

HIGHLANDS ELEMENT

MASTER PLAN SUPPLEMENT TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER MORRIS COUNTY, NEW JERSEY



DRAFT FOR SUBMISSION TO THE NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION
AND PLANNING COUNCIL TOWARD ACHIEVING PLAN CONFORMANCE WITH THE
HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN

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MAY 2013

ADOPTED: MAY 28. 2013

The Planning Board presented, discussed, and accepted public comment on this draft Master Plan supplement at its duly-noticed public meeting of September 8, 2009. Copies of the document were made available for review by the public at least 10 days prior to that meeting, and adequate notice of the meeting advising that the Highlands Element was on the agenda for discussion and public comment, was provided.

This document is based on a model Highlands Element prepared and provided to all Highlands municipalities by the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council. Modifications required to tailor it for application to the Township of Chester were provided by the individual indicated below.

PREPARED BY:

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
POLICIES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES.....	3
A. PRESERVATION AREA GOALS	3
B. PLANNING AREA GOALS.....	4
C. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGHLANDS ACT & MLUL.....	4
D. REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING	5
HOUSING PLAN.....	11
LAND PRESERVATION AND LAND STEWARDSHIP PLAN.....	12
RELATIONSHIP OF MASTER PLAN TO STATE/REGIONAL/LOCAL PLANS	14
EXHIBITS.....	16

INTRODUCTION

The Township of Chester is located in the New Jersey Highlands Region. It is one of 88 municipalities protected by and subject to the provisions of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (“Highlands Act,” N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et seq.). The Highlands Act was enacted by the State Legislature on August 10, 2004 for the purpose of protecting, enhancing, and restoring Highlands natural resources, in particular water resources, which provide drinking water to over 5 million New Jersey residents. The Highlands Act created the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (the “Highlands Council”) and charged it with crafting a comprehensive master plan for the Highlands Region.

To complete that task, the Highlands Council engaged in a four-year planning process involving extensive scientific and technical analysis of the Region, along with an intensive program of public outreach and participation. The Highlands Council solicited the advice and input of all stakeholders and interested parties through a variety of means, including but not limited to: initiation of the “Partnership Program” for municipal and county government representatives; formation of 18 Technical Advisory Committees comprised of technical experts and practitioners in relevant fields such as land use planning, engineering, agriculture, real estate appraisal, transportation, and business; and development of the “Network,” a forum for information-sharing and outreach to the general public. In addition, the Highlands Council has held and continues to adhere to a regular schedule of open public meetings providing continuous opportunity for public comment, and has provided for on-going data sharing and access to information through its internet website.

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

The Highlands Region encompasses some 1,343 square miles in the northwest part of New Jersey. The Highlands Act designates about half of the seven-county Region as Preservation Area (415,000 acres) and the other half as Planning Area (444,000 acres). The Act requires that jurisdictions having lands in the Preservation Area conform to the Highlands RMP with respect to that area, while for lands located in the Planning Area, conformance is voluntary.

The Township of Chester is located partially in each, the Preservation and Planning Area. The municipality affirmatively seeks to align its land use planning program with the provisions of the RMP with respect to the whole of the municipality. For purposes of this document, these lands shall henceforth be referred to as the “Township Highlands Area.” As to voluntary conformance for the Planning Area, the Governing Body adopted General Ordinance #2013-1 on March 19, 2013 indicating its intention to revise the municipal Master Plan and development ordinances, as applicable to the development and use of land in the Planning Area, to conform with the goals, requirements, and provisions of the Highlands RMP).

TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT

The Township of Chester has limited potential for development other than projects that would be exempt from the Highlands Act. Specifically, the Highlands Municipal Build-Out evaluation for Chester Township identified only three lots that could support non-exempt residential units, all of which are located in the Preservation Area. These lots will be regulated under the “Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act Rules” (N.J.AC 7:38-1 et seq.) and will therefore have very limited potential for development. A recent build-out analysis prepared by Ritter & Plante Associates, LLC uncovered four lots located in the Planning Area that have the potential for subdivision that would create one additional lot each. These potential four new lots could each be developed with a single-family dwelling. In total, the Preservation Area and Planning Area could support seven non-exempt residential units, which represent the potential for very limited development in the Township.

The Highlands Element sets forth the policies that shall guide future land use and development (to the extent applicable) within the Township. It provides the rationale and the framework for the adoption of land use requirements that are protective of Highlands resources and consistent with the Highlands RMP. In large part, these policies will be effectuated by adoption of a “Highlands Checklist Ordinance.” This ordinance will require that applicants seeking development approvals for projects within the Township to either provide confirmation of a Highlands Act exemption (pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:20-28); or obtain evidence of RMP-compliance in the form of a Consistency Determination from the Highlands Council. The Township anticipates that most proposals for development will qualify for Highlands Act exemptions. Development not covered by such exemptions will, as applicable, be subject to the provisions of the Regional Master Plan, or in the Preservation Area, the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) “Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act Rules” (N.J.AC 7:38-1 et seq), or both.

The Highlands Checklist Ordinance and any other regulatory requirement deemed necessary to effectuate these Highlands land use policies, shall apply to non-exempt land use activities in the Township. “Non-exempt” land use and development refers to uses, activities, and development projects not expressly listed as exemptions in the Highlands Act (N.J.S.A. 13:20-28). Land use activities, improvements, and development projects that are exempt from the Highlands Act shall remain subject to all other applicable provisions of the underlying municipal Master Plan, Zoning and Land Use Ordinances, and Development Regulations.

The Highlands Element amends or creates in limited form (where not already existing), the components needed to supplement the existing Chester Township Master Plan, as required for Plan Conformance. The Highlands Element is intended to apply in conjunction with the language of the existing Township Master Plan to the maximum extent feasible. In the event of conflicts between the two, the Highlands Element shall supersede, unless the existing municipal Master Plan provisions are more restrictive.

POLICIES, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Township Highlands Area encompasses the whole of the municipality. It consists of approximately 18,695 acres of land (see Exhibit A, Township Highlands Area). Of the total acreage approximately 15,789 acres (84 percent) lies within the Highlands Preservation Area while 2,906 acres (16 percent) lies within the Planning Area.

The Township Highlands Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) (prepared by Ritter & Plante Associates, LLC, and dated January 2013) provides detailed information concerning the physical features, natural resources and specific characteristics of the Highlands Area. The ERI includes all of the information available through the Highlands Regional Master Plan and supporting technical documents, which document the wide array of natural and cultural resources that characterize the New Jersey Highlands Region.

The municipality recognizes the unique value of the Township Highlands Area and seeks to protect and enhance it, in keeping with the Highlands Act and the Highlands RMP. Accordingly, the overarching land use policy with respect to the Township Highlands Area is to place priority emphasis on the protection, enhancement and restoration of Highlands natural and cultural resources while ensuring that land use and development activities therein occur only in a manner and location that is consistent with the Highlands RMP.

In keeping with this policy, the following goals of the Highlands Act and Highlands RMP are embraced by the municipality and shall guide the land use and development of the Township Highlands Area:

A. PRESERVATION AREA GOALS

1. To protect, restore, and enhance the quality and quantity of surface and ground waters;
2. To preserve extensive and, to the maximum extent possible, contiguous areas of land in its natural state, thereby ensuring retention of the unique and significant natural, scenic, and other resources representative of the Township Highlands Area;
3. To protect the natural, scenic, and other resources of the Township Highlands Area, including but not limited to contiguous forests, wetlands, vegetated stream corridors, steep slopes, and critical habitat for fauna and flora;
4. To preserve farmland, historic sites, and other historic resources;
5. To preserve outdoor recreation opportunities on publicly owned land;
6. To promote conservation of water resources;
7. To promote Brownfield remediation and redevelopment, where applicable;

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

8. To promote compatible agricultural, horticultural, recreational, and cultural uses and opportunities within the framework of protecting the environment of the Township Highlands Area; and
9. To prohibit or limit to the maximum extent possible construction or development which is incompatible with preservation of this unique area.

B. PLANNING AREA GOALS

1. To protect, restore, and enhance the quality and quantity of surface and ground waters;
2. To preserve to the maximum extent possible any environmentally sensitive lands and other lands needed for recreation and conservation purposes;
3. To protect and maintain the essential character of the Township Highlands Area environment;
4. To preserve farmland, historic sites, and other historic resources;
5. To promote the continuation and expansion of agricultural, horticultural, recreational, and cultural uses and opportunities;
6. To preserve outdoor recreation opportunities on publicly owned land;
7. To promote conservation of water resources;
8. To promote Brownfield remediation and redevelopment, where applicable;
9. To encourage as applicable, and consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and smart growth strategies and principles, appropriate patterns of compatible residential, commercial, and industrial development, redevelopment, and economic growth, in or adjacent to areas already utilized for such purposes, and to discourage piecemeal, scattered, and inappropriate development, in order to accommodate local growth and economic development in an orderly way while protecting the Township Highlands Area environment from the individual and cumulative adverse impacts thereof; and
10. To the extent applicable: To promote local transportation opportunities that are consistent with smart growth strategies and principles.

C. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGHLANDS ACT & MLUL

The Municipal Land Use Law gives authority to New Jersey municipalities to govern land use and development within their borders. The Highlands Act augments that authority to allow municipalities the power to enforce the goals, policies, objectives, and programs of the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The Highlands Act and the RMP together provide the regional perspective from which local decisions and actions will emanate.

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

As a result of the passage of the Highlands Act, the future of land use planning has significantly changed for both municipalities and counties in the Highlands Region. The New Jersey Supreme Court, in upholding the constitutionality of the Highlands Act in OFP, LLC v. State, 197 N.J. 418 (2008), affirmed the Appellate Division's decision, which emphasized the broad scope of the Highlands Act to protect the natural and agricultural resources of the Highlands through a coordinated system of regional land use controls. The Highlands Act creates a system in which a regional plan is designed to be implemented primarily through local government units. The net effect is that the statutory authority of local government units in the Highlands Region, inclusive of that provided under the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), is not preempted by the Highlands Act, but rather is supplemented through the passage of the Highlands Act and the adoption of the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The Highlands Act provides, through the conformance of municipal master plans and ordinances with the Highlands RMP, authorities for municipal regulation that are in addition to those of the MLUL.

Accordingly, the criteria for approval of development applications under the ordinances that ultimately effectuate this Highlands Element will incorporate aspects of both the Municipal Land Use Law and the Highlands Act. To the extent that MLUL criteria for approval of variances, waivers, exceptions and/or any other relevant aspect are altered or supplemented by provisions indicated in the Highlands Element, authority for such modifications derives from passage of the Highlands Act.

With respect only to the Preservation Area, the Highlands Council will coordinate with NJDEP during Highlands permit review for any major Highlands development including the review of waivers on a case-by-case basis: 1) if determined to be necessary in order to protect public health and safety; 2) for redevelopment in accordance with a Highlands Redevelopment Area Designation (see Redevelopment Planning, Section D); or 3) in order to avoid the taking of property without just compensation.

D. REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The Planning Board has identified the potential for redevelopment opportunities within the Highlands Area. The term "redevelopment" is used herein to refer to reconstruction or re-use of previously developed and underutilized properties (which may include Preservation Area sites that have 70% or greater of impervious surface, as well as other redevelopment and "grayfield" sites in the Planning Area), and to the rehabilitation and re-use of "brownfield" sites (identified as such by NJDEP where in the Preservation Area). Unless specifically stated otherwise, neither the term "redevelopment," nor the phrase "in need of redevelopment" is used herein to invoke the definitions, processes, powers or any other facet of the provisions of the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.).

Rather, Highlands Area redevelopment planning refers to the identification of previously developed areas that: a) are suitable for re-use and/or reconstruction, or reversion to "greenfields," such as parklands, conservation areas, or open space; and/or b) may be eligible for designation by the Highlands Council as Highlands Redevelopment Areas.

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

Highlands Redevelopment Areas are typically characterized by ready access to or potential for water and wastewater utility infrastructure (and available or potential capacities); existing transportation infrastructure and/or services with links to viable transportation networks; proximity to supporting community facilities and services; and suitability for increased development intensity in keeping with smart growth planning principles. Where brownfields are involved in the Preservation Area, NJDEP identification of the brownfield site is a necessary step prior to Highlands Council designation of a Highlands Redevelopment Area. In the Preservation Area, such applications must be submitted to NJDEP for a Highlands Preservation Area Approval (HPAA) with Redevelopment Waiver.

It is the intent of this Plan to encourage redevelopment where appropriate within the Highlands Area, to ensure optimal and efficient use of land. By maximizing the use of previously developed areas and areas in need of environmental clean-up or other improvements, the municipality may provide for desirable new development (or new green spaces), while protecting lands that contain sensitive environmental features and important Highlands resources. This approach is intended to guide development toward the most suitable locations in the municipality, to encourage environmental clean-up where needed, and to maximize the use of existing infrastructure to meet future needs.

Redevelopment projects and activities that conform to density/intensity allowances and meet all other requirements of the applicable land use ordinances (specifically including those developed for the Highlands Area and the Highlands Preservation Area Rules at N.J.A.C. 7:38), do not require Highlands Redevelopment Area designation and may proceed as of right in accordance with all municipal procedural requirements. Any municipally-sponsored redevelopment project proposed pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:12A, while perhaps also requiring Highlands Council Redevelopment Area designation, must be advanced in accordance with all applicable statutory requirements, including preparation and adoption by the Governing Body of a Redevelopment Plan. The Planning Board, in making any Highlands Area determination of “area in need of redevelopment” pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:12A, will incorporate the considerations listed below for Highlands Redevelopment Area designations in evaluating the applicable criteria under N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5.

1. Definitions.

- a. A “brownfield” site consists of a commercial or industrial site that is currently vacant or underutilized and on which there has been or is suspected to have been, a contaminant discharge.
- b. A “grayfield” site consists of a site supported by existing infrastructure that contains an industrial or commercial facility (not excluding one having a residential component) exhibiting signs of abandonment or underutilization, but without evidence or expectation of contamination.
- c. A “redevelopment project” or “redevelopment activity” refers to the re-use, reconstruction, or conversion to alternate use, of a brownfield site, a grayfield site, or a previously developed site that is currently vacant or underutilized in

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

the Highlands Area. Redevelopment projects and activities may include but are not limited to: removal, reconstruction, or adaptive reuse of existing buildings and other structures; construction of new buildings and other structures; and conversion/restoration of a site or portions of a site for open space, recreation or conservation purposes of any kind.

- d. A “Highlands Redevelopment Area” consists of a property or group of properties designated as such by the Highlands Council, and which includes one or more of the following: a) a brownfield site; b) a grayfield site; and c) any previously developed site in the Highlands Area. A Highlands Redevelopment Area may include the intervening or surrounding lands which are significantly affected by or are necessary to support such sites, and will be subject to a Highlands Council-approved redevelopment plan setting forth the full scope and details of the proposed redevelopment project(s) and/or activities.

2. Redevelopment Projects and Activities.

- a. Redevelopment projects and activities that comply with all applicable land use ordinances (specifically including those developed for the Highlands Area) are encouraged in all Areas, Zones, and Subzones of the Highlands Area. Such projects and activities are also subject to all applicable county, state, and federal regulatory requirements.
- b. Redevelopment projects and activities involving conversion to greenfields are particularly encouraged in environmentally constrained areas, where compliance with Highlands Area ordinance provisions for new development may not be feasible.
- c. In consideration of the foregoing, the Board recommends that the following specific sites, consisting of brownfields, grayfields, and/or other previously developed vacant or underutilized properties, be considered for potential redevelopment projects and/or activities in accordance with all applicable ordinances and regulatory requirements:

- i. Simmons Precision Site: Block 39, Lots 2 & 3 and Block 40, Lot 1:

Highlands Land Use Capability Zones: Protection Zone, Existing Community Zone and Existing Community Environmentally Constrained Sub-Zone.

The site was originally used as a lace factory. It was later converted to use as a chemical manufacturing facility by its current owners, Hercules Corporation. Portions of the site are contaminated and are in remediation pursuant to a NJDEP work plan.

TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT

ii. Apgar Garage Site: Block 25, Lot 7

Highlands Land Use Capability Zones: Existing Community Zone.

The site is the location of a former automobile service station that has since been demolished. Soil and groundwater contamination from leaking underground gasoline storage tanks has been documented by NJDEP. The property has potential for redevelopment as a commercial enterprise.

iii. Combe Landfill Site. Block 17, Lot 7

Highlands Land Use Capability Zones: Split; Existing Community Zone and Existing Community Environmentally Constrained Subzone.

The landfill, located in both Chester Township and Washington Township, was closed and put on the Federal "Superfund" List after NJDEP and the Upper Raritan Watershed Association found a variety of pollutants in both surface waters and groundwater in the area.. The site has the potential for development of a solar array.

iv. Glenlora Site. Block 26.06, Lot 7

Highlands Land Use Capability Zones: Split; Existing Community Zone and Protection Zone.

The site, located on Route 24 in the Planning Area, was formerly occupied by Glenlora Nursing Home, which discontinued operation in 2004. Chester Township purchased the site in 2005 with the intent of providing a site for development of affordable housing. The former nursing home buildings remain vacant with the potential for an adaptive reuse. The site is served by on-site septic and well.

3. **Highlands Redevelopment Areas.** In assessing the potential for Highlands Redevelopment Area designations, the Planning Board incorporates the following relevant considerations:

- a. Highlands Redevelopment Area designation in the Preservation Area is confined to: a) sites having 70% or greater impervious coverage, and/or b) sites designated as "Highlands brownfields" in accordance with NJDEP Preservation Area Rules (at N.J.A.C. 7:38-6.6). In addition to Highlands Council approval, a waiver is required from the NJDEP in conjunction with a Highlands Preservation Area Approval (HPAA).
- b. Highlands Redevelopment Area designation within the Planning Area will require Highlands Council approval of a detailed redevelopment plan. This plan will supersede all ordinances otherwise applicable to the Highlands Redevelopment Area, including those developed specifically for the Township

TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT

Highlands Area, and will fully regulate the use and development of lands within the Highlands Redevelopment Area.

- c. Highlands Redevelopment Area designation will only be considered where lands are particularly suited to the proposed redevelopment plan, by virtue of a preponderance of existing characteristics such as, but not limited to: appropriate community location; availability of water and wastewater utility infrastructure and capacity; access to transit and/or other suitable transportation systems and networks; suitability for increased land use intensity or conversion to greenfields, as applicable; extensive coverage by impervious surfaces; proximity to community facilities and services; potential to embody and/or further smart growth principles; opportunity to protect resources; and potential to contribute to a sustainable local and/or regional economy.
- d. Any redevelopment project or activity permitted under the auspices of Highlands Redevelopment Area redevelopment plan must be designed and developed in accordance with smart growth and Low Impact Development principles.
- e. Identification of opportunities for redevelopment projects and activities that are potentially suitable for Highlands Redevelopment Area designation in the Highlands Area should be assisted by the Highlands Council Redevelopment and Infill Analysis Tool. This review should also include any sites depicted in Exhibit B, "Highlands Contaminated Sites Inventory" (duplicated from the ERI). Information on Highlands Contaminated Site Inventories is available in the Highlands Council *Regional Land Use Conditions and Smart Design Guidelines Technical Report*.
- f. In consideration of the foregoing, the potential Highlands Redevelopment Areas identified by the Planning Board to date, include the following:

- i. Simmons Precision Site: Block 39, Lots 2 & 3 and Block 40, Lot 1:

Highlands Land Use Capability Zones: Protection Zone, Existing Community Zone and Existing Community Environmentally Constrained Sub-Zone.

The site was originally used as a lace factory. It was later converted to use as a chemical manufacturing facility by its current owners, Hercules Corporation. Portions of the site are contaminated and are in remediation pursuant to a NJDEP work plan.

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

ii. Apgar Garage Site: Block 25, Lot 7

Highlands Land Use Capability Zones: Existing Community Zone.

The site is the location of a former automobile service station that has since been demolished. Soil and groundwater contamination from leaking underground gasoline storage tanks has been documented by NJDEP. The property has potential for redevelopment as a commercial enterprise.

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The landfill, located in both Chester Township and Washington Township, was closed and put on the Federal "Superfund" List after NJDEP and the Upper Raritan Watershed Association found a variety of pollutants in both surface waters and groundwater in the area.. The site has the potential for development of a solar array.

iv. Glenlora Site. Block 26.06, Lot 7

Highlands Land Use Capability Zones: Split; Existing Community Zone and Protection Zone.

The site, located on Route 24 in the Planning Area, was formerly occupied by Glenlora Nursing Home, which discontinued operation in 2004. Chester Township purchased the site in 2005 with the intent of providing a site for development of affordable housing. The former nursing home buildings remain vacant with the potential for an adaptive reuse. The site is served by on-site septic and well.

HOUSING PLAN

The Planning Board adopted the municipality's Third Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, each prepared by the office of George A. Ritter, PP/AICP, as amendments to the Chester Township Master Plan, on May 22, 2010. These documents are maintained separately from this Highlands Element; however, it is important to note that all goals and objectives required for purposes of Plan Conformance as set forth by the Highlands Council have been incorporated into the Housing Element portion. The Township submitted a petition to the Council on Affordable Housing seeking substantive certification of its Housing Element and Fair Share Plan on June 8, 2010.

LAND PRESERVATION AND LAND STEWARDSHIP PLAN

The existing Master Plan has a Community Facilities/Recreation Plan Element providing detailed information on existing and proposed open space preservation and recreational opportunities in the community. This Plan supplements the existing Element, as applicable to the Highlands Area, to include the additional information and goals and objectives listed below.

A mapped inventory of Preserved Lands in the Township Highlands Area, current through January 2013, appears at Exhibit C, "Preserved Lands" (duplicated from the ERI). This Plan in addition incorporates (from the ERI) Exhibit D, "Highlands Conservation Priority Areas," and Exhibit E, "Highlands Agricultural Priority Area." This Plan recognizes and incorporates the definitions, derivations and delineations used to develop these maps, as provided in the ERI.

Preserved Lands in the Township Highlands Area include lands under ownership by the municipality, the county, the state and non-profit land trusts. In addition, Preserved Lands includes dedicated easements (such as Conservation Easements) to the extent these are currently known and identified (i.e., by deed description) for mapping purposes. (The Planning Board recognizes and will address the need for a more complete inventory of all such easements after Basic Plan Conformance has been attained, with the assistance of the Highlands Council.) In total, the maps indicate 8,100 acres of Preserved Lands. Approximately 10% is currently used for active recreational purposes, 15 % constitutes preserved farmland, and 75% is set aside for other preservation purposes, including passive recreational uses.

Highlands Conservation Priority Area lands are those designated a high priority for preservation due to exceptional water and ecological resource value. The priority order derives from the Highlands Council Resource Assessment methodology, which identifies and ranks Highlands lands based on a combination of indicators, including but not limited to: watershed conditions, Highlands Open Waters, riparian areas, prime ground water recharge areas, forests, critical habitat and steep slopes.

The Highlands Agricultural Priority Area, lastly, consists of those lands determined by the Highlands Council, in coordination with the NJDA and the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), based on an agricultural resource assessment, to have the highest agricultural resource values.

The following goals and objectives will guide the future identification, prioritization, dedication, and stewardship of Preserved Lands in the Township Highlands Area:

1. To apply Highlands Council prioritization criteria in making determinations regarding non-agricultural Land Preservation (whether by fee simple or easement dedication), which are ordered as follows:
 - a. Lands within Highlands Conservation Priority Areas; and

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

- b. Lands within Highlands Resource Areas generally, including but not limited to forested portions of Forest Resource Areas, Critical Habitat Areas, and Riparian Areas, particularly any portion of a Resource Area designated as “High Integrity” or “High Resource Value.”
2. To maintain a current Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) where required by the NJDEP Green Acres Program.
3. To seek ways to establish and fund local land acquisition for preservation and stewardship programs or to expand existing open space and stewardship programs.
4. To identify lands subject to stewardship programs within this Land Preservation and Land Stewardship Plan and to provide that information to the Highlands Council.
5. To require that conservation or land stewardship easements imposed during the course of development applications be enforceable by the Highlands Council and at least one of the following entities, as qualified and amenable in accordance with the particular circumstances: the Township, the County Agriculture Development Board, the SADC, Green Acres, or a non-profit land trust organized pursuant to § 501 (c)(3) of the federal tax code and engaged in the protection of land for the purpose of providing long-term stewardship of land resources.
6. To establish a stewardship and monitoring program for preserved lands owned by or dedicated to the Township. This objective may be accomplished with the assistance of a non-profit land trust organized pursuant to § 501 (c)(3) of the federal tax code and engaged in the protection of land for the purpose of providing long-term stewardship of land resources.
7. To develop and implement a Forest Management Plan or Forest Stewardship Plan consistent with the standards of the NJ Forest Stewardship Program for application to municipally-owned forest lands.
8. To ensure periodic monitoring of easement restrictions protecting Critical Habitat Areas, associated species and ecological communities from any changes in land use or management practices that would impair these resources.
9. To implement Riparian Area restoration practices on Preserved Lands that give priority to ecological and watershed protection measures.
10. To identify and preserve opportunities for outdoor recreation, including a variety of active and passive recreation options, in such locations and in such manner as to ensure environmental resource protections, while addressing the needs of the local population for physical activity, social interaction, connection with nature and the natural environment, and enjoyment of the outdoors.

RELATIONSHIP OF MASTER PLAN TO STATE/REGIONAL/LOCAL PLANS

By adoption of this Highlands Element, the Township Master Plan is brought into alignment with the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP). The Highlands Element incorporates all of the policies, goals, and objectives of the Highlands RMP that are relevant to the use and development of land in the Township Highlands Area. The Highlands Element calls for the development and adoption of various land use regulations and specific environmental management plans, which together will effectuate its vision and in so doing, advance the intents and purposes of the Highlands RMP.

The Highlands Act provides that any portion of a municipality located in the Highlands Preservation Area is exempt from the State Planning Commission (SPC) Plan Endorsement process. It provides further that once the RMP has attained Plan Endorsement from the SPC for the Planning Area, Highlands Council approval of Plan Conformance with respect to lands in the Planning Area shall be deemed the equivalent of Plan Endorsement.

By aligning the municipal Master Plan with the Highlands RMP, its consistency with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) is achieved. A map depicting the municipality's SDRP Planning Areas appears at Exhibit F (from the ERI). The Highlands Element furthers SDRP policies, goals, and objectives in many ways, not least of which are the following:

1. Seeking to protect, preserve, restore, and enhance the natural resources of the Highlands Area;
2. Encouraging the use of smart growth principles in locations of the Area deemed appropriate for development and/or redevelopment;
3. Protecting historic, cultural and aesthetic resources;
4. Encouraging a sustainable local economy;
5. Protecting agricultural resources, supporting local agricultural businesses, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices;
6. Preserving open space and providing for an array of active and passive recreational opportunities; and
7. Ensuring a viable and well-integrated transportation network that incorporates and encourages multi-modal options and efficiency of land use.

The Highlands Element modifies the relationship of the Township development plan to those of the county and contiguous municipalities insofar as it affects the intents for land use and development within the Township Highlands Area. Given that the Highlands Element introduces a substantial number of new constraints to development based on environmental resources and carrying capacities, it is anticipated that the future impacts from development of the Highlands Area will be reduced from previous trends. A complete understanding will not exist however, until further analysis is undertaken to determine the full impacts of conformance with the RMP on the municipal Land Use Plan. An important

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

component of that analysis will be in regard to watershed-based planning. To the extent that the Township shares a HUC14 subwatershed with other municipal and/or county entities, a cooperative planning effort involving all parties will be vital to ensuring sound use and management of the available water resources. It will also be important to understand which, if any, of the adjoining municipalities and/or the county conform to the Highlands RMP and for what portions of their land areas. The land uses, the permitted densities and intensities of development, and the locations and extent of anticipated growth in neighboring Highlands communities that are also pursuing conformance with the RMP are all subject to change. Until information is available concerning such decision-making, a comparison between these master plans will not be meaningful. Further discussion of these aspects will therefore be provided in the next amendment to the Master Plan.

**TOWNSHIP OF CHESTER
MASTER PLAN HIGHLANDS ELEMENT**

EXHIBITS

- A.** Township Highlands Area
- B.** Preserved Lands
- C.** Highlands Contaminated Sites
- D.** Highlands Conservation Priority Areas
- E.** Highlands Agricultural Priority Area
- F.** SDRP Planning Areas