incentives could be made available to homeowners for the restoration of their historical structures. The creation of a Historic Preservation Commission and the adoption of a comprehensive ordinance dealing with historic preservation would allow a framework for protecting and enhancing the Borough's historic heritage.
- Commercial development and redevelopment should be encouraged to establish a viable economic base. Projects designed to upgrade the central business district and commercial areas should be encouraged to support the existing businesses and attract new businesses, which can provide new opportunities for goods, services, employment and customers. The plans to link the waterfront and town center should be continued in order to support the Borough's efforts for commercial development revitalization. Improving the ferry facilities, as well as the road and parking network will support the efforts for economic stability.
- Balance between waterfront commercial and commuter activities with waterfront open space and recreational activities is an important step for the long-term success of the Borough as a viable tourist community. Improving the existing road networks, and the upgrading of transit connections to urban areas will support and enhance the quality of life of Borough residents. Additionally, the plans for development of a network of pedestrian and bicycle links for work and pleasure should go forward to further enable Borough residents to experience the pleasures associated with life. Guidelines will need to be established to protect the intent and future plans for linkages contained within the Borough and those connecting to other Bayshore regional communities.
- Commitment to an upgraded sanitary sewer system is critical for the success of all of the goals put forth in the Master Plan. An in-depth study of existing service and thorough assessment of the areas of the Borough currently with septic systems is imperative to understand the future demands the Borough will experience and to provide realistic guidance to residents using septic systems, many of which are aging. Coupled with these findings, is the need to continue efforts to improve the Borough water supply system. Both systems must be examined and developed in support of an overall plan for the Borough and not reduced to spot examination based on limited individual service.
- The enhancement and preservation of natural resources should occur in a way that is supported and maintained by future residents and visitors. In the long run, it will be an educated public armed with the understanding of the importance for policies and projects that will guarantee the Borough's conservation success. They must understand such issues as:
  - a. What natural vegetation and development resources stabilize soil and why it is important;
  - b. What soil resources retain groundwater and why it is important;

- c. What vegetation attracts wildlife and/or will counteract pollution and how that impacts the everyday life of present and future Borough residents and;
- d. How natural buffers and stream greenways can provide separation between land uses but also minimize the impact of micro-climate conditions.

This Land Use Plan reflects united efforts of the Planning Board in conjunction with numerous other Borough agencies and organizations to guide future land uses and development within the Borough and to coordinate this development with adjacent municipalities. Each goal and objective must be met to maximize the overall development goal of the Master Plan.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The goals of the Land Use Plan have changed somewhat from previous plans due to changes not only on a municipal level, but also on the county, state and federal levels as well. The lack of available land for new development and an ever increasing awareness of the need for preservation of what is unique to the community and conservation of its natural resources have influenced the direction of the goals of this Plan. Some are directions that were not previously encouraged. The recommendations of this Land Use Element are specifically established to support all of the objectives of the seven basic Master Plan Goals.

- (1) **Heritage**  
Maintain and enhance the Borough's architectural, historic and scenic heritage as an asset for the future.
- (2) **Housing**  
To limit future residential development and maintain population density.
- (3) **Affordable Housing**  
To provide affordable housing opportunities to meet present and future populations.
- (4) **Commerce**  
Enhancement of the central business district and light industrial areas to strengthen commercial attraction and to expand the choice of beneficial goods, services, and employment opportunities available within the Borough in order to maintain a viable economic base.
- (5) **Linkages and Edges**  
Appropriate linkage and balance of waterfront open space and recreational activities with waterfront commercial and commuter activities to enhance the character and improve the amenities centrally available along the Bay Shore. Improve the quality of the Borough's network of roadways, trails and gateways.

**(6) Infrastructure and Sustainability**

Maintain and improve infrastructure systems where deemed necessary. Ensure that investment in infrastructure supports a sustainable pattern of land uses that builds on past public investment in roads, schools, utilities and public open space.

**(7) Community**

Retaining the historic small town residential character while continuing to maintain an active, livable waterfront community.

**(8) Natural Resources**

Identify all of the natural resources within the Borough and develop comprehensive plans for the conservation of those resources that will enhance the quality of life in the Borough.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In addition to the goals and objectives the following are recommended:

1. Short Term Residential Rentals - There has been an increasing number of single family homes and other residential uses within the Borough being advertised for short term rentals. These advertisements are typically offered on a variety of different national websites such as “AirBnb”, “Homeaway” and “Vacation Rental by Owner” (VRBO). The result of this practice effectively converts a single family home into a boarding house, bed and breakfast, rooming or guest house. Short-term vacation rentals can bring a positive economic impact to the Borough as a whole in terms of economic benefit because guests will spend their money in visitor related amenities such as restaurants, bars and retail stores. They can also increase the Borough’s awareness as a more attractive tourism destination. While Atlantic Highlands is supportive of increased tourism, visitors and patrons to local business there is also an understanding that this type of use can cause concern. It is therefore necessary to balance the quality of life between businesses, residential uses and short term rental properties. It is therefore recommended that the renting or leasing of residential properties be 30 days or greater. The purpose is to protect the quality of life in single family residential neighborhoods and promote the public health, safety and general welfare. A Short Term Residential Rental Ordinance should be adopted to reflect this recommendation.
2. Signage. Signage in the commercial district should be regulated as follows:
  - a. Permit “murals” in commercial districts as long as specific criteria are met including appropriateness of the design to the function of the site, compatibility with the zone and character of the downtown. It is recommended that a new “Atlantic Highlands Borough Mural Approval Committee” be created to review any new mural sign

- applications. The members on the Committee should include: one member of the Borough Arts Council, one member of the Planning Board, and a Mayor's designee.
- b. "Portable signs" in commercial districts which include A-framed signs commonly referred to as "sandwich signs", banners and feather signs should be regulated subject to receiving a sign permit from the Borough.
  - c. LED lighting should be a permitted sign option in the commercial districts subject to specific qualifying criteria.
  - d. Outdoor seating within sidewalks should be regulated to promote and facilitate the free-flow of pedestrian circulation.
- 3. Developable area standards should be applied to assure that each parcel has sufficient land area outside of steep slopes and wetlands.
  - 4. Lenape Woods Nature Preserve: While the Preserve includes land acquisitions that neighbor Atlantic Highlands and fall within Middletown Township borders, it is recommended that all Borough maps include the full area of the Preserve.

## **RESIDENTIAL**

Approximately 611.0 acres or 84.5 percent of the total land area of the Borough is utilized for residential use.

Although single-family structures are the dominant dwelling type within the Borough, two and four family residential development occupies just over 5.5 acres<sup>2</sup>. The majority of two and four family units have been created from the conversion of single family dwellings, although some recently constructed units also are found. This type of development is most common in areas east of Grand Avenue.

The multi-family category includes apartments, condominiums, townhouses and other attached housing of two or more dwellings. These multi-family uses combine to total approximately 19 acres or 2.2 percent of the total Borough land area. Although multi-family development is scattered throughout the Borough, the larger complexes include: 10 Ocean Apartments, Navesink Cove Condominiums, located on East Avenue south of New Jersey Route 36; and King James Courts Condominiums, located off New Jersey Route 36 west of Sears Avenue, Brookwood Estates off Grand Avenue, and Belvoir Condominiums on Center Avenue, Scenic Ridge townhouses on East Highland Avenue, and Portland Pointe.

There are eight residential land use districts that are based upon established land use patterns. The established residential districts are to be maintained in their present form. Existing lot

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<sup>2</sup> Two to four family residential development acreage is based upon calculation from the August 2007 Borough Master Plan

layouts are to be kept at their present dimensions and configurations. Subdivisions that result in non-conforming lots are to be discouraged

### **R-1 – Single Family Residential**

- The land use in this district is predominantly single family.
- Two-family conversions have been eliminated in this district.
- Conversion of houses containing 2 or more units to single family use is encouraged.
- Minimum lot size of 7,500 sq. ft.

### **R-2 – Single Family Residential**

- The land use in this district is predominantly single family.
- Two-family conversions have been eliminated in this district.
- Conversion of houses containing 2 or more units to single family use is encouraged.
- Minimum lot size of 15,000 sq. ft.

### **R-3 – Single Family Residential**

- The land use in this district is predominantly single family on large lots and steep slopes.
- Two-family conversions have been eliminated in this district.
- Conversion of houses containing 2 or more units to single family use is encouraged.
- Minimum lot size of 30,000 sq. ft.

### **MF-1 - Multi-Family Garden Units**

- This type of multi-family attached housing is restricted to this district. The number of existing units is recommended to be maintained.

### **MF-2 - Multi-Family Mid-Rise Units**

- Multi-Family Mid-Rise attached housing is restricted to this district. The number of existing units is recommended to be maintained.

### **AH – Affordable Housing**

- Two sites are specifically designated for affordable housing within the Borough and include:
  - Block 62, Lot 4 (Simpson Avenue)
  - Block 136, Lot 1 (21 Leonard Avenue)

These two sites are intended to provide the opportunity to construct and help fulfill the mandates of affordable housing. Two-family attached housing is permitted within this district and is required to meet additional affordable housing requirements.

**RTH - Townhouse residential units**

- This type of multi-family attached housing is restricted to this district. The number of existing units is recommended to be maintained.

**SC - Senior citizen housing development**

- Portland Pointe provides for senior citizen development within the Borough. This apartment building is devoted to senior affordable housing (62 years and older) and contains 57 one bedroom units located at 202 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Ten (10) of the units are being counted toward fulfilling the Borough's affordable housing obligation. This development has had a positive impact in providing housing for seniors in the Borough in furtherance of the objectives of the Master Plan.

**OR - Office-residential**

- Located and maintained along the southern frontage of Memorial Parkway and accounts for 22 acres. This district permits single family residential uses and professional offices and banks. This district also permits mixed-use commercial/residential development as a conditional use.

**COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS**

Commercial districts account for approximately 45 acres or 6.2 percent of land area within Atlantic Highlands. Incorporated within the commercial district are such uses as retail/service, mixed use (commercial/residential), office/professional and home/professional or occupation. Commercial development within Atlantic Highlands is primarily centered on First Avenue extending from Bayshore Plaza, located at the intersection of New Jersey Route 36 and First Avenue, to the waterfront. These uses include a variety of commercial activities including banks, restaurants/bars, offices, retail outlets, auto service stations, and other similar uses.

A second but lesser concentration of business activities can be found along West Avenue between New Jersey Route 36 and Bay Avenue. This area represents a relatively large percentage of the commercial acreage, but accounts for only a small number of the actual commercial uses. These uses include printers, auto service stations, foodservices, and building contractors.

There are four districts have been defined for commercial, retail and service uses and make up the commercial districts.

In 2010 the Planning Board conducted a review of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance with respect to permitted building height, floor area ratio and permitted uses in the HBD Historic Business District, CBD Central Business District and the LI Light Industrial District. It was

determined that in order to upgrade and revitalize the HBD, CBD and LI districts several revisions to the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance were necessary and included:

- Increasing the allowable height of structures in the CBD and LI to 40 feet.
- Provide for an increased floor area ratio of 3.0 in HBD zone and 2.0 in CBD and LI zones
- Revise maximum lot coverage and surface coverage to 100 percent in the HBD and 75 percent in the CBD and LI zones
- Delete the rear yard setback for the HBD and CBD
- Reduce the rear yard setback to 20 feet and 40 feet combined for the LI zone
- Add footnote to the Schedule of Zoning Districts – “In the HBD, CBD and LI districts basements and cellars utilized for off-street parking to accommodate on-site uses shall not be counted as a floor”
- Permit mixed-use commercial/residential in the HBD and CBD zones
- Permit mixed-use light industrial/business/office/residential in the LI zone as a conditional use

It was anticipated these changes would create the opportunity for a greater variety of products, services and housing opportunities that would strengthen the business community through increased demand of local services. The changes would also accommodate housing and/or office space to encourage investment to revitalize existing buildings and develop vacant land.

#### **HBD - Historic Business District**

- Based upon historic quality of the streetscape and the buildings.
- Streetscape improvements coordinated with building facade improvements are encouraged.
- Projects subject to Historical Review Commission review (future).
- Off-street parking is confined to public lots outside the HBD boundaries.
- Development applications must demonstrate that adequate parking capabilities are available to accommodate new uses in outside districts.
- Mixed-use commercial/residential is a conditionally permitted use in the zone. A mixed-use building containing commercial and residential uses may be permitted in the HBD (Historic Business District), provided that such use adheres to minimum standards including but not limited to:
  - a. Units are confined to upper stories of mixed-use buildings with ground floor space restricted to commercial activities.
  - b. Smaller residential units, designed for occupancy by one or two person



households are only be permitted.

- Specific sites within the CBD have been designated as affordable housing sites and are further described in the Housing Plan Element.

#### **WB - Waterfront Business District**

- The intent of this district is to encourage development that is based on unified plans coordinated with the marina area.
- This district represents an expansion of the business district into the waterfront area to permit additional retail and entertainment/restaurant uses on underdeveloped property.
- Office space is a conditional use.
- The percentage of floor area in office use is limited to encourage a mix that stimulates pedestrian activity during the day and the evening.
- Open space and pedestrian areas are integrated.

#### **CBD - Central Business District**

- This district provides for an expanded range of general commercial uses.
- On-site parking is required.
- Less emphasis on pedestrian orientation.
- Mixed-use commercial/residential is a conditionally permitted use in the zone. A mixed-use building containing commercial and residential uses may be permitted in the CBD (Central Business District), provided that such use adheres to minimum standards including but not limited to:
  - c. Units are confined to upper stories of mixed-use buildings with ground floor space restricted to commercial activities.
  - d. Smaller residential units, designed for occupancy by one or two person households are only be permitted.
- Specific sites within the CBD have been designated as affordable housing sites and are further described in the Housing Plan Element.

## **HB - Highway Business District**

The highway business district is comprised of commercial uses and shopping centers oriented toward New Jersey Route 36.

## **C - Commercial**

The Commercial District is found along Lincoln Avenue between First Avenue and West Avenue. This district was previously the LI-Light Industrial District, however, historically industrial activity has not been a major component of the developed land area within Atlantic Highlands.

It is recommended that the Light Industrial District be renamed C- Commercial and expand the list of permitted uses to include those uses permitted in the O-R and CBD zones and also include some selected commercial uses. Current permitted uses under the previous LI zone include:

- Professional offices
- Printing
- Personal Services
- Contracting Office
- Assembly, Processing or Repair
- Warehousing
- Municipal Recreation Facility
- Child Care
- Public Facilities

Expanded uses should include:

- Those uses permitted in the O-R and CBD Zones
- Showrooms
- Commercial Indoor Athletic or Exercise Facilities or Health Clubs
- Professional and business offices
- Personal Services
- Auto repair and Sales
- Marine Repair and Sales

## **MARINE RECREATION AND CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**

There are two districts that comprise Marine Recreation and Conservation.

## **MR - Marine Recreation District**

- This district incorporates the marina and public open space uses oriented to the waterfront.
- Uses are restricted to the following:
  - a. Water dependent or water oriented facilities.
  - b. Support uses.
  - c. Recreational uses.
  - d. Public open space.

## **MC - Marine Conservation District**

- This designation is applied to areas waterward of the mean high water line.
- Development in this area is limited.
- This area is intended to maintain the open bay.
- Atlantic Highlands residents are encouraged to enjoy the Borough's coastline resources. Based upon the Resiliency Study that was prepared for the Borough, scientists indicate that residents may experience the effects of higher sea level changes.

## **PUBLIC LANDS AND FACILITIES**

The Land Use Plan includes property under Borough ownership including municipal buildings and land, Board of Education property, Municipal Utilities Authority property, and State and Federal lands. Public lands and facilities (including riparian lands and other water area owned by public entities) totals 353.0 acres.

Borough owned property that is both vacant and active recreation account for 36.5 acres. This includes the Municipal Marina, the Shore Casino Restaurant, totals approximately 15.4 acres or slightly over two percent of the Borough land area.

The Atlantic Highlands Elementary School accounts for 2.0 acres.

The two most prominent recreation areas within the Borough are the Firemen's Memorial Field (6.7 acres) and the Mount Mitchill Scenic Overlook Park (8.1 acres) that includes a 9/11 Memorial. In addition, several small parks and lots have been developed throughout the Borough. Existing municipal recreation facilities are small in area, serve primarily the residential neighborhoods, and provide limited active recreation.

The Borough, State of New Jersey, and Monmouth County also have riparian lands that have been identified and are included on the Land Use Plan. Riparian lands under public classification account for 140.0 acres. Other water area that is shown under public ownership accounts for 141.6 acres. In total both riparian lands and other water area under public ownership accounts for a total of 281.6 acres.

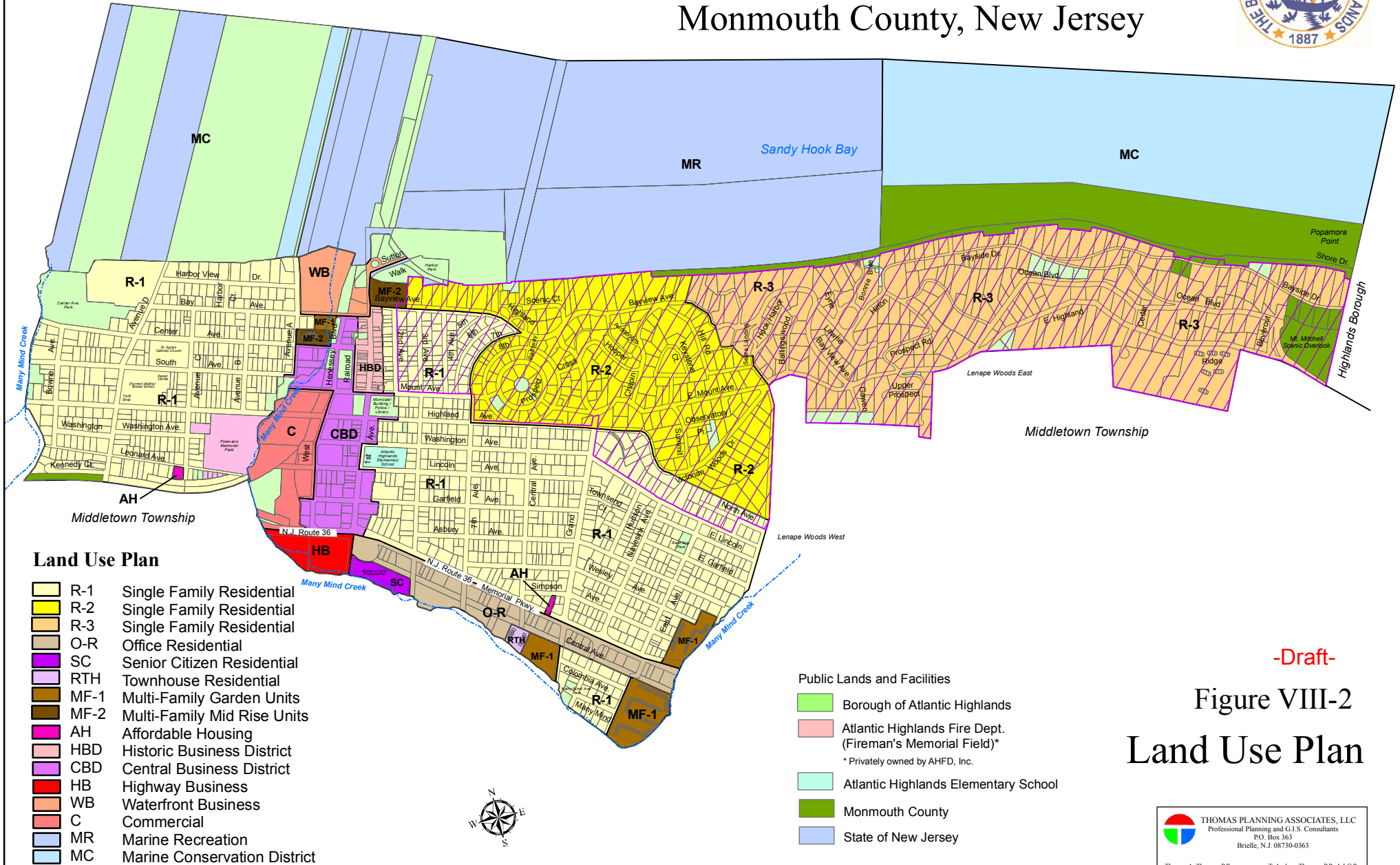
**Table VIII-1**  
**Land Use Plan Element Acreage**  
**Borough of Atlantic Highlands**

<b>District</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Residential</b>			
R-1	Single Family Residential	290	40.1%
R-2	Single Family Residential	110	15.2%
R-3	Single Family Residential	169	23.4%
O-R	Office Residential	22	3.0%
SC	Senior Citizen Residential	3	0.4%
RTH	Townhouse Residential	1	0.1%
MF-1	Multi Family Garden Units	12	1.7%
AH	Affordable Housing	1	0.1%
MF-2	Multi-Family Mid Rise Units	3	0.4%
<i>Subtotal</i>		<b>611</b>	<b>84.5%</b>
<b>Business Districts</b>			
HBD	Historic Business District	5	0.7%
CBD	Central Business District	25	3.5%
HB	Highway Business	6	0.8%
WB	Waterfront Business	9	1.2%
<i>Subtotal</i>		<b>45</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
<b>Other Districts</b>			
LI	Light Industrial	16	2.2%
PB	Public Open Space/Recreation District	51	7.1%
MR	Marine Recreation	286*	---
MC	Marine Conservation District	344*	---
<i>Subtotal*</i>		<b>67</b>	<b>9.3%</b>
<b>Total Acreage*</b>		<b>723</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Open Water / Riparian Land not calculated as part of land area

# Borough of Atlantic Highlands

Monmouth County, New Jersey



-Draft-

Figure VIII-2  
Land Use Plan

## **IX. HOUSING ELEMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLAN**

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The Housing Element and Fair Share Plan is a separate Master Plan document that was prepared by Heyer, Gruel & Associates August 2018. It was adopted by the Planning Board on September 13, 2018.

## **X. HISTORIC PRESERVATION / RESTORATION ELEMENT**

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The purpose of this Historic Plan Element is to establish a comprehensive set of policies to identify and preserve historic resources in Atlantic Highlands. The Historic Plan Element is optional under the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL). Atlantic Highlands has chosen to incorporate this element into the Plan because historic preservation is not only an important part of Atlantic Highlands character, it is vital to the Borough's future economic prosperity as well.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

For thousands of years members of the Native American Lenape tribes, the original inhabitants, lived along the cliffs and creeks, fished in the bay and hunted in the woods in and around the Atlantic Highlands area. Evidence of their presence consists of projectile points, pottery shards, and piles of discarded clam shells, as well as documents from early European explorers and Dutch and English colonists.

**1609** - The first European to visit the area was Henry Hudson in his ship "Half Moon". His ship's log tells of obtaining fresh water from natural springs in the area, now commemorated as Henry Hudson Springs.

**1664** - Popamora, the Lenape chief of the area, agreed to a deed selling the entire peninsula between the Ocean and Keyport to English settlers. William Bowne, with sons John and James, and seven other Europeans came from Gravesend, Long Island and from Rhode Island and soon settled along Many Mind Creek in the area that became Atlantic Highlands, then known as Portland Poynt.

**1667** - New Jersey's first Legislature met in Portland Poynt and under authority of the Nicholls Patent granted three separate townships: Middletown, Shrewsbury and Freehold.

**1776-1783** - Troops from the Colonial and British armies were present in the area. Standing today along the old roads are markers noting the routes and camp sites used by the British enroute to from the Battle of Monmouth in Freehold and Manalapan Township to Sandy Hook.

**1830** - The area began developing. Louis Despreaux, owner of the house near Henry Hudson Springs, known as the "Spout House", sold fresh water from the springs for 5 cents a barrel to fishing vessels, especially the New England Fishing Fleet. The Spout House still stands today at the corner of Hilton Road and Belvidere Road.

**1834** - William Brown built the first dock at the end of what is now First Avenue. It is believed he built the house on First Avenue known as "The Homestead", which sold in 1867 to Thomas Leonard; in turn, Leonard gave it to his son, Thomas Henry Leonard, later to be known as "the father of Atlantic Highlands." The house was later moved from First Avenue to the corner of Mount and Second Avenues, where it remains today.



**1840** – By 1840, the area of comprising Atlantic Highlands was divided basically into four farms. On the west side, from the area of Washington Avenue to the Bay, was the Brown farm, later the Leonard's. From Washington Avenue to the hills was the Roberts farm. On the east side, the Hooper farm was on the water, and inland were the Patterson-Woodward farms.

**1879** - Thomas Henry Leonard began residential development of the Borough by selling land on the east side of First Avenue to about Fourth Avenue as "town lots". He used the money from the sales to extend the original Brown's Dock farther into the Bay to accommodate the new steamships connecting to Manhattan.

**1881** - The Atlantic Highlands Association, a group wishing to establish a Methodist camp meeting grounds, similar to Ocean Grove, purchased the Hooper farm and other properties, and laid out portions of the properties on the east side of the Borough.

**1882** - The first church (Methodist) in Atlantic Highlands was built on First and Mount Avenues (later moved). The first Post Office was established on March 22, 1882. Fire Company formed.

**1883** - First drug store. First public school opening.

**1887** - The Borough of Atlantic Highlands was created from the Township of Middletown by an Act of the State Legislature on February 18, 1847. The Borough was named for its location on the Atlantic Ocean and for steep hills or highlands for which was known. The first street lights were installed.

**1889** - Atlantic Highlands National Bank opened. The Atlantic Highlands Association sold their pier to the Central Railroad.

**1891** - The Borough government was reincorporated into the Mayor-Council form.

**1892** - The Central Railroad pier became the terminus for railroads and steamships, further adding to growth of the area as a popular summer community.

**1895** - First Casino Club organized. The Stone Bridge was built over Grand Avenue and dedicated in 1896. First introduction of electric lighting. Application for a trolley line along First and West Avenues was submitted. A second public school was constructed.

**1905** - The steamboat Mandalay began running three round trips to New York City daily, enabling the Borough's work force to commute to their jobs in the City while still having the pleasures of living on the shore.

**1908** - On August 13, the "Journal" recorded the long-anticipated extension of the electric trolley line into Atlantic Highlands from the Stone Church branch of the Jersey Central Traction Company. The single track was laid on First Avenue, made a loop down Center Avenue, passed the Railroad Station, on what is now West Avenue, and traveled up Mount Avenue to rejoin First

Avenue. Connections could be made to Highlands, Red Bank and Keyport Boroughs. The First Avenue trolley was in operation until the early 1920s.

## **HISTORIC STRUCTURES**

Atlantic Highlands has a variety of residential and commercial structures remaining from the Borough's early history and development. Two areas which serve as historic focal points in Atlantic Highlands are the **Victorian Hill District**, covering an area of approximately 60 acres on a steep hill which rises up from Sandy Hook Bay to an elevation of 120 feet above mean sea level, and the **First Avenue** streetscape of the **Historic Business District**, which comprises the two blocks of First Avenue between Mount Avenue and Ocean Boulevard. The majority of houses in the Atlantic Highlands District date back to the late 1800's and represent a number of late Victorian styles. Included in the district is the Stone Bridge constructed in 1896. The First Avenue streetscape serves as part of the Borough commercial center and was largely constructed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These two districts contain over half of the currently inventoried notable historic structures in Atlantic Highlands. These historic structures are identified in the **Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory**, which was undertaken in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and identifies and recognizes historic properties through the United States. The Monmouth County Inventory is updated periodically with the last update in 2014. The Monmouth County Inventory also assessed the eligibility of sites in Atlantic Highlands for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Fortunately, a number of private owners have worked hard to maintain and enhance their historic houses, including extensive restoration in some cases. Also, some homeowners have recently formed an Older Homes Group under the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society auspices to share information on ways of achieving better house preservation. Unfortunately, however, some houses have been remodeled without historical sensitivity or are inadequately maintained, and are losing their architectural quality and historic property value. Also, current market conditions have led to demolition of historic houses in some nearby towns (a phenomenon known as "scrape-downs") and often replaced with construction of jarringly inappropriate and oversized houses in their place.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The policy expressed in the Historic Preservation/Restoration Element is to encourage and guide a range of actions needed to preserve the rich heritage of Atlantic Highlands. The Element promotes the preservation and enhancement of those buildings, structures and areas of historic and aesthetic value that reflect the cultural, social, economic and architectural history of Atlantic Highlands.

## **OBJECTIVES**

In order to implement the policy, five preservation/restoration objectives are presented in the following section:

1. Ordinance changes to facilitate preservation/restoration efforts;
2. Creation of a Historic Preservation Commission;
3. Development of tools to encourage property owners to preserve, restore and adapt their historic structures;
4. Completion and updating of the historic building inventory to coincide with or add to the Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory and also the State List for Historic Buildings, as well as examining the possibility for the inclusion of additional historic districts; and
5. Development of a Community Education Program.

### **Ordinance Changes to Facilitate Historic Preservation/Restoration Efforts**

The objective of historic preservation and restoration efforts is to develop positive regulations, ordinances, and action mechanisms that support and encourage preservation, restoration and adaptive use of historic structures and help maintain the wider heritage of historic streetscapes and districts. These rules “should protect historic districts, through a combination of zoning and architectural review, from intrusions, demolitions, incompatible alterations and new construction, and other negative visual impacts,” as recommended in the **Monmouth County Historic Preservation Guide (1989)** (page 28). Zoning would be the strongest tool, especially for historic districts where it is important to “protect the exterior appearance of buildings, historically appropriate siting and street configurations, as well as to encourage adaptive use, rehabilitation and harmonious new construction” (page 40 of the Guide).

The Middletown Township zoning ordinances relating to historic preservation could well serve as a model for Atlantic Highlands to adapt and adopt. One section provides clear and comprehensive “standards of consideration for historic landmarks and historic districts” (listed below under Standards of Consideration). A second section provides a broad policy framework for historic preservation (listed below under Visual Compatibility Factors). It also sets out procedures for review by a Landmarks Commission of building permits for historic buildings, except in cases of immediate emergency repairs. The Commission carries out architectural-historical reviews of plans for restoration, rehabilitation and additional construction at landmark sites.

### **Visual Compatibility Factors**

Visual compatibility factors should be adopted to preserve the integrity and authenticity of historic buildings and districts and to insure the compatibility of new structures. Visual compatibility factors should be considered by the Historic Preservation Commission when

performing a review. If past architectural styles are to be used, a copy of a specific structure is preferable to an amalgam of building types and styles.

The following visual compatibility factors should be listed in the historic preservation ordinance:

**1. Height.**

The height of the proposed building shall be visually compatible with adjacent buildings.

**2. Proportion of building's front facade.**

The relationship of the width of the building to the height of the front elevation shall be visually compatible with buildings and places to which it is visually related.

**3. Proportion of openings within the facility.**

The relationship of the width of windows to the height of windows in a building shall be visually compatible with the buildings and places to which it is visually related.

**4. Rhythm of solids to voids in front facades.**

The relationship of solids to voids in the front facade of a building shall be visually compatible with the buildings and places to which it is visually related.

**5. Rhythm of spacing of buildings and streets.**

The relationship of the building to the open space between it and adjoining buildings shall be visually compatible with the buildings and places to which it is visually related.

**6. Rhythm of entrance and/or porch projections.**

The relationship of entrance and porch projections to the street shall be visually compatible with the buildings and places to which it is visually related.

**7. Relationship of materials, texture and color.**

The relationship of materials, texture and color of the facade and roof of a building shall be visually compatible with the predominant materials used in the buildings to which it is visually related.

**8. Roof shapes.**

The roof shape of a building shall be visually compatible with buildings to which it is visually related.

## **9. Walls of continuity.**

Appurtenances of a building such as walls, open-type fencing and evergreen landscape masses shall form cohesive walls of enclosure along a street, to the extent necessary to maintain compatibility with the buildings and places to which it is visually related.

## **10. Scale of building.**

The size of a building, the mass of a building in relation to open spaces, the windows, door openings, porches and balconies shall be visually compatible with the buildings and places to which it is visually related.

## **11. Directional expression of front elevation.**

A building shall be visually compatible with buildings and places to which it is visually related in its directional character, whether this be vertical character, horizontal character or non-directional character.

## **12. Exterior features.**

A structure's related exterior features such as lighting, fences, signs, sidewalks, driveways, and parking areas shall be compatible with the features of those structures to which it is visually related and shall be appropriate for the historic period for which the structure is significant.

Other potential resources to draw upon in preparing Atlantic Highlands historic preservation guidelines and regulations include:

1. The Secretary of the Interior's standards and guidelines on preservation and rehabilitation. The basic philosophy is to identify, retain, and preserve the form and details of historic properties. The emphasis is on maintaining and protecting such properties first, repairing and rehabilitating second, and replacing only when maintenance or repairs of certain components are not feasible or cost-effective. The standards serve as a yardstick for assessing Federal endorsement, funding or tax-incentives (where applicable) for preservation work on historic properties. They are fundamental and foundational for, and should be built into, municipal regulations as well.
2. The Monmouth County Historic Preservation Guide.
3. The experience and guidelines of other New Jersey municipalities that have made major improvements in their historic districts and sites and are models for successful, municipal promotion of preservation and related heritage tourism.

## **Creation of a Historic Preservation Commission**

A Historic Preservation Commission should be established in the Borough to provide consultative assistance to historic property owners. It would have responsibility under the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-107) to compile a survey of historic sites, give advice on the Preservation Plan Element of the Master Plan, and review and provide recommendations on applications for development, and also carry out educational programs. If the zoning ordinance of the Borough also designates and regulates landmark sites and districts, then the Commission would have powers to grant or deny permits for the development or alteration of the designated sites.

Its first responsibility should be the drafting of guidelines and regulations to incorporate into new ordinances for adoption by the Borough.

## **Standards of Consideration**

In carrying out all of its duties and responsibilities, including but not limited to the nomination of landmarks and districts for historic designation and the review of regulated activities, the Commission shall be guided by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings, which may hereafter be amended and which are given as follows:

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for an historic property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose.
2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of an historic building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
3. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
4. Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.
5. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship, which characterize a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.
6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the

material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.

7. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.
8. Every possible effort shall be made to protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by, or adjacent to any project.
9. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, when such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood or environment, and when such design is not visible from the street.
9. Wherever possible, new additions or alteration to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

### **Development of Tools to Encourage Property Owners to Preserve, Restore and Adapt Their Historic Structures**

Possible tools to support this effort may be the following:

1. Property tax incentives.

The existing ordinance (§323-7 – Tax exemption for improvements) offers property tax abatement incentives for improvements on existing dwellings and on multiple dwellings and commercial or industrial structures more than twenty years old. “Improvements” can mean work done for purposes of historic preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of residential or business district structures. Building improvements typically increase the assessed value of a property and also the property tax that is levied on it. However, the ordinance provides that, when an abatement is granted for a dwelling, up to \$25,000 in new assessed value is phased in over a period so that the tax levy on that amount only goes up 20 per cent per year during five years. The same phasing applies to income-producing buildings (multiple dwellings and commercial or industrial structures), but the ceiling of assessed value on which taxes can be abated is \$25,000.

The Borough Council should increase the ceiling for the available tax abatement on all landmarked structures 100 years of age or older that undergo appropriate historic preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, or adaptive use. Such an increase is warranted because structures of that age are under greater threat of deterioration, disuse, and even demolition, and need more improvement work of greater complexity, difficulty and

cost, than younger buildings. Also, these 100 year-plus structures usually represent historical architectural styles and construction methods that are more scarce and thus more valuable historically as a community heritage resource.

The ceiling of assessed value to be abated for 100-year-plus structures of any type could be set at \$50,000. This would replace the \$25,000 level being set for dwellings over 20 years old and match the new top level enacted for income-producing buildings. If owners of the 100-year category want to qualify for an abatement higher than \$25,000, the planned improvements would be required to be certified by the Historical Preservation Commission as appropriate forms of historical preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, or adaptive use, according to agreed standards to be incorporated into the ordinances. Through the certification process, if sought by owners, they would receive sound advice relating to their structure and its streetscape, as necessary. The process also would help ensure that the community benefits from a well-conceived and harmonious restoration in exchange for the postponement of additional Borough tax revenue.

In addition, the Monmouth County Historic Preservation Guide lists other possible tax incentives which would require closer study:

- a. Property tax credit based on a percentage of restoration or rehabilitation expenditures.
- b. Assessment at “current use value” rather than “highest and best use” valuation.
- c. Recognition of decreased assessed value after donation of a preservation easement or landmark designation.

## 2. Conservation Easements.

Conservation easements covering exteriors/facades and historic/scenic views. Under certain conditions, Federal and State tax laws can treat easements as tax-deductible charitable contributions. The owner/donor continues to own and use the property, the municipality still receives property taxes, adjacent property values may increase because historic and scenic value is protected, and the community gains the benefit of a protected historic property.

## 3. Deed restrictions and covenants.

Deed restrictions and covenants can be used to maintain the historic integrity of buildings as well as surrounding land, to rule out facade alteration or obstruction of a particular view. The strongest method is restrictive covenants that run with the land. If these agreements are enforced by a qualified organization, they may be eligible for treatment as tax deductible charitable contributions.



#### 4. Transfer of Development Rights.

Where an historic property, particularly in a more compacted “downtown” area, has additional development potential under zoning and land use regulations, those unutilized development rights can sometimes be transferred by sale to another site where they can be translated into new construction. The seller is thus compensated for the restriction of development on the historic site, and the buyer can construct the equivalent amount of development on a second site.

### **Completion and Updating of the Historic Building Inventory**

Historical architecture is an essential element of Atlantic Highlands physical image today. The historic architectural styles, building scale, and streetscapes prevailing in much of Atlantic Highlands are an integral part of the town’s basic fabric and help define its special character. These sites, which are part of the heritage from the past, are also important to the town’s sense of community, real estate appeal, property values and economic survival, both now and for the future. The Borough should update and fully document historic sites and structures within the Borough to coincide with or add to the Monmouth County Historic Sites Inventory and also the State List for Historical Buildings, as well as examining the possibility for the inclusion of additional historic structures and sites.

### **Landmark Designation Standards**

To guide the identification and designation process, the following standards should be used for evaluating the significance of properties and their eligibility for landmark status in Atlantic Highlands:

1. The landmark is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local, state or national history; or
2. The landmark is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past; or
3. The landmark embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that it represents the work of a master, or that it possesses high artistic values, or that it represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. The landmark has yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history; or
5. The landmark exhibits scenic, historic, architectural, archaeological, or cultural features which make a unique contribution to the townscape of the Borough.

### **Development of a Community Education Program.**

The Borough should sponsor a program, which educates community residents and makes them aware of the location and significance of landmark features. Such a program might include recognition through the award of landmark certificates to owners of landmark properties, historic markers on landmark sites, information distributed through the Borough or special publications newsletter, and sponsoring programs and events. This would complement the award of plaques to historic houses over 100 years of age, which is done by the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society.

### **LANDMARKS INVENTORY**

Many structures in Atlantic Highlands are 100 years old or more. The present inventory designates 46 sites as landmarks, including residences, three churches, the Stone Bridge, two special scenic views, and some First Avenue buildings. (In contrast, State property records show that 240 structures in the Borough are 100 years of age or older; though not all of these are in original condition, a number of them are worthy as historic sites and should be designated.)

Most of the 46 existing sites are in two historic districts. As named in the 1990 Master Plan, these are the:

1. “Atlantic Highlands District”, which is now renamed “Victorian Hill Historic District”. This district is located on land from Second to Hooper/Chapin Avenues, and from Ocean Boulevard to East Highland/East Mount Avenue.
2. “Historic Business District”. This district is located on First Avenue between Mount Avenue and Bay Avenue Ocean Boulevard.

These are overlay districts, meaning that historic designation is “in addition to such designation and regulation as the zoning ordinance may otherwise require” in those locations (N.J.S.A. 40:65.1 of the Municipal Land Use Law). The existence of these overlay districts only represents a pleasant form of recognition; it does not, in itself, provide any protection of historic structures in those districts, nor any incentive for their preservation and restoration.

## HISTORIC LANDMARK SITES

### Borough of Atlantic Highlands

NO.	ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	NRHP ELIGIBLE	SOURCE**
<b>Residential</b>				
1	District as a whole	Second to Hooper/Chapin Avenues; Ocean Boulevard to Mount; north side of East Highland Avenue from 8th Avenue to Grand Avenue	Yes	MCHA
2	38 Ocean Boulevard	"Barre Harbor Cottage" - Queen Anne residence	—	AH
3	44 Ocean Boulevard	"Peck House" - Queen Anne style residence	—	AH
4	48 Ocean Boulevard	"How Kola" - Colonial Revival residence	—	MCHA
5	54 Ocean Boulevard/Fifth Avenue	Colonial Revival/neo-Classical residence	—	MCHA
6	Ocean Boulevard/east of Seventh Avenue	Peanut stone steps/Victorian house	—	AH
7	Second and Mount Avenues	"Old Red Homestead" - Leonard House	—	MCHA
8	Third Avenue (Ocean/Mount)	First wooden house in Borough	—	AH
9	Third and Highland Avenues, NE corner style	Central Baptist Church - Romanesque Revival	Yes	MCHA
10	Third and Highland Avenues, SW corner	Presbyterian Church - Gothic revival style	No	MCHA
11	Third and Mount Avenues, SW corner	Site of First Methodist Church	—	AH
12	33 Fourth Avenue	Stick Style residence	Yes	MCHA
13	12 Seventh Avenue	Queen Anne /Stick Style residence	—	MCHA
14	28 Seventh Avenue	Queen Anne style residence	—	MCHA
15	16 Eighth Avenue	Victorian style residence	District	MCHA
16	60 Eighth Avenue	Carpenter Gothic residence	Yes	MCHA
17	78 Eighth Avenue	Queen Anne style residence	Yes	MCHA
18	Eighth Avenue next to #78	Peanut stone steps	—	AH
19	Mount &Seventh Avenues	"Woodmanse House" - Queen Anne residence with Colonial elements	—	AH
20	12 Prospect Avenue	Carpenter/Queen Anne style residence	District	MCHA
21	22 Prospect Avenue	Colonial Revival on Shingle/Queen Anne	Yes	MCHA
22	27 Prospect Avenue	"The Towers" (Strauss Mansion) - Queen Anne style residence	Possible	MCHA
23	46 Prospect Avenue	"Forest Cottage" - Shingle Style residence	District	MCHA

24	95 Mount Avenue	Queen Anne style residence	District	MCHA
25	Mount Avenue Bridge	Stone bridge over Grand Ave	District	MCHA
26	102 Mount Avenue	"The Stable House"	—	AH

27	Mount & Summit Avenues	"Crawford Cottage" - Victorian style residence	—	AH
28	43 Hooper Avenue	Queen Anne style residence	District	MCHA
29	27 Hooper Avenue	Craftsman Style residence	—	AH

East Side:

30	58 East Lincoln Avenue	Queen Anne style residence	Yes	MCHA
31	27 East Washington Avenue	Late Queen Anne residence	No	MCHA
32	37 East Washington Avenue	Late Queen Anne residence	No	MCHA
33	170 Ocean Boulevard	"Point Lookout" residence - portion predates Revolutionary War	—	MCHA
34	26 Belvidere Road	"Sprout House" - Colonia style residence	—	AH
35	Hilton at Bayside Drive	Henry Hudson Springs	—	AH
36	Observatory Place	Water tower and observatory	—	AH

West Side:

37	Center Avenue and Avenue C	St. Agnes Church	—	AH
38	Avenue D between West Highland & South Avenues	"Brucewod" - Dutch Colonial revival house	—	AH

**HISTORIC BUSINESS ZONE**

39	First Avenue streetscape	First Avenue between Mount Avenue/Ocean Boulevard.	No	MCHA
40	33 First Avenue/Bay Avenue	Atlantic Highlands National Bank	Possible	MCHA
41	42 First Avenue	Commercial building	No	MCHA
42	85 First Avenue	Commercial building	No	MCHA

**SCENIC VIEWS**

43	Mount Mitchill Park, Point Lookout Bridge	Cliff-top view of bay, Sandy Hook, ocean, NYC skyline	—	AH
44	Center Avenue Park & creek, bay beach & dunes at many Mind Creek, Popamora Point	Natural scenic views to bay and beyond	—	AH

45	Promenade in the Marina	View of bay, Sandy Hook, ocean, NYC skyline	—	AH
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#### **COMMERCIAL ZONE**

46	South side of West Lincoln, west of West Avenue	Industrial buildings (now NJ Natural Gas)	No	MCHA
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#### **WEST SIDE AREA OF TOWN**

Over 70 structures on the west side were built 100 or more years ago, and a number of these are vernacular Victorian residences whose exteriors are still close to original. These sites deserve individual landmark status and should be so designated.

#### **SEARS HOUSES**

At least a dozen houses in the Borough are kit houses marketed by Sears, Roebuck and Co. during the period 1908- 1940. If the exteriors are still close to the original, they should be designated as historic sites.

#### **Notes:**

\* NRHP = National Register of Historical Places. The entry "district" in this column means the site is eligible for inclusion in the Register as a contributing element in an historic district, not by itself. NRHP eligibility was determined in the 1984 sites inventory by Monmouth County Historical Association (MCHA), with some updating in 2006.

\*\* The sources for designation of the historic sites and districts listed were either designated by Monmouth County Historical Association (marked as "MCHA"), or selected by the Atlantic Highlands Planning Board in consultation with the Atlantic Highlands Historical Society (marked as "AH").

## **XI. COASTAL WATERFRONT DESIGN**

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The biggest, most visible and most appreciated feature of Atlantic Highlands is its coastline along Sandy Hook Bay. The waterfront stretches 2.5 miles from west to east along the southern edge of the bay. Behind this shore, the territory of the Borough is a relatively narrow strip ranging in width from only a half mile to one mile maximum. Seen from many vantage points, whether above on the highland ridge or down at the tidal flats, the coast is an important defining factor in the environment and life of the Borough.

### **HISTORY**

- During the late 1800s, individuals and groups came from New York City and the surrounding vicinity to camp along the water in tent colonies.
- The creation of the municipal marina took place from 1938 through 1940. It was built with municipal, state and federal funds; the Atlantic Highlands Lions Club supplied the vision and determination. Today, the municipal marina is the second largest on the East Coast, home to 715 craft.
- From the late 1800s through the 1940s, steamship service was a major source of transportation. Steamers such as the “Sandy Hook” and “Monmouth” navigated the waters, bringing commuting businessmen and vacationers to Atlantic Highlands. In 1892, the Central Railroad of New Jersey built a major pier at the end of First Avenue. Several trains at a time could continue to the end of the pier to off load steamboat passengers. In 1966, the existing Central Railroad pier was destroyed by fire.
- In 1992, high-speed ferry service was introduced into the Borough. Now, eleven runs a day leave Atlantic Highlands for the “city”.

### **CURRENT USES**

Looking at the entire waterfront segment-by-segment reveals three main types of uses: natural, recreational, and residential, with a few commercial uses mixed in.

- **Sandy beaches.** Nature and nature-based recreation are combined at two sandy beaches at opposite ends of the coastline. Both beaches are available for swimming and other public uses, contain some grassy sand dunes, wetlands and woodlands, and are permanently dedicated as open space. One beach, next to Wagner Creek at the western border with Leonardo, covers about 400 feet of the Bayfront. And forms part of the Center Avenue Park owned by the Borough.

The other beach, next to the eastern border with neighboring Highlands, is about 1,600 feet long. It is part of Popamora Point, a County-owned park. Inland from its dunes will be built the eastern segment of the bike-and hike trail, which will run there from the marina.

- **Coastal bluffs section.** Natural elements currently prevail below the high coastal bluffs between the eastern end of the harbor and Henry Hudson Springs. While residential structures top bluffs as high as 100 and 200 feet above sea level, below them is a narrow strip about 1,800 feet along the waterside, which contains a small beach area and fringe wetlands. At water's edge is the rocky coastal embankment of a railroad line, which used to parallel the shoreline. The area will be developed recreationally as part of bike-and-hike trail, while retaining its natural character as much as possible.
- **Below Bayside Drive.** Natural vegetation also prevails on the more gentle slopes rising from the water below Bayside Drive east of Henry Hudson Springs. This segment, which covers about 3,200 feet of shore length, also contains a few wetland pockets and the rocky fringe of the former railroad's embankment. Here, too, the bike-and-hike trail is planned as an active recreational use running through the preserved natural setting.
- **Marina and boat storage areas.** The main recreational use of the coastal zone is boating. The total water frontage devoted to boating uses is about 4,800 feet, with the bulkheaded part of the marina accounting for 1,180 feet of this. In addition, under a Borough lease, the Sandy Hook Bay Catamaran Club (also called the "Hobie Cat Club") based at the Center Avenue Park, uses the bay-edge of the beach for launching boats and the back beach for summer boat parking. The total footage includes not only the active docks and rented boat slips of the Atlantic Highlands Marina, but also boat storage on the eastern end of the marina, along the mouth of Many Mind Creek east of Avenue A (Skipper's Shop yards), and east of the beach at Center Avenue Park (Blackfoot Mobile Marine boatyard). On the Bayfront of the same private property which contains the Skipper's boatyard, there is also a curved sandy beach between Avenue A and First Avenue; only a 50-foot-wide portion of this beach on the Avenue A end is Borough owned and has public access. Commercial facilities at the Marina are three restaurants, a bait and fishing supply shop, day-tripper fishing boats and party boats, and the commuter ferry to Manhattan.
- **Residential uses** line most of the northern edges of the slopes, hills, cliffs and bluffs which rise from the Bay Shore. Public access to coastal lands is permitted below most of these residential areas. However, except at low tides, there is no public access along one 1,250-foot waterfront segment between Avenue A and Avenue D which is lined with private residences relatively close to the water.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The goal of this element is to guide development and redevelopment along the waterfront and to coordinate local plans and ordinances with the Monmouth County's Waterfront Access Plan, the Regional Strategic Plan, as well as changes expressed on a State level. Future development must respect the public interest in maintaining and enhancing this area as a community resource.

## **OBJECTIVES**

In order to implement the 2007 policy the following coastal/waterfront design objectives are presented:

### **The need to maintain and enhance public access to the waterfront.**

Several public access areas exist today, although some sections are difficult to negotiate due to natural conditions. On the publicly owned segments, such access is a guaranteed right. The access points are listed below:

1. The sandy beach at the east end of town.
2. The sandy beach at the west end of town.
3. A 50-wide wide sand beach at the end of Avenue A.
4. Along the foot of the coastal bluffs and below Bayside Drive on the path of the former Bayfront railroad.
5. In the municipal marina, the waterfront promenade behind the bulkhead line is fully open for public use, and some docks have pedestrian foot traffic, while others are limited to boat-owners who rent mooring slips.

With the completion of the bike-and-hike trail, some of the access difficulty existing today will be erased. Four main access points to the trail will exist:

1. From the east end of the marina.
2. Downhill from Henry Hudson Springs.
3. At the former Hilton Station of the railroad off Bayside Drive.
4. From Shore Drive in the Highlands.

Four other areas of the waterfront are bordered by private property, and so public access is not guaranteed above the high water line. From east to west, these are:

1. The peninsula of the old railroad-steamboat pier at the western end of the marina.
2. The sandy beach running west of the peninsula, to Avenue A
3. The waterfront downslope from private residences on Harbor View Drive, where physical blockages prevent access from both ends (at Avenue A and Avenue D).



4. West of Avenue D at the bulkheaded waterfront bordering the boat storage facility of Blackfoot Mobile Marine.

Municipal policies and ordinances should be adopted based on regulations issued by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) under the Coastal Areas Facilities Review Act (CAFRA) section 7:7E-8.11 Public Access to the Waterfront.

Atlantic Highlands should incorporate Public Trust Doctrine language into ordinances for the assurance of municipal support for public access both existing and in the future. The Doctrine requires that tidal waterbodies be accessible to the public for navigation, fishing and recreation and that the public must have access to and use of privately owned “dry sand” areas as reasonably necessary to use the tidal waterbodies. The State recommended access zone of ten (10) feet above high-tide mark for “dry sand” should be used.

The Bayfront area where public access still needs to be provided and assured and any blockages removed is between the eastern border of the Center Avenue Park and First Avenue. There are three issues of physical access in this area:

1. An upland fence barrier preventing access from Avenue D (as required by insurance provider); and
2. The obstacle of a man-made jutting pier made of large stones which extends into the bay past the high water mark west of Avenue A.

The third issue involves the privately owned beach areas between Avenue A and First Avenue. Beach access for this area should be examined from a legal basis as it relates to the Public Trust Doctrine mentioned above.

- **The need to develop and maintain the waterfront’s potential for recreation and open space uses.**

As stated in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) adopted by the Planning Board and Borough Council and approved by NJDEP/Green Acres in early 2001, appropriate lands should be designated and reserved for open space and recreation, in the same way as other land uses. Open space should be looked on as an element of public infrastructure and services that must be provided and maintained to sustain the community.

Portions of the lands identified as “waterfront at town center” in the Plan would be desirable as “public open space/recreation areas (PB)” for such uses as Borough beach, bicycle trail, pedestrian promenade and Many Mind Creek Greenway. Inclusion of a portion of the peninsula and related neighboring mainland (the former railroad pier and its approach) would enable that point of land to be reshaped and replanted as a pedestrian walkway and fishing site. Coexisting uses include: Borough and ferry parking, potential retail, and other marine and recreation uses.

The efforts to create a pedestrian trail system stretching from the Marina to Popamora Point along Sandy Hook Bay will continue. The trail will unite a series of waterfront activity areas that includes the following features:

1. **Harbor Park and Marina.** A trail has been constructed behind the municipal marina and park, which offer active recreation and boating.
2. **Trail and Linear Park.** The right-of-way of the former railroad will be converted to use as the Trail and will be designed for pedestrian and bike access. Linkages to the trail will be provided from residential neighborhoods. Points of interest along the linear park will include Henry Hudson Springs and Hilton Station.
3. **Popamora Point.** This park terminates the Trail at the eastern end of Atlantic Highlands and provides beach access and passive recreation.
4. **Bikeway.** A bike route could be marked along Bayside Drive and Ocean Boulevard providing scenic over-water views and access to the Mount Mitchill Scenic Overlook.

Additionally, the existence of the Trail as publicly protected and permanently dedicated open space will ensure that the coastal base areas of the bluffs are not excavated or otherwise undermined.

There is still debate regarding uses for several existing undeveloped areas found along the waterfront. Further studies should be conducted and a plan of action adopted to be sure that those remaining properties will be developed over time in a manner that supports and enhances the community as a whole.

1. **The west.** The largest remaining open space in the Borough is the largely unbuilt land west of First Avenue and North of Bay Avenue on both sides of Many Mind Creek. (See “Bayfront at Town Center” above.) The area consists of five lots, of which the Borough owns only two unconnected lots totaling about 1 1/3 acre. The remaining acreage is the private ownership of Seastreak, Hesse and McConnell tracts. Therefore, any proposals to reconfigure these lands for public purposes depend on these owners becoming willing sellers, the Borough willing to finance the purchase costs, and a plan and layout being agreed upon as to how to use this space. So far it has not been possible to achieve sale of these lands to the Borough.
2. **The peninsula.** The undeveloped peninsula of land that used to be part of the old railroad and steamboat pier juts far out into the bay. It is privately owned.
3. **The east.** New piers for boats and for fishing have recently been installed here along the water, near an existing ramp for boat launching. Presumably, some natural enhancements on the land will accompany the planned bike-and-hike trail where it will turn toward and run along the bay here. Other development possibilities for this area need further investigation.

- **The need to maintain and enhance the contribution made by the waterfront to the Borough by linking it to the First Avenue business district and encouraging appropriate water-oriented uses.**

The Marina operation on the central part of the Atlantic Highlands coast is, in effect, the town's biggest business and a sizeable source of Borough revenue. It is the second largest municipal harbor in New Jersey and is run as a municipal utility under the guidance of the Mayor and Council of the Borough. A feasible link between the town's central business district and waterfront activities could enhance the economic base of the community. Improvements should be focused on transportation first. A study detailing the order and projected time frame for the creation of new transportation systems or the upgrading of existing systems should be undertaken.

The Waterfront Business District (WB) was created to encourage development based on unified plans coordinated with the marina area. This extends the area permitted for retail and entertainment while also integrating open space, recreation, beach access, and pedestrian areas. However, in order for this link to remain viable and its purpose realized, the Borough must address improvements to the links from the downtown to the ferry system.

Two areas for immediate attention would be:

1. To improve the existing roadway system; and
2. To implement a regular shuttle bus service.

- **The need to coordinate with the State and County Plans for Coastal Zone Management and waterfront development.**

The Borough will continue, wherever possible, to work closely with the State of New Jersey through its Green Acres program, with the Monmouth County Freeholders and Monmouth County Park System, and with neighboring municipal governments in efforts to preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities in the coastal zone.

Among New Jersey State organizations, the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) has developed substantive guidelines and legal regulations, as well as education and public information programs, for many environment-related issues (including coastal conservation and access) and provides matching funds for certain priority areas, including "Green Acres."

The NJDEP administers the Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA), originally enacted by the legislature in 1977 and amended in 1994, which provides for the NJDEP to assess and decide on plans for the use and development of coastal resources. The primary purpose of CAFRA is to provide added protection to sensitive coastal areas located along the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, Raritan Bay/Sandy Hook Bay, and Delaware Bay.

The New Jersey Coastal Management Program (NJCMP) sets a number of goals, policies and standards to protect the values of coastal resources. Among the eight goals of the NJCMP are to

“protect and enhance the coastal ecosystem,” “encourage the preservation of open space,” and “promote public access to the waterfront through the protection and creation of meaningful access points and linear walkways” (from “New Jersey Coastal Management Program fact sheet,” March 2002). The NJCMP’s legal framework includes CAFRA, the Wetlands Act, the Waterfront Development Law, and the Public Trust Doctrine for access to and use of tidelands. Its administrative arms include regulatory authority given in state coastal management and permit rules (Nj.A.C.7:7E and 7:7) and planning activities by the NJDEP office of Coastal planning. NJCMP is an approved part of the federal Coastal Zone Management Program.

Additionally, the Borough should continue to participate in and support the efforts of the towns involved in developing the Regional Strategic Plan. The issues and strategies expressed in that document encompass many of the concerns and subsequent planning objectives expressed above. Waterfront and open space preservation issues can no longer be viewed with blinders. Future overall economic growth for the region is dependent on decisions and directions being made by the united effort of municipalities.

## **XII. OPEN SPACE / RECREATION**

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The Municipal Land Use Law, specifically N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28(b)7 calls for the creation of a Recreation Plan Element.

Atlantic Highlands waterfront has beaches, dunes, wetlands and a thriving harbor for fishing and boating. Its steep slopes are forested and even flatter areas have substantial tree cover. The town's small area of 1.2 square miles is almost fully built out - about 95 per cent of the land is developed - and densely populated.

The movement to protect remaining open space in and surrounding Atlantic Highlands derives from this basic geography and demography. Beyond these figures, it also springs from the increased demand for active recreation by children, youth and adults, which outstrips available facilities. There is also growing public concern for the preservation of woodlands, waterfront, stream corridors and wetlands for purposes of both passive recreation and conservation of natural resources and habitat.

### **HISTORY**

Atlantic Highlands has a strong commitment and a long history of providing recreation opportunities and preserving open space resources for public purposes. In recent years, Atlantic Highlands has been acquiring open space for public access and use as a deliberate policy.

- 1997-98, the Borough made five land purchases that created a 39-acre Lenape Woods Nature Preserve, consisting of an eastern section of almost 26 acres and a western section of 13 acres.
- November 1999 - The election ballot included an open space referendum which the voters approved by a margin of 2.5 to 1 (1,106 yes and 435 no).
- December of 1999 - The Borough Council adopted an Ordinance establishing a dedicated open space tax of 1 cent per \$100 of assessed valuation.
- April 2000 - Twenty five per cent of households in Atlantic Highlands responded to a survey mailed out by the Environmental Commission. Asked what they find attractive about living in the town, respondents cited the "small town atmosphere" (90 per cent), water front and views (89 per cent), natural beauty (79 per cent), boat harbor (79 per cent), commuter ferry to New York City (51 per cent), and Lenape Woods Nature Preserve (48 per cent). Asked how they would like to see the Borough develop in the future, the highest percentage of respondents chose more public open space (48 per cent).
- July 2000 - A public meeting was held to introduce and discuss the proposal to submit a Planning Incentive application and a draft Open Space Recreation Plan (OSRP) to Green

Acres.

- July 2000 - The Open Space Tax came into effect with property tax bills.
- July 2000 - The 2000 Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) is completed and certified by Borough Council with which they agree to permanently hold all lands currently dedicated to recreation and conservation purposes.
- August 2000 - The Environmental Commission submitted the OSRP and the Planning Incentive application to Green Acres.
- February 2001 - OSRP adopted by Borough Council.

With Green Acres funding, the Borough acquired 9.24 acres to add to the eastern section of Lenape Woods Nature Preserve; it also bought one acre on upper Hillside Road, and dedicated almost 2 acres of Borough-owned land on the lower Hillside Road paper street to open space, creating the Cliffside section of the Preserve and enabling a link from the future Trail uphill to Ocean Boulevard and the Preserve's eastern section. All sections then totaled about 51 acres.

In addition, the Borough obtained shared use rights for ballfields that Middletown Township will build adjacent to the new acreage of Lenape Woods East.

- Following its December 2002 session, the Habitat Workgroup of the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program (HEP) designated the estuary of Many Mind Creek, its saltmarsh and the surrounding Bayfront land of the Giuliani tract as a priority for acquisition and restoration. (Project RB17).
- May 2003 - the Harbor Commission recommended and Borough Council approved a bond ordinance for \$2.5 million to be used for acquisition of Bayfront land.
- October 2003 - the Borough obtained a 1.38 acre corridor of land that connects the Campo Overlook section to the main eastern section of Lenape Woods Nature Preserve, bringing its total size to 52.39 acres.
- November 2003 - a community survey questionnaire was mailed to residents, seeking opinions about the future of Bayfront lands west of the harbor. With a return rate of 19 per cent, 83 per cent of respondents favored acquiring the Giuliani tract for public ownership. Among other questions they answered, respondents wanted increased access to the Bayfront for biking, walking, fishing, sunset viewing, kayak/canoe launching, etc., as well as protection of natural habitat, wetlands, and beach (93 per cent).
- September 2004 - the Mayor's Waterfront Advisory Committee recommended to the Borough Council that 1) "all available means should be used" to acquire "expeditiously" the Giuliani tract for public ownership and use; 2) its western portion should be preserved for open space, recreation, and habitat/wetland/beach protection; and 3) its eastern portion

should allow for wetland, vegetated buffer and the Many Mind Creek Greenway, as well as some parking for ferry commuters.

- In 2004-2005 - Borough officials identified potential funding sources for acquisition of Bayfront lands, in addition to the Borough bond ordinance and open space tax fund. These include Green Acres matching funds, Port Authority open space acquisition funds, grants from the Monmouth County Park System and the NY-NJ Baykeeper.
- April 2006 - residents presented to Borough Council a petition with almost 1,400 signatures, urging acquisition of the unbuilt 6.5 acre Giuliani tract. West bank land would be devoted to open space, recreation and habitat (including beach, dunes and saltmarsh), while the east bank would have a stream buffer, Greenway trail, and expanded ferry parking. In August came the withdrawal of a developer who had proposed building a very dense condo development with 80 units on the tract.
- August 2006 - agreement was reached on open space preservation of a 27.3 acre portion of the lands south of Lenape Woods Nature Preserve and Highway, to be known as the Campo Trails. The agreement involved Middletown Township, the Friends of the Navesink Highlands, Green Acres, Atlantic Highlands, and the developer of a neighboring housing project.
- April 2007 - the Campo Overlook section of the Preserve was officially opened following an Eagle Scout project that created trails and installed fencing and signage.
- May 2007 - a contract was approved to survey the Atlantic Highlands-Middletown Township boundary in the area where a trail corridor needs to be established to connect the east and west sections of the Preserve.

## **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN (OSRP)**

The OSRP of Atlantic Highlands was a five-year program of land acquisition. It was prepared in 2000 by the Environmental Commission, reviewed by the Planning Board for consistency with the Borough's Master Plan in January 2001, and adopted by the Borough Council on February 21, 2001. It was accepted by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection under its Green Acres Planning Incentive Program. It is recommended that the Borough continue to review and update the OSRP as needed, with particular emphasis on the six projects listed below.

The purpose of the OSRP is to provide a vision of the Borough's open space and recreation aspirations and a blueprint for their realization as far as possible. It also identifies logical and feasible ways of creating a comprehensive open space system to serve the unmet needs and growing interests of the population. It foresees acquisition of most vacant properties with substantial conservation and recreation value. The decision-making process for selecting properties for acquisition is based on numerous factors including site availability, owner

willingness, development pressure, funding availability, recreation needs, and critical environmental issues.

The philosophy that motivates the OSRP has two components. First, the view has clearly emerged that Atlantic Highlands is a small town that wants to keep its character. With population density quite high and close to the carrying capacity of the land, the philosophy endorsed by the community is to restrain development, preserve as much unbuilt land as possible in its small territory, and also acquire and preserve neighboring lands as necessary.

The second motivation is to widen opportunities for recreation and outdoor enjoyment - in terms of geographic access, types of activities, and the population segments being served. This calls for land acquisition, which in addition to providing open space and natural conservation, seeks properties especially suited for active sports such as swimming, various ball games, and hiking. The range of interests to be served goes from bird watching to boating, from environmental education to soccer, from steep slope protection to slides and swings for tots. The Borough is committed to keeping all its recreation facilities open and accessible to the public and to serving the needs of all residents, including children, youth, adults, senior citizens and those with special needs.

Four types of needed recreation were singled out as having the least adequate capacity and the strongest unmet demand in the existing system and facilities available to Atlantic Highlands:

1. Playing fields for Little League, soccer, and field hockey;
2. Hiking;
3. Biking; and
4. Swimming

A number of desirable land acquisitions were identified and grouped into six projects according to location, resources, topography and possible uses. As a whole, these projects have features, new capacities and potential uses, which would satisfy a significant portion of identified unmet needs. The plan envisages that the recommended conservation of public open space must go hand-in-hand with efforts to sustain, preserve and improve the Borough's two key centers of economic activity - the business district and the harbor - and to help enhance the Victorian historic district as an attractive and economically supporting asset; those efforts have their own appropriate planning and financing channels.

Six projects were originally proposed in the Action Plan. The six projects in their present state are summarized below. Attached to the full OSRP is a map titled "Atlantic Highlands Open Space and Recreation Plan" showing the location and configuration of all existing public and private sites for open space and recreation, as well as a general depiction of additional lands, which the Borough would like to acquire.

### **Lenape Woods Greenway**

The next stage of land acquisition with Green Acres matching funds would create a trail corridor to join the existing east and west sections, and extend the area to the east and south by



incorporating neighboring forested slopes that are unbuilt. This expansion would protect the corridor of sensitive slopes, woodlands, and natural habitat along the highland ridge; provide access for additional neighborhoods; connect to the County park at Mt Mitchill Scenic Outlook; extend the system of hiking trails; stop further encroachment from development along our borders; maintain the existing buffer against noise, traffic and pollution from the New Jersey Route 36 area; add to the nature/environmental education opportunity available to children and adults; preserve the tree mass which moderates temperature and wind effects; and preserve habitat sufficient to sustain birds and other wildlife living in the zone.

### **Waterfront at Town Center**

The Borough has long wanted to obtain the privately owned lands in the waterfront zone west of the municipal harbor between the bay and Bay Avenue. These unbuilt lands consist of about nine acres (not counting surrounding waters) and include:

- The peninsula extending into the bay and related neighboring mainland. Fishing and pedestrian strolling take place on the peninsula, where there was a railroad/steam boat pier beginning in the 1890s. Mainland portions are currently used largely for ferry and marina parking.
- The curve of Bayfront beach running from the foot of First Avenue westward to Avenue A. The beach and bay waters here are suitable for swimming and related water recreation. Also, low-water sand flats form a “delta” by the mouth of Many Mind Creek and water birds frequently feed there. The western portion of the beach is backed by a dune grass border.
- On the western portion behind the beach, about half a square block extending back to Bay Avenue. This large lot is bisected by Many Mind Creek and contains about an acre of wetlands. Mature pine trees line its borders along Bay Avenue.

### **Many Mind Creek Greenway**

The Environmental Commission has developed proposals for a greenway along Many Mind Creek between the bay and New Jersey Route 36, in the center of the town’s population and geography. The current decontamination and earth replacement work by New Jersey Natural Gas presents a one-time opportunity. Done right, the Borough can fashion a creek corridor which is better managed, better serves the needs of landowners, business and the public, and is a more attractive sustainable natural resource.

The key design features covered by proposals for this lower stretch of the Creek are appropriate bank sloping and vegetation, including fringe wetland species to the high water mark; protection against flooding, erosion and degradation of water quality; restoration for natural habitat including shade cover; provision of creekside trails; pedestrian crossing bridges and neighborhood access from the west side of the Borough and to the “backyard” of the business district; and linkage to the Henry Hudson Trail. To achieve these objectives, the basic guideline

is to establish a 50-foot wide buffer on stream corridors in relatively urbanized areas, such as this downstream portion of Many Mind Creek.

The upstream reaches of the Creek form the southern and eastern borders of the Borough with Middletown Township (except for a segment near the creek's source in the Lenape Woods western section). On the Atlantic Highlands side of the Creek are fully developed residential neighborhoods. Here the needs for better management of water flows and banks are similar to the downstream portion as described above. A protected buffer is important both for those purposes and for guarding against over-intensive development on both sides of the Middletown Township border. Ways of creating or maintaining such a buffer have to be worked out in consultation with owners along both banks. In some upstream sections, public trail development seems feasible within the buffers to be established along the Creek, but must be evaluated lot-by-lot on both banks.

### **Wagner Creek/Center Avenue Park Extensions**

Wagner Creek, the only other stream in Atlantic Highlands, forms the western border with Leonardo. It requires protection by natural buffers for the same reasons as Many Mind Creek. On one bank on its northern portion next to the bay are several acres of mixed woodland/wetland protected by the Borough-owned Center Avenue Park. The park includes an upland area used for T-ball, a tot lot and parking, and a beach area, which is shared between swimming, sunning and walking by the general public and boat launchings by the Sandy Hook Bay Catamaran Club which leases some park land for boat storage. This protected zone should be extended in two directions: Eastward along the beach as far as Avenue D, in order to increase public recreational uses of the Bayfront; and Southward for four blocks along Wagner Creek to provide a buffer and greenway to serve flood control needs, preserve habitat, and connect to the Henry Hudson Trail near New Jersey Route 36. These acquisitions might be accomplished mainly by negotiating easements or outright purchase for buffers 50 feet wide.

### **Bayside Drive Bluffs**

Bayside Drive on the eastern end of Atlantic Highlands is bordered on its north side by the bay coast and on its south side by steep slopes and bluffs which rise to 260+ feet above sea level - the highest point on the Atlantic seaboard of the United States. Some coastal land in this corridor has experienced and continues to be at risk of "slump blocking." Because of this geological phenomenon, it is critical to protect the slopes from several dangers. These include excessive water permeation and water back-up (e.g. from walls) which increase the weight and the slip and slump tendencies of soil blocks; disturbance of the slope toe which serves as a "foundation" and support for sharp bluffs above; deforestation and heavy drainage which destroy soil stability; etc.

Several conservation areas have been established on the water edge, slope sides and bluff top to offer such protection. These include the County beach park at Popamora Point next to the Highlands Borough border, Mount Mitchill Scenic Overlook Park and its downslope sides, the Henry Hudson Springs downslope conservation corridor, four Borough-owned lots along Bayside Drive and the "paper street" of lower Hillside Avenue. In addition, in 2002, the Borough acquired an acre of unbuilt land high on the slope off Ocean Boulevard at Hillside Avenue. The

planned Bayshore Trail for hiking and biking along the coast will run parallel to Bayside Drive; as publicly protected and permanently dedicated open space it will ensure that the coastal base areas of the bluffs are not excavated or otherwise undermined.

A number of additional very steep areas remain unprotected against development that could seriously undermine their stability and that of lower elevations. In addition, there are important opportunities along this corridor for public access to stunning scenic water views, beautiful forested slopes, and passive recreation opportunities such as hiking. The OSRP action plan proposes that the Borough acquire and thus conserve and dedicate as public open space such important segments of land along the Bayside Drive bluffs as they become available for either purchase or conservation/access easements.

### **Lenape Woods South**

Along New Jersey Highway Route 36 double jug handle is a recent Kara Homes development. On its northern edge, the proposed housing footprint was reduced, conserving a corridor of wooded land that Atlantic Highlands acquired in order to connect parts of Lenape Woods East. On the southern side of the highway, a partnership agreement saved 27 acres of land east and south of the Kara Homes development for an open space corridor known as the Campo Trails. At the highway, this corridor will continue the north-south trails of Lenape Woods if a pedestrian bridge can be built over the highway; funding has been committed by the citizen group Friends of the Navesink Highlands for a bridge feasibility study. South of the Highway, the Campo Trails will eventually connect to Hartshorne Woods. The partnership arrangements for conserving the 27 acres involved funding from Middletown Township (which now owns the land), Atlantic Highlands, the Friends of the Navesink Highlands, and Green Acres, as well as a contribution by the developer.

## **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION POLICY STATEMENTS**

The policy statements expressed in the Open Space and Recreation Element (OSRP) are intended to preserve the existing open space and to explore the possibility of acquiring additional lands, both within and outside of the Borough, in order to provide the open space necessary to expand the opportunities and enrich the experiences available for recreation and outdoor enjoyment by the residents of Atlantic Highlands.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The OSRP provides a comprehensive set of goals and objectives designed to identify and address both the short and long term needs of present and future residents of the Borough. The proposed acquisition projects would serve the following specific recreation and conservation goals of the Borough:

- Provide increased active and passive recreation for children and adults, including active recreation such as ball games and swimming, and passive pursuits such as hiking and nature observation.

- Offer trail access and other open space amenities to additional neighborhoods.
- Help restrain growth in housing and population density in environmentally sensitive areas of the Borough, thus maintaining both quality of life and property values.
- Reduce the danger of over-intensive development along the environmentally sensitive areas along the Borough borders.
- Protect natural resources such as streams and stream banks, bay coast beaches, steep slopes, slump block zones, forests and wetlands.
- Preserve and enhance the environment by maintaining existing buffers against highway noise and air pollution, saving natural habitat needed by birds and wildlife, and preserving tree mass, which moderates temperature and wind effects.
- Add to natural/environmental education opportunities available to children and adults.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- **To support acquisition of the types of land which can provide open space for:**
  - Natural resource protection - including plant and animal life; fish and wildlife habitats; streams, marshes, estuaries and bay areas which are important for water quality, filtering pollutants, and reproduction and survival of fish and other water life; and stream banks, bay beaches, dunes, wetlands and other areas of environmental importance or sensitivity.
  - Outdoor recreation - including areas that are particularly suited for parks and active recreation, to provide accessways to beaches and streams, trail systems, scenic corridors and utility easements, and serve as links with other recreation and open space lands.
  - Protection of public health and safety - including areas needing special management or regulation because of hazards or special conditions such as steep slopes, flood plains, watersheds, erosion and siltation.
  - Community character - including woodlands, open water, scenic resources, historic sites, and townscapes which have visual impact, contribute to the Borough's image and add aesthetic value to the surrounding built environment.
- **Research and obtain all sources of funding available to finance land acquisition.**

First priority in funding will be to obtain grants, such as the 50-50 matching grants available under the Planning Incentive Program of Green Acres. Other sources and formulae will come into play as required, sometimes in combination. Green Acres also offers 30-year loans at 2

per cent interest, which could be advantageous in certain circumstances. The Open Space Tax which the Borough voters endorsed, can be used to create access to larger sources of funding, and to repay any debt entered for land preservation, and to improve parklands already preserved. Through the years, heavy development pressures on unbuilt lands with high value as open space have led the Borough to pass bond ordinances meant for land purchase; several purchase actions were completed and have generated reimbursement of half the cost by Green Acres.

- **Change the way that open space and the preservation of open space is dealt with at the municipal level.**

Appropriate lands should be designated and reserved for open space and recreation in the same way as for housing, business and other categories of land use. Open space should be looked on as an element of public infrastructure and services that must be provided and maintained to sustain the community.

- **To continue to cooperate with other entities in an effort to preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities.**

At the government level, the Borough will continue, wherever possible, to work closely with the State of New Jersey through its Green Acres program, with the Monmouth County Freeholders and Monmouth County Park System, and with neighboring municipal governments in efforts to preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities within the Borough and along its borders.

## **XIII. CONSERVATION**

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The Conservation Element is an essential component of the Master Plan as identified in N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28(b)8. The Conservation Element establishes the framework for the Borough of Atlantic Highlands to protect, conserve, responsibly manage and, where appropriate, restore or enhance the Borough's water resources; wetlands; stream corridors and floodplains; greenways; slump block and steep slope areas; woodlands and tree cover; and wildlife and wildlife habitat. Each of these areas is appropriate for special land use regulations.

### **HISTORY**

As was common in many parts of the world, especially during the 1900s, Atlantic Highlands viewed saline and freshwater wetlands as unproductive swamps that should be drained, filled in and used for building purposes. Both saltwater and freshwater wetlands surrounding long stretches of Many Mind Creek were eliminated, especially between New Jersey Route 36 and the bay, but also along parts of the creek paralleling New Jersey Route 36. Nevertheless, hydric soils, high water tables, wetland types of vegetation and other characteristic wetland features are still present, together with some flooding since wetlands and their absorptive role have been reduced or eliminated.

Development in Atlantic Highlands and other coastal municipalities in New Jersey is subject to numerous statutory environmental regulations adopted through the years including:

- 1914 – Waterfront Development Act (N.J.S.A. 12:5-1 et seq.)
- 1954 - Air Pollution Control Act (N.J.S.A. 26:2C-1 et seq.)
- 1954 - Realty Improvement Sewerage and Facilities Act (N.J.S.A. 58:11-23 et seq.),
- 1962 - Flood Hazard Area Control Act (N.J.S.A. 58:16A-50 et seq.)
- 1970 - (Coastal) Wetlands Act (N.J.S.A. 13:9A-1 et seq.)
- 1973- Coastal Areas Facilities Act (CAFRA) (N.J.S.A. 7:7-1 et seq.)
- 1977 - Water Quality Planning Act (N.J.S.A. 58:11A-1 et seq.)
- 1977 - Water Pollution Control Act (N.J.S.A. 58:10A-1 et seq.)
- 1983 - Stormwater Management Rules (N.J.A.C. 7:8-1 et seq.)
- 1987 - Freshwater Wetlands Act (N.J.S.A. 13:9B-1 et seq.);
- 1993- Surface Water Quality Standards (N.J.A.C. 7:9B)
- 2016 - Coastal Permit Program rules and Coastal Zone Management rules were consolidated into one chapter (N.J.A.C. 7:7)

In addition to the New Jersey environmental regulations, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard regulate major development activities within the navigable waters of coastal area.

- The Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act was adopted in recognition of the importance of such wetlands and the need to preserve them and their natural buffers. Formal determination of wetland areas are based on three main factors: the presence of “hydrophytic” vegetation which prefers or can tolerate saturated soil conditions; the presence of wetland or “hydric” soils; and an evaluation of the soil’s ability to support wetlands vegetation.
- Beginning in 1998, volunteers working with the Atlantic Highlands Environmental Commission did monthly water sampling and testing in Many Mind Creek and Wagner Creek. Between 2005 and 2007, this was replaced by professional testing at six sites on Many Mind Creek to detect problems of non-point source pollution. Along the Bayshore between Aberdeen and Atlantic Highlands, similar data collection activities are being carried out on a number of creeks, brooks and lakes.

In addition, at six of these water bodies the Monmouth County Health Department also collects data on fecal coliform counts quarterly and nutrient levels twice a year. The data collected are shared at the county level to assemble a picture of non-point source pollution and contribute to watershed planning efforts.

- In 1996, an agreement was reached to end the dumping in the ocean of contaminated materials dredged up when deepening shipping channels in the bay. It was agreed to close the “Mud Dump Site” where these materials had been deposited in the ocean, approximately six miles off Sandy Hook. Instead, the contaminated area, which is 15 square miles, was to be capped with clean sediments as protection against the pollutants already there.

Since then 3 million tons of new material have been deposited at the site under the name of capping and “remediation” of the existing dump. However, nearly one million tons of this exceeds the latest definition of limits for toxic contaminant PCBs, and other pollutants were also present.

This prompted a new campaign against ocean dumping led by Clean Ocean Action with a coalition of ocean advocacy groups. Over 200,000 people signed petitions and 100 local governments passed resolutions opposing continued dumping and pressing for promised new definitions of permissible material to use in capping the site.

During the summer of 2000, an eight-day, 150 mile protest march was held from one end of the Jersey Shore to the other, and other events and supporting actions were held by groups ranging from surfers to business owners.

- During the latter decades of the 1900s, despite predictable problems for environment and for construction stability, areas with steep slopes in the Borough were increasingly used as development sites. This trend was fed as population growth stimulated housing demand, suburban living became increasingly popular, coastal zones attracted high-end land prices,

and economic prosperity made it all affordable.

In the second half of the 1980s and during the 1990s, in reaction to the more compacted neighborhoods and the loss of open space and recreation lands, which resulted from the real-estate boom, public counter-moves aimed at public land conservation began to gather steam. In 1989, the Atlantic Highlands Borough Council passed a steep slope ordinance, which set limits on the development of slopes greater than 10 per cent and specifies the detailed studies to be made when applying for permission to build on such slopes. The ordinance takes into account such factors as the extent of erosion and the potential for more; soil stability; maximum preservation of trees and other vegetation on site and in the surrounding area; the need to limit the extent of impervious surface to be constructed and the lot area to be disturbed; etc.

- In November of 2000 the Borough's Forestry Master Plan was approved by the NJDEP Division of Parks and Forestry. This plan was prepared and is administered by the Shade Tree Commission. The Forestry Master Plan was prepared as a result from the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act passed in 1996. The Atlantic Highlands approval certificate is No. 42, statewide.
- The 2006 Bayshore Region Strategic Plan focuses on nine municipalities in the Raritan Bay and Atlantic Highlands region. The plan provides a strategy for communities in this region to recognize economic growth through revitalization efforts to create an attractive destination for tourism and to preserve and enhance the area's unique and sensitive natural resources.
- In January 2008 the "Many Mind Creek Watershed Restoration And Protection Plan" was prepared by Weston Solutions, Inc. for the Atlantic Highlands Environmental Commission
- In October 2012 Superstorm Sandy struck New Jersey. In response to that storm "Getting to Resilience" Recommendations Report was prepared in January 2015 by the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve.
- In August 2017 the "Many Mind Creek Planning Assistance to States" (PAS) study was adopted by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New York District in partnership with the Borough of Atlantic Highlands. The goal of the study was to develop risk reduction alternatives for Many Mind Creek and also identify areas along the creek that are prone to flooding, stream bank erosion, sedimentation or flow constrictions. Recommendations were provided for each of the identified problems.
- Litter, debris and other pollutants enter the bay and ocean both from boats and from wash-downs off the land. In Atlantic Highlands there are ordinances and fines aimed at preventing boaters and pedestrians from despoiling the harbor, with enforcement by harbor security officers
- Every spring and fall, the Atlantic Highlands Environmental Commission organizes a beach clean-up by community volunteers in the area west of the harbor. In so doing, they



join many other bayside and oceanside towns which take part in these region wide “sweeps” organized by Clean Ocean Action.

### **Impacts of Superstorm Sandy**

Since the 2006 Master Plan, the Borough has an increased awareness of flooding from severe storms and hurricanes including Superstorm Sandy. There is also a heightened awareness from rising sea levels. Revised flood maps by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and new data on the impacts of sea - level rise have become available.

The Borough did not experience as much damage to residential properties as other nearby communities due to a more elevated geography. This allowed Atlantic Highlands to assist other neighboring communities during and after the storm. There was extensive damage to the marina estimated in the tens of millions. The harbor docks were destroyed and the public buildings on the shoreline were heavily damaged by Sandy but have since been rebuilt to standards that should be able to withstand a Category 3 hurricane.

Many lessons were realized as a result of Superstorm Sandy. Several of the implementation strategies that were identified post-Sandy are discussed below.

### **Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014**

The Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014 provides for the gradual increase of flood insurance rates until the premiums reaches full-risk rates. With limited exceptions flood insurance premiums cannot increase more than 18 percent annually. These exception areas may see annual increases of up to a 25 percent until they reach the full-risk rate. The exception areas include:

- Older non-primary residences insured with subsidized rates;
- Severe Repetitive Loss Properties insured with subsidized rates; and
- Buildings that have been substantially damaged or improved built before the local adoption of a Flood Insurance Rate Map (known as Pre-FIRM properties).

### **Sea Level Rise and Infrastructure Impacts**

The historical rate of sea level rise along the New Jersey coast over the past half-century was 0.14 inches/year, while predicted future rates are expected to increase to 0.5 inches/year. This means that by 2050 sea level is expected to rise by approximately 1.3 foot and by 2100 sea level is projected to rise about 3.1 feet along the Jersey Shore .

It is important to take sea level rise into account when developing land use regulations and designing infrastructure. For this reason, it is recommended that the Borough maintain a requirement of two (2) feet above base flood elevation for future development.

## **Getting to Resilience Report**

The “Getting to Resilience” Recommendations Report prepared in January 2015 by the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve recommends both short-term and long-term resiliency planning strategies. The majority of the short-term strategies revolve around public education on the dangers of flooding and providing information to the public on flooding and sea-level rise.

Long-term strategies include land acquisition through the N.J.D.E.P. Blue Acres or other buyout programs of land in floodplains and revising the Borough Master Plan and land development regulations to reduce flood vulnerabilities.

The Resiliency Recommendations Report provides resource recommendation goals and floodplain management objectives to guard against the potential impacts of sea-level rise and surge vulnerabilities. These goals and recommendations are incorporated into the Master Plan below:

## **Resource Protection Goals**

Air, water, and land can be overused and despoiled. The Conservation Element of the Master Plan is geared toward resource protection. If damage to air, land or water occurred, local residents’ quality of life and tourism could potentially be negatively affected. Preserving the Borough’s natural resources and character will therefore continue to be a major goal:

## **Floodplain Management**

Floodplains, lands along waterways subject to flooding, locally have low relief and sedimentary soils. Floodplains are defined by how often they flood. A 100-year floodplain has a 1% probability of flooding in a given year and is not tidally influenced. Local flooding can occur in major storm events. Most of the 100-year floodplain areas in the Borough of Atlantic Highland’s are highly developed. Both residential and commercial uses exist within this floodplain. Most of the time a floodplain is available for use. However, during floods they can be dangerous. Superstorm Sandy reinforced this fact. Floods injure people physically and emotionally and cause economic damage. Beyond this, emergency personnel are put at risk when called upon to rescue flood victims. In Atlantic Highlands, flooding must be taken very seriously. To protect public safety and property, limiting future building in floodplains and stringent construction standards will help reduce injuries and property damage. Federal, state and local policies should be consistent to implement this approach.

## **Floodplain Management Objectives**

The Borough’s objectives for floodplain protection are as follows:

- Limit development in floodplains
- Reduce imperviousness of existing and future floodplain development where possible
- Preserve and protect the biological values and environmental quality of tidal and non-tidal floodplains, where reasonable and possible to do so.

Developed floodplains have a reduced capacity to absorb stormwater, resulting in increased flooding. For example, development results in new impervious surfaces (roads, sidewalks, roofs, etc.), which limit the effectiveness of the floodplain by reducing the land's absorption capacity. This increases the potential for flooding. It is therefore important that the natural floodplain character be maintained, wherever reasonable, to promote public safety, to reduce economic losses, and to protect water quality and wildlife habitat.

Atlantic Highlands faces additional flooding issues. Several areas of the Borough commonly flood during storms. Sea level rise will increase flooding hazards. New Jersey is particularly vulnerable to sea level rise. During this century, as sea level rises, shorelines could retreat significantly in parts of the Borough. Narrow bay beaches and wetlands at low elevations, both important habitats, would be lost to even a modest rise in sea level and erosion of the oceanfront would increase. Currently, the State recognizes a right to protect shores with hard structures (e.g. riprap). As sea level rises, these hard structures will prevent "migration" of beaches and wetlands, and these natural features will be lost.

## **Programs and Policies**

Flooding from coastal storms is a serious threat to life and property with the potential for extensive damage and disruptions. To reduce potential damage, Monmouth County is developing a hazard mitigation plan. This first step will provide guidance for pre-disaster activities. The second phase of addressing disasters is to develop a post-disaster plan. Confusion and rapid decision making typically follow a disaster. Advance planning can position the Borough to reduce its exposure to future disasters and reduce the need for ad hoc decision-making. Superstorm Sandy has provided a valuable lesson, that planning is necessary for an effective post-disaster recovery process.

## **Recommendations**

1. Work with federal and state federal agencies to regularly update the Borough floodplain maps.
2. Limit new development and subdivisions in floodplain areas.
3. Promote uses, such as open space easements, natural areas, and recreational open space to reduce impervious surfaces in floodplains.

4. Work to acquire properties in the lowest lying portions of the 100-year floodplain, and return them to a natural state.
5. Reevaluate the effectiveness of the current floodplain protection regulations.
6. Discourage the location of new homes and roadways in the “V” or wave velocity zone and the 100-year floodplain.
7. Work with Monmouth County to complete a hazard mitigation plan for flooding, wildfire, and other natural hazards.
8. Develop and implement a post-disaster recovery and reconstruction plan to facilitate recovery and to reduce exposure to future disasters.
9. Consider participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) to receive flood insurance premium credits.
10. Consider code changes that will limit impervious surfaces.
11. Develop a sea level rise response strategy (including a two foot freeboard requirement for properties exposed to flooding and discourage further shoreline hardening).

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR WATER RESOURCES**

**GOAL: The Borough’s overall objective for water resources is to achieve “fishable and swimmable waters”**

### **1. WATERSHEDS**

Sound conservation, protection and management of the water resources on land within Atlantic Highlands begins with awareness of the watershed, its behavior and effects. It requires understanding of rainfall and natural water drainage from the hills and in the flatlands; underground water buried in aquifers; surface water flows in creeks, springs, wetlands and flood zones; and tide-water influences on stream mouths, shorelines and salt marshes. This hydrological system has positive and life-sustaining value, but also entails some risks and negative effects if engineering and development actions are not carefully planned.

Many Mind Creek and Wagner Creek are the main drainage channels within Atlantic Highlands. They carry almost all the surface water runoff from the Borough northward toward the Bay. Some runoff enters these streams directly over the land, some is retained in creekside wetlands, and some runs in stormwater drainage pipes, which are embedded under the streets and empty into the creeks. At their mouths, the two creeks are partially mixed estuaries, with a mix of seawater beneath a surface layer of freshwater moving seaward. Both creeks deposit sediments in a fan-shaped delta beneath the shallow bay-edge waters.

A smaller amount of runoff from the Borough is carried by a number of gullies and ravines in the steep slope areas between the eastern end of the harbor and near the border with Highlands Borough. Between storms some of these water courses are dry. As these waters enter the low-lying shore lands, some cross directly into the Bay and some are retained for a period in isolated wetlands.

The slope below East Highland Avenue between upper Prospect Avenue and Scenic Ridge drains southward to the Navesink River. Runoff from there starts downhill by feeding an intermittent stream which goes through Middletown Township lands parallel to and then crossing New Jersey Route 36. It becomes a perennial tributary of Clay Pit Creek in the Navesink Estates townhouse development, passes through a culvert under Navesink Avenue, and heads to the estuary of Clay Pit Creek.

The total watershed territory, which drains into Raritan Bay/Sandy Hook Bay extends 18 miles east-west along the Bayshore, between Highlands Borough and South Amboy Borough. A total of 13 streams, including Many Mind Creek and Wagner Creeks, carry water northward from sources one to four miles inland and empty into the bay. For that reason, an integral part of the policy environment for Borough pursuit of its water resource goal is the essential linkage with neighboring towns that share the same watershed with Atlantic Highlands.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- The Borough should continue its partnership in Watershed Management Area 12 as mandated by NJDEP, and incorporate the goals and objectives addressed in the WMA 12 plan into the Borough Stormwater Management Plan.
- The implementation of non-structural Best Management Practices should be added to the Borough's existing development regulations and applied to all new site design proposals. Whenever possible, the following nine strategies should be incorporated into site design:
  - a) Protect areas that provide water quality benefits and areas particularly susceptible to erosion and sediment loss;
  - b) Minimize impervious surfaces and break up or disconnect the flow of runoff over impervious surfaces;
  - c) Maximize the protection of natural drainage features and vegetation;
  - d) Minimize the decrease in the "time of concentration" from pre-construction to post construction. "Time of Concentration" is defined as the time it takes for runoff to travel from the hydraulically most distant point of the drainage area to the point of interest within a watershed;
  - e) Minimize land disturbance, including clearing and grading;

- f) Minimize soil compaction;
- g) Provide low-maintenance landscaping that encourages retention and planting of native vegetation and minimizes the use of lawns, fertilizers and pesticides;
- h) Provide vegetated open-channel conveyance systems discharging into and through stable vegetated areas; and
- i) Provide other source controls to prevent or minimize the use or exposure of pollutants at the site in order to prevent or minimize the release of those pollutants into stormwater runoff. These source controls include, but are not limited to;
  - I. Site design features that help to prevent accumulation of trash and debris in drainage systems;
  - II. Site design features that help to prevent discharge of trash and debris from drainage systems;
  - III. Site design features that help to prevent and/or contain spills or other harmful accumulations of pollutants at industrial or commercial developments; and
  - IV. When establishing vegetation after land disturbance, applying fertilizer only in accordance with the requirements established under the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act N.J.S.A 4:24-39 et seq., and implementing rules.
- The Borough prepared a complete inventory and instituted a close control of its stormwater outfalls into the creeks and the bay. This will be done for two reasons: 1) NJDEP requirements under the “fishable and swimmable water” policy and state-wide watershed management initiatives. 2) Impervious cover in the Borough has expanded and is slated to continue expanding with approved development projects. This raises concerns related to creek-flooding, an existing problem, and issues of non- point pollution.
- The following measures reduce the volume of stormwater run-off and the non-point source pollution it carries; the Borough has already adopted some of them, as previously indicated:
  - 1) At construction sites, control soil erosion and trap sediment by covering exposed soil with straw mulch or sowing grass seed, erecting a black cloth silt fence along the edge of sites (adopted). Studies show that mud pollution from construction sites must be reduced by 90 per cent or more to protect sensitive aquatic resources.
  - 2) Limit the percentage of lot area, which can be disturbed by construction and the area which is allowed to have impervious cover (adopted).
  - 3) Pass municipal regulations and educate homeowners to preserve trees and retain natural land cover that will absorb water into the soil, hold soil in place instead of eroding, and reduce the amount of sediment entering streams (tree preservation

included in steep slope ordinance, but need in rest of town).

- 4) Provide for tree canopy over streams and other bank vegetation to reduce water temperature, act as a soil stabilizer and keep erosion in check.
  - 5) Reduce or eliminate the use of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides on lawns and gardens because these degrade water quality.
  - 6) Create ponds that can keep 40 to 60 per cent of the nutrients and toxic metals out of nearby waterways (several ponds created).
  - 7) Install signage on storm drain covers to indicate what bodies of water they flow into and discourage people from discarding pollutants in gutters and drains (completed Borough-wide).
- The Borough should institute regulatory measures to ensure that future major drainage projects are designed with “stormceptors” (devices that intercept trash and some types of pollutants from passing through outfall pipelines), and should progressively retrofit storm drain covers that block trash.
  - Monthly water sampling and testing in Many Mind Creek and Wagner Creek should continue with the help of volunteers. The Borough of Atlantic Highlands should continue to share data at the county level in order to assemble an area-wide picture of non-point source pollution, which will in turn contribute to future watershed planning efforts.
  - The Borough in cooperation with Middletown Township should utilize the NPS Grant to develop a regional plan for watershed restoration and stormwater management for Many Mind Creek that will address the stormwater problems throughout the watershed and provide regional Best Management Plan solutions that are needed to reduce water quality impairments.
  - The Borough should determine what sites can achieve stormwater control with vegetative swales and buffers, as well as landscaping to control non-point source pollution, or what sites may require the building of a stormwater basin, to comply with the State standard that requires sufficient stormwater detention capacity to hold and slowly release the runoff from storms that have a likelihood of recurring once every two, 10 and 100 years.
  - The Borough should continue to extend the street drains and piping systems into the eastern hills section to control erosion and slope instability.

## **2. WETLANDS**

Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater often and long enough to support vegetation adapted to survive in saturated soil, according to the definition used

by the NJDEP. Wetlands generally occur in relatively flat areas between deep water and uplands, such as along Sandy Hook Bay, Many Mind Creek and Wagner Creek. They are variously referred to as salt marshes, tidal marshes, salt meadows, wet meadows, shrub swamps, swamps or bogs, depending on their locations and characteristics. Development patterns can change wetlands or even unintentionally create wetlands if the capacity of a land area to drain or infiltrate water becomes overburdened.

Wetland areas are essential to maintaining a healthy ecosystem. They provide important plant, fish and wildlife habitat, flood protection, erosion control, water quality maintenance, and recreation. Wetlands act as natural detention basins, temporarily store floodwaters, lower downstream flood crests, and slow the velocity of destructive water flow. They help maintain stream flow, reduce silt loads, filter chemical and organic pollutants, and serve as buffers to protect upland areas.

The two main types of wetlands, estuarine (tidal, saline) and palustrine (inland, freshwater), are both found in Atlantic Highlands:

**Estuarine wetlands** are formed in coastal areas along Sandy Hook Bay where the tide ebbs and flows, and at the mouths of Many Mind Creek and Wagner Creeks where bay tides meet the stream current. These salt and brackish marshes are home to myriad life forms, provide an integral link in the ecological food chain, and serve as a nursery and feeding habitat for food fish. However, increases of stormwater runoff can change the salinity of the creeks and their estuaries and add unwanted fertilizers and pollutants. Aquatic life, which relies on an estuarine habitat, is very sensitive to these human induced changes. As the quality of the habitat is reduced, so will the variety and number of resident species decrease.

**Palustrine forested wetlands** are areas of freshwater marshes, bogs or swamps, which are scattered along streams. Freshwater marshes also have great ecological value, support basic elements of the food chain, and are home to many fish, turtles, amphibians and mammals, as well as a refuge for various birds and waterfowl.

In April of 2000, engineers at Maser Consulting prepared a survey that identified isolated freshwater wetlands existing in several sections of the waterfront land - areas inundated or saturated by such freshwater sources as rainfall and surface water runoff. Some of these wetlands were caused naturally, and others resulted from the retention of water in the soil behind such structures as shoreline bulkheads and berms containing the dredge spoil site east of the harbor.

The majority of these wetland areas are classified as having intermediate resource value. They are characterized by their hydric (wet) soils and the prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation which is typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. According to the survey, the plant communities in these wetlands “are generally successional, consisting of a number of alien species and native species adapted to human disturbance.” The inventory was completed as part of the Borough’s application to NJDEP for a CAFRA (Coastal Area Facility Review Act) permit to construct the Atlantic Highlands section of the Bicycle and Walking Trail, a continuation of the Henry Hudson Trail that begins in Keyport.



The longest stretches of freshwater wetlands in the Borough are found next to Many Mind Creek between South Avenue and New Jersey Route 36, along the southern borders of town, and beside its two tributaries near West Avenue and Leonard Avenue respectively. Including tidal wetlands from Sandy Hook Bay to approximately South Avenue, the wetlands total 3.8 acres in this area.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- The Borough should continue the Many Mind Creek remediation started in 1998 by the New Jersey Natural Gas Company (NJNG). The replanting of vegetation will follow the recommendations found in the Atlantic Highlands Environmental Commission's 1999 report, which were based on an analysis performed by a stream restoration specialist, Steven Barnes.
- The Borough should continue to coordinate municipal regulations with state regulations by recognizing the restrictions placed on wetland development under Coastal Areas Facilities Review Act (CAFRA) jurisdiction and the NJDEP permitting process requirements.

### **3. STREAM CORRIDORS, FLOODPLAINS, and GREENWAYS**

Although Many Mind and Wagner Creeks are the most visible carriers of surface water, there are less visible, less voluminous flows in the Borough, mostly in the eastern hills section. These include:

- Small spring fed streams that have been channeled into underground pipes, such as from Ocean Boulevard at Grand Avenue, to the bay.
- Intermittent streams which flow only when it rains or at times of the year when soils are heavily saturated.
- Open springs that maintain steady output, such as the Henry Hudson Springs off Drive.
- Saturated wetlands where water is visible all year round, or nearly so.

Floodplains provide wide areas where water can lie without causing downstream flooding, siltation and erosion. In addition, they retard excess runoff and provide natural detention areas. Greenways preserve or improve the integrity of the landscape, not only by stemming the loss of natural features, but also by engendering new natural and social functions. The Borough currently has three high priority projects underway as part of the Open Space Plan:

#### **Lenape Woods Greenway**

The next stage of land acquisition with Green Acres matching funds would create a trail corridor to join the existing east and west sections, and extend the area to the east and south by incorporating neighboring forested slopes that are unbuilt. This expansion would protect the corridor of sensitive slopes, woodlands, and natural habitat along the highland ridge; provide

access for additional neighborhoods; connect to the County park at Mt Mitchill Scenic Overlook; extend the system of hiking trails; stop further encroachment from development along our borders; maintain the existing buffer against noise, traffic and pollution from the New Jersey Route 36 area; add to the Nature/environmental education opportunity available to children and adults; preserve the tree mass which moderates temperature and wind effects; and preserve habitat sufficient to sustain birds and other wildlife living in the zone.

### **Many Mind Creek Greenway**

The Environmental Commission has developed proposals for a greenway along Many Mind Creek between the bay and New Jersey Route 36, in the center of the town's population and geography. The current decontamination and earth replacement work by New Jersey Natural Gas presents a onetime opportunity. Done right, the Borough can fashion a creek corridor which is better managed, better serves the needs of landowners, business and the public, and is a more attractive sustainable natural resource.

The key ingredients covered by proposals for this lower stretch of the creek are appropriate bank sloping and vegetation, including fringe wetland species to the high water mark; protection against flooding, erosion and degradation of water quality; restoration for natural habitat including shade cover; provision of creekside trails; pedestrian crossing bridges and neighborhood access from the west side of the Borough and to the "backyard" of the business district; and linkage to the Henry Hudson Trail. To achieve these objectives, the basic guideline is to establish a 50-foot wide buffer on stream corridors in relatively urbanized areas, such as this downstream portion of Many Mind Creek.

The upstream reaches of the creek form the southern and eastern borders of the Borough of Middletown Township (except for a segment near the creek's source in the Lenape Woods western section). On the Atlantic Highlands side of the creek are fairly dense residential neighborhoods. Here the needs for better management of water flows and banks are similar to the downstream portion as described above. A protected buffer is important both for those purposes and for guarding against over-intensive development on either side of our Middletown Township border. Ways of creating or maintaining such a buffer have to be worked out in consultation with owners along both banks. In some upstream sections, public trail development seems feasible on the buffers to be established along the creek, but must be evaluated lot-by-lot on both banks.

### **Many Mind Creek Flooding**

The "Many Mind Creek Planning Assistance to States" (PAS) study was adopted by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New York District in partnership with the Borough of Atlantic Highlands in August 2017. The focus of the study was to identify areas along the Many Mind Creek that are prone to flooding, stream bank erosion, sedimentation or flow constrictions. Based on the existing data, field inspection and analysis the two general causes of problems within Many Mind Creek are:

- (1) Coastal flooding within Sandy Hook Bay; and

- (2) Riverine flooding resulting from routine precipitation events and lack of maintenance.

Based on the findings, potential solutions were identified to address the cause of each type of flooding:

- (1) Coastal Flooding: Dunes with floodwalls and floodgates
- (2) Riverine Flooding: Implementation of watershed management practices.

**GOAL:** To minimize the impact of Many Mind Creek flooding.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- The potential solutions and costs associated with each solution as presented in the PAS Study should be evaluated by the Borough to help correct the identified problems.
- An implementation Plan should be adopted.

**Wagner Creek/Center Avenue Park Extensions**

Wagner Creek, the only other stream in Atlantic Highlands, forms the western border with Leonardo. It requires protection by natural buffers for the same reasons as Many Mind Creek. On one bank or its northern portion next to the bay are several acres of mixed woodland/wetland protected by the Borough-owned Center Avenue Park. The wetland is scheduled for restoration and enhancement under an approved plan. The park includes an upland area used for T-ball, a tot lot and parking, and a beach area, which is shared between swimming, sunning and walking by the general public and boat launchings by the Sandy Hook Bay Catamaran Club which leases some park land for boat storage. This protected zone should be extended in two directions: Eastward along the beach as far as Avenue D, in order to increase public recreational uses of the Bayfront; and Southward for four blocks along Wagner Creek to provide a buffer and greenway to serve flood control needs, preserve habitat, and connect to the Henry Hudson Trail near New Jersey Route 36. These acquisitions might be accomplished mainly by negotiating easements or outright purchase for buffers 50 feet wide.

**GOAL:** To minimize the impact of stormwater to property and possessions due to flooding.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- The Borough should continue with the existing public outreach initiatives and develop new initiatives to continually inform the public of the importance and functionality of the springs and streams and other environmental issues that are crucial to the vitality of Atlantic Highlands.

- 1) Periodic water sampling and testing in Many Mind Creek and Wagner Creek.
- The Borough should implement the 2000 Open Space Plan to ensure undisturbed buffer zones along stream corridors and protection of associated floodplains.
  - The Borough should consider the adoption of the following stream protection measures:
    - 1) Rule out the construction or paving in stream buffers;
    - 2) Establish wider buffer areas;
    - 3) Control and limit additional direct channeling of surface water runoff into streams;
    - 4) Create protective stream conservation districts and greenways as overlays to be enforced by regulation which needs to be formulated and adopted;
    - 5) Require some type of permanent vegetative cover beside the Borough's two creeks;
    - 6) Require a permit to remove any riparian trees;
  - In developing the greenways initiatives, the Borough will seek all applicable federal, state and local funding sources in order to facilitate land acquisition to incorporate the greenway plans.

#### **4. STEEP SLOPES / SLUMP BLOCKS / TREE REMOVAL**

Slope is measured as the change in elevation (vertical distance) over horizontal distance and it is expressed as a percentage. Slopes greater than 12 to 15 per cent are potentially critical environmental impact areas, and experts agree that efforts should be made to keep them in their natural state. Slopes increase stormwater runoff rates and, when disturbed, are subject to erosion. They can be difficult to stabilize with vegetative cover. Slopes denuded of vegetation can result in nearby water bodies being subject to considerable sediment loads during rainstorms with an attendant loss of wildlife, water quality and aesthetic landscape.

Slump can result in major and rapid drop of steep slopes, cliffs and bluffs. Slump is identified as the downward movement of a block of earth material along some curved surface of failure. Although some slump movement is a natural phenomenon, man can inadvertently accelerate the process of slump development by 1) the placement of a load on top or along the slope; 2) disturbance of the toe of a slope, or 3) increasing soil moisture content by lawn watering, installation of drain fields within prone regions, or construction of ill-drained retaining walls.

**GOAL:** Restrict disturbance of sensitive slopes and protect mature vegetation.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- The Borough should re-examine the existing Steep Slope Ordinance to determine if existing requirements are adequate or if additional language or evaluation is required regarding tree removal, retaining walls, and slope buffers.
- The Borough should continue the efforts to acquire steep slope open space for preservation.
- The Borough should continue to evaluate and update all ordinances and zoning regulations related to tree preservation, tree replacement, and tree removal.
- Due to their expertise and experience in tree specification, planting and preservation, the Shade Tree Commission should be formally recognized and utilized as a part of the planning function involving public property and lands.

## **XIV. CIRCULATION PLAN ELEMENT**

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The Circulation Element is a required element of the Master Plan and is closely linked to all other general plan elements. This plan has been prepared to coordinate circulation recommendations for waterfront, business district, and residential zones and open space development, to and identify intersections and streets in need of improvement.

The Circulation Element addresses the concerns (with related policy and action proposals to be developed) for the scenic roadways, presentation of public viewscales from roadways, and related construction guidelines.

The Circulation Element is not limited to automobile-related transportation, but addresses the development of a balanced, multi-modal circulation system for Atlantic Highlands. It addresses such topics as public transportation, ridesharing, bicycle and pedestrian circulation, public recreation trails, linkages and coordination with other municipalities, and investments for the future as they relate to circulation.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **Policy Statement:**

- Create and maintain an efficient, safe and coordinated multi-modal circulation system, serving the needs of a variety of users.

#### **Objectives:**

- Maintain a network of roads that is consistent with the land use patterns of Atlantic Highlands.
- The preservation of public viewscales from County and Borough roadways and the development of related construction guidelines.

### **ROADWAYS**

Atlantic Highland commuters travel primarily by car. Based on U.S. Census 2010 statistics, 77 percent or 1,646 of the total 2,142 commuters drive to work alone; 8 percent of 172 workers carpooled and 15 percent or 324 commuters take public transportation.

The roadways located in Atlantic Highlands are under the following jurisdiction:

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Roadway</b>
NJDOT	Memorial Parkway (New Jersey Route 36
Monmouth County	Route 8 including First Avenue, Bayview Avenue, and Ocean Boulevard (Scenic Route)
Atlantic Highlands	All other roads in the Borough are either under Borough jurisdiction or are private streets

The Borough Engineer each year identifies the street locations in need of attention. Improvements may include curbs, sidewalks, aprons, road pavement, overlay, storm drains, etc.

### **New Jersey Route 36**

New Jersey Route 36 is a busy and relatively fast moving roadway with lots of intersections, traffic lights, residences and driveways along its roughly 14 mile length in the . Although traffic normally flows at acceptable levels of service, summer and weekend traffic congestion can create a problem for many travelers who use the road to reach destinations east and south of Atlantic Highlands, including Sandy Hook and the Jersey Shore. New Jersey Route 36 is served by local and express buses; however, these modes of transportation are not easy to use. There are few park and ride locations and poor bus stop access. The need to cross New Jersey Route 36 in one direction or the other limits use of these public transit options.

The Monmouth County Bayshore Regional Strategic Plan which was adopted on September 18, 2006 has set forth management strategies and implementation strategies in order to deal with the problems related to summer congestion. The plan recommends changes to New Jersey Route 36, and included creating a parkway feel and awareness of character and the environment along Route 36 corridor. One of the proposed major efforts was the replacement of the New Jersey Route 36 drawbridge connecting Sea Bright with the Highlands which was constructed in 1932 with a new fixed span bridge. The drawbridge was demolished and between 2008 and 2011 a new 75 foot tall fixed-span bridge was constructed consisting of two individual 1,610 foot long spans. Also proposed in the Strategic Plan was a summer traffic management plan that details roles and responsibility for a myriad of public agencies involved in traffic mitigation and planning in the region, including the NJ Highway Authority, NJ Department of Transportation, the National Park Service, the Transportation Operations Coordinating Committee (TRANSCOM) and staff from several local police departments.

## **Scenic Roadways**

Natural views from scenic road and hillsides in Atlantic Highlands are one of its most valuable and noteworthy environmental resources. The views of the bay, Sandy Hook, the Raritan Bay and New York City are a key feature of the Borough's northern-facing slopes. The outlook ridge facing the bay and Manhattan was named "Bayview" in the 1880s. Then it became "Ocean Boulevard". It is signposted and widely known as "Scenic Route" and "Scenic Drive." Other roads named for their water views are Prospect Avenue, Prospect Road, and Scenic Court.

In addition, there are beautiful landside views from roads and lands on the southern side of the ridge, looking toward the Navesink and Buttermilk Valleys and the Navesink River. On these slopes, road names again proclaim the heights and the views from them: Summit Avenue, Observatory Place, Highland Avenue, and Mount Avenue.

One of the objectives of the Circulation Plan is the preservation of public views from roadways and the development of related construction guidelines. The scenic outlooks to water and valley from County and Borough roads deserve public protection because they are a public amenity.

On September 17, 2001 Monmouth County Planning Board adopted the Monmouth County Scenic Roadway Plan (MCSRP). It identifies county roadways that possess such a high degree of visual quality that driving, biking or walking along these roadways is a pleasurable and enjoyable experience. It provides design guidelines to be followed in preserving and enhancing county scenic roadways. Atlantic Highlands will consider adopting these design guidelines into current zoning and development regulations. Subject to these standards the Borough will create a list of designated roadways. The following roadways are possible candidates for qualification:

- Bayview Avenue and Ocean Boulevard (CR 8) designated by Monmouth County
- East Highland Avenue (from Grand Avenue to Ocean Blvd)
- Mount Avenue (from East Highland Avenue over the Stone Bridge to Eighth Ave)
- Bayside Drive - the entire loop at its western border going up Hilton/Prospect/Belvidere Road to Ocean Blvd.
- Center Avenue between Avenue D and Wagner Creek

## **Implementing Goals:**

- In addition to state and local rules and initiatives to preserve scenic views, the Borough should consider the adoption of an adapted version of the County Planning Board



published guidelines for “scenic roads” which include “alternate design standards and land use controls that will keep your beauty of the roads with your town.”

The guidelines can be found at:

[www.monmouthplanning.com/Scenic%20Roadway/SR%20Chap%203.pdf](http://www.monmouthplanning.com/Scenic%20Roadway/SR%20Chap%203.pdf).

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

**Objective:** To improve the existing systems both in terms of function and safety in order to enhance the Borough’s economic potential and capitalize on its maritime heritage and natural resources.

### **Ferry Services**

Since the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, federal funds have been available for investments in ferry facilities (not vessels or operations). New Jersey succeeded in receiving some of the competitive funds available, which the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) will utilize to support private sector ferry services within the NJDOT. The Office of Maritime Resources provides overall direction, oversight and coordination among various NJDOT units. Atlantic Highlands was one of nine initial ferry projects to benefit from this program.

The SeaStreak Ferry Line serves the region between Atlantic Highlands and New York City. It provides daily year-round ferry services to Pier 11 in lower Manhattan, to 34th Street in Midtown. The ferry trips to Manhattan take approximately forty minutes. Although the ferries are usually packed with commuters on a daily basis, ferry service fares are prohibitive to many commuters. In 2010, ridership from Atlantic Highlands averaged about 972 persons per day to New York City.

The SeaStreak Ferry also operates daily service to Jersey City and Hoboken. Additional tours and events are available throughout the year.

### **Implementing Goals:**

Possible opportunities for expanding ferry service and improving connections with other transit modes include:

- Provide for dredging along Raritan Bay that supports the continuation of existing ferry service
- Improving traffic circulation in the marina area;
- Implementing shuttle bus service from ferries; and
- Expanding ferry service to accommodate weekend tourism, and other special events trips to and from New York City not associated with weekend commuting operations.

**Bus Service:**

New Jersey Transit and Academy Bus Lines offers bus service throughout the region with direct and connecting service to New York and other major regional destinations. County Route 534 (m24) currently services the Atlantic Highlands area.

**Implementing Goals:**

- Atlantic Highlands currently has park and ride lots to serve the ferry service, however, none connect with the New Jersey Transit bus lines.
- Revision to the current zoning ordinance could grant businesses in the Atlantic Highlands area the ability to allow parking for commuters for a small fee without having to obtain approval from the local zoning board.
- Improve existing bus stops for convenience and safety.

**Henry Hudson Trail**

The Henry Hudson Trail is a rail trail named for Henry Hudson, who explored the harbor at Atlantic Highlands and the Raritan coastline in the early 1600s. The 24-mile-long paved multi-use trail is part of the Monmouth County Park System and the National Rail to Trails network that transforms former railroad lines into community recreation trails.. The rail trail extends through the Bayshore and connects Keyport to Atlantic Highlands and inland to Freehold Borough and Marlboro using the former rights of way of several rail lines.

In Atlantic Highlands a small portion of the trail (+/- 760 feet) extends from the western border with Middletown at the southwest corner of the Borough parallel to Kennedy Ct. to Avenue D. The trail then follows Avenue D and winds through the southern portion of the Atlantic Highlands Marina.

The 1.4 miles Atlantic Highlands extension opened in April 2009 and extends the Henry Hudson Trail eastward from the Atlantic Highlands marina below the bluffs of Atlantic Highlands, ending at Popamora Point Park at the western end of Highlands. This section of the trail has been open under primitive conditions since being destroyed by Sandy in October of 2012.

The extension will be reconstructed and the project will include installation of subsurface drains to convey water across the trail; new surfacing, new concrete boardwalks at various trail sections; and additional storm water protection along the bayside of the trail. The reconstruction project is a joint effort between the Monmouth County Park System and the Borough of Atlantic Highlands. The new design will create a more sustainable trail that can withstand the flooding and storm events that occur along this trail section.

It is expected that work will begin in early 2017 and be completed by the fall of that year and will be closed to the public during construction.

**Implementing Goals:**

- Completing the Henry Hudson Trail
- Incorporating the Henry Hudson Trail on local maps

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Links**

Bicycle and pedestrian links to the waterfront and transit hubs such as park and rides should be created and enhanced. The pedestrian path system should incorporate the Henry Hudson Trail, pedestrian extensions linking the Henry Hudson to Firemen's Field, and linking existing pedestrian paths to future pedestrian paths. Bike racks should be installed near the ferry dock and the New Jersey Route 36 bus stop.

**Implementing Goals:**

- Follow the lead of Middletown Township-by requiring zoning changes to require sidewalks in new developments along New Jersey Route 36 to facilitate pedestrian traffic.

**Livery and Ridesourcing Services**

The Borough is served by private taxi services and ride sourcing services such as Uber and Lyft. These emerging companies utilize smartphones, global positioning systems (GPS), and social networks to provide rides in a timely manner.

**Implementing Goals:**

- To encourage the use of ridesharing and ride sourcing services within and to and from the Borough to limit demand on existing parking facilities.

**Public Parking**

The availability of public parking for businesses within the central business district is becoming an increasing issue. Current parking demand has risen over the past 10 years and within the past three years the increased popularity of the downtown and approval of several new sites has increased the demand required for existing parking facilities to function efficiently. The parking issues are limited to those uses clustered along First Avenue and parking areas servicing those uses.

The goal is to provide sufficient parking to meet the demand of those uses, particularly at peak times. In order to begin to alleviate the demand there is a short term and long term goal.

The short term goal is to amend the Zoning Ordinance by reducing the distance of off-street parking of the principal uses from six hundred (600) feet to three hundred (300) feet.

The long term goal is to perform a targeted parking study that studies current parking supply and demands and provides options for the Borough to meet future parking demands. One of the options to consider would be structured parking at the municipal parking lot and to explore a funding source for its construction.

### **Implementing Goals:**

- The immediate implementing goal is to revise Section 150-89 B. (5) (i) of the Zoning Ordinance. This section should be revised to reduce the distance of off-street parking of the principal use in the HBD, CBD and C zones from six hundred (600) feet to three hundred (300) feet.

***150-89 B. (5) (i)** In the HBD, CBD and LI Zones, the off-street parking requirement may be satisfied in whole or in part by evidence that the required amount of parking has been or will be provided in public or privately operated lots available for the use of the general public. Such parking space shall be located within ~~600~~ 300 feet walking distance of the principal use, but in no case shall such parking areas be located on the opposite side of State Highway 36 from the principal use. [Amended 11-10-2004 by Ord. No. 16-2004; 5-26-2010 by Ord. No. 11-2010]*

- A long term recommendation is to prepare a parking study and provide options to meet long term parking demand. This may include the construction of a parking garage within the municipal parking lot. Funding sources would also be explored as part of the parking study.

### **Transit Village**

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and New Jersey Transit have developed a Smart-Growth partnership known as the Transit Village Initiative. The Transit Village Initiative creates incentives for municipalities to redevelop or revitalize the areas around transit stations using design standards of transit-oriented development (TOD). This type of development helps to create attractive, vibrant, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods where people can live, shop, work and play without relying on automobile transportation. There are 32 municipalities that have been designated transit villages since the program began in 1999.

Municipalities that are committed to TOD may be eligible for NJDOT Transit Village designation upon meeting the Transit Village Criteria and completing an application. Being designated a Transit Village provides a municipality with several benefits including:

- State of New Jersey commitment to the municipality's vision for redevelopment.
- Coordination among the State agencies that make up the Transit Village task force.
- Priority funding from some State agencies.
- Technical assistance from some State agencies.
- Eligibility for grants from NJDOT's dedicated Transit Village funding.

**Implementing Goals:**

- Due to the Borough's characteristics which include a transit ferry terminal and commuter parking lot and adjacent downtown it appears the Borough may be uniquely suited for Transit Village consideration by the NJDOT. It is recommended the Borough review the criteria and application process and determine if being designated as a Transit Village would be appropriate for the Borough.

## **XV. RECYCLING PLAN / UTILITIES PLAN**

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The intent of the Utilities Element is to guide utility service in a way that ensures adequate utilities will be available for all needs and it also provides a basis for determining the location of appropriate land uses. The Utilities Element will describe and evaluate the existing systems that currently serve Atlantic Highlands and it will also recommend future considerations or improvements of service where appropriate or feasible.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **Policy Statement:**

Develop new systems or improve and maintain existing utility systems at the appropriate level of service to support the needs of Atlantic Highlands now and in the future.

### **SEWER**

The Borough of Atlantic Highlands is serviced by the Atlantic Highlands Water and Sewer Department. Previously the Borough was serviced by the Atlantic Highlands/Highlands Regional Sewerage Authority (AHHSA). In 2014 it was agreed through a joint Resolution between Highlands and Atlantic Highlands that the AHHSA be dissolved and that each municipality create a separate utility within its own borders. Wastewater collected by Atlantic Highlands is pumped from a pumping station located on First Avenue to treatment facilities owned and operated by the Township of Middletown Sewerage Authority (TOMSA) in the Belford section of Middletown. The treated effluent is then transferred to the Monmouth County Outfall Authority for disposal in the Atlantic Ocean. Atlantic Highlands are assessed through an end user charge by the TOMSA.

The wastewater treatment plants in the region have adequate capacity to handle current and projected residential and non-residential development and redevelopment. Maintenance, repairs and replacement of aging sewer infrastructure is a concern. To allow for growth and development, sewer repair and maintenance to reduce inflow and infiltration are necessary.

Approximately 81 percent of the units in Atlantic Highlands are serviced by the Borough's sanitary sewer system. The Borough installs and manages the entire sewer system. A unit is defined as the following:

- Single family residence
- Apartment
- Rented room with private bath
- School

- Separate building connected to the sanitary sewer system
- Business with separate toilet facilities.

Property owners connected to sewers are responsible to maintain their pipe until it reaches the sewer line. Sewer charges are based on the amount of water a property owner uses. Average output per home in Atlantic Highlands is about 260 gallons of wastewater per day.

## **QUARTERLY WATER AND SEWER RATES**

Residents receive a quarterly bill for sewer and water. The current rates as of 2016 are:

<i><b>Gallons of water used per unit</b></i>	<i><b>Sewer rate per unit</b></i>	<i><b>Water rate per unit</b></i>
<i>0 – 3,470</i>	<i>\$110.00</i>	<i>\$60.50</i>
<i>3,741 – 7,481</i>	<i>\$135.30</i>	<i>\$77.55</i>
<i>7,482 to 14,961</i>	<i>\$155.10</i>	<i>*\$77.55 + \$3.79 per gallon over</i>
<i>14,962 to 26,182</i>	<i>\$174.90</i>	
<i>Over 26,182</i>	<i>156% of Water Charge</i>	<i>** \$194.70 + \$4.55 per gallon over</i>

## **Sewer Collection**

Management and operation of the pipelines and pumping system are the responsibility of the Atlantic Highlands Water and Sewer Department. Beyond the boundary lines of individual property owners, the sanitary sewer system operates primarily by gravity through pipelines running mostly under the streets. The age and condition of the pipes in the system vary greatly. Many pipes are from the original system, dating back to the mid1890s. As funding becomes available older pipes are being repaired or replaced.

### **System**

- All pipelines feed into the main pumping station on the west side of First Avenue next to the Hesse building. A bypass pipe was recently installed at the pumping station to handle any obstruction in the flow.
- From the pumping station, sewerage is then pumped through pipes running north-

northwest for about three miles to a secondary treatment plant in Belford on Center Avenue.

- Maximum plant capacity is 10.8 million gallons per day (mgd), as authorized by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. It currently treats 9 million gallons per day leaving a reserve capacity of 1.8 mgd. The largest share - 6.9 mgd - comes from Middletown Township, whose residents all have sewers.
- Atlantic Highlands is entitled to send up to 1.3 mgd to the Belford plant.
- Average Atlantic Highlands' flow in 2006 was 400 -500 mgd and it has gone as low as 900,000 gallons per day.

### **Treatment**

- Treatment starts by separating wastewater from solids through a series of large concrete tanks.
- The solids or sludge generated by the treatment process is trucked to a landfill in Pennsylvania where it is composted.
- The wastewater is chemically treated to kill any remaining pathogens.
- Treated wastewater is then discharged into an outfall pipe 48 inches in diameter.
- The pipe goes underground back through Atlantic Highlands and Highlands along the Bayfront, crosses Sandy Hook, and then discharges into the Atlantic Ocean approximately 4,000 feet off Sandy Hook.
- This pipeline is maintained by the Monmouth County Outfall Authority.

### **Stormwater inflow and infiltration of sewer system**

Heavy rain or snowmelt draining to the First Avenue pumping station is the most difficult situation for the Borough's system. This stormwater can increase flows up to 1/3 above normal. Basement sump pumps often discharge directly into sewer lines. The Borough has worked to reduce inflow and infiltration over the years. When the reductions are completed, it is expected that enough capacity will be freed up for the Borough to include the remaining 400 residential units if the sewage collection system can be extended.

### **Recommended locations for new lines and replacement/relining of existing systems**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Memorial Parkway (part of Highway)
- Garfield Avenue
- New Jersey Route 36 and First Avenue



## **SEPTIC SYSTEMS AND SEWER EXTENSION POSSIBILITIES**

Homes in Atlantic Highlands not connected to sanitary sewers (458 units or 19% of total housing units) are all in the eastern section and mostly in steep slope areas. These homes have septic systems, whose efficient operation requires avoiding disposal of certain materials, regular maintenance and periodic pumping. Older or poorly managed systems can experience decay, blockage and breakdown, causing household problems and environmental risks and impacts. The steep slopes already face major water infiltration by drainage from natural surfaces and from building on more and more lots; the addition of septic systems at new houses and the malfunction of aging systems further strains the absorptive capacity of the soils. Waterlogged slopes are more likely to slump or slide because of the added weight and lubrication. These risks are additional reasons why it was especially important in the eastern hills area to increase existing lot sizes and configurations and rule out further subdivisions, and was mandated in the creation of a new R-3 zone.

In recent years, gravity-fed sanitary sewers have been extended through a shared arrangement with homes located on Victorian Woods Drive which is located below East Highland Avenue so as to reach homes south of there between Sears Avenue and Grand Avenue. Some limited additional sewer hook-ups can be achieved by activating a shared arrangement with an approved senior housing project (Conifer Village), directly south of the Atlantic Highlands' eastern ridge along New Jersey Route 36 on Middletown Township lands.

However, for many or all of the remaining properties with septic systems, whether or not they can be sewerred depends on complex issues of topography, geological stability, technological alternatives, system layout, costs and financing methods. These issues need to be closely assessed to determine in which groups of houses it is deemed impossible. Absent such a study, homeowners with older septic systems cannot plan ahead because of two expensive questions:

- Is sanitary sewer coverage, with its initial and quarterly costs, feasible?
- Will septic systems 30 to 50 years of age need to be replaced, with the major costs that are entailed?

### **Recommendation**

To design and seek financing in the coming years, for a technical and economic feasibility study. For any areas where sewers are found feasible, there would still be the difficult, major and time-consuming task of trying to marshal construction funding. If septic systems eventually could be eliminated in some areas, benefits would include:

- Reduced environmental risks and environment repair costs
- Elimination of operation-and-repair responsibilities

- Maintenance of property values for those homeowners
- Possibly a reduction of Atlantic Highlands sewer rates as more users share the fixed costs incurred when the treatment plant shared by Middletown Township, Atlantic Highlands and Highlands was expanded some years ago.

## **WATER**

The Atlantic Highlands Water Department is an independent, self-sustaining utility within the Borough government. It has 1,800 customers, revenues of approximately \$2 million a year, and 5 full time employees, including one to operate treatment facilities. Its budget comes entirely from user fees.

The water supply for Atlantic Highlands is provided by the Atlantic Highlands Water Department Plant located on West Lincoln Avenue. All drinkable water in Atlantic Highlands comes from natural water-bearing layers deep underground, known as aquifers. This groundwater is drawn from four active wells that tap into the Potomac-Raritan-Magothy Aquifer that is 600 feet deep and the Englishtown aquifers that is 200 feet below the surface. Natural layers of clay protect the wells from contamination, which may be in the ground.

The Borough is within a water supply critical area designated by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection; therefore it is not possible to increase water withdrawals from the Raritan-Magothy Aquifer. To expand the water supply, the Borough will rely upon the Englishtown Aquifer. The Borough expects that this approach will meet its projected needs.

The Borough of Atlantic Highlands has four working production wells called well #7, well #4, well #5 which draw water from the Potomac-Raritan-Magothy Aquifer and well#6 draws from the Englishtown Aquifer. All of these well are described below:

- Well No. 4 - Located on the site of the plant on West Lincoln Avenue
- Well No. 5 - Located on Leonard Avenue
- Well No. 6 - Located on East Avenue
- Well No. 7 – Located in the Borough Yard off West Lincoln Avenue

Atlantic Highlands is allowed to draw about 198 million gallons of water per year from these aquifers, but actual usage was 141 million in 2015; 145 million in 2016; and 123 million in 2017. These aquifers serve wide areas of the state so the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) monitors the balance between extraction and natural replenishment, telling towns how much they can draw.

The NJDEP is concerned about depletion of aquifers underlying Monmouth County, which is classified as a “critical area.” Aquifers are recharged by water infiltrating from surface outcrops, wetlands, stream corridors, and soils, which allow deep penetration of water. If natural recharge

areas are developed or covered by impervious surfaces, infiltration can be adversely affected. All Raritan formation outcrops are in Middlesex County. The Englishtown Aquifer is recharged along a band of land extending from Belford, Port Monmouth and Ideal Beach along the Bayshore, southwest 20 miles into Monroe Township in Middlesex County. In Atlantic Highlands it is regularly monitored at a well off East Highland Avenue operated by the U.S. Geological Survey (New Jersey District).

## **Treatment**

The importance of the treatment process is emphasized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which warns, “Inadequately treated water may contain disease-causing organisms. These organisms include bacteria, viruses, and parasites, which can cause symptoms such as nausea, cramps, diarrhea, and associated headaches.”

- Water pumped from the wells is piped into the central treatment and distribution plant on West Lincoln Avenue.
- There, raw well water goes through several steps:
  1. **Aeration** to remove any odor-causing hydrogen sulfide;
  2. **Clarification** by adding lime and alum which coagulates iron and settles it into decant tanks to be process offsite; and
  3. **Filtering** to “polish” the water and remove any residual color.
- Chlorine is added as mandated by NJDEP at the rate of one to two pounds in the 500,000 gallons of water used per day (average), leaving a minuscule residual (0.3 parts per million).

## **Distribution**

After treatment, water is pumped to two storage tanks at high elevations in the Borough so as to maintain water pressure and use gravity for distribution downhill. The tank at Observatory Place holds a million gallons, and 200,000 gallons can go in the tank above East Highland Avenue and the Eastpoint Shopping Center. This is about a two-day supply in summer and a three-day supply in the winter. If an emergency ever cut off the supply, service could be provided by a connection at neighboring Leonardo in Middletown Township with the New Jersey American Water Company.

The distribution system needs constant maintenance and is regularly upgraded; perhaps a fourth of it is over 100 years old. Eight-inch pipes have replaced all two-inch and many four-inch ones to expand flow volume. Annual flushing scours out the pipes. Over 200 hydrants provide fire protection.

Such improvements have reduced residents' complaints. There is still occasionally low water pressure in some locations. Dirty water can occur temporarily when sediments, which collect in pipelines, are disturbed by flushing, firefighting use or illegal opening of hydrants. Some problems are caused by sediment gathering in water main dead-ends, but these will all eventually be eliminated.

## **Testing**

Water samples from around the Borough are regularly tested by independent water-quality laboratories, and results go to the Borough and NJDEP. Federal and State governments have established test procedures and limits called maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for over 80 substances found in water. Under Federal law, all water users now receive an annual report on drinking water quality, listing only those contaminants that were detected in the water. All results from the most recent "Annual Drinking Water Quality Report" for the year 2016 show that any levels of contaminants that are present sometimes occur in miniscule amounts and are far below the enforced MCL Limits. Test results showed no violations.<sup>3</sup>

The required water tests cover:

- Regulated Disinfectants (Chlorine)
- Inorganic contaminants
- Disinfectant Residuals
- Radioactive contaminants (that occur naturally or from oil, gas or mining activities)
- Secondary contaminants (that have no health impact but may affect water's odor, taste or appearance or have cosmetic effects on skin and teeth)

## **SOLID WASTE**

Waste management is handled in Atlantic Highlands in three ways:

- Collection and disposal of solid wastes from residences;
- Special handling of restricted and hazardous wastes at the County level; and
- Recycling and waste avoidance measures.

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<sup>3</sup> Borough of Atlantic Highlands Water Department – 2016 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report

## **Residential solid waste**

The Atlantic Highlands Sanitation Department makes curbside pick-ups of household solid waste twice weekly. Solid waste is disposed of at the landfill of the Monmouth County Reclamation Center on 6000 Asbury Avenue in Tinton Falls Borough.

Atlantic Highlands alone generated 2,455 tons of solid waste in 2017. In 1987, before recycling, Atlantic Highlands generated 5,400 tons of solid waste per year. Since 1987, the Atlantic Highlands landfill contribution has remained relatively stable, but has risen slightly each year.

## **Restricted and hazardous waste**

There are special requirements for disposing of four categories of restricted waste:

- **Asbestos** - Asbestos (including shingles and siding) is classified as a restricted waste. Asbestos can be disposed of at a private Bulk Waste Facility. Proper handling and transport procedures should be followed. The Monmouth County Health Department Solid Waste Enforcement Team (SWET) should be contacted for handling instructions (732) 683-8686 ext. 5650. Large fines (up to \$50,000) can be assessed for improper asbestos disposal.
- **Construction debris** - The Borough will not collect construction debris, so residents must make arrangements for disposal with a private hauler or take debris to the landfill themselves.
- **Grass** - Grass cannot be mixed with waste, but is accepted at a special grass site located at the landfill during normal business hours. Ultimately grass clippings are transported to a compost site. Fees for grass clippings are \$3.00 per carload or \$36.50 per ton truckload
- **Pollution hazards** - Many types of waste involve pollution hazards and require special handling by the County Household Hazardous Waste Facility, located on Shafto Road in Tinton Falls. It accepts household hazardous wastes such as pesticides, lawn and garden chemicals (fertilizers, herbicides), household cleaners, paints, solvents, thinners, varnishes, pool chemicals, propane BBB tanks, gasoline, motor oil, antifreeze, batteries and other toxins. Materials must be in marked containers with original labels. A maximum 220 pounds of dry material and 20 gallons of liquid material per visit (liquid containers limited to 5 gallon size maximum and solid packages 50 pound maximum. The facility requires advance notice to schedule an appointment (732) 683-8686 or visit its website on the internet (<https://njhazwaste.com/counties/monmouth-county-nj/>).
- **E Waste (electronics)** - Since January 1, 2011, Computers and Televisions are no longer accepted for disposal, pursuant to the NJ Electronic Waste Management Act. In 2017 32,039 pounds of e-waste was recycled.

## **RECYCLING**

Recycling became compulsory in New Jersey in 1987 with the passage of the Statewide Mandatory Source Separation Act, which incorporates State and County recycling goals for solid waste. It requires that municipal development regulations controlling site plan and subdivision approval include provisions that ensure conformity with a municipal recycling ordinance. The goals of the legislation are to extend the life span of existing landfills, recover natural resources, and reduce pollution by encouraging remanufacturing.

## **RECYCLING PROGRAM**

Chapter 300 Article V – “Recycling” of the Borough of Atlantic Highlands Code provides for the source separation of recycling materials. The article states “It shall be mandatory for all persons who are owners, lessees and occupants of residential property, of business and industrial properties, and of private or public and government institutions and buildings, to separate the following from all other solid waste produced by such residences and establishments, for the collection and ultimate recycling of such materials:”

- Newspaper
- Corrugated cardboard
- Clean mixed paper
- Aluminum cans
- Tin and bimetal cans
- Glass bottles and jars, and pourable plastic bottles ("designated recyclables")

The Borough collects recyclable materials from the curbside of each property and/or from a drop-off center to be designated by the Mayor and Council. The Borough is separated into four zones with curbside recycling pick-up occurring twice per month on designated days.

A Recycling Coordinator is appointed by the Mayor and Council. The Coordinator is responsible for establishing the Rules and Regulations governing the days and times for the collection, sorting, transportation, sale and/or marketing of the recyclable materials

When recycling became mandatory, a market existed for recycled items such as glass, metal, and newspapers, and municipalities could sell these items to offset the costs of pickup. As more and more municipalities began recycling, the supply of recyclables outpaced the demand, and now the Borough of Atlantic Highlands must pay to dispose of these items. The cost to dispose of recyclables in this way is still cheaper than to have them disposed of at the Monmouth County Landfill. For example, it may cost \$5.00 per ton to have one ton of newspapers hauled away by a recycler, but disposing of the same ton of newspapers at the landfill would cost over \$55.00. This is known as “cost avoidance.”

Atlantic Highlands recycled 9,171 tons in 2017<sup>4</sup>. Because recycling saves on dumping fees, as demonstrated above, it makes the recycling program self-financing. Recycling is the law in Atlantic Highlands as provided in Chapter 300 Article V. Violators are subject to penalties under the law including fines and community service. It is a punishable violation to put recyclables in with regular garbage. If the County finds recyclables mixed when garbage goes to the landfill, the Borough is subject to fines. The recycling program in Atlantic Highlands is overseen by the Atlantic Highlands Sanitation Department.

### **Recycling Collection:**

- Zone 1 and 4: second and fourth Wednesday of each month
- Zone 2 and 3: first and third Wednesday of each month

### **Materials picked up curbside:**

- Newspapers - tied in bundles, 8 to 10 inches high
- Corrugated cardboard - flattened and tied in bundles or in a large box
- Office paper, mixed paper
- The following items placed in rigid containers, commingled, not separated:
  1. Aluminum cans
  2. Tin, steel and bi-metal cans
  3. Glass bottles and jars
  4. Plastic #1 and 2, but not margarine/butter tubs or baby wipe containers

### **Bulk items:**

- Bulk items are picked up once (Zone 2 & 3 first Saturday of every month; Zones 1 and 4 second Saturday of every month) Trucks automatically go to all streets and pick up bulky trash such furniture (upholstered, glass), carpeting, and mattresses. Only a reasonable amount of items are picked up.

### **Metals:**

- Metals are picked up every Friday but must be arranged with Borough Hall for a special pick-up. Items include lawnmowers, tubs, sinks, exercise equipment and empty propane tanks.

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<sup>4</sup> Atlantic Highlands Recycling Coordinator

- White Appliances - Borough Hall must be notified to arrange for special pick-up. The cost is \$15.00 and a sticker is required from the Borough. Items include washers, dryers, stoves, refrigerators, microwaves, air conditioners, computers and televisions.

The trucks do not pick-up construction or demolition debris.

The Borough notifies residents about the seasonal schedule for pick-up of brush, yard waste (no grass), and leaves.

The Borough Recycling Center is located at the end of West Lincoln Avenue, to the west of West Avenue. The Center accepts the same items as the curbside pickup plus:

- mixed paper (junk mail, magazines, catalogs)
- high grade paper (letterhead, computer paper)
- phone books
- brush and yard waste (no grass)
- used motor oil and anti-freeze
- car batteries

Paint cans, which are empty and dry with lids removed, can be placed with regular trash and recyclables

Household batteries including button batteries and rechargeable batteries only are accepted at Borough Hall during business hours.



## **XVI. COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

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The Community Facilities Element identifies existing public and quasi-public facilities within the Borough. They are a significant component of the Borough land use pattern. Community facilities are necessary to provide for the safety, health, educational and general welfare of present and future Borough residents. Each of the specific facilities located within the Borough are described below. It should be noted that parks and recreation and open space facilities are described in a separate plan element.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Encourage a sense of one community throughout the Borough so that all the separate areas feel connected. The Borough public schools, governmental facilities, fire stations, police, library and community centers should communicate a sense of a single community.

#### **1. Administration and Government**

Atlantic Highlands Borough Hall is located at 100 First Avenue. Atlantic Highlands was incorporated as a Borough by an act of the New Jersey Legislature on February 28, 1887, from portions of Middletown Township, based on the results of a referendum. The Borough was reincorporated on September 1, 1891. The governing body consists of a Mayor and a Borough Council comprising six council members. All positions are elected at-large on a partisan basis as part of the November general election. A Mayor is elected directly by the voters to a four-year term of office. The Borough Council consists of six members elected to serve three-year terms on a staggered basis, with two seats coming up for election each year in a three-year cycle. The Borough form of government used by Atlantic Highlands is the most common system used in the state. It is considered a "weak mayor / strong council" government in which council members act as the legislative body with the mayor presiding at meetings and voting only in the event of a tie. The mayor can veto ordinances subject to an override by a two-thirds majority vote of the council. The mayor makes committee and liaison assignments for council members with the advice and consent of the council.

#### **2. Fire Protection**

Atlantic Highlands Fire Department (AHFD) Station (85-1) is located at 10 East Highland Avenue and is part of the Emergency Service Complex which also contains the Atlantic Highlands Fire Aid and Safety Squad. The Department operates from a four bay building that directly accesses East Mount Avenue and averaged 145 calls in 2017.

The Atlantic Highlands Fire Department has operated since 1882 to service the community. It is an all-volunteer organization with more than 100 active, auxiliary and life members who volunteer their time to protect the citizens of Atlantic Highlands.

In 1889 the first firehouse was built on Center Avenue. That firehouse was later closed and in 1917 construction was completed on another firehouse that was built on East Mount

Avenue. In 1997 the Emergency Services Building was dedicated to all past and present members.

From its original 1883 truck, the AHFD has steadily progressed to state of the art equipment. The department currently maintains the following:

- 1985 Grumman 100 foot ladder truck
- 1991 Spartan E-One 1500 gpm pumper
- 1991 Mack/Saulsbury Rescue/Air/Light Water Rescue Unit
- 2002 S&S Pumper
- 2005 International pumper
- 2008 Fire Chief Command Vehicle
- 2018 UTV / ATV (for off road brush fires)
- fire police van
- utility truck
- 23' fire boat and two emergency use jet-skis.

The Atlantic Highlands Fire Departments also provides mutual aid to surrounding areas including membership of Mid-Monmouth Mutual Aid, Bayshore Active Chief's Association, Monmouth County Wildfire Taskforce, Bayshore Water Tender taskforce, and the Monmouth County Marine Taskforce.

3. **Police Department.** The Police Department is located with Borough Hall on First Avenue. The stated mission of the Department is *“to enhance the quality of life in our Borough by working in partnership with the community and in accordance with constitutional rights to enforce the laws, preserve the peace and provide for a safe environment.”* The Atlantic Highlands Police Department typically consists of the following personnel:

- 1 - Chief of Police
- 1 - Captain
- 1 - Detective Sergeant
- 4 - Sergeants
- 7 - Police Officers
- 4 - Dispatchers

4. **Public Works**

Construction projects for roads, streets, sidewalks, gutters and storm drains are overseen by the Borough Engineer, Borough Administrator, and Superintendent of Public Works, based on plans that are developed, approved and funded annually. Public works staff and equipment are deployed for routine repair of roads and streets, periodic cleaning of streets and storm drains, installation of signage, and collection of trash, recycling and brush. The Borough Yard is located at the end of West Lincoln Avenue and is open for recycling six days a week.

## 5. **Emergency Services**

The Atlantic Highlands First Aid and Safety Squad, founded in 1929, is an all-volunteer organization that has been providing around-the-clock free emergency medical services to the residents and visitors. It is located at 10 East Highland Avenue and is part of the Emergency Service Complex which also contains the Atlantic Highlands Fire Department. The Squad responds to approximately six hundred calls a year and operates from a three bay building. The Squad has emergency water rescue vessels for use in Sandy Hook Bay. Other vehicles include two ambulances, a patient transport bus, a 4x4 vehicle and a mass casualty truck. The organization relies on donations from residents, businesses and the Borough. The First Aid Squad received a grant from the Department of Homeland Security to equip every member of the squad with personal protection equipment.

## 6. **Public Library**

The Atlantic Highlands Public Library is located at 100 First Avenue and is within the Borough Municipal Building. The Library is also part of the Monmouth County Library System which contains 12 branches including the Atlantic Highlands Branch. The Monmouth County Library headquarters is located at 125 Symmes Dr. in Manalapan. The mission of the Library is to provide convenient and equal access to information in useful formats; create environments which foster life-long learning, personal enrichment, and a literate society; strengthen information partnerships through resource sharing; and actively promote library services, programs and materials to the community. In order to accomplish this purpose, the library will support the principles of intellectual freedom as set forth in the Freedom to Read Statement and the Bill of Rights of the American Library Association.

## 7. **Schools**

Two schools serve Atlantic Highlands.

**Atlantic Highlands Elementary School** is located at 140 First Avenue, in Atlantic Highlands. It covers pre-kindergarten to 6th grade. Enrollment for the 2016-2017 school year was 335 students. Enrollment has remained relatively steady at the school since 2010-2011 when there were 312 students enrolled.

**Henry Hudson Regional School** is located on the hill adjacent to the Twin Lights in the neighboring Borough of Highlands overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and Gateway National Area at Sandy Hook. The school district serves students in grades 7 through 12 from the Boroughs of Atlantic Highlands and Highlands. The enrollment at Henry Hudson Regional School has dropped dramatically in recent years. Between 2010 and 2017 the enrollment has decreased by 27 percent from 403 students to 307 students.

School Year	Enrollment
2010-2011	403
2011-2012	360
2012-2013	356
2013-2014	314
2014-2015	307

2015-2016	294
2016-2017	307

According to the Henry Hudson Regional School its mission is to offer a curriculum that fosters high academic achievement and prepares individuals to succeed in a changing technological society.

**8. Environmental standards.**

Public and quasi-public community facilities should be developed, renovated or retrofitted for environmental stability in accordance with the best building practices according to the Uniform Construction Code (UCC).

## **XVII. POLICY STATEMENT OF PLAN RELATIONSHIPS**

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The Municipal Land Use Law requires that all municipal master plans include a specific policy statement indicating the relationship of the plan to the master plans of contiguous communities; the Monmouth County Master Plan; the State Development and Redevelopment Plan; and to the Monmouth County Solid Waste Management Plan. The policy of the Borough of Atlantic Highlands is to ensure that the development within the Borough does not conflict with the development and welfare of neighboring municipalities, the County, and the State as a whole. An analysis of the Borough Plan shows that it is compatible with the plans of adjoining municipalities.

### **CONTIGUOUS MUNICIPALITIES**

The Borough of Atlantic Highlands adjoins the Borough of Highlands and the Township of Middletown.

**Highlands Borough:** The area in Highlands Borough, which abuts Atlantic Highlands, is zoned for residential, multifamily, mobile home, and neighborhood commercial uses. These more intensive uses in Highlands Borough adjoin park space and single-family development in Atlantic Highlands. There is a need for both communities to coordinate planning efforts for the Henry Hudson Trail, waterfront access, and slope protection.

**Middletown Township:** The abutting area of Middletown Township is planned and zoned as single-family residential, R-22 and R-15 Zones, and commercial, B-3 Zone. The municipal border, where undeveloped, is characterized by sensitive undeveloped wooded slopes and by hydric soils along Many Mind Creek. These features are not suitable for conventional development and should be conserved. Highland Avenue traverses property in both Atlantic Highlands and in Middletown Township. While the Atlantic Highlands frontage is designated residential, a portion of Middletown Township is designated commercial. The Borough disfavors the use of Highland Avenue for commercial access. Moreover, any nonresidential use should be separated by planted screens and fencing. The Borough also urges that the vicinity of the landmark Bowne House, at the end of Leonard Avenue, be conserved.

### **MONMOUTH COUNTY**

The Monmouth County Planning Board was established in 1954. Since its inception the County has adopted three comprehensive plans. The first plan was the *Monmouth County General Development Plan* adopted in 1969. The second plan, the *Monmouth County Growth Management Guide*, was adopted in 1982.

An amendment to the 1982 Plan included the Waterfront Access Plan. This plan promotes the implementation of Waterfront Park, a linear park interconnecting recreational and open space areas from Aberdeen along the coast to Highlands.

On September 19, 2016 Monmouth County produced its third plan, the ***Monmouth County Comprehensive Master Plan***. The 2016 Plan is a two volume set and as the Plan states it:

*“was initiated in response to a fundamental change in our approach to regional planning; from one that had emphasized growth management in an era of mass suburbanization to one that is more focused on the redevelopment, revitalization, and rediscovery of communities throughout the county. The new Plan recognizes that most of our municipalities have successfully planned for and have already established their desired physical form and character. As such, many of them now seek to maintain and/or enhance their distinct identities through more sustainable approaches in a time characterized by limited growth and constrained public finance.”*

Atlantic Highlands, has been categorized as an environmentally sensitive area within the Coastal Growth Corridor due to its unstable slopes and slump features. A strong transportation network has developed within the Corridor attracting higher density housing, commercial and office facilities.

The Atlantic Highlands Master Plan is supportive of the Monmouth County Plan goals for the Waterfront Area and has considered its recommendations in the preparation of the Municipal Conservation, Circulation and Land Use Elements. Atlantic Highlands is proposing connecting municipal park sites to the Henry Hudson Trail.

## **MONMOUTH COUNTY DISTRICT**

### **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Monmouth County Reclamation Center in Tinton Falls Borough serves as the landfill for solid waste generated by Monmouth County municipalities. It is also the site of the County recycling transfer station. The Monmouth County Solid Waste Management Plan was amended in 1987 to mandate certified municipal recycling programs as a condition for municipal solid waste dumping privileges at the Monmouth County Landfill. Atlantic Highlands received certification from the County in September 1987 for having a recycling ordinance consistent with the County Plan. Annual recertification is contingent on meeting the goals set forth by the recycling law of the State.

These goals include an acceptable Recycling Plan Element adopted as part of the municipal Master Plan and a recycling ordinance. The County approved the Recycling Plan Element of Atlantic Highlands Master Plan adopted on June 30, 1988. Atlantic Highlands adopted an amended Recycling Plan Element in 2006.

Monmouth County amended the Solid Waste Management Plan on March 12, 2009. The updated Statewide Solid Waste Management Plan reaffirmed the State’s goal of recycling 50% of the municipal solid waste (MSW) stream. The amendment also increased the types and quantities of materials being recycled by:

- Mandating the separation and recovery of additional materials;
- Increasing the visibility and convenience of appropriate recycling containers, with specific requirements for labeled containers and recycling provisions at all businesses, institutions, and at special events;
- Providing more convenient recycling outlets for residents and small business;
- More effective enforcement of recycling requirements by municipal and county inspectors; and
- More visible educational and promotional programs

Since 2009, the Plan has had several administrative actions the latest occurring on May 25, 2016.

## **STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT**

The State Planning Commission released the State Development and Redevelopment Plan in 1992. Since Atlantic Highlands is within the land area under the jurisdiction of the Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA), the State Plan relies upon the policies, regulations and implementation mechanisms that have been developed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to regulate coastal areas.

The Borough has participated in the cross-acceptance process of the State Plan. As a result, that portion of the Borough characterized by unstable and steep slopes is proposed as Planning Area 5 (PA-5), Environmentally Sensitive. The remainder of the community is designated Planning Area 1 (PA-1), Redeveloping Suburb, with a portion delineated as a “Center”.

### **Contemplated Changes**

Working with the Monmouth County Planning Board and neighboring municipalities as part of the Regional Strategic Development and Redevelopment Plan, the Borough hopes that this process will identify ways to achieve revitalization, redevelopment, or at least aesthetic improvements along the New Jersey Route 36 corridor between Keyport and Atlantic Highlands. Previous area-wide plans described the Atlantic Highlands portion of the corridor as well planned, attractive and integrated with its locality (known as “Memorial Parkway” within Atlantic Highlands). The Borough would like to see such a positive image extended westward from the Borough.

The Borough faces very practical, down-to-earth difficulties in approaching a vision of faster, concentrated, and higher-density growth that arises from the Planning Area 1 designation. That vision is, in fact, contrary to the Borough’s own vision. The difficulties are scarce undeveloped land, an existing high density, the unsuitability of the historic district for other than restoration initiatives, and the critical environmental constraints of the Borough steep slope zone and the Many Mind Creek stream corridor.

## **2012 Strategic Plan**

In 2012 a State Strategic Plan (SSP) was drafted. The Plan was a revision to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and was designed to meet the statutory charges of the State Planning Act. The overall goal of the State Strategic Plan was to guide future growth by balancing development and conservation objectives to meet the needs of New Jersey.

The State Planning Commission was scheduled to take action to adopt the Final Plan at its November 13, 2012 meeting. However, Superstorm Sandy, which hit New Jersey on October 27, 2012, put a hold on the adoption of the Plan. Since that time there has been no action or discussion to adopt the new Plan.