

## **APPENDIX F:**

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES**

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TECHNIQUES USED TO  
SOLICIT PUBLIC INPUT  
INTO A NEW  
COUNTY GROWTH  
MANAGEMENT PLAN



Prepared by  
the Hunterdon County Planning Board

2004

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## Background

Hunterdon County made a clear commitment to solicit public participation in the development of a new Growth Management Plan when it received a Smart Growth Planning grant from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs in 2001. Regardless of the grant, the County planned to use as many avenues as possible to engage residents, local officials, businesses and interest groups throughout the planning process.

Public participation accomplished three very important goals. First, the County was able to hear the public's reaction to its various recommendations put forth. Second, it afforded the public an opportunity to suggest ideas that may not have been previously considered by the County. Third, it was an important venue for sharing information and educating people about complex planning issues.

## Public Participation Methods

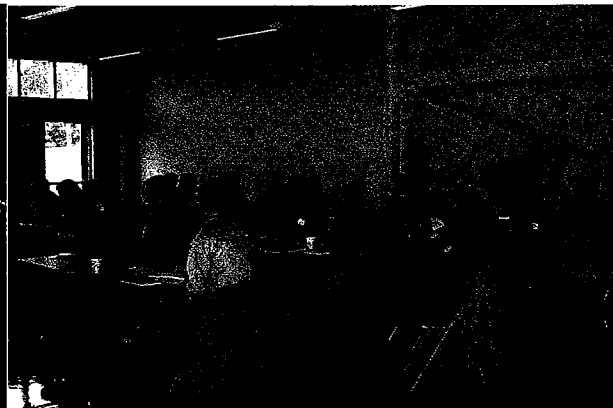
The Hunterdon County Planning Board used numerous means of reaching out to the public. These included the following:

- Public advisory and technical committees
- Public meetings and programs
- Presentations to interest groups
- Public opinion survey
- Web-based community design survey
- Newsletters and newspapers
- Website
- Email and regular mail

## Public/Technical Advisory Committees

Five committees (the first five listed below) were created to help guide various projects. All meetings were open to the public and generally advertised via mail, newspaper and/or website announcements. Two additional committees were created subsequently in response to needs identified by Planning Board staff as the growth management planning process ensued.

- **Buildout Committee**—The Buildout Committee was a technical advisory committee consisting of invited individuals - including computer specialists, planners and local officials - and interested members of the public. This Committee assisted the County in the development of a computer-based tool designed to calculate and visual display the build out potential of available, developable properties in Hunterdon County. The Committee met five times.
- **Community Design Committee**—The Community Design Committee offered suggestions about



**What's so  
Special  
about  
Hunterdon  
County?**

- Our land
- Our water
- Our communities
- Our history...
- Our future!!!

**Join friends, neighbors,  
community leaders, busi-  
ness leaders and all others  
with a stake in our future:**

- **For a presentation on  
what makes Hunterdon  
County a special place**
- **To begin developing goal  
statements for a new  
Hunterdon County  
Growth Management  
Plan—a plan for YOUR  
future.**

ways to reach out to residents through a public opinion survey and commented on potential topics and questions that might be included in the survey. The Committee met twice.

- **Land Use Committee**—The Land Use Committee first met in early 2003 to review and revise a set of draft Smart Growth Planning Goals prepared by County Planning Board staff. Subsequently, it teamed up with the Natural Resources Committee to help develop strategies in support of the various Smart Growth Goals. The Land Use Committee met four times independently. Subsequently, it met jointly with the Natural Resources Committee for a total of eight meetings.
- **Natural Resources Committee**—The Natural Resources Committee met three times, once in 2002 and twice in 2003, before teaming up with the Land Use Committee. It worked with County Planning Board staff to develop criteria for an Environmental Assessment—a computer-based model designed to evaluate the landscape both for its inherently valuable natural resources and also for natural resources that pose significant development constraints.
- **Groundwater Carrying Capacity Committee (later re-named Nitrate Dilution Committee)** - This Committee included invited individuals—among them hydrogeologists, environmentalists, agricultural representative, planners and local officials—and interested members of the public. The Committee met seven times between 2001 and 2002 to guide the County's analysis of potential development limitations based on septic system-generated nitrate concentrations in the ground water. In particular, it help establish criteria used in running a "nitrate dilution analysis" using a model developed by the New Jersey Geological Survey.
- **Agricultural Viability Committee**—This Committee, created in 2003, helped the County articulate policies and strategies related to agricultural viability and farmland preservation. The Committee was organized by the CADB Coordinator and met twice.
- **Highway Corridor Design Committee**—This Technical Advisory Committee was created in 2004. It met once to help generate design concepts for highway corridors that respond to the public's desire for concentrated nodes of development rather than linear development.

**Public Meetings and Programs**

- In 2001, the Hunterdon County Planning Board held a kick-off meeting to announce receipt of a Smart Growth Planning Grant and its proposed multi-year program to

- prepare the plan. Approximately 55 people attended.
- In 2002, a public meeting was held for two purposes: 1) to present a snapshot of existing conditions in Hunterdon County, contained in “A Profile of Hunterdon County,” Chapter One of the Hunterdon County Growth Management Plan and 2) to solicit initial comments on a draft set of Smart Growth Principles, the predecessor of what became the County’s Smart Growth Planning Goals. This meeting was entitled “What’s So Special About Hunterdon County?” and drew approximately 80 people.
  - Following a public opinion survey and web-based community design survey, the County Planning Board held a public meeting in July of 2003 to share results of the surveys with the public and to solicit public comment on a draft Vision Statement. The Vision Statement, to be included in the County Growth Management Plan, was supposed to reflect the general sentiment expressed by residents in the two surveys. Some 55 people attended.
  - In November of 2003, the County Planning Board hosted a Saturday event called “Take a Day to Plan for Our Future.” The County made a concerted effort to increase attendance by local officials, a group that tended to be poorly represented at previous meetings. The morning was devoted to presentations by Planning Board staff and invited speakers. Following the presentations, participants were organized into small groups, each of which responded to three items: 1) a revised draft Vision Statement; 2) a draft set of Smart Growth Planning Goals prepared by the Smart Growth Land Use Committee; and 3) a draft set of strategies in support of the Smart Growth Goals. Approximately 85-90 people attended. It is estimated that at least half were local officials.
  - The Hunterdon County Planning Board conducted a series of regional meetings between June and December of 2003. The County was divided into six regions. Municipal officials representing each municipality were asked to attend their respective regional meetings to discuss possible changes to the State Plan Policy Map. The State Plan Policy Map would ultimately become the framework for a Growth Management Plan Map. Four meetings were held in each region. Attendance was relatively low, though it varied from community to community and from meeting to meeting.

#### Meetings by Special Invitation

The Hunterdon County Planning Board gave presentations on various aspects of its Smart Growth Program at numerous forums on an as-requested basis. These included the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce, North Hunterdon Rotary Club, Kwanis Club (Flemington), Hunterdon County Planning and Zoning Administrators’ Luncheon, Flemington Planning Board, Readington Township



Saturday, November 1, 2003  
 8:00 am—1:30 pm Assembly Room  
 Bldg #1, Rte. 12 County Complex  
 Raritan Township

#### Speakers include:

- Senator Leonard Lance
- Frank Banisch, Banisch Associates, Inc.
- Jim Kyle, Banisch Associates, Inc.
- Peter Demicco, Demicco & Associates, Inc.
- Jon Carnegie, Voorhees Transportation Policy Institute, Rutgers University
- Hunterdon County Planning Board staff

Committee, New Jersey Water Supply Authority Raritan Basin program, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commission Annual Congress.

#### Public Opinion Survey

In April of 2003, the Hunterdon County Planning Board mailed a public opinion survey to 5,000 randomly selected households in Hunterdon County to solicit resident opinions on a variety of planning topics. The survey generated a 42% response rate, achieving statistically significant results. Details on the survey and responses can be found in a report entitled "Vision21 Public Opinion Survey," (July 29, 2003).

#### Web-based Community Design Survey

In July of 2003, the Hunterdon County Planning Board designed and posted a web-based photographic survey on its Smart Growth webpage. The survey solicited residents' opinions on various development patterns and architectural styles. In total, 432 people completed the survey. Unlike the public opinion survey, this was not designed to be statistically valid. Nonetheless, information gleaned from it helped shape the County Growth Management Plan Vision Statement. Further information on this survey can be found in "Vision21 Internet Survey" (August 13, 2003).

#### Bus Tours

In 2003, the Hunterdon County Planning Board hosted two bus and walking tours for interested individuals. The purpose of the tours was to gauge residents' opinions on innovative developments and site designs. The first tour, conducted in May of 2003, included sites in Hopewell Township and Washington Township (Mercer County), NJ and Newtown Borough, PA. The second tour included sites in Tewksbury Township and Gladstone (Somerset County), NJ. Twenty-six people attended the first tour; 21 attended the second. A complete description of the sites and people's reactions to them are available in two separate reports: "Vision21 Bus Tour—What Hunterdon County Residents Had to Say About New Development" and "Green Development—Designing with the Environment in Mind."

#### Newsletters and Press

Thus far, four issues LandScapes, the Hunterdon County Planning Board's newsletter, were devoted to Smart Growth and development of the County's new Growth Management Plan. These were distributed to a mailing list of approximately 350 and posted on the County's Smart Growth webpage.

Beginning in the summer of 2003, the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce invited the County to write a monthly column on Smart Growth in its newsletter. Twelve articles have been published since then. In addition, County Planning Board staff published an article on Smart Growth in a South Branch Watershed Association newsletter. The Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association featured an article on the County's public opinion survey in its August, 2003 newsletter.



Press releases and articles were published on numerous occasions in various newspapers announcing meetings, featuring results of public programs and events, including the public opinion survey. A special edition of Hunterdon Life 2002, an annual magazine of the Hunterdon County Democrat and Delaware Valley News, featured articles on Smart Growth in the November 7, 2002 edition. Included in the magazine was a two-page discussion on Smart Growth as presented by staff during a public meeting in 2002.

#### Website

Hunterdon County's webpage includes an entire section devoted to Smart Growth and preparation of the County's Growth Management Plan. Reports, powerpoint slide shows, links, meeting calendars and minutes, among other things, are featured on this website. Since July of 2002, there have been a total of 6858 hits on the webpage.

#### Mailings and e-mailings

The Hunterdon County Planning Board maintained a mailing list of approximately 350 individuals and entities. Periodically, mailings went out announcing events and updating the list on the County's Smart Growth activities. In addition, various Smart Growth Committee members, local officials and others whose email addresses were provided received notice of the same via email.

#### Cross-Acceptance 2004

The Hunterdon County Planning Board launched Cross-Acceptance on June 12, 2004 when it held its first public meeting. The process was presented as a dual process to comment on the State Plan and simultaneously receive public input on the development of the County's Growth Management Plan. Following the State Planning Commission's Public Information Meeting in July, the County held four more Cross-Acceptance meetings through November, prior to the public hearing process on the draft and final Cross-Acceptance Reports. Approximately 80—90 people have attended each, largely consisting of local officials and municipally-appointed Cross-Acceptance Committee members. Meeting announcements, summaries and materials are sent by mail and e-mail and posted on the County's Smart Growth webpage.

#### Summary

The County's efforts at drawing public involvement were ambitious. Early on in the process, the public opinion survey was the most effective way of reaching out to a broad audience representative of Hunterdon County constituents. Local official representation at public forums increased with the onset of Cross-Acceptance. At that time, a plethora of proposed and enacted legislative initiatives were in the public spotlight, generating a great deal of public debate and discussion. The newly enacted fast-track legislation, Highlands legislation and proposed COAH rules all relate to the State Plan and impact local planning decisions. Most likely, the attention these initiatives received caught drew local interest, creating a more active group in the County growth management planning process. This is expected to continue through the Comparison Phase of Cross-Acceptance and through to the completion of the County's Strategic Growth Management Plan.