



Highlands Business Partnership

2005

Annual Report

HBP Board of Directors

The HBP Board of Directors provides leadership, oversight and financial control of the operations of the corporation, Highlands Business Partnership. The 6th year, 2005 assessment budget was \$90,000 and in addition Sponsorship, Grant and Event Income to offset the programs costs generated approximately \$69,000.

The Board is comprised of 17 voting members and four non-voting members. Mayor's designee, Mayor Rick O'Neil and the Planning Liaison Member and Councilman, John Urbanski, represent the governing body as voting members of the Board. There are seven commercial property owners and seven business operators that comprise the HBP Board of Directors.

6th Year Objectives: During the sixth year of operation the primary objectives include:

- Develop, implement and expand regional image, brand identity including logo, slogan to be used to promote Highlands as a regional waterfront destination.
 - Expansion of destination marketing (events) and advertising to strengthen the anchor businesses, restaurants.
 - Campaign for summer and winter
- Develop promotional video using new image components to promote destination travel and business investment
- Develop a joint newsletter between HBP/Borough to send to all business and residential stakeholders
- Solicit Grants and Sponsorship to enhance improvements.
- Continue with the Borough and HBP to work together and build consensus for business growth and expansion that is business friendly and is consistent with Borough's Master Plan.
- Create new visual improvements to enhance the public areas that traverse the central business district and provide an attractive public space environment for customers and visitors to experience when utilizing Highlands' businesses.

2005 Officers of the Corporation:

Carla Cefalo-Braswell, President; John Koenig, Vice President; William Weber, Treasurer; Eddy Sousa, Secretary. The Officers serve according to the bylaws and form the Executive Committee of the corporation providing the overall management of the corporation and oversight decision-making body on behalf of the Board of Directors. These Executive Committee members also serve as Board members and answer to the Board of Directors. In 2005, the Executive committee expanded to include committee chairs Fred Rosiak (ED), and Nancy Thomas (VIC).

2005 Board Members:

Jay Cosgrove, Bahrs Restaurant; **Carla Cefalo-Braswell**, ShoreGrafx & Resident; **Loriann Bodnar-Nolan**, Lori's House of Beauty & Resident; **Michael Kovic**, Commercial Property Owner & Resident; **Kathryn Lustig**, Christine Michelle Handmade & Resident; **Anne Parmelee**, Parmelee & Parmelee Attorneys & Resident (replaced August 2005 by Dan Shields, Windansea & Sugar Shack); **Eddy Sousa**, Sandy Hook Cottage Bed & Breakfast & Resident; **Katharine James-CPO/Joan Wicklund (Desig)**, & Residents; **Fred Rosiak**, Captain Cove Marina; **AJ Solomon**, Resident; **Jim Bollerman**, Sandy Hook Bay Marina; **Scott Beim** – Twin Lights Marina & Resident; **Lisa Kockanik**, Transcendence Spa & Resident; **John Koenig**, Clam Hut Property & Marina on the Bay, **Bill Weber**, Nauvoo @

Sandy Hook the Resident Member, AJ Solomon, will serve for a one-year term. The Executive Committee members comprised of the corporate Officers, who also serve on the Board, are Carla Cefalo-Braswell, President; Eddy

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Sousa, Secretary; Bill Weber, Treasurer; and John Koenig, VP. **Mayor Rick O'Neil** served as 2005 Council Liaison and **Councilman John Urbanski** served as 2005 Planning Board Liaison to HBP.

Highlands has a unique situation, where a majority of the Board Members are residents. Resident stakeholders, who are also commercial investors, enhance the level of commitment to improve Highlands. These board members maintain residency in the community where they have invested in their commercial businesses. This unique dual stakeholder brings a broader perspective to the decision-making process to improve Highlands.

Non-Voting Board Members:

These members bring institutional and corporate private-sector talent and resources to the Board. These members should bring an added outside viewpoint to the board that assists in their decision making process. **Tom Laverty**, Twin Lights Historic Site; **Larry Novick**, Brookdale Small Business Development Center; and **Roberta Sheridan**, JCP&L Energy. These members provide for value added resources for HBP. These board members do not vote on issues or serve on committees.

Committee Chairs

Board Members Fred Rosiak, Carla Cefalo-Braswell, Loriann Bodnar-Nolan, Eddy Sousa and Residents Marcia Shaya, Nancy Thomas took leadership roles to Chair and Co-Chair HBP Committees. Committee chairs, who also serve as Board members, direct HBP activities that promote the objectives of the Board. In addition, business and resident HBP committee members become experienced leaders who can become good candidates for future position vacancies on the Board of Directors.

HBP Administration:

Legal publication notices, as outlined in the state statute for BIDs, announced the HBP meeting schedule for three regular meetings and one annual meeting in 2006. State of New Jersey filing fee, dues for membership in Downtown New Jersey, postage, stationery, educational conferences were administrative expense line items. As required by the state statute, the Churchin Group completed an audit April 2005. HBP will file our Certified Audit with the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services, and Borough of Highlands and remains with HBP corporate records. Charitable Registration was completed for HBP 2005. HBP Insurance is provided through a partnership with the Borough and the Monmouth County JIF, Joint Insurance Fund. Anne Parmelee provided legal services at no expense to HBP for the review of all contract renewals or changes. Resident, Business and Commercial Property Owner, Nick Evangelista, provided management services for the first half of 2003 and Carla Cefalo-Braswell, a resident, business and commercial property owner, provided professional management services from June - December. The HPB phone # is (732) 291-4713 and Fax # is 732-872-1031. HBP has an account with Verizon for the Phone # only. Carla Cefalo-Braswell provided HBP free use of office space; fax machine, computer equipment and utilities in 2005. Management services were provided by Michele Pavacich through June 2005. Loriann Bodnar-Nolan replaced Michele Pavacich and an agreement was approved by the Board at the August regular board meeting for the monthly services of Loriann Bodnar-Nolan.

Marketing & Communications/Events Committee:

Chaired By Carla Cefalo-Braswell and Eddy Sousa, Sandy Hook Cottage Bed & Breakfast for 2005
The Marketing committee worked to sell sponsorship, manage events and initiate marketing incentives. It is important that corporate sponsorship be secured from outside of Highlands, as the community is small; and new partnerships need to be developed to undertake a successful destination-marketing plan for Highlands.

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Sponsorship provides the backbone of funding for events and advertising. Sponsorship funding maximizes the local BID investments funded by special assessment to fund advertising, event expenses and promotions to create destination environment to attract visitors. Having so many visitors in the surrounding area - Sandy Hook, Twin Lights and Shore areas - Highlands desires a greater share of the visitors to discover our restaurants and businesses. As a community with several NYC Ferry landings, there is a year-round opportunity to direct market "Highlands as a destination". The HBP Marketing committee has initiated direct marketing programs with a coupon distribution system that extracts Highland's business coupons from our Website. Through the services of HBP, businesses can register and design their own coupons free of charge. Coupons can be changed as frequently as the business operator desires. Upon purchase of monthly or weekly ticket book, complimentary coupons are provided. HBP oversees, administers the coupon books and the Ferry Company includes the HBP coupon book with each weekly or monthly commuter ticket purchase. Use of Highlands' restaurants and businesses by Ferry riders is being nurtured, encouraged and brought to their attention on a daily basis through our partnership with ferry. Most downtown's striving to come back from decline must develop a destination agenda from scratch. Highlands has been able to develop and nurture partnerships with existing resources, including ferry transportation to NYC and Gateway National Park Sandy Hook, and Twin Lights Historic Site.

Website www.highlandsnj.com

Maintenance and expansion of the Highlands' web site during HBP's 6th year has been continued. The Website enables HBP to provide maximum access to HBP information by all business operators and commercial property owners of Highlands included in the BID, as well as, the general public. Minutes, reports, newsletters, organization chart, mission statement, ordinance, budget, events, photo album, bylaws are accessible and printable from your computer. The Highlands/HBP web site is promoted on all HBP media contacts reinforcing the destination marketing objective activities. All events held in 2005 provided visitors with coupons and additional event information as well as promoting our Website.

The Highlands Visitor's Guide was created and enhanced with full color in 2005 version that includes information on Highlands such as history, coupons, event information, ferry schedule, a map and a business directory. The visitor guides were distributed at all HBP events. Additional Guides were distributed at Sandy Hook promoting our event calendar and Clam Fest, as well as distribution at every 2005 HBP event.

Tourism Video The marketing committee developed a theme and script that will be used to create a video for distribution to showcase Highlands as a destination.

Funding Development - HBP

Private Sector Partners - Sponsorship Development

HBP Marketing Committee has served as the primary catalyst for attracting private funding to maximize the local assessment investment. Through efforts of the Marketing Committee a corporate sponsorship track record is being maintained and expanded, that will ensure our corporate sponsors are provided value in the marketing initiatives set forth through HBP. Corporate sponsors budgets are allocated on an annual basis and long-term brokering must take place to deliver value to both partners. Sponsors for 2005 were Comcast, 94.3 the Point, Valley National Bank Frank Rahm Landscaping, Foodtown, JCP&L First Energy, and the Sugar Shack.

Awards and Matching Grants

HBP applied for a Farmers Market Grant through the New Jersey Department of Agriculture for 2005. The funding was matched 50/50 to promote the Jersey Fresh Farmers Market along with all promotional information about Highlands' events and marketing.

Special Events Committee Chaired by Carla Cefalo Braswell

The committee set an aggressive agenda. Destination - Highlands is the objective of the marketing activities. Create Highlands as a destination for visitors partially by hosting events to showcase the community. The 2005 event calendar provided a "complete marketing package" for the Marketing Committee to use to broker and solicit greater sponsorship opportunities for Highlands. Through this process Highlands can expand our destination marketing activities that will enhance the local business environment by attracting new and repeat customers. A comprehensive event schedule is packaged and our committee serves as a broker between corporate and media partners who will provide sponsorship in return for media exposure.

HBP promotes Highlands at several regional events during the calendar year. HBP Visitor Guides, event collateral, complimentary bags, marketing and promotional materials are distributed during the following regional events:

- **Bike New York - Great Five Boro Race** – 33,000 cyclists – Ft. Wadsworth, Staten Island, NY (1st Sunday in May) Board President Carla Cefalo-Braswell and family volunteers coordinate and work this event.
- **NJ Pride – Asbury Park** – 15,000 people (1st Sunday in June) Board President Carla Cefalo-Braswell and family volunteers coordinate and work this event.
- **NJ Lighthouse Challenge – Twin Lights** – October 15th HBP Board member, Eddy Sousa, staffs booth for the two-day weekend event with some assistance from Ken Braswell. Event promotes visitation to the NJ Lighthouses during a weekend with over 15,000 in attendance. HBP provided shuttle services from parking lots to Twin Lights and distributed complimentary bags filled with marketing and promotional materials.

HBP 2005 Events Calendar

Saint Patrick's Day Parade 2005 – March 19 was held on March 19 with 6 pipe bands and local and regional floats, along with a host of local business participation. The parade is growing each year and brings an early start to the busy spring/summer season for local restaurants and businesses.

Seaport Craft Show 2005 – May 29 - was held on Memorial Day weekend with a successful start of 61 crafters. The event was well received by crafters and visitors alike. This has grown over time and we expect it to continue.

Antique and Classic Car & Motorcycle Show 2005 - September 3 was held under the direction of Lori Bodnar-Nolan (Lori's House of Beauty) and spouse, Councilman Frank Nolan, the local business volunteers and Highlands Police worked closely with the Jersey Shore Cruisers and Bob Dooly. Participation from local businesses provided certificates and prizes for the visitors. Over 160 enthusiasts participated during the event including the addition of motorcycles this year. Games and DJ were on hand for everyone. Loriann Bodnar-Nolan and Frank Nolan worked together on a Tricky Tray Gift Auction and a super 50/50 for the event. Loriann obtained the raffle license for the event.

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Concert Series 2005 - July -HBP hosted three Tuesday evening beach concerts in July at Veteran's Park, Bay Avenue waterfront park area. The concerts were funded through HBP and promoted in partnership with HBP. The concerts are always a big draw to visitors and HBP promotes our other events here as well. We are striving to keep concerts in Highlands. Concerts were previously undertaken in partnership with the Northern Monmouth Chamber of Commerce and held at the Seastreak Conner's Landing beach area. The 2005 HBP Concerts included entertainment from: Brian Kirk & the Jirks July 12, Daddy Pop, July 19, The Fever, July 26 performed with the first concert being rained out. Fund raising by 50/50 sales supplemented the cost of each concert. The HBP concerts are sponsored by Sugar Shack.

Highlands Farmers Market 2005 July – October HBP prepared and submitted the 2005 Farmer Market grant to the NJ Department of Agriculture. HBP was awarded \$400 to be matched in advertising and promotion of the Highlands Market. The 2005 season began in Huddy Park in July and continued through until the last Saturday in October. Farmers participated with the Oktoberfest event with mums, fresh fall produce, pumpkins and squashes. Mike Kovic and Kathryn Lustig took on the responsibilities of the market each Saturday. Outside vendors were solicited for the market and there were various successes with adding vendors to the market. Advertising and highway signs were installed to promote the market.

Clam Festival 2005 - August 4-7- The Clam Festival proved to be successful and was continued to be enhanced greatly by obtaining a raffle license for HBP to have a money Wheel and 9 games of chance. It was a huge effort and took over 50 volunteers. Local residents were a huge asset to the success of the games and HBP could not have run the games without them. The expansion brought a substantial income and growth to the event. The Clam Fest had 8 local restaurants of the 10 food vendor spaces sold. There were nearly 40 vendors. Live entertainment, rides, contests and games were also included in the four-day event. HBP rented a new stage set-up which really put the event over the top. There were 6 bands performing over the four-day event.

Twin Lights Ride - September 18 - The Twin Lights Bike event was held in Highlands at Huddy Park Area. The event was a great success and hopes to grow each year Seastreak Ferry Company cooperated with bringing bike enthusiasts to Highlands for a multi-tour bike event. The event was to benefit Lance Armstrong Foundation this year, which added over 500 riders totaling nearly 1500 registered bike enthusiasts to visit Highlands and sections of Monmouth County. There were 4 routes available. Many cyclists visited most businesses that were open this day.

The Bike NY is a non-profit organization that works with our Recreation Director, Mr. Tim Hill to promote bike recreation and bike safety. We are in the planning stages of the 2006 bike event and hope to draw 2000 cyclists.

Oktoberfest 2005 – October 1 – The event was truly unique this year as 2 weeks prior to the event, our local food vendor pulled out of the festival leaving the organization in a dilemma. HBP advocate and President scrambled calling every German Caterer in the State until one was obtained. The food sales by HBP proved to be beneficial as it added approximately \$2800 to the gross income. There were no police reports for the fifth year, which is always a concern with an alcohol event. A liquor license was secured and Mayor Rick O'Neil, and HBP volunteers manned the beer operation, the grills, the children's bounce ride and many more festivities. Entertainment was provided by a German Band that warmed the crowds with traditional German music. There were 10 vendors and 2 inflatable rides. The event concluded with Fireworks over the river.

Highlands Cares 2005 (for Breast Cancer Cure) October – The Highlands Police Department approached HBP shortly after the Clam Fest to join in partnership to host a Breast Cancer Walk with the donation proceeds to benefit the American Cancer Society. In less than 8 weeks the HBP and the HPD implemented a successful walk at Sandy Hook with cooperation from Superintendent Richard Wells, the Park rangers and the administration at the NPS. The event was held Sunday October 23rd at 10:30 am. Registration was \$25 per adult and \$15 per child. The fee included a long sleeve t-shirt and lunch following at the Clam Hut Restaurant. The event will be heavily promoted in 2006 in hope to double the 100 participants.

Holiday Lighting 2005 December 3 Rain Date December 4 - Councilmen John Urbanski & Bill Ciazza, Councilwomen Becky Kane and Anna Little joined Mayor O'Neil at the ceremony. The event was held the first Friday in December and was changed to the first Saturday. Local entertainers performed holiday programs. Local resident Rick Abair portrayed Santa and Mrs. Clause was Joan Schneider, resident and member of the Highlands Garden Club. HBP volunteers, decorated Huddy Park and several public areas with the assistance of Tim Hill, Recreation Director and the Highlands Garden Club

Visual Improvement Committee -VIC

Co-Chaired by Marcia Shaya and Nancy Thomas

This HBP Committee has a wide scope of objectives including Parking, Safety, Beautification, Capital Improvement, Maintenance and Design. During 2005 the committee focused on visual improvements in the business district.

Public Safety

Continue to expand the partnership with the Borough code enforcement officer to promote community safety and maintenance standards.

Parking Recommendations - HBP, as a private sector corporation, can facilitate the brokering of leased parking arrangements. Leased parking will improve parking utilization and provide existing underutilized lots with potential income to "pay the bills". This plan will assist the Borough and private property owners to manage the parking issues with a flexible strategy. No new parking leases were negotiated between privately owned lots since 2003.

Public Area Maintenance

Clean Communities Entitlement

The public area maintenance plan is part of an ongoing program funded through a publicly funded entitlement of \$5,500, Highlands' allocation from the Department of Environmental Protection, Clean Communities Grant Program fiscal year 2005. The lowest bidder came in at \$6,950 and HBP paid the difference of the entitlement in an effort to proceed with the HBP Spring Flowering plan. The public area maintenance plan had been approved by the Borough to be administered in partnership with HBP. The program had been administered successfully under the former Highlands Neighborhood Preservation Program, and HBP VIC Committee requested an opportunity to continue the program. Public area debris removal, maintenance, organization of volunteers and Highlands Adopt-A-Highway area — the Highlands Bridge Ramp are the primary components. During the past seven years there were five areas that this entitlement program served to maintain by a private sector landscape contractor. Highlands Bridge Embankment, Veterans Park Planters, Huddy Park planters, Highway Sign at Linden Avenue and Cornwell Park planters. These are areas of steep slope or areas that were severely neglected.

A scope of work was created and quotes were secured from licensed landscape contractors who could perform herbicide applications. Borough employees have not yet certified for conducting herbicide applications. These areas were cleaned with:

- Debris and litter removal
- Herbicide applications
- Plant replacement and maintenance and replacement mulch three times April, July and October. These areas were maintained through the 2005 publicly funded entitlement

Former VIC Chair Nick Evangelista, submitted a proposal for a Downtown Pilot Maintenance Program where he proposed that HBP seek a part time maintenance person to sweep up, clean graffiti and public signs, possible window cleaning in the business district. Funding was not available in 2005 but plans to implement this pilot are underway for 2006.

Flower Containers/Streetscape

The VIC Committee purchased flowers and worked with the generous members of the Garden Club to plant flowers in all streetscape planters and public parks except for Gertrude Ederly, which the Garden Club maintains. It saved HBP a substantial amount of money by utilizing the Garden Club manpower for planting rather than paying a landscaper. The Highlands Department of Public Works provided services for watering. Nancy Thomas of the garden Club also provided additional planting and watering services at Huddy Park. We had four seasons of arrangements in the street planters, spring, summer, fall & holiday.

Holiday Decorations

All Holiday light displays were hung by the American Flag Company. Candy Canes were re-taped and displayed by VIC committee members as well as some teen volunteers. Red velvet bows, garlands, tree and wreaths were purchased for several streetscape areas. Volunteers installed bows, garland and the decorated tree in Huddy Park. Bows and garlands, and the Huddy Park gazebo tree were installed by the DPW.

Inventory of Way Finding Signs, Utility Poles, Parks and Streetscape Amenities

Street Maps have been created and maintained of existing amenities through new management of HBP. This map system will allow the VIC Committee to plan and purchase new amenities in the public areas of the central business district and will assist in the placement of annual holiday decorations and street banners.

Sign Projects

Way Finding

The Way Finding Signs along Bay Avenue were revisited and expanded to allow for additional businesses to appear on the posts. Currently, Business Owners pay for their own sign and the Borough installs the signs for HBP to save additional costs. Expansion will require an investment by HBP in 2006. Removal and installation of old signs have been taken on by HBP to ensure that signs are hung in an orderly fashion. Several signs were hung too low and they posed a danger to pedestrians. HBP is working with the Borough on this program. HBP purchased the wood materials, Borough installs wooden posts to sign fabricators specifications and signs are installed by the DPW & HBP to ensure that a comprehensive program can be offered and maintained to businesses.

Welcome Signs at Bridge Ramps

The Highlands Welcome sign opposite the East Point Shopping plaza was removed by the HDPW per the order of the Middletown officials. HBP continues to maintain the Bulkhead sign and showcases Highland's events and sponsors. The sign was \$3500 and HBP would like to find a relocation area for the sign in 2006.

Economic Development Committee Chaired by Fred Rosiak

Using the completed Master Plan summaries of strategies and responsible parties, the HBP Economic Development Committee worked to formulate a transportation link between the NYC Ferry and local Highlands waterfront destinations and Gateway National Park – Sandy Hook by drafting a Water Taxi Plan. The Water Taxi Plan would support and implement strategies from the 2004 Master Plan:

- Actively promote the waterfront as a place for restaurant, retail and waterfront activities
- Connect the waterfront with downtown commerce by encouraging entertainment & recreation activities

The Water Taxi Plan was presented 3/24/2005. Create a Water Taxi operation with a coast guard certified vessel that will efficiently transport people to and throughout the town and deliver potential customers to our members businesses. Project objectives include:

- Stimulate business environment for existing businesses
- Contribute to the new Highlands image and brand.
- Serve as a catalyst for new business investment

Business Recruitment

Many initiatives were made by HBP Executive Committee members during 2005. There were numerous inquiries and meetings with potential investors. HBP provided tours regarding available properties for purchase or rent. HBP provided free resources to those potential investors such as bank programs, technical assistance and a hand holding process in order to streamline their plan. Meetings were held with Borough officials in an attempt to solidify the potential investor's business plan. Documentation was provided such as the design standards, Tax Abatement & Sign ordinances as well as other pertinent documentation. The Borough's Tax Abatement Program was also posted on the HBP website as a tool to attract new Commercial Investors.

Business Retention

Many initiatives were taken in order to provide assistance to existing businesses with retention issues. HBP helped businesses with parking, safety and other problems, which may impact their business. The Borough provides HBP Office with new Mercantile Licenses. HBP Members schedule meetings with the new business to provide key business related information. Each new member is provided the entire *How To's* of HBP. Packages are on hand with Meeting Schedules, a Business Improvement District Information Guide, Sign Requirements, Visitors Guides, HBP Registration Form and a copy of the by-laws are distributed to the new business. The meeting is usually an hour or more and all information and opportunities that HBP has to offer is explained. Training was provided on use of the free database driven website and free marketing is also provided as a retention tool.

Smart Growth Application for funding from NJ Office of State Planning

As part of HBP efforts to develop a business recruitment and retention program, an application was submitted with

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Monmouth County Planning Board and the New Jersey Office of State Planning some time ago. The application needs to be revisited as the scope has changed. HBP President saw Joseph Donald, Office of State Planning at the Monmouth County Planning Board's 50th Anniversary and re-discussed options for Highlands and HBP. HBP understands that the land use issues and planning for the rehabilitation of the downtown and the waterfront must have a community vision. Plans to revisit Office of State Planning were discussed in 2005. HBP and the Borough participated in the regional Smart Growth Planning for the Bayshore Region during 2005.

Annual Report 2003 Summary Statement

The development of resources, people, and activities is an ongoing process that has attracted many diverse people during the year 2005. The re-investment strategies of HBP by Highlands' business community, including their time, talent and financial contributions, make a staggering impact. The Borough has experienced the impact of creating a vehicle for change and the role of the business community to manage that change. HBP is committed to bring improvements to Highlands at a steady, systematic pace - working with government leaders and residential stakeholders to craft the best strategies for improvement Highlands.

Submitted by Carla Cefalo-Braswell