

May 2, 2014

Creative Highlands: Call to Collaboration Complete Notes

How do we use creativity and innovation to galvanize our diverse community so as to honor our heritage, embrace revitalization, and move toward a sustainable Highlands?

Creative New Jersey is dedicated to fostering creativity, innovation, and sustainability by empowering cross-sector partnerships in commerce, education, philanthropy, government, and culture in order to ensure dynamic communities and a thriving economy.

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Preface: Creativity and Collaboration Take Courage

As I reflect upon our [Creative Highlands: Call to Collaboration](#), I am reminded of the power of the human spirit to overcome adversity and loss.

The residents and business owners of this seaside community have been working hard to recover from the colossal damage of Hurricane Sandy and their determination and resilient spirit was palpable during our day-long community-wide creativity convening on May 2. ([Click here to see the News 12 New Jersey video from the event.](#))

The 80-plus community members gathered at the gymnasium of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to discuss the issues most important to them, and to grapple with the question:

How do we use creativity and innovation to galvanize our diverse community so as to honor our heritage, embrace revitalization, and move toward a sustainable Highlands?

It was a tall order, but over the course of seven hours, residents, business owners, municipal leaders, educators and Board of Education personnel, nonprofit leaders, environmentalists and recovery experts led more than two dozen self-directed breakout sessions.

The topics included:

- The creation of “green spaces” to help address the flooding and drainage challenges
- Waterfront development
- Temporary housing for displaced residents
- Utilizing and leveraging Highlands existing arts, cultural and environmental assets such as Twin Lights and Hartshorne Woods
- Securing appropriate levels of funding for staffing recovery coordinators and recovery programs
- Establishing better communication networks and processes
- Need for a community-based peer leadership program
- Addressing the needs of seniors when considering elevating buildings
- Educating students to excel in a competitive environment, while creating a sustainable, thriving community so that these same pupils will wish to remain living in Highlands’ as they mature into adulthood.

These are difficult discussions to hold. The issues are personal and the problems have been magnified by Sandy’s wrath.

In the 18 months since the storm pummeled Highlands’ shores, many individuals and organizations have been working tirelessly on Highlands’ recovery. FEMA conducted an extensive community planning process, and our New Jersey Recovery Fund colleagues at New Jersey Future, Sustainable Jersey, and Rutgers University

have been working in cooperation with the municipal leaders to identify and develop solutions to Highlands most pressing needs. Yes — it does take a village to recover and design creative, sustainable rebuilding strategies.

If we are to build consensus, enhance the flow of relevant information, diffuse rumors, mitigate fears, and find common ground, we must continue to engage all members within a community. These discussions are crucial to building trust and shared vision among all stakeholders.

While it is unreasonable to expect that all community members will agree on all aspects of their town's recovery and rebuilding strategy, deliberating on these issues in a creative, open and democratic manner is an essential component for strengthening the social capital and human networks within community.

In turn, those networks become ideally situated to work in cooperation with the recovery experts, and to help leverage the community's current assets in a manner that supports collective action. The stakes are high. Collaboration takes time and creativity takes courage. This work also requires all of us to trust in each other, and we learn to trust in each other through consistent and meaningful engagement.

The [Creative Highlands: Call to Collaboration](#) provided another opportunity to foster and fuel the collaborative spirit in Highlands.

All of us at Creative New Jersey are grateful to the residents and business owners of Borough of Highlands for embracing this Call to Collaboration, and for leaning in with their courageous, creative spirit!

~Elizabeth Murphy

Director, Creative New Jersey

Originally posted on the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Blog (5.28.14).

If you'd like to connect with any of the Creative Highlands participants and follow the conversations, please visit the Creative New Jersey [website](#), join us on [Facebook](#), and follow us on [Twitter](#).

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Session #1: Affordable taxes

Convener: Kelly Ward

Participants: Melissa Pederson, Doug Farardi, Pam Marvin, Mary Prinwalli, Eileen Scanlon, Barbara Iannucci, Catherine Reed, Doug Card, Jan Bruno, Teri Jover, Jennifer Olson, Molly Cunniff, Meghan Wein.

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion: In order to get affordable taxes actin needs to be approached from multiple levels and angles on multiple issues. Biggest highlight is that change has to happen from towns people. We are Highlands. We cannot leave our lives in the hands of the town government nor in the hands of the Business Partnership. Both have been ineffective in the ways that we think are necessary. From the Grassroots level we need to create a town homeowners association that develops several campaigns using volunteer townspeople to beautify the town, help neighbors with work necessary that overall changes the area, ask town members to list the abandoned houses that they know of, even if it is repetitive to assure there is a list. We need to keep the highway clean and neat, grass cut. litter down (Adopt a highway?). This beautifies the area, increasing people to come by. Homeowners and landlords keeping their property us will increase more residents to move here, increasing taxes. Perhaps Highlands United or something similar needs to be created that does all this. Communication through the blog and facebook and then how do we reach those who are not electronic. Finally town members need to be more aware and challenge how tax money is spent.

On a governmental level we need code enforcement and start fining banks who are not keeping properties us. We need properties knocked down and encourage developers to build. That means changing the restrictions if necessary that prevent building now. We also think that the business partnership and the town need to work on the mercantile laws and the zoning laws on Bay Ave. We think that the town should look at shared services with Atlantic Highlands and Sea Bright, maybe Navesink, enforce current codes, apply for grants, find another town to “adopt” us and come with Sandy projects like Colts Neck does with Union Beach, We need the town to act on the FEMA projects mentioned last Fall and stop trying to do another strategic plan.

Finally when the town is better, building are up, the town is beautiful, we have to seriously market the town, both the government and the grass roots needs to do this. WE have Hartshorne, Sandy Hook, Twinlights, and need to use these attractions to bring in tourists. We may need a town crier that alerts people, better signs in better locations to bring people into town. We need to attract business, new homeowners and tourists. Marketing would include on the seastreak, the docks in NY, the PATH, NJ transit, and in NY businesses through Highlands residents to their work places.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional) create a grass roots community volunteer group that organizes and takes on individual issues and recruits members for multiple issues that they are passionate about and willing to spend time on.

Session #2: How to bring younger generations to Highlands

Convener: Valerie Montecalvo

Participants: Nicole Montecalvo, Paige Lacina, Marta Lefky, Joe Blewett, Sandy Taylor, Valerie Montecalvo, Doug Feraldi, Cynthia Fair, Architect Adler

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Mainstream Stores/Businesses:

- Rook Coffee
- Dunkin Donuts
- Dean's Natural Market

Multipurpose Activity Center / Recreation Center:

- Movies in the Park
- Dog Park
- Mommy & Me Classes
- Yoga Center (hot yoga)
- Farmers Market (advertise better)
- Soul Cycle
- Highlands Bike- similar to Citi Bikes. Can utilize in Harthorne Woods, Twin Lights and Sandy Hook

Restaurants / Bars:

- sushi
- juice bar
- smoothie bar
- deli / butcher
- frozen yogurt - ice cream
- nightlife
- live bands

Better housing:

- more visually appealing buildings
- mandate types of housing
- new buildings
- offer incentives to buy in highlands
 - first time homeowners incentive programs

Safer Communities

Lodging:

- additional bed & breakfasts
- hotel/inn - like the Blue Bay Inn in Atlantic Highlands

Better Town Hall image- rebuild the Town Hall

School image needs to be represented in a positive way. When new homeowners are looking to buy, schools are the first question on their list. If the education system is represented better that may increase new home purchases in the town.

Session #3: How Can The Arts Help Highlands?

Convener: Lois Bajor & Danielle Acerra

Participants: Laura Kirby, Brittany Ashman, Jim Hickey, Scott Keller, Ayman El-Sawa, Diane Keaveny, Carla Cefalo Braswell, Kevin Hardy, Sandy Taylor, Heather DiBlasi, Rachel Alvarez, Donna Kessinger, Cynthia Fair, Robert Landgraf

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

INITIAL:

- PARTNERSHIPS and identifying resources (human capital, materials, financial), talents and assets are key - residents, businesses, Highlands Business Partnership(HBP) will partner with Highlands Borough Arts Council (HBAC)
- Fr. Bill - arts at summer camp at OLPH
- Start with student exhibitions in the schools, get parents comfortable, then broaden Bahrs space
- PIGGYBACK on existing festivals to more broadly include arts and music - student bands also
- Public Art Project Proposal: Murals, Mosaics - HBP will sponsor. - Teen Mentoring Program with professional artists on mural project
- Art in vacant windows and window dressing
- CROSS MARKETING for each other and during events

FUTURE:

- Bahr's to have exhibitions for seniors and students, include student jazz
- Financial - gov't aid to rehab buildings? generating income through attracting tourism through the arts
- Rehab a building for indoor arts market, generate \$ to maintain building
- Education including Seniors and Students in new community center Teen Improv & Spoken Word (partner with Soar Productions, Navesink Players, Middletown Arts Center)
- HERITAGE - Maritime Museum, seamanship
- more robust ARTS FESTIVAL
- Giant Clams for auction (think NYC cows)
- Make Memorial Park more "fun"

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

1. Ideas

2. Identify Resources / Partnerships

3. Plan of Action

- We have identified so many ideas, next step is to start small with a google group - extension of HBAC from our session, to populate a RESOURCE list including people, assets and festivals
- Start public art project by doing a "wall hunt" with the Highlands Business Partnership

- Create a formal proposal to Highlands Council for Public Art Project
- Piggyback arts onto existing festivals

Session #4: How can we keep educating our children and make them competitive in the workforce and represent our community successfully?

Convener: Cynthia Fair for Rosemary Ryan

Participants: Cynthia Fair, Nicole & Valerie Montecalvo, Kevin Hardy, Mary Rawlson, Heather DiBlasi, Chief Blewett

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Schools have to bring back shop class and the trades to revitalize the workforce and local economy. There are no electricians, plumbers, mechanics, machinist being trained/educated to replace the retiring baby boomers. Most schools are pushing for college and “brainwashing” the students that college will guarantee them a high-paying/salaried position

There are many high-paying jobs in the trades available and not enough applicants to fill the positions.

Keeping the children focused on their future includes providing a safe recreational environment, i.e. rec centers, YMCAs and activities that focus on fun and activities to promote responsibility.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Institute training for anti-bullying and promoting a positive self-image and advocating for each child to be responsible for their behavior. Bring families, schools (teachers, administrators, students, parents and Boards of Education) together in sharing strategies and solutions for developing positive leaders. Have the schools promote their achievements (advancements in literacy and math scores) and turn around the perceptions that Highlands Schools are not performing well and do not provide a safe learning environment for the children of the community.

Session #5: How do we make our open spaces more beautiful?

Convener: Gina Cioffi

Participants: Maggie Moro, Joann Lowry, Fred Hohn, Donna Kessinger, Julia Graese, Sandy Taylor, Lori Dibble, William Lago, Mary Prinzinelli, Bill Iler

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

How are we defining open space for the purpose of this discussion? Town owned and controlled spaces, Parks already designated, visual welcome to the town and beautification of our streets and vacant lots. Connection between upper and lower parts of town.

Creating a buzz - Proclaim beauty of our town that exists as now: Guide to Photographing Highlands identify scenic vistas, create communicate tool to develop awareness about adopting and protecting public spaces

Take Ownership - Establish core team and continue to recruit like-minded thinkers and doers. Continue to meet and work together to develop a plan for how we envision a more beautiful Highlands, Relentlessly talk about our ideas

Identify opportunities for free advice on landscape architecture and community planning.

Hold elected officials accountable -

Show up at meetings and make our views known

Understand which ordinances protect/preserve open space and hold city accountable to enforce them

No tolerance culture for dog poop and debris

What is the town doing to comply with the Public Trust Doctrine - public access plan?

How can the Army Corps incorporate access in its seawall and flood mitigation plans in an appealing manner

We envision -

Flags on bridges and streets proclaiming Highlands is a destination

Sand Dunes, sea grass and more funding for Highlands Garden Club to work its magic

Windmills, Solar power and use of town ambassadors to as pollution police

Viewfinders

Upgrade community events - spread out clam feast to include entire town - offer art shows and serious musicians (jazz, blues, classical) as well as rock, hip hop and other - Diverse offering more frequent events,

collaborate with Highlands Arts council

Dog Run in land next to bank across from Huddy Park

More recreational opportunities - Community Tennis, PaddleBoard and Kayak, yoga, meditation, community beach club, better bike lanes, easier walking routes

Improve public beaches, remove chain link fences, uses fences where artwork can be incorporated, sculptures throughout town

Connect Bay Avenue to the Waterfront

Municipal Parking lot, landscaped better maintained

Session #6: Improve Quality of Life for seniors

Convener: Vickie Cooke

Participants: Paula Dolan, Mary Rawlinson, Vickie Cooke, Donna Blaze, Carol Eyeran, Mary Gambarony

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Transportation

Contact county Dept of Transport to reroute bus route

get activities for seniors coming into building to get them out of their apartments

decrease isolation - get them more involved in everything - borough activities, finding volunteers to help to get daily needs met

transport volunteers

videographers to memorialize their talents - living talents as well as their family history and lives

Help them identify their strengths & skills and put them back to use as volunteers

SCAN - org that helps video facilities

Computer training

connecting with Youth in community (high school boy scouts, girl scouts)

Young people going for confirmation who need to put in service hours

LOVE INC will hopefully work with OLPH to help send someone to help with seniors who are currently "lost" to help with benefits

Start a newsletter at PTAK that would coordinate with all the locate services to help keep seniors connected

maybe see a central volunteer base offered by the community - if volunteers needed, seek our seniors first!

Computer training (and computers)

exercise program designed for various disabilities

have lunch program for Highlands (one for Middletown but not us)

Resources:

HUG - source for financing?

Rotary, Elks, Knights of Columbus

McCloons

Someone to help write letters to these places and appeal for funds, donations, volunteerism

Start a tenants association at PTAK and could use some outside advice how to do that

borough - more painted crosswalks and enforced stops at pedestrian cross walks

more benches and bus shelters

borough wide flea market 1-2 times a year



bus shuttle that would travel around town and out to Sandy Hook with a bike trailer that would employ seniors to give historical information or assist in any way they can either as volunteers or paid employees

Session #7: What can we learn from this disaster to better strategically plan for the next disaster?

Convener: John K. Romano (HOPE Coalition America)

Participants: Doug Card, Melissa Pedersen, Rachel Alvarez, Heather DiBlasi, Emilio Delia, Sarah Thoma, Julie Cause, Barbara Iannucci, Joanna Kirvin

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- When recovery efforts are underway, how do we best communicate a needs assessment for residents?
- Needs of survivors has to be surveyed in “real-time” to determine what should be done
- A community proprietary individual needs database
- Needs of survivors should be assessed using a bottoms up strategy-versus top –down strategy.
- This is perhaps a better strategy than Government (Federal, State, & Local) with their top down hierarchical approach - dictating the needs of disaster survivors for both short term and long term recovery.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

A database that protects proprietary information of survivors and at the same time distributes in ‘real time’ pertinent information to stakeholders in a disaster aid mode This paradigm provides for a higher quality end user experience for outreach in short term and long term recovery efforts.

Session #8: What is Highlands' Heritage?

Convener: Art Gallagher

Participants: Lawrence Barbieri, Emilo DeLia, Paulette Wall, Vickie Cook, Sue Thomas, Chris Francy, Sue Jaquillard, Sandy Taylor, Lori Dibble, Gert Safmon, Katie Reed

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

A) Which Highlands?

Up the hill/down the hill *Goat Herders vs Clam Diggers*
Legacies/Newcomers
Rich/poor
Seniors/young adults/families/youth
Starbucks vs no Starbucks

“Highlands has changed, but it hasn’t”

FACTIONS

2. If downtown became marketable, up down and down town would come together. Would they?

3. 1974 closure of Fort Hancock. Highlands is a town that lost a military base 40 years ago?

4. Still have Sandy Hook. Not attracting Sandy Hook tourists. Nudists, parasailers, birders, beach goers. Sandy Hook exit signs point visitors to Sea Bright and KEYPORT.

5. Lori Dibble: “Highlands is a working class waterfront community, clamming/fishing village, with family oriented summer rentals/bungalows.” *A good description of downtown’s heritage.*

6. What is the heritage of updown, south of Route 36.

Twin Lights, Marconi, first radio transmission, first reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance, rich undefined history.

7. Where a Shore Town that is not Asbury Park or Seaside.

Family oriented summer rentals/bungalows

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Increase accessibility....sidewalks, signs

Historical Society as an avenue to bring uptown history and downtown history together

How do we get people of different factions to communicate?

Session #9: How to Understand and Communicate the Risks of Living Close to the Bay

Convener: Steven Nelson (NJ Future), Transcribed by Brittany Ashman (Monmouth County Planning)

Participants: Laura Kirby, Brittany Ashman, Douglas Card, Meghan Janbur, Joanna Kirvin, Barbra Iannucci, Emilio DeLia, Gria Ceoff, Gert Sofman

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Understanding where you live and the risks (financial risks and maintenance)
- News bits (use social media) throughout the year on information, not all at once because that is overwhelming, but rather tidbits of information throughout the year
- FEMA regulations need to be easier to understand
 - Clearer information on flood zoning, protection, insurance from local officials, banks, flood insurance, Board of Realtors
 - User/peer groups between local officials, FEMA, residents to understand regulations
- Residents and local officials need to be Proactive not reactive to future floods
- Residents don't always understand the risks when purchasing homes in bay area
- There isn't always a connection between flood insurance and water damage
- Different information for different audiences
- Understanding the property history (if available) and reading and understanding the mortgage and flood insurance
- More Monmouth County and local Office of Emergency Management (OEM) giving information on what to do in an emergency
- Communicate resources to rebuild and fix houses

Session #10: Improve communication in Highlands

Convener: Jennifer Olson

Participants: Melissa Pedersen, Teri Jover, Joan Bruno, Paulette Wall, Mary Prinzivalli

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Emergency communication: OEM Reverse 911 inconsistent, look at using Nixle for notifications (other boroughs including Sea Bright use this)

“Town Hall” sites for those without computers: possibly in Huddy, Veterans Parks, places on hill (OLPH, Henry Hudson, Bus stop at Miller) with bulletin board or blinky sign with updates. 36 is the common ground for both parts of town.

Town website: need to improve 2-way communication without judgments (ie, residents’ input on where plowing is needed, debris removal, code enforcement, abandoned homes), town needs to communicate plans in advance to avoid resident frustration; proactive goes a long way (upcoming meetings and documentation, snow plow plans), reminders, urgent notifications with scrolling banner. Make sure that the tourist/visitor section encourages tourism. Share these with borough’s website committee.

Resident communication via Facebook: utilize current page but set up rules, procedures, admin. Make it more of a forum to share than a bitch-fest. Encourage various civic groups and businesses to post upcoming events. Promote FB page via signs in town (idea: recycle election signs after May election). Promote FB page to Sandy Hook visitors, via sign or airplane; promote to riders on Seastreak.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Reach out to current FB admin and set up some plan/rules/admins (probably post-election)
Communicate above to town as suggestions.

Session #11: Future Planning

Convener: Ayman El-Sawa

Participants: Donna Blaze, Doug Card, Barbara Iannucci, Time Hill, Ayman El-Sawa

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

1. Preparing Master Plan for Highlands's future that reflect residents, investors, Government .
2. Addressing and identify major Key pointes that affects master plan and attract all Stockholders (residents, investors, Government) :
 - Flooding & Storm management plan.
 - Engaging local residents and Stockholders to phases of Master Plan in order to make it easier to pass the final draft.
 - Having and open discussion to edit/modify Master plan.
 - Business friendly attraction points in the master plan (TAX, insurance, Opportunities,)
 - How to attract Sandy Hock visitors.
 - Increase Values to local properties (not just investors profits)

Master Plan Process:

- Current Planning:
 - Planning board works on a master plan
 - Other organization (Universities and other expert's planners) already working on future and visionary planning.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

1. Putting a plan to engage all Stockholders into the planning process.
2. Identify key areas that lead to a successful Master plan that attract investors and fulfill local residents and business vision of their town
3. Include a process to collect ideas from local residents and investors to be included in the master plan.
4. Create an attractive approach when communicate Master plan to residents and investors (not just the same old approach, Example: Master Plan Town Meeting".....)

Session #12: Getting Rid of Abandoned & Derelict Properties & Making Room for New Growth

Convener: Catherine Reed

Participants: Fred Hohn, Julie Gause, Mary Prinzivalli, Diane Keaveny, Meghan Taubor, Carla Cefalo Braswell, Doug Card, Fed Rosiak, Joseph R. Blewett, Sue Jaquillard, Eileen Scanlon

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Code Enforcement - Ordinances are not friendly to change
25% Estimates Homeowners walk away not returning resulting in long term derelict properties with hazards such as health and safety as well as aesthetic.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Working in conjunction with Code Enforcement officer - Eileen
Private Sector Partnerships/Developers
Contact Health Department Regarding Safety Issues
Contact News Agencies to Highlight/Publicize Properties in Disarray
Section off town zones/Create Block "Captains"/Have Spreadsheet/Follow up emails "ticklers"
Database of Abandoned Properties/List of Properties
Letters to owners with intent for properties
Go after mortgage holders & insurance company lien holders with fines until in compliance
Proper Prosecution of violations /Accountability
Penalty Taxes for Non-Compliance/Keep "up" tax
Publicize ordinances overhaul & enable public to view and report violations easier
Pressure Banks to comply with town ordinances by issuing fines
Ordinances must be rewritten in order to make real progress
Vacant Property Tax if vacant for too long additional taxes
Code Enforcement a must for all

Session #13: How will we inform Highlands Residents & future residents about our excellent Schools

Convener: Sue Thomas

Participants: Mary Rawlinson, Sandy Taylor, Sue Thomas, Diane Dowds, Paul Dolan, Danielle Acerra

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

We need to know if there is viable housing for young families in the community and how we can make people more aware of that

Important to know there are 2 elementary schools feeding into 1 high school but three separate school districts Highlands, Henry Hudson, Atlantic Highlands, chosen by Dept. of Edu as an example of how to consolidate under one superintendent

Shine the light on great public ed here:

- publicize options for sports (can be on a football team through cooperative district)
- Arts enrichment is available through Monmouth Cty school system
- Vocational training available (ALL FREE)
- Education people about options

Need to elevate perception that citizens have of school district

- make public aware of & encourage to attend board meetings
- educate realtors on quality of school system - suggested Dr. Compton meet with a group of realtors
- We're known to have a lot of poor special needs children that somehow affect the children without such issues, so we have to overcome this perception.
- more Public relations - access the people who use the commuter (ferries, etc.) - how can we reach them they will be PR for us too
- Improve Property Values - through curb appeal, clean up, etc.
- Need a PR link up - someone to write press release
- encourage new families to visit the schools

Session #14: Recovery - Staffing, Program Coordination and Funding

Convener: Ellen Williams

Participants: Ellen Williams, Matt Cotton, Diane Dowds, Jac Smith, Steve Nelson, Tim Hill, Jennifer Olsen, Meghan Wren, Bob Planer, Tara Shah

1. Highlights and Key Points From Your Discussion

Need for peer leadership coordination - people helping each other (e.g. for instance, someone who has been through some recovery from Sandy would be able to assist another resident)

Staffing levels in Highlands are inadequate for the amount of work that needs to be done; the staffing levels were too low before Sandy, but now, woefully inadequate after Sandy

Highlands Council approved permit costs which have taxed the ability of homeowners to rebuild after Sandy; other towns voted to have no permits or permits of much less amount

Bahrs Real Estate wishes to help people return to their homes, rent, or buy new homes. Willing to help with volunteer management and grant writing

Coordination of volunteer services needed; many people want to help after Sandy, but their efforts are not always fully utilized due to lack of coordination (e.g., 120 youth coming to Monmouth County in July seeking jobs to do; volunteer groups coming into town, but aren't sure what to do in the time they have available)

Clean Ocean Action is holding monthly meetings for recovery

Some volunteer groups are offering different types of assistance (e.g., furniture) but have no capacity to provide transportation or assist with storage. Better coordination is needed so that offerings can be accessed by those who need them, but may not have transportation or storage

Should build on what Highlands is known for, for instance the waterfront and seafood restaurants. Make it easier for businesses to stay here (e.g., tax credits)

Army Corps of Engineers has done a storm protection study

Question on status of town master plan, website and newsletter

Need to delineate those activities that could only be done by professionals, and those which could be done by volunteers

Bayshore Center at Bivalve (Cumberland County) interested in learning how to network with us in the recovery process

Need case managers to help people through recovery process

Shore Resource Center will be coming to Highlands to assist with recovery; suggestion made that a resident wish list be developed

Concern about drainage in town

Concern about Sandy damage to municipal facilities

Involve community in rebuilding process; be more transparent (not decision-making by council, or research groups)

Town has had a grantwriter for two years; grant funding requested from WIA, DOL, etc

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Create position of volunteer coordinator

Obtain more funding for recovery programs, case managers, advocates and staff

Create community based peer leadership program

Create better way to involve and communicate with residents (e.g. town hall meetings, focus groups) Website is only one avenue. Some recovery efforts may be well intentioned but not ones that the townspeople would want, had they been asked

Obtain additional staff for boro departments (e.g., processing permits, etc., but not by revenue from inflated building permits

Session #15: How to help Teens

Convener: Heather DiBlasi

Participants: Rachel Alvarez, Magi Moro, Mary Gambarony, William Lago, Ella Williams, Lois Bajor, Sandy Taylor, Danielle Acerra

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Improv Nights / Coffee Houses
- Teen Nights / Events
- Sex Education
- Community Service Projects
 - Recreation Building / Beach
 - Interfaith Youth Groups
- Video Project/Computer Skills
 - P-Tak Seniors
- Cross Age Teaching
 - Seniors / Younger Teens or Children
- Career Fair
 - Internships
 - Jobs
 - Job Shadowing

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

- Youth Advisory Council
- Community Directory
- Community Survey

Session #16: Maximize our major waterfront resources

Convener: Scott Keller

Participants: Dianne Keaveny, Carla Braswell, Joan Lowry, Lori Dibble, Tara Shah, Emilio DeLia, Paulette Wells

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Main areas we discussed

- Recreational
- Commercial
- Clamming/Fishing
- Discussed Public Access and Parking
- Sustainability and Environmental Issues

Clamming heritage and modern usage - how do we celebrate our clamming heritage and incorporate that into future waterfront development?

- Clamming Demo Day
- Maritime Heritage that is associated - lighthouse, lifesaving, boat building
- Seaport Museum

~~~~~One topic that we discussed extensively was the revitalization of the Clam Plant and making it a part museum, part clam plant, docks for the clammers and a berth or access for visiting tall ships, the oyster barge, educational or historic ships, renovations to the clam plant to modernize the depuration process. The town owns the land and the buildings so it would be ideal for public private partnership in consort with the baymens association.

- ~~~~~ Public Marina - Ramp
- Development of a public marina or ramp on public lands

~~~~~ Blue Acres program to permanently remove areas from development - what are the tax implications long term.

- ~~~~~ Public Access

Public access inventory and inclusion of public access plan with zoning and development impacts and requirements.

~~~~~ Cafra and Fema waterfront development requirements need to be built into our zoning and master plan.

~~~~~ Watersports - Water Sports area and development into our recreation plan and open space plan

- Rentals, lessons

- Boat rentals

- Kayak storage

- Stand up paddleboards

~~~~~ Tie these ideas into funding and other organizations - clean ocean action, Clearwater, Monmouth County Recreation, Boys Clubs etc.

~~~~~ Development of Parks for water usage.

Session #17: How Can We Get Town Hall Back?

Convener: Barbara Iannucci

Participants: Mary Rawlinson ; Diane Dowds; Gert Sofman; Doug Card

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

ISSUES:

Why not renovate existing building?

No insurance \$

Council w*ants a brand new building / new location.

Very expensive to rent the temporary trailers and pay associated costs & ongoing expenses

CHALLENGES

Have to share Atlantic Highlands Court Room

Difficult to get to Police Department

No visibility or "face" to mayor's office Or sense of Welcome

No sense of Community interaction

A sense of being disconnected - (Paradox!) ... After Sandy when everyone was so connected

The existing mindset

People don't vote (snowbirds)

ACTIONS

Stay on Bay Ave - Relocate later when we can afford it.

Start rebuilding with a bare minimum approach

Assess actual damage 18 months+ post-Sandy?

What are the \$\$\$ numbers involved?

What changes are needed to be FEM compliant?

Define Material Costs to make Habitable.

Define Insurance issues.

Gather Volunteers / Contractors to get job done.

Investigate & find FUNDING options.

WHAT DO WE NEED IN TOWN HALL?

Office Space

Court Room

Police Department

ADA Compliant

Session #18: How can we help create place making opportunities?

Convener: Carla Cefalo-Braswell, Highlands Business Partnership, Inc. President

Participants: Teri Jover, Mary Gambarony, Danielle Acerra, Sandy Taylor, Vicky Cook, Steve Nelson, Catherine Reed, Joanna Kirvin, Rachel Alvarez, Brittany Ashman, Laura Kirby, Joan Bruno, Joseph Blewett, Bill Iler, Donna Kessinger, Diane Keaveny, Sue Thomas, Eileen Scanlon

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

The group described what they identify as place-making.

What is unique about a place and how we can promote it?

Fostering ownership.

Putting town on the map.

Take a place without identify and create one.

Creating and programming a destination.

Identified Huddy Park where existing programs such as the Farmers Market can be expanded.

Creating a place of pride.

Create Highlands iconic Symbol such as Twin Lights, Clamming, etc.

Idea included:

Change traffic patterns in a smaller area of downtown to encourage walking, resting, cycling.

Pocket parks on Bay Avenue – 1-2 parking spaces required.

Seasonal Kiosks in Huddy, Veterans and Cornwall Parks

Expand Farmers Market to include, art music and local talent.

Create a Seashore theme in parks or on Bay Avenue (seals, mermaids, etc.)

Create a visual impact on route to Twin Lights

Identified audiences:

Residents – local, regional

Beachgoers

Commuters/NYC Regional Tourists

Public Private Partners

Federal/State/Local Partners

Hikers/Bikers

Water sport enthusiasts

Artists

Bird Watchers

Families/Day Trippers

Identified what the target audience may want:

Fishing

Relaxation
Recreational activities
Parks & Trails
Skyline/Sight Seeing
Wine/Beer Tasting
Seafood
Entertainment/nightlife

Marketing:
Cross Branding/ Cross Marketing
Special Promotions
Centralizing Communications
Web/Social Media

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Expand the committees to include more residents and redefine roles and responsibilities within the Highlands Business Partnership to include those present and interested.

Session #19: How can we help people find temporary Housing During Home Elevation

Convener: Paula Dolan

Participants: Fred Hohn , Joann Lowry, Donna Blaze, Paula Dolan, Sue

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Need more flexible permitting and Licenses for short term and hotel housing
- Explore using existing housing that is unoccupied
- Find available RVs to use - may be gov't, donated, rented..
- Identify multiple solutions and not just one.
- Share a Home Program- link homeowners who need income to those temporarily without a place to live during home elevations.
- Explore available parsonage housing
- create more media awareness of the problem and owners make come forward to assist
- "Housing Buddies" - Get people in the RREM program together and lend each other space in their repaired homes while they are going through the same.
- Ask political leaders to keep Ft. Monmouth Housing available for very short periods of use during RREM.

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

Involve political officials more and also involve people who are in the same situation as in the RREM Program to support each other.

Session #20: How to cut through red tape

Convener: Melissa Pedersen

Participants: Melissa Pedersen, Jen Olson, Ellen, Lois Bajor, Pam Marvin

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

There is a lot of red tape.

Better communication between residents & town govt

Find reasons to say yes than say no

Identify Why its happening

Session #21: Substance Abuse

Convener: Heather DiBlasi

Participants: Kelly Ward, Matt Cotton, Meghan Wren, Eileen Scanlon, Mary Prinzivales, Lois Bajor, Gina Ceoffer, Gert Sofman, Katie Reed

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- 12 Step Meetings
- Sober Events
 - Something to do
- Limit Bar Times - Open/Close
- Place for Teens to Hang Out
 - Music
 - Open Mic Night
 - Events
 - Dancing
 - Yoga
 - Healthy Choices
- Natural Highs
- Volunteers in Community
- Foster a Grandparent Program
- Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)
- Oxford Houses - Abandoned Home
- Highlands Police Department
 - Patrol the Beaches/Parks/Woods on Foot or Bike
- Social Host Liability
- Board of Education
 - Fund School Based Social Service Program - Mental Health and Substance Abuse
 - Fund a Full-time SAC - Student Assistance Counselor
- Work with Municipal Alliance

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

- Bring back 12 Step Meetings
- Highlands Police Department - Increase patrolling on beaches/parks/woods
- Work with Municipal Alliance

Session #22: How to use the assets of Twin Lights and Hartshorne Woods to unify the town

Convener: Donna Blaze

Participants: Donna Blaze, John Romano, Art Gallagher, Lois Bajor, Paula Dolan

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Events like the Lighthouse challenge should direct participants to town to visit ships and restaurants
- The roads to both the Lighthouse and Hartshorne Woods do not identify as Highlands. They need to be beautified and provide an image of the town
- Utilize these assets in the best interests of the community as these will survive any storm
- Brand the Lighthouse - Have a Highlands Lighthouse day and festival
- Competition to sculpt lighthouse
- Seastreak promotion to see the Lighthouse
- Brand the streets/roadway to the Lighthouse and Hartshorne Woods with Banners reflecting businesses and heritage
- Sponsor a hike for Huddy to the Lighthouse via Hartshorne
- Utilize the Lighthouse Auditorium for a Highlands Sunset Concert
- See if there can be a part from the High school to the Lighthouse since some can't do the hill = park there for Hartshore and Lighthouse
- Have a Military History Tour
- Host a Highlands event the same day as the Lighthouse Challenge to keep visitors here to spend money
- Put an exhibit about the Lighthouse and Military history in town
- Have a treasure Map or scavenger hunt to find Historic Highlands throughout the town
- Painting/Photo Day followed by reception at Huddy Park
- Beautify access roads to Hortshorne and to the Lighthouse w/ banners
- Host Movies at the Lighthouse in the summer
- Have a Haunted Highlands event at Hartshorne Woods
- Signage to identify that you are Highlands Historic District, Business etc. Leaving Highlands, Welcome to Highlands
- Trolly to the Lighthouse during the Clam fest or other Highlands event

Session #23: Resiliency and environmental sustainability

Convener: Cindy Zipf

Participants: Cynthia Fair, Suzanne Thomas, Gina Cioffi, Joseph Blewett, Meghan Wren, Jerri Lynch, Lori Dibble, Brittany Ashman, Gert Sofman, Tara Shah, Scott Keller, Mary Prinzivalli, Kevin Hardy, Rachel Alvarez, Laura Kirby, Heather DiBlasi, M. Cunniff,

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Lower Highlands is a fish bowl--how do you plan, what is the ability to bounce back.

Flooding is not only along the shore, but in the middle of town, too.

Be sure to rebuild correctly for the long term--if we raise all the houses, how will people get to their homes as they grow older.

Use building codes to make community more resilient.

Need to rebuild homes and businesses, but buy-outs, blue acres, retreat need to be considered but currently they are not being discussed.

Create green spaces to act as sponges throughout the town to make them more resilient.

Increased resiliency will increase the confidence of investors for existing and new development.

Consider plan that Rutgers is presenting shortly.

Are there costs of green spaces? How would we address maintenance costs.

A new Master Plan for Highlands is underway.

Creation of open space/rain gardens can engage students,

Resiliency means sustainability and includes creating more community gardens -- get them out of floodplain grade school started one, High School should start one, can grow food and plants for open space sites-- can also help feed community members in need. Many opportunities for teen involvement.

Consider home garden competition for most outstanding gardens, (flower or natural).

Need to allow for ideas to address yards/gardens on abandoned homes or homes in limbo

Community clean ups

Beach Plums Jam!-- make the native Beach plum the official Highlands plant with all it fruiting and flowering power. Celebrate the bounty by hosting a Beach Plum Jam in the fall to highlight beach plum jam (and have jam competitions, music, local foods.....etc.)