



# Highlands Business Partnership

2001  
Annual Report

Highlands Business Partnership (HBP)  
District Management Corporation  
Highlands Borough Business Improvement District  
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**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 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 2001 operations budget was \$82,403.58. The Board is comprised of 17 voting members and four non-voting members. Mayor's designee, Councilman Bob Rauen and the Planning Board Member and Councilwoman, Sherry Ruby, 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.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Year Objectives:**

During the second year of operation the primary objectives include:

- Expansion of destination marketing (events) and advertising to strengthen the anchor businesses, restaurants.
- Securing NJ Office of State Planning Smart Growth funding to facilitate a Strategic Revitalization Plan (SRP) that will provide:
  - Borough leaders and HBP a Vision for redevelopment of Highlands underutilized waterfront and commercial areas.
  - By creating the SRP jointly, the Borough and HBP will built consensus for business growth and expansion that is business friendly and is consistent with Borough's Master Plan and SRP, adopted as part of Highland's Master Plan.
- 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.
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**Officers of the Corporation:**

Lynn Hunter, Clam Hut, President; Carla Braswell, ShoreGrafx, Vice President; Kathryn Lustig, Christine Michelle Handmade and The Elizabeth Anne Spa, Secretary; Bill Garcia, Fortuna Restaurant Supply, Treasurer. The Officers serve according to the bylaws and form the Executive Committee of the corporation providing the executive 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.

**Board Members:**

Kathy Armstrong, Cottrell's Lobsters and Fish Market; Larys Cartaya, Bolero Café; Doug Douty, Lusty Lobster; Katharine James, commercial property owner; Michael Kovic, commercial property owner; David Stafford, Seastreak Ferry; John Koenig, New York Fast Ferry; Henry Moyer, Off The Hook; Roger Mumford, commercial property owner; Joan Wicklund, Sand Dollar Card and Gift; and Bill Duncan, resident member. The Executive Committee members, comprised of the corporate Officers, who also serve on the Board are Carla Braswell, ShoreGrafx; Bill Garcia, Fortuna Restaurant Supply; Lynn Hunter, Clam Hut; and Kathryn Lustig, Christine Michelle Handmade and The Elizabeth Anne Spa.

**Non-Voting Board Members:**

These members bring institutional, and corporate private-sector talent to the Board. These members bring an added outside viewpoint to the board that assists in their decision making process. Patti Baxter, Executive Director of the Northern Monmouth Chamber of Commerce; Jeff Flimlin, Rutgers University Cooperative Extension Services; Tom Laverty, Twin Lights Historic Site; Larry Novick, Brookdale Small Business Development Center; Roberta Sheridan, GPU Energy.

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**Committee Chairs**

Board Members Roger Mumford, commercial property owner; Bill Duncan, resident; Lynn Hunter, Clam Hut; Carla Braswell, ShoreGrafx; Kathy Armstrong, Cottrell's Lobsters all took leadership roles to Chair and Co-Chair HBP Committees. This ensures linkage to the objectives of the Board.

**HBP Administration:**

Several professionals were hired after soliciting quotes and reviewing professional backgrounds. HBP Attorney, Ron Reich was retained for HBP business for the year 2001. Mr. Reich provided legal assistance for various HBP issues including corporate record requirements and litigation. Attorney Robert Goldsmith, Greenbaum, Rowe represent HBP and the Borough with litigation regarding property class inclusion in the district. Legal publication notices, as outlined in the state statute for BIDs, announced HBP meeting schedule for four regular meeting in 2001. 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, an audit was completed April 2001 and filed with the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services, Borough of Highlands and with HBP corporate records. Charitable Registration was completed for HBP 2001. HBP Insurance is provided through a partnership with the Borough and the Monmouth County JIF, Joint Insurance Fund. Professional management services are provided through the Bayshore Development Office (BDO). Kathaleen Shaw serves as HBP Business Advocate. Offices are located at 945 State Highway 36 Leonardo, NJ 07737 (732-291-4713). HBP has a contract with the BDO for 20% of the HBP BID Assessment Budget.

**Marketing & Communications/Events Committee:**

Co-Chaired by Lynn Hunter and Carla Braswell, also HBP President and Vice President, the committee set an aggressive agenda. Destination marketing is the objective of the marketing activities. Create - Highlands as a destination for 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 three Ferry landings hosting New York commuters and visitors, there is a year-round opportunity to direct market "Highlands as a destination". Commuters are creatures of habit who just want to go home after a day's work.....like most people who work. HBP has initiated direct marketing programs on-board the Ferry's, with brochures and flyers; along with coupon distribution system that extracts Highlands business coupons from our Website on a quarterly basis. 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 Companies include the HBP coupon books with each 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 NY Fast Ferry and Seastreak America. Both Ferry company principals sit on the Board of Directors of HBP. Making Ferry riders familiar with Highlands' businesses and restaurants along with upgrading the quality of our business offering is a long-term marketing investment that has unique and valuable assets for Highlands' businesses. Most downtown's striving to come back from decline must develop a destination agenda from scratch. Highlands has been able to develop and nurture a partnership with an existing resource – 2,200 commuters and visitors who arrive daily at one of Highlands' three Ferry landings.

**Marketing Consultant**

Marketing Consultant, Allen Consulting (ACI), was hired for an additional six months to bring the contract to the end of the calendar year 2001. The initial contract with ACI began in April of 2000 and ended in December 2001 with a "wash" between sponsorship and event income secured for HBP and the expense of the consulting contract. A financial spreadsheet was provided by the HBP Marketing Chair to Board

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members at the January, 2002 regular meeting that outlined a total cash from events income, corporate sponsors of \$47,249 from the start of the ACI contract, April 2000 until December 31, 2001. An additional \$30,250 in barter value was presented through Barter Pays!, Comcast, WJLK Radio, Ward Color and New York Fast Ferry. A total investment of \$77,499 in destination marketing of Highlands. The total professional expense for the same time frame of April 2000 until December 31, 2001 was \$40,000. As a first year experience with professional marketing services, the success can be noted by Board members comments. David Stafford, Seastreak America commented that marketing services are not inexpensive and the single most important business expansion task for a corporation. David Stafford's involvement in Octoberfest, a first time event for HBP 2001, supports his opinion on the success of Highlands' destination marketing. The hard work and commitment made by the committee and ACI made this first time event a sure hit for expansion in next year's HBP event calendar. Marketing services from ACI includes all public relations, media contacts, event calendar development, implementation and solicitation of corporate sponsorship to promote events that will showcase Highlands as a destination. 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. 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.

**Events 2000/2001**

Chairpersons for HBP events continue to be difficult to produce. The 2001 event calendar provided a "complete marketing package" for ACI 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 consultant serves as a broker between corporate and media partners who will provide sponsorship in return for media exposure.

**Holiday Lighting 2001** provided Not Your Ordinary Dancers, under Lillian Zuar's leadership, entertaining on Waterwitch Avenue along with local organization and service groups joining in holiday song to make the event full of community spirit and pride. HBP volunteers, under the direction of Kathy Armstrong, VIC Chair, decorated Huddy Park and several public areas with the assistance of Tim Hill, Recreation Director and the Highlands Garden Club, Jaime Terrell, President.

**Octoberfest 2001**, a first time event, was very successful. A liquor license was secured and beverage sponsors will be expanded for 2002 due to our initial success. A non-Highlands food vendor provided German food loved by the crowds along with a lively German Band that warmed the crowds with traditional music that young and old enjoyed. Fireworks were postponed for a 2002 event due to wind conditions at the event. Many visitors looked forward to the fireworks, but safety came first with the guidance of our local officials and Serpico, fireworks contractor. Officials and Police support was outstanding and this first time event is a repeat performance for 2002.

**Re-Discover the Treasures of Highlands** returned for the 2001 event calendar with limited success. The Marketing Committee will work on variations of this event for the new HBP event calendar. This event created an on-line map with call-outs of participating businesses as part of the treasure hunt concept. Highlands Website marketing was undertaken along with a double truck ad in the Asbury Park Press that encompassed Octoberfest and Re-Discover the Treasures. The \$2,300 double truck, full page ad was part of an advertorial pull-out section devoted to Highlands stories and related advertising.

**Twin Towers to Twin Lights Bike Tour** was canceled due to the events that occurred September 11. Both ferry companies planned to cooperate with bringing bike enthusiasts to Highlands for a multi-tour

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bike event. Bike NY has confirmed the event for HBP's 2002 event schedule. The response to the event was in excess of 700 pre-registered bike enthusiasts to visit Highlands and sections of Monmouth County. Bike Tour participants were informed of the cancellation by Allen Consulting; and 90% of the registrants donated their fees to the World Trade Center Relief Fund instead of received a refund. ACI Staff handled the entire cancellation and donation process.

**Cruise Nights 2001** were held under the direction of Lori Bodnar-Nolan and Frank Nolan. During July and August local business volunteers (Lori's House of Beauty) worked closely with the Jersey Shore Cruisers and Bob Dooly. Participation from local businesses provided certificates and prizes for the visitors. Over seventy car enthusiasts participated during the July and August events.

**Northern Monmouth Chamber of Commerce Concert Series**

Through a partnership with NMCC and HBP four Tuesday evenings in July, Highlands HBP hosted band musical entertainment at the Seastreak beach- front area. The concerts were funded through the NMCC and promoted in partnership with HBP. The bands included the Jazz Lobsters, The Party Dolls,

**Highlands Farmers Market** was taken over from the remaining officers of the Highlands Farmers Market - Nancy Makafka and Joe Walsh for the 2001 season. A starting balance of funding was transferred to HBP treasury to be maintained in a separate account. HBP prepared and submitted the 2002 Farmer Market grant to the NJ Department of Agriculture. HBP was awarded \$500 to be matched in advertising and promotion of the Highlands Market. The 2001 season began the first Saturday in July and continued through until the last Saturday in October. Farmers participated with the Octoberfest event with mums, fresh fall produce, pumpkins and squashes. Kathryn Lustig, Carla & Ken Braswell, and Mike Kovic 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 2001** maintained entertainment, rides and vendors for a four-day event. Printing, advertising, signs, maintenance, entertainers, and installations of electric, contribute to the event success and these functions were managed through HBP volunteers, Business Advocate and Allen Consulting. ACI expanded the Clam Festival 2001 with thirty new vendors. A Clam Fest advertorial was produced with a HBP investment of \$2,300 for a double truck ad showcasing Highlands' restaurants and businesses as a visitor's destination. Expansion of vendors when from ten to thirty. Electric demands will require a new look at Huddy Park electric requirements and new investments from HBP to upgrade event electric.

**Seaport Craft Show 2001** was held on Memorial Day weekend with a successful start of 25 crafters. The event was well received by crafters and visitors alike. Committee and Board consensus on the potential of this event make it a repeat for 2002.

"Print and save" promotions from our Website and all printed media brought a new dimension to marketing for Highlands businesses. All events held in 2001 provide visitors with coupons and additional event information as well as promoting our Website.

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

Maintenance and expansion of the Highlands' web site during HBP's 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. An online map of Highlands with variable call outs featuring participating businesses was continued during the October Re-Discover Event bringing on-line marketing

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and promotion for all Highlands' businesses. Linkage to the ferry riders through the Internet is a primary goal for the Marketing Committee. HBP is highlighting the Highlands' businesses and direct marketing to ferry customers through the web site and our other complementary marketing initiatives. HBP requested and received brochures or printed promotional information from business operators that are showcased on board the ferry. The Highlands/HBP web site is promoted on the ferry and in all HBP media contacts reinforce the destination marketing objective activities.

### **www.bayshorenj.com**

As a business improvement district in the Bayshore Region, HBP is taking advantage of a newly developed regional marketing tool for absolutely free. [www.bayshorenj.com](http://www.bayshorenj.com) web site, provides a proprietary database of Highlands' businesses, and is searchable with HBP members' noted and special e-coupon offerings. HBP members can access their listing on bayshorenj.com and utilize custom options including the design and posting of e-coupons absolutely free. The Bayshore Development Office created [www.bayshorenj.com](http://www.bayshorenj.com), which contains a nine town searchable, proprietary database of Bayshore businesses, events and municipal information. [www.bayshorenj.com](http://www.bayshorenj.com) promotes the Bayshore Region as a destination and region center for living, business, transportation and tourism.

### **Advertising/Media Area Map**

Working with our partner and non-voting member of the Board of Directors, Patti Baxter, Executive Director, HBP placed a full-page ad in the Northern Monmouth Area Guide Map published by the Northern Monmouth Chamber. The County of Monmouth Economic Development Office/Tourism and NMCOC mail out this Area Guide and Map to inquiring tri-state region and beyond visitors. This area map and guide represents our Bayshore Region Aberdeen to Highlands. HBP's ad promotes Highlands as a destination along with our largest event the Highlands Clam Festival. The area map supply will continue to be distributed to inquiring visitors until a reprint opportunity is presented to HBP.

### **Media Impressions**

Since April, 2000 in excess of 4,423,878 measured print impressions have been made. That means that Highlands' name is getting out there as a destination. Changing perception and customer habits take persistence and consistency. Allen Consulting prepares all new releases for HBP that are approved through the Marketing Co-Chairs. Any business innovations or news are welcomed topics for a HBP media release.

### **HBP Newsletter - On the Move**

The first HBP Newsletter was compiled by collaboration by the Board, Committee Chairs and Business Advocate to communicate the status of organizing the District Management Corporation. Volunteer editor, John Tedesco, published two subsequent issues of the HBP Newsletter - *On The Move*. John Tedesco, a Highlands resident, sponsorship professional for Pace University New York, put his talents to work on the Marketing Committee. This internal communication is mailed to all business operators and commercial property owners in Highlands. Additional copies are distributed to committee volunteers, Borough Officials and staff and extra copies are left at Borough Hall and the Highlands Community Center. The newsletter is archived and printable from the Website.

### **Block Leaders**

In the fall of 2000 it became apparent to the Board of Directors and Committee Chairs, HBP needed greater communication between our members. Key business operators volunteered to take a block area near their business to network information and follow up on important initiatives for HBP. It is easy to say I never got my mail but difficult to say you don't know when a personal visit is made. The success of the programs HBP creates are directly linked to participation and communication. HBP needs to know the

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issues in order to solve the issues. Block Leaders will continue add another benefit to HBP's communication network. An ongoing challenge for HBP is to maintain strong leaders in the communication network.

**Marketing Workshops/Group Media Buys**

Two marketing workshops were scheduled fall 2000. It became clear by the input from those in attendance that there was a desire for a "group media buy" to bring down the individual business cost of advertising. HBP issued an offer for a "group media buy" December 10<sup>th</sup> and it will be included in the 2001 initiatives. Several mailings were provided to businesses regarding group media buy opportunities. Without a critical mass of ten participating businesses the offer could not be launched. Two (2) advertorial special sections were created through ACI and the Asbury Park Press. A total of \$4,700 in double truck ads during October and June of 2001 was initiated through the Marketing Committee with Board approval. Contained in the special pull-out section of the Asbury Park Press were five or more stories highlighting Highlands' as a destination. ACI provided the editorial information that was approved by the Executive Board. One reinforced Highlands' most successful event the Clam Festival and the other extended the season and showcased two fall events after labor day - when perceptions of Highlands' "closing down" provide a slow down in the business climate.

**Marketing Committee Summary**

Hiring of our Marketing Consultant, Allen Consulting, is HBP's largest investment from our budget. Marketing was clearly what the Board of Directors, Committee volunteers and business community at large identified as the most important need for the businesses. Freehold Center Partnership's successes, over the past eight years through Allen Consulting, convinced the search committee and Board that this was an investment that must be taken for Highlands. April 2001 will provide a complete cycle for the Allen Consulting contract for Board evaluation. Sponsorship and event income through December 31 is \$20,000. After evaluation at the end of the contract, April 2001, the total sponsorship dollars was \$26,000 and the consulting fees remaining were credited to maintain the terms of the contract. A \$30,000 investment was made in promoting Highlands above the BID assessment dollars contributed by Highlands' businesses. As a first year outside investment - a success for all especially those who contributed time, talent and energy to the event/marketing process.

**Visual Improvement Committee -VIC**

Chaired by Kathy Armstrong, this HBP Committee has a wide scope of objectives including Parking, Safety, Beautification, Capital Improvement, Maintenance and Design. During 2001 the committee continued their agenda expansion with parking. Kathy Armstrong attended the 2000 Borough Parking Committee Meetings and worked with the HBP VIC volunteers. The goal was to ensure recommendations were developed from both the business district and residential viewpoints. Highlands' neighborhoods are a mix of commercial and residential blocks along Bay Avenue and the waterfront. HBP Board members kicked off this "hot-button" issue with board action to authorize purchase of speed radar equipment. Ferry operators Seastreak and New York Fast Ferry, Highlands Chamber of Commerce and HBP provided a four-way split in the cost to purchase this equipment. The partnership included the Borough to ensure that the speed radar equipment provided by HBP and partners to the police department would be maintained and monitored for placement. HBP requested the equipment be used in a wide range of areas from the Regional High School to Bay Avenue. The equipment is a warning and educational tool not a means to issue tickets. Monthly reports were requested from the Borough for the VIC Committee. Police reports included information on special officer assignments that are paid by Highlands ferry partners, police personnel assignments for special events, and locations that speed monitor equipment was placed during the month. HBP will continue to explore planning options and activities recommendations on parking issues. Speed monitor equipment educates the public (residents and visitors) about speed. The

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Police Department continues to circulate the equipment to various locations to provide a traffic-calming environment and continue to education the visiting and local resident public.

### **Parking Recommendations**

Parking recommendations were drafted and approved by the VIC Committee in 2000. The HBP Board approved and forwarded the written recommendations to Mayor and Council on June, 2000. The recommendations feature three components that HBP stands behind:

- Borough adoption of a Parking Impact Ordinance completed 2001 )
- Borough Line Striping on Bay, and Shore Drive (Shore Drive completed 2001)
- HBP serving as a broker to be a catalyst for leased parking arrangements between businesses. (VFW, Doris & Ed's)

### **Database Creation**

#### **Parking**

In order for HBP to implement the parking recommendations the volunteers worked to create a database of parking information. The central business district was broken into eleven (11) districts. Volunteers were assigned areas to inventory and prioritize parking areas fully utilized and parking areas underutilized both for public owned and private owned lots. Borough owned properties were identified in the database for parking utilization. With this database the volunteers could assist in identifying leased parking opportunities. 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:

- Parking ordinance to create a parking improvement funds paid into by those who impact parking through expansion
- Line striping to account for actual parking areas available in Highlands
- HBP contributing as a facilitator to broker leased parking options between private sector business operators.

### **Maintenance**

Highlands neighborhood conditions prompted the VIC Committee to take the same, eleven (11), database districts and list property maintenance issues. The second database was created for the VIC Committee to use on an ongoing basis to target issues and to work with the Borough on identifying solutions. Borough owned properties were identified in each district and included in the evaluation of property maintenance standards. Setting standards for property owners can only be effective when the Borough promotes equal property maintenance standards. Life Hazard conditions were identified through the participation of Terrance Fennell and the Committee. Follow-up and legal ramifications were identified as the largest problem to date. Increased meeting and communication with the Borough will be tried to bring the outstanding issue to solutions or conclusions. It was the opinion of the VIC Committee that if all eleven areas were brought to the attention of the Borough at once it would be a waste of time. VIC Committee members agreed to bring one district at a time to the attention of municipal officials. The Shore Drive District was identified as the first group to be submitted to the Borough. There was a large percentage of Borough owned properties in this district. Having the Borough set a tone for their own properties paved the way to provide the maintenance enforcement that will visually improve Highlands.



### **Public Area Maintenance**

#### **Clean Communities Entitlement**

VIC Committee was presented a proposed public area maintenance plan in early January, 2000. The public area maintenance plan was part of an ongoing program funded through an publicly funded entitlement of \$9,394. Highlands' allocation from the Department of Environmental Protection, Clean Communities Grant Program fiscal year 2001. 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. the areas were maintained through the 2001 publicly funded entitlement \$9,394.00.

#### **Flower Containers, Trash Receptacles, Bike Racks, Container Plantings - Bay, Waterwitch Avenues and Atlantic Street**

The VIC Committee in partnership with the Garden Club planted flowers in all streetscape planters with a design plan created by the Highlands Garden Club. Woods Edge Landscaping provided services for watering. The unique design created for each planter will be changed for 2002 to provide one solid look for the streetscape areas. Twenty additional planters were purchased at a cost of \$9,149, along with ten additional planters to replace in areas where planters were damaged and unsightly. New Alberta Pine plantings were installed for fall 2001 in all new and existing planters where necessary to provide a uniform appearance. Bike racks were selected and purchased by HBP for ferry landings, Borough parks and near the bridge. HBP Board authorized \$2,500 for a total of ten bike racks. HBP recommended that new trash receptacles be purchased and the Borough took action at a council meeting to authorize the purchase in the amount of \$3,369. HBP purchased planters and bike racks, and the Borough purchased the trash receptacles for locations identified by HBP VIC Committee. VIC Committee recommended that locations that had damaged containers be replaced and identified areas where there was a need to add containers.

#### **Marine Place Improvements**

VIC committee identified Highlands' new bulkhead area along Marine Place as a critical area in need of maintenance and improvements. After meeting with the Borough Administrators, Paul Shaffery, Nina Flannery and John Tedesco, a plan was presented to hire a licensed landscaper to apply herbicide and remove overgrowth of weeds and dead plants. Kathy Armstrong discussed the concern from residents and the perspective buyer for Captain Cove's Marina on Washington Street for the conditions along the new bulkhead. Damaged lighting problems were to be repaired by the Borough and HBP would take on the overgrown weeds. After Board and Borough approval, the project was completed and new mulch was installed. This clean up process is known as Phase I. Phase II will be further investigated after all electrical lighting conditions are addressed by residents and VIC committee. It was proposed to include indigenous plantings that have been selected and designed by Highlands Garden Club member Marsha Shaya. To date the electrical issues are not finalized. Sheet-metal light shields to deflect light away

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from homes and toward the public path area are being fabricated. A team approach is used to address any lighting concerns before adding any plantings. Cost of repairs estimates to repair damaged or missing parts for the vandalized light-bollard poles were secured by HBP VIC Committee. Purchase of replacement component parts were priced for materials only and totaled in excess of \$4,000. Removal of light bollards and relocation to another area to lessen the "over" lighting problems for the public space is cost prohibited. Costs in excess of \$7,000 would be incurred to disconnect existing lighting and reconnect in conduit along the six- block area. A report will be prepared for the Borough after coordination with Public Works, and appropriate sub-code officials. Upon completion of the fabrication of the light shields for Marine Place the lighting will be re-evaluated by the residents and VIC Committee.

### **Public Area Maintenance Schedule — Electric**

#### **Holiday Decorations**

VIC Committee created a maintenance schedule to ensure that regular maintenance of public area electric is undertaken. This project was started as a result of Committee attempts to design and purchase new electrical holiday decorations. With our existing improvements suffering from maintenance neglect, the Committee developed a maintenance schedule to bring our existing public area electric up to standard before adding new improvements. Highlands Chamber of Commerce provided Kathy Armstrong with a commitment for GPU outlet purchase for holiday lighting, provided there was utility and Borough approval to complete the project. With the Highlands Chamber of Commerce funding commitment, GPU permanent decoration outlets were installed in 16 new locations. These locations take decorations toward Waterwitch Avenue where approvals and funding was not previously available. All new swags and wreaths were purchased with a total investment of \$12,000 (new street swags and wreaths) from HBP and \$3,000 (permanent GPU outlets) from Highlands Chamber of Commerce. Red velvet bows, garlands, tree and wreaths were purchased along with the addition of candy canes along several streetscape areas. VIC Chair Kathy Armstrong, Tim Hill, Highlands Recreation Director, Councilwoman Sherry Ruby, resident, John Bentham, VIC Committee members and Garden Club Members installed bows, garland and the decorated tree in Huddy Park. Bows and garlands, and the Huddy Park gazebo tree were purchased by HBP from the Highlands Volunteer Fire Department. The Borough partnered with HBP and installed all new swag and wreath decorations along with lighting for the tall pine tree in Huddy Park. The holiday lighting silhouettes purchased by the Neighborhood Preservation Program were maintained and installed in Ederly Park and on the lot across from Huddy Park where the former "Welcome to Highlands" off-site sign was located. This welcome sign was an improvement funded by a previous private sector owner that had fallen into disrepair. A Borough initiative demolished the sign and the temporary holiday displace was installed for this holiday season.

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

Further inventory records have been created and maintained of existing amenities. Kathy Armstrong, VIC Chair completed photo taking and created inventory records with the support of the Committee. The Highlands Garden Club, under the leadership of Jaime Terrell, will further expand the parks inventory for existing conditions, equipment and amenities as well as desired improvements. This base information will allow the VIC Committee to plan and purchase new amenities in the public areas of the central business district.

#### **Sign Projects**

##### **Way Finding**

VIC Committee has undertaken two sign projects. The Way Finding Signs along Bay Avenue needs to be expanded to allow for additional businesses to appear on the posts. That will mean additional structures added to existing posts and new post locations. Currently, Business Owners pay for their own sign and installation. Expansion will require an investment by HBP in 2002. 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 fabricator to ensure the sign programs expansion and that a comprehensive program can be offered and maintained to businesses.

### **Welcome Signs at Bridge Ramps**

Plans are developed to install larger "Welcome Signs" in new, more visual locations at the Bridge Ramps. The existing "Welcome to Highlands" sign, installed in the late 1980's by the bridge guardrail, was relocated to the monument area on the east-bound ramp entrance to Highlands. A new "Welcome Sign" was installed at the top of the westbound exist ramp from Highlands. This location has greater visibility to those driving over the bridge. The proposed sign can also handle changeable sign slates at the bottom area that will promote Highlands events. (Farmers Market, Clam Festival, etc.) HBP recommended that the Borough purchase of a second "Welcome Sign" to replace the sign on the highway near the East Pointe Plaza. Quotes were obtained and provided to the Borough for action at a Council Meeting in the amount of \$2,750. The Council accepted the recommendation and purchased the sign. Both signs are in place and will further display Highlands' events for 2002.

## **Economic Development Committee**

### **Business Recruitment**

#### **Business Retention**

**Sewer Rate Recommendations** Co-Chairs Bill Duncan and Roger Mumford have taken on a Business Retention and Recruitment issue — Sewer Rates. A letter of recommendation was drafted and approved by the Board and forwarded to the government body August 3, 2000. The existing sewer rate structure for commercial properties in the Borough is inequitable and detrimentally impacts our pro-business objectives. Sewer rates affect the ability of Highlands to retain existing businesses and attract new business. Some business operators are actually being overcharged by as much as 500%. Numerous businesses are being negatively affected including small retail businesses with limited water usage, seasonal commercial users, and mixed-use commercial users that are exposed to both a commercial and residential fee that can total \$5,400 per year. This type of combined rate is perceived by business as "the high cost of doing business in town". HBP identified seventeen (17) commercial businesses that are currently paying \$5,000 fixed fee per year and compared their actual usage at a rate of \$.0031 per gallon. (rates were defined in detail in HBP's letter) A reduction in the amount of \$42,000 collected from these seventeen commercial businesses by utilizing a fee \$.0031/gallon based upon actual usage will provide relief and help us in our goal to retain existing commercial businesses in Highlands. In terms of magnitude, \$42,000.00 represents less than 3% of the total sewer revenues received by the Borough. Economic Development Committee volunteers identified Careless Navigator, Bootlegger, Doris & Ed's Original Oyster, Stewart's and Vercelli's Pizza in this fixed rate category paying substantially more than their usage. These businesses should not be burdened with excessive rates that may impact their continued viability in Highlands. The success of Highlands' established businesses provides HBP with a foundation to recruit new business partners for Highlands. Without these successful business partners, Highlands tax base would be severely eroded and new business recruitment would be extremely difficult. A new Sewer Rate Ordinance was adopted April 2001. The impact of the new rate structure will continue to be assessed during 2002.

### **Smart Growth Application for funding from NJ Office of State Planning**

#### **Create a Highlands Strategic Revitalization Plan (RFP)**

As part of HBP efforts to develop a business recruitment and retention program, a dialogue was initiated with Monmouth County Planning Board and the New Jersey Office of State Planning. HBP Business Advocate met with Joseph Donald, Ed Fox, Office of State Planning; Bonnie Goldschlag, Bill Sampson to explore options for Highlands and HBP. The Keyport initiative was discussed and identified as a Bayshore

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model for updating local master plan documents and facilitating a process to improve the business climate and how re-use and expansion fits into the whole town picture. HBP understands that re-development must have a vision for the waterfront and underutilized commercial areas. Design standards and flood mitigation factors must be integrated into the vision. Community consensus is a key component of any initiatives that HBP seeks to move forward to enhance the business environment. Discussions with Borough Administrator, John Tedesco, Councilwoman Sherry Ruby, also Planning Board Member, Borough Engineer, Marty Truscott, Lynn Hunter, HBP President and Kathy Shaw, HBP Business Advocate during a meeting in Highlands with Office of State Planning Staff provided a new direction for the Highlands Smart Growth Application submission. A presentation to the Planning Board for endorsement and the HBP Board of Directors produced letters of endorsement for the application that was submitted to the State in November 2001. HBP pledge to fund one-half of the required match \$4,000 upon receipt of the grant award.

### **Highlands Flood Mitigation Plan**

The Bayshore Development Office completed the final Highlands Flood Mitigation Plan and presented the plan to the Borough Planning Board and Council. The business community played a role in the Flood Mitigation Plan process through surveys and meeting participation. The Mitigation Plan, approved by FEMA and the State, will be used in conjunction with the Boards review of projects and their impact in lessening flood hazard conditions. While HBP recognizes that their funding base is not directed at flood mitigation projects, but enhancements of Highlands business environment and public space. HBP supports the Borough's efforts to continue to secure flood mitigation project funding to divert the highway runoff drainage from the tidal influences that occur in the central business district. Without prioritizing a Flood Mitigation Plan for the community, HBP's initiatives to enhance the business environment and public spaces would be far less successful. The partnership in flood control and business expansion is of primary importance for the Borough and HBP. The tax base burden shared by too few will spiral a future tax increase. Our flood mitigation and business recruitment activities will serve to broaden our tax base by re-using our existing underutilized properties.

- **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 professional efforts of Allen Consulting a corporate sponsorship track record is being developed that will ensure corporate sponsors that Sponsors will be 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.

- **Awards and Matching Grants**

- ACI and HBP Business Advocate submitted a nomination of the HBP Destination Marketing Strategy to the **Downtown New Jersey - Best of the Best Awards** and **NJ Travel and Tourism** matching grant for 2001. Highlands HBP was awarded a Best of the Best Award for Destination Marketing which will be presented in January, 2002 at Steven Institute by DNJ. Awards will be published in a best practices manual for downtown revitalization. HBP was awarded a \$10,000 matching grant by NJ Travel and Tourism, NJ Commerce and Economic Development Commission. The grant is to be used to expand destination marketing outside of New Jersey targeted for New York Ferry riders and NY State rack card marketing at visitor centers. HBP was the only marketing award recipient for the DNJ Best of the Best Awards; while Highlands HBP shared with four other Monmouth County recipients of \$10,000 matching grant awards for the year 2001: Freehold Center Partnership (\$10,000), Wildwood Business Improvement District (\$10,000) and our marketing partner - Northern Monmouth Chamber of Commerce (\$3,000). After a review of ACI contract and

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accomplishments with Board members on Saturday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, HBP Board members were provided a copy of the contract provisions crafted at that meeting and provided an opportunity for input and select contract options.

In order to continue maximizing outside corporate sponsorships and maintain the momentum HBP has attained from our 2001 events and partnerships, a professional services contract will be finalized with Board review. There was Board consensus regarding the accomplishments of ACI. During the November regular meeting of the Board of Directors there were requests from Board members to be involved in the final contract process. The Executive Committee welcomed the participation. A fax vote according to the HBP bylaws provided the consensus needed to finalize the ACI contract for 2002.

**Annual Report 2000 Summary Statement**

The development of resources, people, and activities is an ongoing process that has attracted many diverse people during the year 2001. The re-investment by Highlands' business community, of time, talent and money, is a commitment that has and will bring improvements to Highlands. The Borough has experienced the talents and impact of what creating a vehicle for change can have on a community. The re-investment by the business community will bring improvements to Highlands at a steady, systematic pace. The systematic, consensus building strategies that HBP will put forward will allow all Highlands' partners to share in it's continued success.

Submitted by K. R. Shaw 12/30/01

edited 1/28/02 by Highlands Business Partnership Board of Directors