

Planning for Sustainability and Climate Change in the Highlands Region

A Project to Develop Municipal Guidance

Speakers



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Agenda

- Project Overview
- Review of Policy Considerations
- Sustainability Issues for Municipal Decision-Makers and Planners in the Highlands Region
- Framing and Scoping of the Guidance Document Under Development
- Questions and Answers
- Concluding Remarks

Project Overview

Project Goals

Develop guidance that will assist 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).

Highlands Resilience Project Practitioner Panel

- Provide thoughts and considerations about your experiences or needs relating to development of the guidance.
- Participate in a focus group discussion.
- Attend the training workshop.

Guidance Goals

Address municipal environmental sustainability plan, 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.

Developed for Municipal Officials, Planners, and Activated Community Members or Professionals

- Local Practitioners
- Decision Makers
- Planning Or Working Teams

Align with
Master
Planning
Process

“On Ramps”
for
Sustainability
and Climate
Planning

Balance of
Information
with Best
Practices

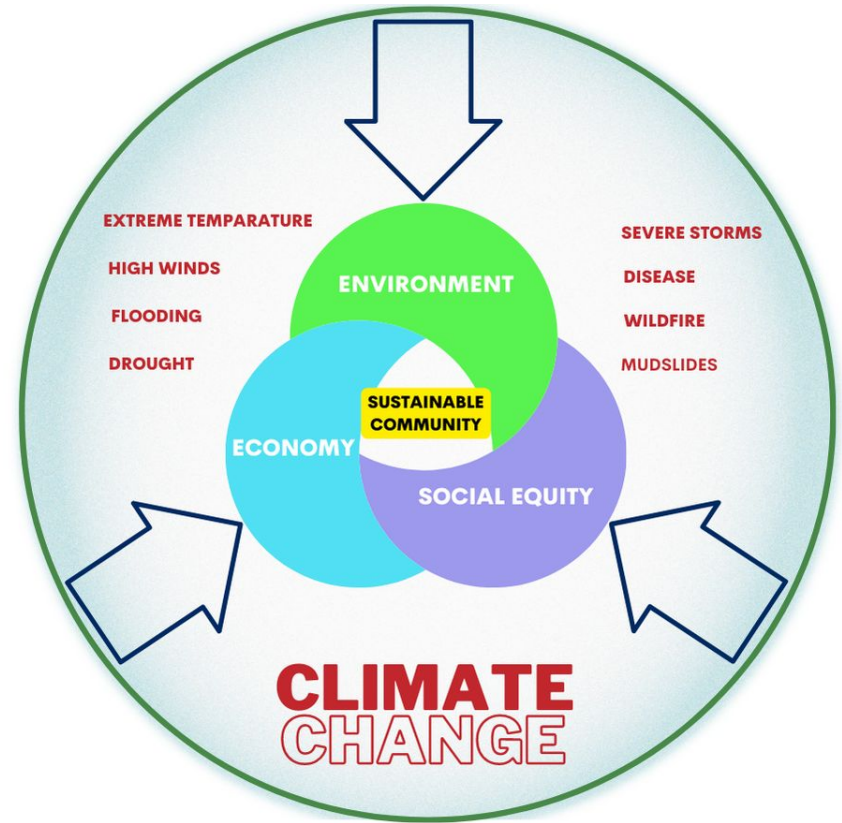
Identifies
Roles,
Resources,
Requirements

Intersection of
Planning
Processes

Considers,
Cost, Time,
Technical
Expertise

Climate Planning Relationship to Sustainability

Vulnerability to climate-related hazards jeopardizes community sustainability



Polling Question – *Vulnerability Assessment*

Has your municipality, or a municipality that you work with, begun a climate vulnerability assessment as per the 2021 Municipal Land Use Law amendment?

- ☐ Yes, the assessment has been completed and adopted into the master plan.
- ☐ Yes, the assessment is currently being conducted.
- ☐ No, but we are about to begin the assessment.
- ☐ No, but we intend to begin the assessment within the next year.
- ☐ No, we have not begun to consider how or when the assessment will be conducted.

Review of Policy Considerations

Municipal Land Use Law amendments

- 2008 N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.b(15). Green Building and Environmental Sustainability Element to make sustainability an integral part of community policies and regulations.
- 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 electric vehicle charging stations
 - Storm resilience with respect to energy supply, flood-prone areas, and environmental infrastructure
 - Environmental sustainability

Municipal Land Use Law amendments

- 2019 N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.b.(2)(g). Existing and proposed locations of public Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure
- 2021 N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.b.(2)(h). Climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment

Additional Policy and Laws

- 2019 Energy Master Plan
- 2020 New Jersey Environmental Justice Law
- 2020 New Jersey Protecting Against Climate Threats (NJPACT)
- 2021 EVSE Law - ordinance in effect related to Electric Vehicle Supply/Service Equipment

Polling Question – *Master Plan Elements*

Which element(s) does your master plan include beyond the required land use element?

- ☐ Housing Plan
- ☐ Circulation Plan
- ☐ Utility Service Plan
- ☐ Community Facility Plan
- ☐ Recreation Plan
- ☐ Conservation Plan
- ☐ Economic Plan
- ☐ Historic Preservation Plan
- ☐ Green Building and Environmental Sustainability Plan
- ☐ Recycling Plan
- ☐ Farmland Preservation Plan
- ☐ Development Transfer Plan
- ☐ Educational Facilities Plan
- ☐ Public Access Plan

Polling Question – *Sources of Information*

In recent years, we've seen amendments, new laws, executive orders and updates to policies. Which source(s) of information do you use to keep abreast of these types of changes?

- ☐ Highlands Council communications - eg. website; alerts, public notice?
- ☐ New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection - website; news releases
- ☐ New Jersey Planning Officials - newsletter and communications
- ☐ Non-profit organizations newsletters and communications
- ☐ Conferences - e.g. NJ Floodplain Managers; New Jersey League of Municipalities, Planning and Redevelopment
- ☐ Other

Sustainability Issues for Municipal Decision-Makers and Planners in the Highlands Region

Highlands Sustainability Assets

The Highlands Region has environmental assets that make it well-suited for sustainability planning:

- Excellent Water Quality and Water Recharge
- Abundant Natural Resources
- Habitat for Threatened & Endangered Species
- Tourism and Outdoor Recreation
- Strong Sense of Community
- Local Business Opportunities
- Sites of Cultural and Historic Significance

Highlands Sustainability Challenges

Strategies to address planning in the Highlands Region is different than the rest of the state due to its unique features. Sustainability Plans can help address, prevent, and provide solutions for the following challenges present in the region:

- Aging or inefficient infrastructure
- Locational distance hampering growth opportunities
- Inadequate accommodations to capitalize on eco/agritourism
- Budgetary constraints
- High residential taxes
- Regulatory oversight and complex permitting processes

What does a Sustainability Plan mean for the Highlands Region?

- What are the metrics?
- What could be prioritized?
- What issues would need to be overcome?
- What stakeholders should be involved in your plan?

Green
Building

Stormwater
Management

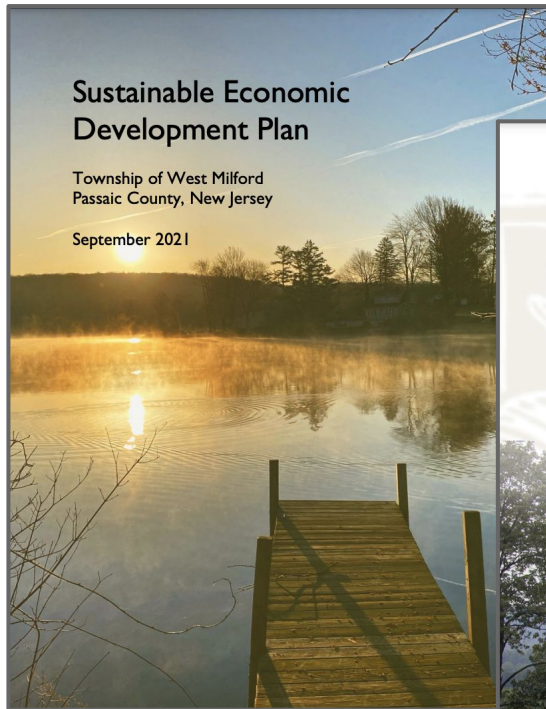
Tourism and
Recreation

Growth and
Business
Development

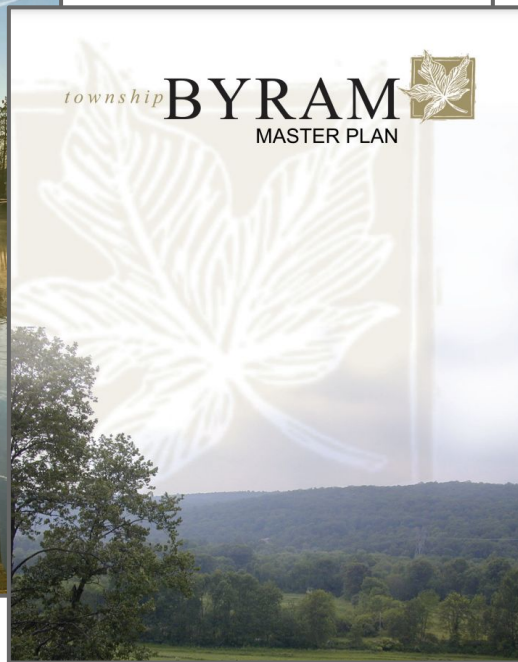
Water
Quality

Resilience and
Equity

Highlands Sustainability Planning Examples



Highlands Resilience
Project Practitioner Panel



Polling Question – *Challenges to Sustainability*

What do you see as the greatest challenge to crafting a Sustainability Plan in your community?

- ☐ Warehousing
- ☐ Land use restrictions
- ☐ Environmental hazards
- ☐ Aging infrastructure
- ☐ Strained municipal budgets

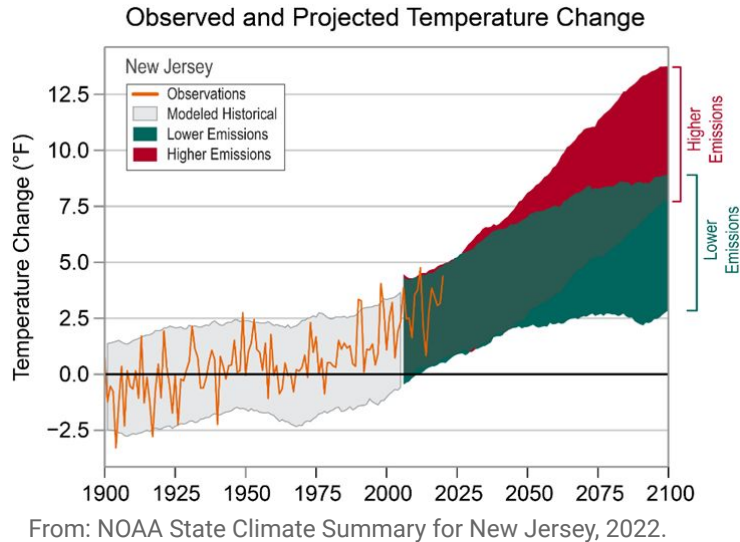
Framing and Scoping of the Guidance Document Under Development

Climate Vulnerability Assessment



- **Exposure** - The extent people, places, or systems are touched by or in contact with or disturbed by a hazard.
- **Sensitivity** - The extent that they can experience harm from that exposure
- **Adaptive Capacity** - The extent people or systems can respond to and learn from disturbances to mitigate the causes and the impacts of climate-related hazards

Frames the Issues and the Approach to Solutions



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

What Will This Help 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.

Next Steps

- Drafting Guidance Document
- Focus Groups
- Workshops

Questions and Answers

Thank You!

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