



# Highlands Business Partnership

2008

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 9th year, 2008 assessment budget was \$98,000 (approved at the November 19, 2008 HBP Board Meeting); and in addition, Sponsorship, Grant and Event Income to offset the programs costs generated approximately \$103,000. The Board is comprised of 17 voting members and four non-voting members. Mayor's designee, Planning Liaison Member, Frank Nolan, and Council representative Nancy Thomas, 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.

**9th Year Objectives:** During the ninth year of operation the primary objectives include:

- Expand image, brand identity, and slogan to promote Highlands as a regional waterfront destination.
  - Expansion of destination marketing (events) and advertising to strengthen the anchor businesses,
  - Expanded Ad Campaign to include spring, summer fall and winter
- Promote video media tool using new image components to promote destination and business investment
- Use database of 2700 emails to promote Highlands – quarterly email blasts
- 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 and provide an attractive public space environment for customers and visitors to experience when utilizing Highlands' businesses.

**2008 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 2008, the Executive committee included committee chairs Fred Rosiak (ED), Jim Bollerman, Co Chair (ED) and Nancy Thomas (VIC).

	<b>2008 Board Members:</b>	<b>Business/ Affiliation</b>	<b>Resident</b>	<b>Board Assignment</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Replacement Unexpired Term</b>
1.	Jay Cosgrove 3-yr term 09	Bahrs Restaurant	CPO	Liaison to Bridge Committee		
2.	Carla Cefalo-Braswell 3 yr term 08 <b>President</b>	ShoreGrafx	Resident CPO	Chair – Events Co- Marketing/Comm	2008 Seat	
3.	John Koenig 3 yr term 09 <b>Vice President</b>	Clam Hut & Marina on the Bay	CPO	Co- Chair Economic Development Committee		
4.	William Weber 3 yr term 10 - <b>Treasurer</b>	Cottages @ Sandy Hook	CPO	Economic Development Committee		
5.	Eddy Sousa 3 yr term	Sandy Hook Cottage B&B	Resident BO	Marketing & Events Committee		
6.	Lynda Rose 1 yr term		Resident	Resident	2008 Seat	Resident Member
7.	Margot Takian 3 yr term 10	Duane Realty	CPO	Marketing & Events Committee		
8.	AJ Solomon 3 yr term 09	Solomon & Associates	Resident BO	Visual Improvement Committee		
9.	Leo Cervantes 3 yr term 10	Chilangos Restaurant	Resident BO	Marketing & Events Committee		
10.	Jim Bollerman 3 yr term 08	Sandy Hook May Marina	BO	Economic Development Committee		
11.	Lori Ann Bodnar-Nolan 3 yr term 08	Lori's House of Beauty	Resident BO	Marketing & Events Committee		
12.	Jim Filip 3 yr term 09	Doris & Eds	Resident BO	Economic Development Committee		
13.	Fred Rosiak 3 yr term 08	Captain Cove Marina	Resident CPO	Co-Chair Economic Development Committee	2008 Seat	
14.	Benny Harten 3 yr term	Claddagh	BO	Visual Improvement Committee		
15.	Dan Shields 3 yr term	Windansea	BO	Marketing & Events		

Members of the district, according to the HBP By-Laws, elect HBP Board members that have expiring terms annually. Board seats that become vacant prior to the end of the expiration of the term are filled by Board action at regular or special meetings. Mayor annually at reorganization appoints these two positions. 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, **Jackie Hoehn**, Brookdale Small Business Development Center; **Roberta Sheridan**, JCP&L Energy, **Richard Wells**, Superintendent Gateway National Park at Sandy Hook, and Art Gallagher, NMCC. 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, Eddy Sousa, Carla Cefalo-Braswell, Jim Bollerman, John Koenig, Councilwoman Nancy Thomas took leadership roles to Chair and Co-Chair HBP Committees. Committee chairs, which 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 2008. 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 will complete a certified audit in 2008. HBP will file 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 2008. HBP Insurance is provided through a partnership with the Borough and the Monmouth JIF, Joint Insurance Fund. Resident Carol Bucco, and Linda Mikhail provided staff support and Downtown Network Co. provided professional management services as needed by the Board. The HBP phone # is (732) 291-4713 and Fax # is 732-872-1031. HBP has an account with Verizon for their Phone and fax#. In September of 2007, HBP began to pay for their JCP&L electric usage. Checks are made payable directly to JCP&L from a detailed invoice. Carla Cefalo-Braswell and Ken Braswell provide HBP free use of office space, Internet and computer equipment.

**Marketing & Communications –Chaired by Eddy Sousa, the Marketing committee worked to sell sponsorship, manage events, initiate new marketing incentives and expand on Destination Highlands.** A summary of the 2008 activities include the Jersey Shore Destination Marketing; Monmouth County Tourism Guide, Escapemaker 2008 contract, Te NYT Travel Show; 2008 HBP Marketing/Advertising Opportunities table chart prepared by, Linda Mikhail. The table chart served as a marketing tool for current members to plan activities through comprehensive Marketing/Advertising opportunities for 2008. HBP purchased holiday destination advertising showcasing dining and lodging in Jersey Shore Guide, EscapeMaker.com, and Monmouth County Tourism Guide advertising with our brand identity and destination offerings. Council approved the HBP 2009 event calendar in November.

### **Website [www.highlandsnj.com](http://www.highlandsnj.com)**

Maintenance and expansion of the Highlands' web site during HBP's 9th<sup>th</sup> year has been continued. The Website was enhanced for more transparency with new charts for Minutes, annual reports, organization chart, mission statement, ordinance, budget, events, photo album, and 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. The website was promoted throughout the year.

**Escapemaker.com** - An investment in destination marketing was completed with a 2008 contract. Email Blasts with weekend getaways were created and attracted over 2700 email addresses. The escapemaker.com site was modified to reflect new business spotlights and additions based on a visit from a travel writer. The escapemaker.com site was updated and reflected the new information. All Highlands businesses are listed on escapemaker.com.

**The Highlands Visitor's Guide** was created and enhanced with full color in 2008 version that includes information on Highlands such as history, biking and hiking trails, lighthouses, event information, ferry schedule, a map and a business directory. 2008 Visitor Guides were distributed at all HBP events, the Great 5-Boro Race, NJ Pride, the NJ Lighthouse Challenge, County Tourism Office, Historic Twin Lights Visitor Center, the Sandy Hook Visitor Center, aboard the Water Taxi, as well as in our local businesses and Borough Hall. HBP produced 20,000 guides for distribution during 2008.

**Tourism Video** The Tourism Video was unveiled and proves to showcase Highlands as a destination and as an investment tool. The video will be distributed to the general public, realtors, businesses, and tourism kiosks.

### **Funding Development - HBP**

#### **Private Sector Partners - Sponsorship Development**

HBP Marketing served as the primary catalyst for attracting private funding to maximize the local assessment investment. Through efforts of the Exec 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 2008/2009 include Comcast, 95.9 WRAT, Frank Rahm Landscaping, Hufnagel Tree Experts, New Jersey Tourism (visitnj.org), Seastreak and Super Foodtown.

#### **Awards and Matching Grants**

HBP applied for the NJ State COOP Marketing grant to promote Highlands. HBP was not funded for this application. HBP applied for a Farmers Market Grant through the New Jersey Department of Agriculture for 2008. The funding was matched 50/50 to promote the Jersey Fresh Farmers Market along with all promotional information about Highlands.

#### **Special Events Committee - Chaired by Carla Cefalo Braswell**

**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 2008 event calendar and marketing plan reached over 100,000 visitors.**

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

- **Bike New York-Great Five Boro Race** – 31,000 cyclists – Ft. Wadsworth, Staten Island, NY (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in May)
- **NJ Pride – Asbury Park** – 15,000 people (1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in June)
- **NJ Lighthouse Challenge – Twin Lights** – October 2008 the two-day weekend event promotes visitation to the NJ Lighthouses during a weekend with over 15,000 in attendance.
- **HBP 2008 Special Events Calendar:**

**Saint Patrick's Day Parade March 29, 2008** was held with 11 pipe bands and local and regional floats, along with a host of local business participation. The parade brings an early start to the busy spring/summer season for local restaurants and businesses.

**Pride in Highlands Earth Day, April 19, 2008** was held in Huddy Park in conjunction with the Clean Communities Program and the goal for the event is to educate the community; especially the youth about reduce, reuse and recycle as well as keeping Highlands clean. There was participation from all local groups such as the Highlands Police Department, Highlands Elementary School, Highlands Recreation and the Highlands Garden Club. Participants worked to clean the town to continue the public lands clean up program. There was a presentation from David Street from Kingdom of Clean, a Litter Prevention Program.

**Seaport Craft Show May 25, 2008** – was held on Memorial Day weekend with over 55 specialty vendors/ crafters. The event was well received by crafters and visitors alike.

**Highlands Farmers Market 2008 July – October** - The 2008 season began in Huddy Park in July and continued through until the last Saturday in October. 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 July 31 – August 3, 2008** - The Clam Festival proved to be successful and attracted nearly 30,000 visitors over a 4-day period. Efforts of over 40 volunteers, many which are local residents, were a huge asset to the success. Clam Fest had all local restaurants and 43 vendors. Live entertainment, rides, contests and games were also included.

**2008 Twin Lights Ride - September 28** - 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. There were near 1700 bike enthusiasts visiting Highlands and sections of Monmouth County. There were 4 routes available. Many cyclists visited most businesses that were open this day. Promotions with local businesses were advertised and announced. The Bike NY is a non-profit organization that works with HBP and our Recreation Director, Mr. Tim Hill to promote cycling through education and recreation.

**Oktoberfest 2008 – October 4** – German food sales by HBP proved to be beneficial as it added to the gross income. There were no police reports for the eighth year, which is always a concern with an alcohol event. A German Band that warmed the crowds with traditional German music provided entertainment. There were specialty vendors, trackless train and inflatable rides. The event concluded with Fireworks on the river and attracted 4700 visitors.

**Highland Cares Breast Cancer Walk 2008 – October 28** – in conjunction with HPD. Event moved from Sandy Hook to Community center. Participation was lower than prior year.

**Holiday Lighting 2008 - December 5** - The event features local entertainers performing holiday programs. Local residents portrayed Santa and Mrs. Clause. Tim Hill, Recreation Director and the Highlands Garden Club decorated the tree and all public areas.

**Visual Improvement Committee –VIC - Chaired by Nancy Thomas**

**This HBP Committee has a wide scope of objectives including Parking, Safety, Beautification, Capital Improvement, Maintenance and Design.**

**Highway Welcome Sign**

HBP has maintained the Highway Welcome sign and Linden Avenue for many years. The sign could no longer be repaired. HBP erected the new welcome sign in July of 2008 with an \$18,000 investment. Businesses did not like gateway to Sandy Hook, as it was not our identity. HBP used new slogan Where The Jersey Shore Begins on sign.

### **Tree Maintenance**

Continue to provide trimming services of trees on Bay Avenue, in public parks and Commercial areas.

### **Flower Containers/Streetscape**

The VIC Committee purchased flowers and through our generous partnership with the Highlands Garden Club, flowers in all streetscape planters and public parks except for Gertrude Ederly were planted. It saves 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 the containers. The HGC provided additional planting and watering services at all Public Parks.

### **Holiday Decorations**

All Holiday light displays were hung by the American Flag Company. Red velvet bows, garlands, tree and wreaths were purchased for several streetscape areas. Volunteers installed bows, garland and the decorated tree in Huddy Park.

### **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 \$44 per sign and HBP pays for the installation. This includes re-alphabetizing annually.

### **Economic Development Committee Chaired by Fred Rosiak/Jim Bollerman**

#### **Business Recruitment**

The Board introduced the DBIZ Loan opportunity to the Mayor and Council for improvements such as underground utilities and wifi services to be used as business recruitment opportunities. The Borough may utilize the DBIZ Loan, as a New Jersey community with a Special/Business Improvement District. Towns without BID's are not able to use the DBIZ Loan Program at a 0% interest rate for a maximum period of 15 years. There are two types of loans:

**Type A** with maximum loans of \$100,000 at 0 percent interest – matching funds may be provided. If matching funds are provided, one year may be added to the repayment period for each twenty percent increment of the loan amount up to a maximum of 15 years. In absence of matching funds, the maximum repayment period will be five years. Payments are due annually beginning on the first day of the first month, twelve months following the closing date of the loan.

Applications for loans will be accepted at anytime subject to the availability of funds.

**Type B** for loans over \$100,000 to a maximum of \$500,000. The loans are at 0 percent interest for a maximum Highlands payment period of 15 years. The loan will require a dollar-for dollar match. Payment will be due annually beginning on the first day of the first month, 12 months following the closing date of the loan. The commissioner may, at his/her discretion, reallocate loan funds from one type to the other and adjust the loan limits to better serve the purposes of the program.

#### **DBIZ Loan Criteria:**

Consideration is given to first time borrowers; project readiness to proceed; degree to which borrower is able to concisely document that the public improvements are integral to implementing a comprehensive revitalization strategy or plan. The initial HBP proposal submitted to the governing body provides that the DBIZ loan would be paid back from the proceeds of the BID Annual Budget – estimated to the \$16,000 per year for the 15-year term of the loan and there would be no interest payments. HBP, the district management corporation for the BID is authorized by the governing body, annually with approval of the BID/HBP Annual Budget. In order to obtain a DBIZ, the municipality would be required to guarantee the loan payback. Providing a loan guarantee is standard operating procedure for any loan program – either public or private.

### **HBP Economic Development DBIZ Loan Project Proposal**

HBP economic development committee has developed a project agenda that includes promoting mixed-use investment along Bay Avenue. The addition of underground utilities, creating a visually attractive streetscape will serve as a catalyst for new commercial and residential investment. The attraction of professional services in the infill mixed-use projects will be further stimulated by the availability of WIFI Internet access. The underground utilities and WIFI activities were developed into a financial model with costs associated with the phases of installation over the last three years by HBP volunteers. The HBP Board recommended the underground utilities and WIFI activities for the proposed loan application through Board action. The proposed loan application activities were provided to our HBP Council liaisons and Mayor Anna Little for consideration.

### **Loan Terms and Repayment Responsibilities**

Loans would be repaid each year from the BID Budget. The municipality would be obligated to repay the loan if the BID budget was not renewed, as the program requires municipal support and matching funds can be provided by the Borough or other public/private grants or funding sources. The ability to secure loan funds at 0 percent interest is a dynamic financial tool that can only be utilized by a SID/BID in New Jersey. UEZ communities are prohibited from utilizing the DBIZ Loan Program.

### **Water Taxi Program**

The water taxi project completed a three-year seasonal operation with a successful Sandy Hook landing operation implementation during the 2008 season. Through Mayor Anna Little's efforts, a regional water taxi program is being developed through a network of water transportation companies, County and State agencies. HBP, as a non-profit district management corporation, took on the challenge as a demonstration project to link the National Park at Sandy Hook with our local restaurants and shops. HBP completed the three-year pilot program and garnered support and interest to continue the water transportation link in the Bayshore Region and S. Amboy, Carteret and Elizabeth. HBP does not have the long-term capacity to operate the water taxi with insurance, staff, maintenance and operational demands on a predominately volunteer organization created for management of community revitalization. Mayor Anna Little outlined the work she is undertaking to expand the HBP Water Taxi demonstration project beyond Highlands. The HBP accomplishments attracted the attention of State and County transportation officials. Mayor Little commended the HBP board and volunteers for the work to develop and operate the water taxi. HBP would like to support the water taxi initiative through marketing and promotion in 2009 to attract new customers.

### **Business Retention**

HBP contributed to small business inquiries and provides assistance to existing businesses. 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 Land Use Strategies**

As part of HBP efforts to develop a business recruitment and retention program, HBP continues to work closely with the Borough and Monmouth County Planning Department to plan and implement strategies that promote mixed use in fill projects that will expand business opportunities and promote flood mitigation design and construction. HBP strives to implement the action plan that resulted from the adoption of the Highlands Master Plan. Flood mitigation strategies must



be integrated into the land use design and construction regulations to affect sustainable results in new in fill mixed use projects. HBP worked with Council Liaisons, Councilman Frank Nolan and Councilwoman Nancy Thomas to identify projects such as underground utilities to enhance the future growth of our downtown community.

**Annual Report 2008 Summary Statement**

The development of resources, people, and activities is an ongoing process that has attracted many diverse people during the year 2008. The re-investment strategies of HBP by Highlands' business community, including their time, talent and financial contributions, make a staggering impact. 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