



Planning for Sustainability and Climate Change in the Highlands Region

A Project to Develop Municipal Guidance





Agenda

- Project overview
- Considerations for the scope and goals of an environmental sustainability plan element to the master plan
- Considerations for conducting municipal climate vulnerability assessments in the Highlands
- Wrap-up





Project Overview





Project Goals

Develop guidance that will assist Highlands municipalities in meeting all of the regulatory requirements for incorporating climate resilience, environmental justice, and environmental sustainability into municipal master plans.

Compile background data and provide processes and templates to enable municipalities to produce Land Use and Environmental Sustainability Master Plan Element(s), including climate vulnerability assessments.

Develop a model scope of work for conforming municipalities to demonstrate eligibility and apply to the Highlands Council for grant funding to develop a Land Use and Environmental Sustainability Master Plan Element(s).





Project Approach

Tasks

- Research
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Develop Guidance Document
- Municipal Workshops

Timeline

- May 2022 - Summer 2023





Highlands Resilience Project Advisory Committee

- Provide input and feedback on development of the guidance as it's being developed.
- Share relevant information and insight based on your work in the Highlands Region.
- Convey to municipalities and partners that this guidance is forthcoming.





Guidance Goals

Address municipal environmental sustainability plan, climate vulnerability assessment, land use element, and framing of master plan appropriately.

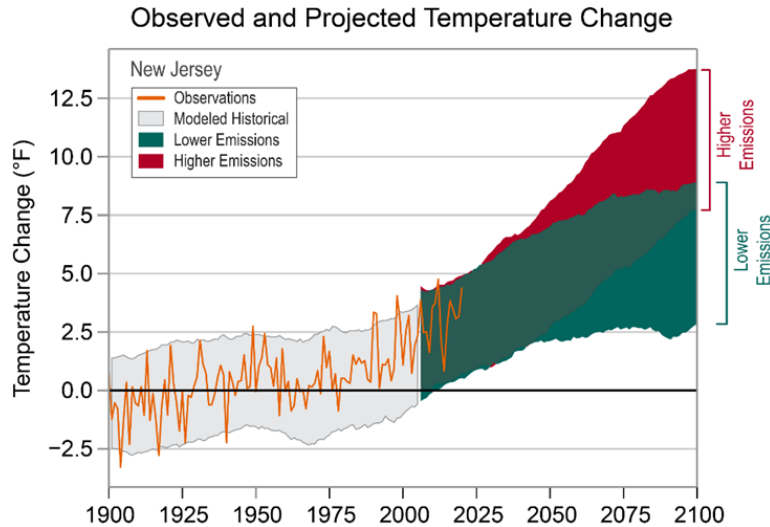
Description of data requirements and sources for obtaining data.

Best practices for public engagement for sustainability and resilience planning and processes for establishing sustainability and resilience goals.

Model scope of services.



Frames the Issues and the Approach to Solutions



From: NOAA State Climate Summary for New Jersey, 2022.

- Equitable Process and Outcomes
- Adaptive Capacity
- Climate Readiness
- Systems Approach
- Sustainability and Resilience Planning Framework



What Will This Help Highlands Municipalities Do?

- Municipal Comprehensive Planning
- Highlands Regional Planning
- State Policy

- Guide appropriate land use or development.
- Provide for the general safety and welfare of the community.
- Advance equity.
- Update all elements of the master plan, and all plans, to reflect the vulnerability assessment and align with the climate action plan.
- Highlands-specific resilience planning.
- Institutionalize a climate readiness and sustainability framework overall and in master plan statements.





Considerations For The Scope And Goals Of An Environmental Sustainability Plan Element To The Master Plan





Sustainability in the Highlands Region

- Water resource planning and management
- Reuse and redevelopment of previously developed areas
- Economic growth in existing developed areas
- Use of smart growth principles
- Sustainable tourism and recreation
- Innovative technology and entrepreneurial businesses





MLUL - (Optional) Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Elements

- Provide for, encourage, and promote the efficient use of natural resources and the installation and usage of renewable energy systems
- Consider the impact of buildings on the local, regional and global environment
- Allow ecosystems to function naturally; conserve and reuse water; treat stormwater on - site; and optimize climatic conditions through site orientation and design





Research Scan of Sustainability Elements and Guidance

- 2012 Sustainable Jersey Action
- 2014 NJAPA – *Planning for Sustainable Communities: Master Plan Guidance for New Jersey Officials*
- 2020 Together North Jersey – Sustainability Toolkit





Research Findings - Sustainability Element

- Where did the element go?
- No common list of “sustainability” topics that are addressed in master plans.
- Use of Sustainability Element as an organizing principle for master plan.
- Integration of sustainability in all elements





MLUL - (Required) Sustainability Components

- 2017 N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.b.(2)(f) . For any land use plan element, a statement of strategy concerning:
 - smart growth / locations for EV charging stations
 - storm resiliency with respect to energy supply, flood -prone areas, and environmental infrastructure
 - environmental sustainability
- 2019 N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.b.(2)(g) . Existing and proposed locations of public Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure (existing resources and data)
- 2021 N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.b.(2)(h) . Climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment





Other Policy Considerations For Local Sustainability Plans

- 2019 State Energy Master Plan and updates to the Global Warming Response Act Goals:
 - 100% clean energy by 2050
 - Reduce GHG emissions below 2006 levels by 80% by 2050
 - **Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment** (EVSE Law) - municipal requirements for Electric Vehicle Supply/Service Equipment
- 2020 NJ Protecting Against Climate Threats (NJ PACT) pending regulations to integrate climate change considerations - e.g. sea level rise, increasing precipitation - into the NJ DEP regulations and permit programs.





Resources to assist in local sustainability plans

- State Energy Master Plan - greenhouse gas reduction at the local level using BPU - Community Energy Plan
- Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment Law - State Guidance and additional resources from Sustainable Jersey for local response





Discussion

Other considerations for the scope and goals of an sustainability element to the master plan:

- [Outside Together! A Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) - New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection - in process
- [Active Transportation Plan](#) - North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority - in process
- Other plans which can inform local sustainability elements?





Considerations for Conducting Municipal Climate Vulnerability Assessments in the Highlands



Local Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment and Climate Adaptation and Resilience Planning Process

01	Initiate and Contextualize	Steps to designate a lead and initiate the process
02	Explore Data and Resources	Steps to gather preliminary data about the community, climate hazards, stakeholders, and partners
03	Activate Community Engagement	Steps to set up a team and a community engagement plan
04	Assess Vulnerability	Steps to characterize existing and potential community features and evaluate the vulnerability of systems supporting the community
05	Develop a Strategy	Steps to prioritize strategies and create a plan
06	Maintain Climate Readiness	Steps for implementing, evaluating, and updating the plan and other local plans, through ongoing practices and policies



Climate Vulnerability Assessment and MLUL Compliance

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Assess Vulnerability

Steps to characterize existing and potential community features and evaluate the vulnerability of systems supporting the community

- Characterize existing and future community features
 - Conduct buildout
 - Identify and characterize climate hazards
 - Identify community assets and features
- Evaluate vulnerability of community systems
 - Rank exposure and sensitivity of community assets and features
 - Assess impact on community systems
 - Assess impact on master plan and consistency with other plans
 - Assess adaptive capacity
 - Characterize vulnerability
- Develop a Strategy
 - Visioning
 - Identify strategies and design standards
 - Create the plan





Highlands Guidance Content

- What is a vulnerability assessment?
- Why is it important and what will it tell you?
- Communicating and collaborating with the community and best practices for inclusive community engagement.
- Guidance for going through the steps of conducting a local vulnerability assessment while integrating it with comprehensive planning, development of a sustainability plan, and other municipal plans and planning processes.





Discussion

Highlands Region climate-related hazards, vulnerabilities, data, resources, or other considerations related to:

- Economy / Businesses / Eco-tourism
- Agriculture - Economy and Farmland
- Overburdened Communities and Vulnerable Populations
- Water Quality and Quantity Protections
- Hazards - Ice Jams, Dams, Flash Floods, High Winds, Landslides, etc.
- Natural Resources Indicators and Measures
- Regional Planning
- Other?





Wrap - Up

- Next steps
- Suggestions for Highlands Region Sustainability & Climate Planning Practitioner Group membership & outreach?



Thank You!

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