

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN & SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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**Borough of Wharton  
Morris County, New Jersey**

December 11, 2018

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN & SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

WHARTON BOROUGH, MORRIS COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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Christopher Borinski, P.E., C.M.E., Engineer  
Jessica Caldwell, P.P., A.I.C.P., L.E.E.D.-G.A., Planner  
Patricia Craven, Secretary

The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12

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Jessica C. Caldwell, New Jersey Professional Planner, License #5944



**J. Caldwell & Associates, LLC • 145 Spring Street • Suite E • Newton • New Jersey • 07860**

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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## Highlands Center Plan & Sustainable Economic Development Plan

### Introduction

#### Overview

The Borough of Wharton is located entirely within the Highlands Planning Area. In August 2011, the Highlands Council approved Wharton's volunteer petition for Plan Conformance in the Planning Area and designated a Highlands Center within the Borough. The primary goals for designating the Highlands Center in Wharton were to promote economic revitalization and redevelopment. In order to further those goals and as part of Plan Conformance to the Highlands Regional Master Plan, the Borough of Wharton has prepared the following Highlands Center and Sustainable Economic Development Plan. This plan is prepared for Plan Conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan and was funded by a grant from the Highlands Council.

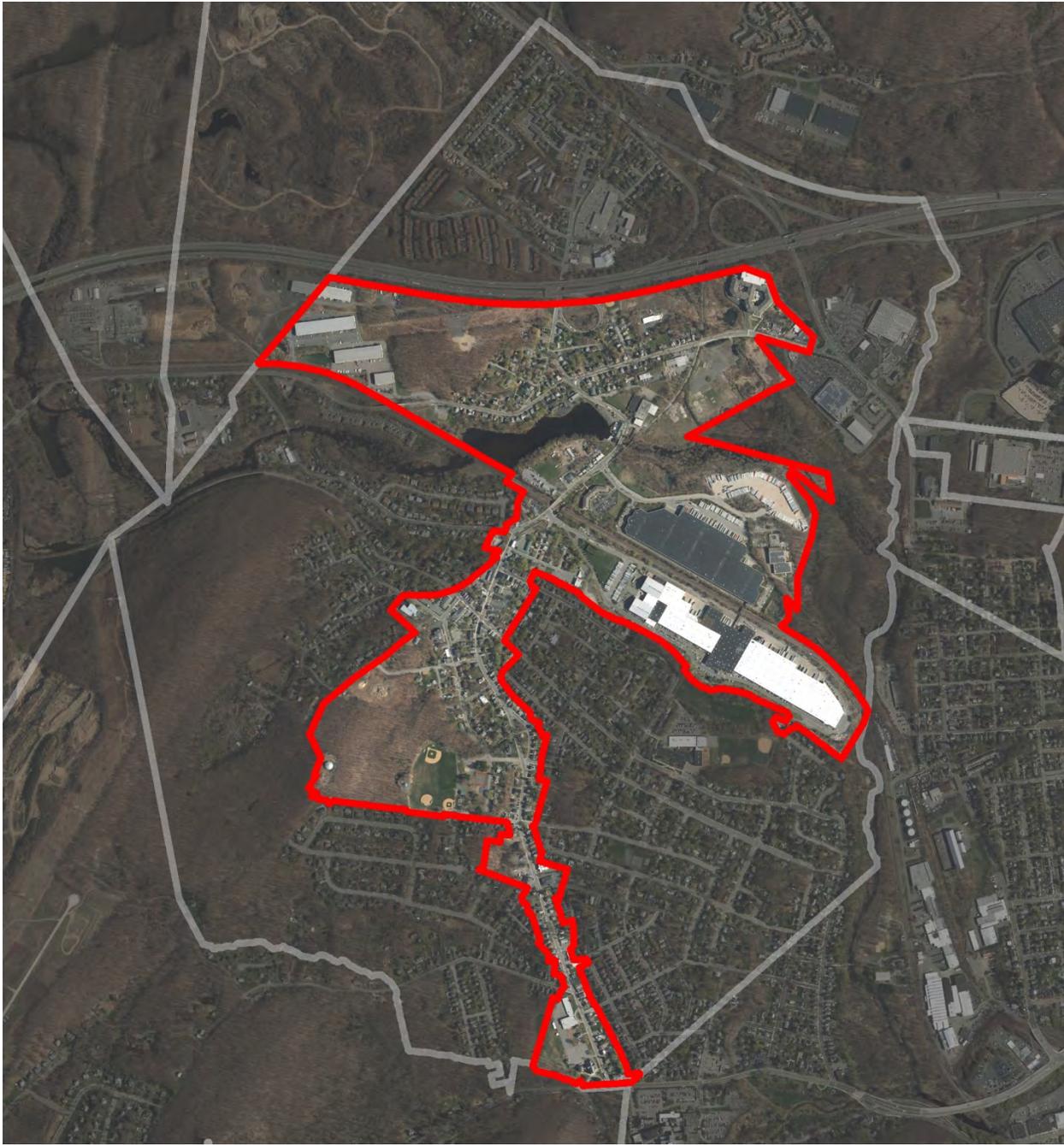
#### Highlands Center

The New Jersey Highlands Council designated a Highlands Center within the Borough of Wharton in August 2011 to provide the framework for a planning process designed to identify the goals, best uses and densities for Wharton's Center, while remaining consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan. A Highlands Center is an area within the Highlands Region where development and redevelopment are planned and encouraged. Highlands Centers are intended to support balance in the Highlands Region by providing for sustainable economic growth while protecting critical natural and cultural resources. Wharton's Highlands Center is located primarily along Main Street running from north to south and encompassing the Central Business District and industrial areas for the Borough. The Highlands Center comprises a total of 417.50 acres and includes commercial, industrial and residential uses.

#### Purpose of the Highlands Center and Sustainable Economic Development Plan

Wharton's Highlands Center, as its Central Business District, like many others in the State of New Jersey, experienced a fundamental transformation in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Now, in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the transformation is evolving and even on some fronts, coming full circle. Creating resiliency and sustainability of the economy in Wharton and particularly, the Wharton Center, is the purpose of this planning effort.

HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN  
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Wharton Center Boundary

## History of Wharton's Industry and Commerce

Wharton began as a mining town and ore shipping port on the Morris Canal. Iron mining and smelting were large industries in Wharton during the 1800s and early 1900s when the Morris Canal was active. Residential uses sprung up around the iron industry in the Borough and Main Street developed to provide for the commercial needs of the residents. The presence of the Morris Canal also encouraged other types of manufacturing industries to locate in the Borough. Even after the Morris Canal's closure in the 1920s, Wharton's position along the railroad and later along Interstate Route 80, continued to promote industry in the Borough.

From the late 1800s, the Borough was the home of silk mills, including Wharton Textiles which closed in the early 1940s. The subsequent L.E. Carpenter Company manufactured military fabrics and eventually vinyl wall coverings in the Borough from around 1943 until 1987, at its property along North Main Street. The Lock Joint Pipe Company was built in 1946 in the Borough and later became Interpace Pipes and Ceramics in the early 1960s, before closing in 1980. In 1966, Thatcher Glass Company was built on the grounds of the original Wharton Furnace. Thatcher Glass Company went bankrupt in the mid-1980s and its former location is now the Wharton Interstate Commerce Center.

The Borough's 1994 Master Plan noted a dramatic decline in employment in the Borough, citing a 45% decline in jobs from a high of 2,420 jobs in 1981 to 1,036 jobs in 1991. The 1994 Master Plan identified the loss of manufacturing at Thatcher Glass, the Lock Joint Pipe Company and the L.E. Carpenter site as the main reason for the decline in employment in the Borough.

Once an economic hub, the Borough started losing its economic base and vibrancy due to the loss of the manufacturing companies. This change was brought on due to many factors including the changing job market, the shift of manufacturing jobs to more service-based jobs, growth of other types of commercial or retail markets such as the Rockaway Center Mall, online shopping, and the drop in the real estate market in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

However, unlike much of the State, including several neighboring municipalities, the Borough of Wharton has not lost population and the manufacturing and job base has rebounded in the last 10 years to 3,441 jobs, exceeding the highs noted in the 1980s. In fact, the Borough has maintained population growth, albeit at a slower pace than in the past. Job growth has rebounded; however more jobs are likely to be found in the service sectors than in the past.

Wharton's Center is a very vital component of the Borough's economy. A strategic and sustainable plan for the Center will not only ensure overall economic strength and sustainable growth for the Borough but will create ripple effects of improved economic development in surrounding towns and the region.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Public Input and Findings

In order to develop a vision for the Wharton Highlands Center, the Borough initiated a public involvement process to gain input from residents on their vision for the Borough as well as thoughts and input on economic development. The public involvement process included public meetings with the Planning Board and Borough Council as well with the Main Street Committee, which is a group of Main Street business owners. The Borough also conducted an online survey to gain input from residents.

On June 12, 2017, a joint meeting of the Borough Planning Board and the Borough Council was held to solicit public input on the Borough's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). The meeting was attended by roughly 50 people and resulted in a SWOT analysis to be used in the subsequent survey effort.

An online survey was conducted between mid-July and mid-August. The online survey solicited opinions on the items derived from the initial SWOT analysis. Below is a summary of the top results for each of the SWOT categories from the online survey.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<i>Walkable Town</i>	Empty Storefronts	Main Street Redevelopment	Absentee Landlords
<i>Public Works</i>	Lack of unification of downtown	Walkability	Public apathy for businesses
<i>Hospital nearby</i>	Facades not upgraded	Trail System	Lack of understanding
<i>Library</i>	Traffic (narrow streets and congestion)	Borough Owned Utilities	Businesses (Fern Kossuth, Nocturnal Lounge)
<i>Location</i>	No marketing of local businesses	Fiber Network (Fios)	Shrinking Grants

On August 23, 2017, the Main Street Committee held an interactive stakeholder meeting with Main Street businesses. The meeting was attended by a dozen Wharton business owners. A full list of SWOT items discussed follows.

## HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### **Strengths:**

Location to Route 80 & Route 15, Population Density, Business Friendly, Walking Town, Support from Local Government, Organized Town, Diversity, Parking Spaces, Buses, Town Wide Events, Restaurants, School System, Chamber of Commerce, Social Media, Survey to businesses, Newsletter, Sponsoring a Sports Team, Electronic Sign, Calendar

### **Weaknesses:**

Traffic (Dewey), Rockaway Mall, Big Box, Empty Stores, Curb Appeal – Main Street

### **Opportunities:**

Parking, Keeping Businesses Informed, Town TV, Employment Opportunities Train/Trolley, Port Oram/Wharton Woods, Welcome Wagon, Electronic Signs, Senior Bus Program

### **Threats:**

Rockaway Mall, Amazon (people ordering - not shopping local), Dover's Master Plan

### **Vision for Wharton's Center**

The public involvement process helped create a Vision for the Center which is described below:

*Wharton's Center is a thriving mixed-use regional hub that incorporates elements of its industrial past into a multicultural human-scaled downtown. The Center offers a variety of retail, restaurant and employment opportunities within a walkable center district. High quality streetscapes, wide sidewalks and access to the Dover Train Station via a local trolley, make the Center a sustainable and accessible place. Access to the Morris Canal, Open Space and Trails Systems in the Borough provides a viable ecotourism industry, while the Borough's restaurants, brew pubs and distilleries offer reasons for tourists to linger in the Borough. Washington Forge Pond offers a boardwalk, for fishing and lakeside strolls to residents and visitors. Access to high quality and affordable residences along with viable employment opportunities, makes Wharton Center a desirable place to live, work and play. Wharton's unique, local businesses create a thriving retail, dining and commercial experience in the Center. Annual festivals, concerts in the park, street fairs, farmer's markets and Canal Day, all offer opportunities to draw visitors in from the region, while creating a sense of place and pride for local residents. Placemaking signage, art installations and murals reinforce Wharton's industrial heritage and connection to the Morris Canal. Wharton Center is a thriving, unique place that offers a high quality of life to its residents and visitors alike.*

## Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the plan implement the vision for the Borough Center and provide a framework for sustainable economic development within the Borough. This vision includes ideas for promoting the Borough's Center as a viable economic driver for the local economy, serving the needs of the residents and the region. The Borough's Center will provide employment, housing, restaurants, entertainment, goods and services and recreation. The plan identifies targets and goals for increasing the vitality of the Borough for the residents, the region and visitors to the area. The plan covers land use initiatives, policy direction and economic development goals and objectives.

To implement this vision, the plan has the following overarching goals:

### **General Economic Development Goals**

- a. Identify land use goals and objectives for the Borough's Center in order to establish opportunities for economic development and to support economic development goals and objectives.
- b. Identify policy directives for the Borough that will support economic development in the Borough, such as connecting trails, to help draw visitors and wayfinding signage to establish an identity and assist tourism in the area.
- c. Define a target market and identify market niches and trends that the Borough can capitalize on using its existing assets while also seeking to leverage those assets for greater market share of each viable niche. These could include trends like food or craft festivals, local food and beverage production such as microbreweries and micro-distilleries, and the like.
- d. Identify jobs-producing industries within Wharton and establish methods for attracting additional industry while also identifying the needs of existing industries to keep them in the Borough and help them grow and succeed in the long term.
- e. Create an action plan to identify specific actions to implement the proposals within the plan.

## Land Use Objectives

- a. Create a mix of land uses that would create a sustainable and self-reliant core for the Borough of Wharton.
- b. Create a more attractive business district by proposing design guidelines for existing building facades and promoting redevelopment where existing buildings cannot be renovated.
- c. Provide an inviting and improved streetscape, one that will welcome visitors and businesses.
- d. Produce a unified theme for Wharton Downtown that will result in a defined visual identity.
- e. Develop and apply architectural design themes for the downtown area and prepare graphics to assist development applications.
- f. Promote creative placemaking within the Center to solidify a unique identity for the Wharton Center.

## Economic Objectives

- a. Continue to promote Wharton as a tourism center within the region based upon cultural/heritage tourism, outdoor recreation and special attractions and events.
- b. Build on current initiatives to establish Wharton as a regional destination and residential center.
- c. Establish Wharton as a center of technology based entrepreneurial activity by attracting “telecommuters” and businesses that promote work from home.
- d. Identify niche businesses to attract to Wharton that will build on economic themes within the Borough.

## Policy Objectives

- a. Identify open space and trail connections to provide connectivity and access for outdoor recreation.
- b. Increase access to existing amenities within the Borough including Washington Forge Pond.
- c. Identify necessary infrastructure improvements to support economic development, including fueling station alternatives, electric vehicle charging stations, and compressed natural gas.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Socio-Economic Data

### Background

To prepare the Borough of Wharton's Sustainable Economic Development Plan and Highlands Center Plan, it is essential to understand the socio-economic conditions in the Borough. This includes a review of data related to population characteristics, employment, housing and income. The number and types of jobs available in the Borough, the types of industry and a general market analysis also provide a framework for the analysis. A market analysis was also prepared for the Borough of Wharton by the Morris County Economic Development Corporation, which provided an essential review of the retail and jobs market in the Borough. This data along with the status of the built environment from a land use perspective, including analyses of the infrastructure, existing land uses, roadways and amenities sets the backdrop for the socio-economic patterns in the Borough. Understanding the existing socio-economic framework in the Borough allows for the Borough to develop policies that support positive and sustainable economic development.

### Population

Similar to Morris County and the State, the Borough of Wharton has experienced steady population growth that has been at a slower growth rate than in the past. Between 1990 and 2000, the Borough's population increased from 5,405 people to 6,298 people, an increase of 16.5%. Between 2000 and 2010, the population grew to 6,522 people, an increase of 3.6%. From 2010 until 2015, the estimated population is 6,612 people, an increase of 1.4%. This is similar to the State population growth which grew by 8.9% between 1990-2000, 4.5% between 2000-2010 and 1.9% between 2010-2015. The table below shows, the population growth from 1990 to 2015. The slow growth rate is most likely due to the economic downturn and the built-out nature of the Borough.

**Table 1: Total Population (1990-2010)**

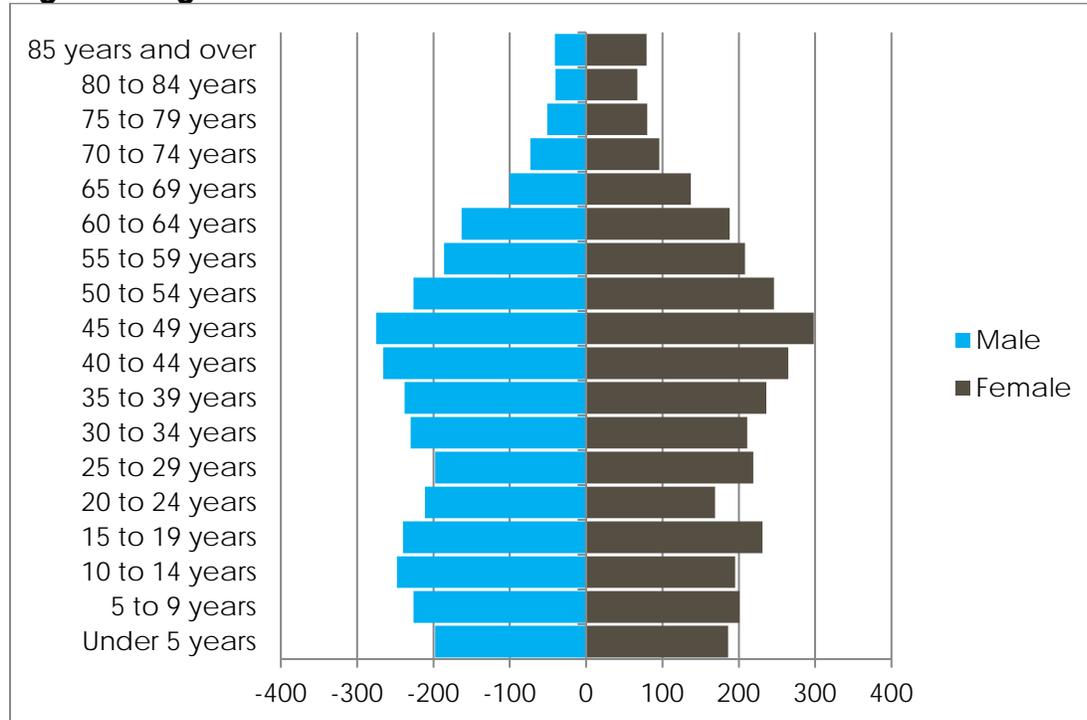
Population	1990	2000	2010	2015 (est.)
Wharton Borough	5,405	6,298	6,522	6,607
Morris County	421,803	470,212	492,276	498,192
State of New Jersey	7,763,000	8,414,350	8,791,894	8,904,413

Source: Master Plan Documents; 2000 & 2010 US Census Data; American Community Survey Estimates.

## Age

According to the 2010 Census, the median age of Borough Residents is 38.2 years old, which is lower than the median age of both Morris County (41.3) and the State of New Jersey (39). The largest age group is 45-49 years old (8.8%), followed by those who are 40-44 years old (8.1%). The generally non-working population, the population under 18 years old and the population over 65 years old, total 2,324 people (35.6%). The remaining 64% of the population is in the workforce eligible age group.

**Figure 1: Age and Gender**



## Gender

According to the 2010 US Census, there was roughly an even distribution of male population 3,210 (49.2%) and female population 3,312 (50.7%) among residents. Similarly, in the American Community Survey, 2015 estimate of male population was estimated at 3,457 (52.3%) and female population was estimated at 3,150 (47.6%).

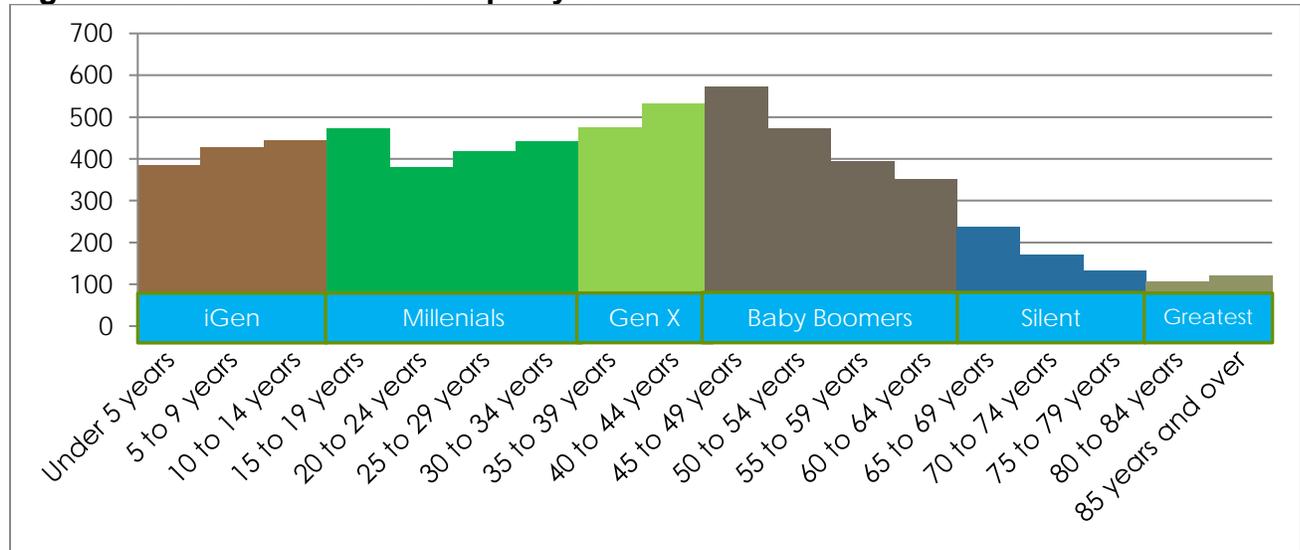
# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Table 2: Total Population-Age Data (2010)**

Age	2010 Census	Percentage
Total Population	6,522	100%
Under 5 years	384	5.9%
5 to 9 years	427	6.5%
10 to 14 years	443	6.8%
15 to 19 years	471	7.2%
20 to 24 years	380	5.8%
25 to 29 years	417	6.4%
30 to 34 years	441	6.8%
35 to 39 years	474	7.3%
40 to 44 years	531	8.1%
45 to 49 years	573	8.8%
50 to 54 years	472	7.2%
55 to 59 years	394	6.0%
60 to 64 years	351	5.4%
65 to 69 years	237	3.6%
70 to 74 years	169	2.6%
75 to 79 years	131	2.0%
80 to 84 years	107	1.6%
85 years and over	120	1.8%

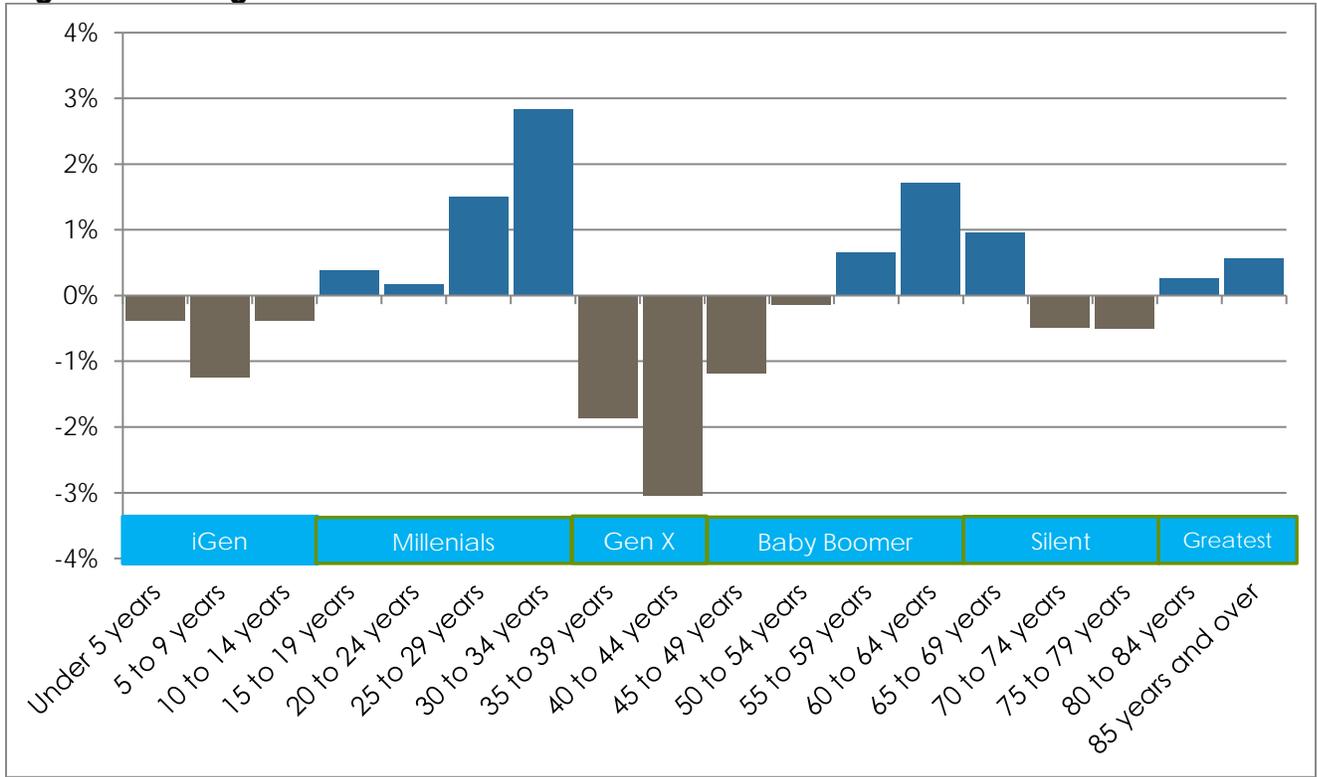
Source: 2010 Census Data

**Figure 2: 2015 Generation Groups by Size**



# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Figure 3: Change in Generations Between 2010-2015**

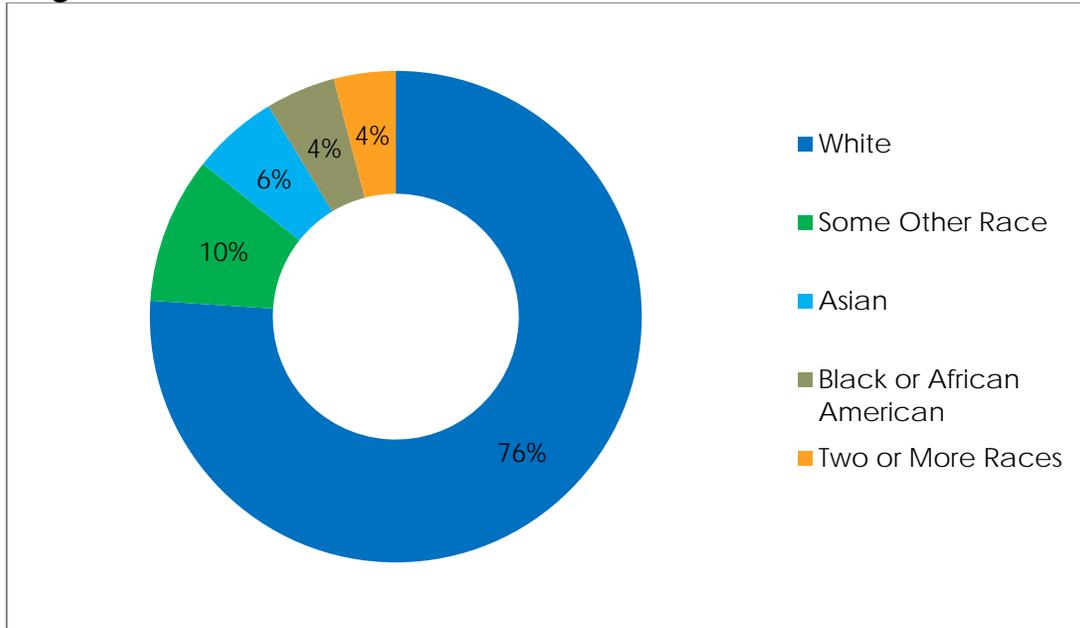


When comparing the Borough's generational composition between the 2010 US Census Data and the American Community Survey's 2015 Five-Year Estimates, it shows an increase in millennials and late baby boomers and early silent generation and a decrease in iGen, Gen X and early Baby Boomers.

## Race and Ethnicity

To understand the ongoing trends and the consumer market in Wharton, it is important to understand demographic trends in race and ethnicity of the residents. This provides an overview on the type of markets preferred based on the cultural background.

**Figure 4: Race**



The Borough of Wharton has a relatively diverse population. About 76% of the Borough’s population is White. The second largest group is reported as “Some Other Race” and covers roughly 10% of the population. The third largest group is Asian, constituting approximately 6% of the population. “American Indian and Alaska Native” and “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” account for less than 0.5% of Wharton’s total population.

**Figure 5: Ethnicity**



The US Census tracks ethnicity as it relates to Hispanic or Latino descent, Hispanic or Latino can be of any race. When looking at ethnicity, roughly 46.3% of the Borough’s population is Hispanic or Latino. This shows the diverse demographic of the Borough.

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## Population Projection

Population projections for the Borough of Wharton prepared by North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) reveal that the forecast for population growth is at a steady and slow pace. The graph to the right shows this pattern. According to the NJTPA, the Borough's population is estimated at 6,536 (slightly less than the American Community Survey estimate of 6,607 people in the 2015 estimates) and is projected to be 6,679 in 2040. This estimate shows that the population of the Borough is expected to remain relatively stable for the next 35 years. This is most likely an assumption based on current available land for new development and stable economic forces. Constructed or approved housing units, including redevelopment such as Avalon Wharton and the former Green Tent property, could fuel population growth beyond the NJTPA forecasts.

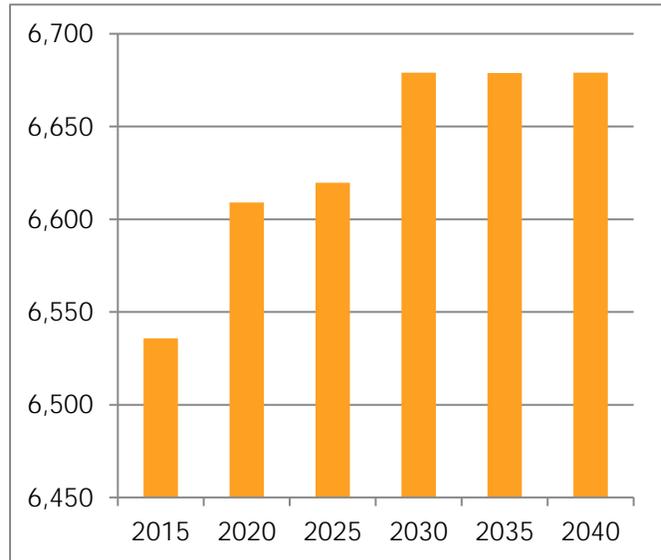


Figure 6: Population Projection Graph  
Source: NJTPA forecasts

**Table 3: Projected Population (2015-2040)**

Years	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
<b>Wharton</b>	6,536	6,609	6,620	6,679	6,679	6,679

Source: North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority

**Table 4: Revised Projections\* (2015-2040)**

Years	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
<b>Wharton</b>	7,230	7,881	7,878	7,924	7,910	7,896

\*These projections are based off the NJTPA projections, plus the number of housing units approved multiplied by the projected average household size.

## Income

About 3,746 residents are in the labor force, according to the 2015 American Community Survey. Out of which 3,332 are employed and 414 are unemployed. According to the same data, the median household income in the Borough is \$66,579 and the per capita income is \$27,720. If compared to the median family income statewide of \$88,335 and the Morris County median family income of \$120,114, the Borough median family income is much lower than both the State and the County.

According to 2015 American Community Survey data, out of the estimated total population of 6,601, 512 residents are determined to be at an income below the poverty level. Further, since there is no poverty-related census data available for 2010, the 2010

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

estimates noted out of 6,466, total of 440 were below the poverty level. Per estimates, the number of people with income below the poverty level has increased. This may be due to the Great Recession that occurred between 2007 and 2009. Currently, the economy is improving and incomes are likely to increase.

## Household Size

The 2010 U.S. Census estimated that there were 2,304 households in Wharton, of which, 1,590 or 69% were “family” households and 714 households or 31% are “nonfamily” households. A “family” household, according to the US Census, is one where at least one member of the household is related to the householder (person in whose name the residence is owned or rented) by marriage, birth or adoption.

**Table 4: Household Size (2015-2040)**

Size of Household	Population
Total	2,304
1 person household	575
2 person household	626
3 person household	385
4 person household	351
5 person household	209
6 person household	83
7 or more person household	75

Source: 2010 Census Data

The average household size in Wharton was estimated at 2.83, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. This represents a slight increase from the 2000 Census, when average household size was estimated at 2.70 persons per household. This figure is also slightly higher than average household size for Morris County and the State of New Jersey, which were both estimated at 2.68 persons per household.

## Market Tapestry Segmentation

ESRI provides information on demographics by segmenting the population based on a variety of demographic characteristics, including spending habits. There are 67 unique segments throughout the United States. According to the ESRI Tapestry segmentation Wharton Borough is comprised of 48% “City Lights”, 18% “Pleasantville”, 17% “Soccer Moms” and 17% “International Marketplace”. The segments are often used by marketing professionals to target specific demographic groups. These segments also provide insights on how the national markets view Wharton Borough.

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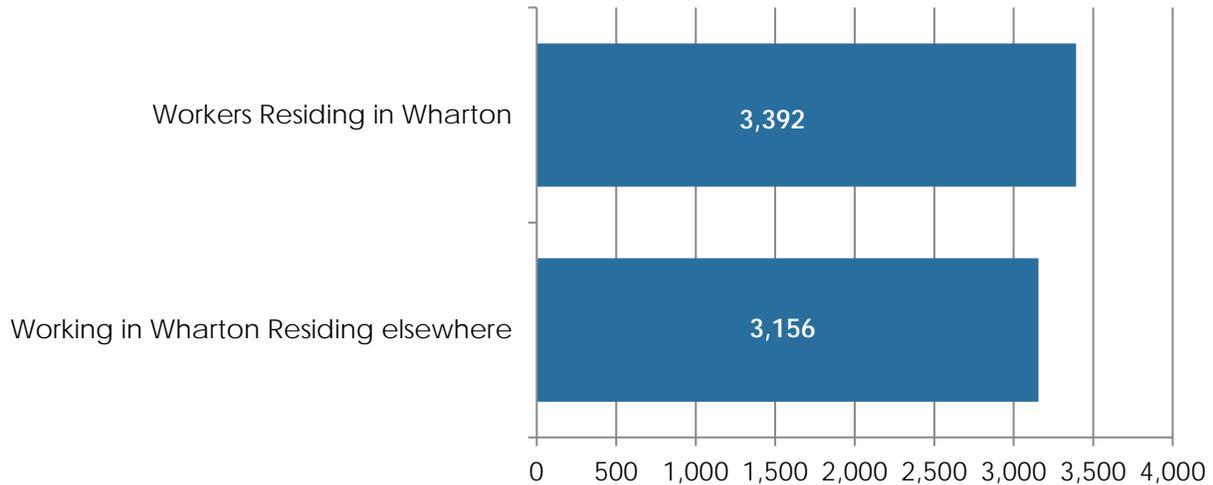
CITY LIGHTS (48%)	PLEASANTVILLE (18%)	SOCCER MOMS (17%)	INTERNATIONAL MARKETPLACE (17%)
<p>City Lights, a densely populated urban market, is the epitome of equality. The wide-ranging demographic characteristics of residents mirror their passion for social welfare and equal opportunity. Household types range from single person to married-couple families, with and without children. A blend of owners and renters, single-family homes and town homes, midrise and high-rise apartments, these neighborhoods are both racially and ethnically diverse. Many residents have completed some college or a degree, and they earn a good income in professional and service occupations. Willing to commute to their jobs, they work hard and budget well to support their urban lifestyles, laying the foundation for stable financial futures.</p>	<p>Prosperous domesticity best describes the settled denizens of Pleasantville. Situated principally in older housing in suburban areas in the Northeast (especially in New York and New Jersey) and secondarily in the West (especially in California), these slightly older couples move less than any other market. Many couples have already transitioned to empty nesters; many are still home to adult children. Families own older, single-family homes and maintain their standard of living with dual incomes. These consumers have higher incomes and home values and much higher net worth (Index 400). Older homes require upkeep; home improvement and remodeling projects are a priority—preferably done by contractors. Residents spend their spare time participating in a variety of sports or watching movies. They shop online and in a variety of stores, from upscale to discount, and use the Internet largely for financial purposes.</p>	<p>Soccer Moms is an affluent, family-oriented market with a country flavor. Residents are partial to new housing away from the bustle of the city but close enough to commute to professional job centers. Life in this suburban wilderness offsets the hectic pace of two working parents with growing children. They favor time-saving devices, like banking online or housekeeping services, and family-oriented pursuits.</p>	<p>International Marketplace neighborhoods are a rich blend of cultures, found in densely populated urban and suburban areas, almost entirely in the Middle Atlantic (especially in New York and New Jersey) or in California. Almost 40% of residents are foreign-born; 1 in 4 households are linguistically isolated. Young, Hispanic families renting apartments in older buildings dominate this market; about two-fifths of households have children. Over one-fifth of households have no vehicle, typically those living in the city. Workers are mainly employed in white collar and service occupations (especially food service and building maintenance). One-fifth of workers commute using public transportation and more walk or bike to work than expected. Median household income is lower, but home values are higher, reflecting the metropolitan areas in which they live. Consumers are attentive to personal style; purchases reflect their youth and their children. True to their culture, residents visit Spanish language websites, watch programs on Spanish TV networks, and listen to Hispanic music.</p>

**Figure 7: ESRI Tapestry Data**

## Employment Characteristics

The US Census maintains the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) dataset. This dataset distinguishes between workers residing in Wharton (3,392) and workers with jobs in Wharton but residing elsewhere (3,156).

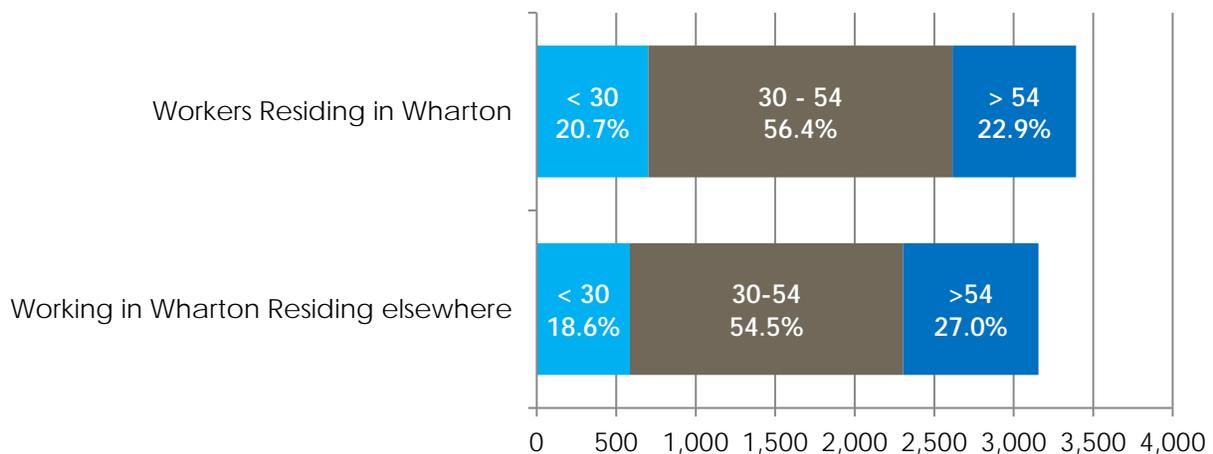
### Worker's Residence



**Figure 8: Worker's Residence**

The graphs below demonstrate some of the characteristics of those workers residing in Wharton and those workers with jobs in Wharton but residing elsewhere.

### Worker Age



**Figure 9: Worker Age**

Workers residing in Wharton are generally younger than those working in Wharton and residing elsewhere.

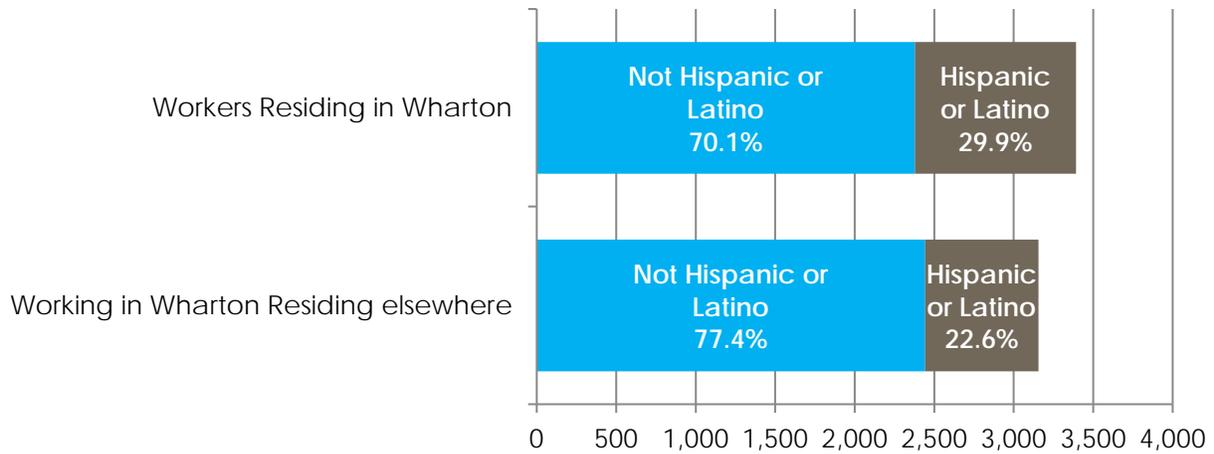
### Worker Gender



**Figure 10: Worker Gender**

A higher percentage of workers working in Wharton are male and a higher percentage of workers residing in Wharton are female.

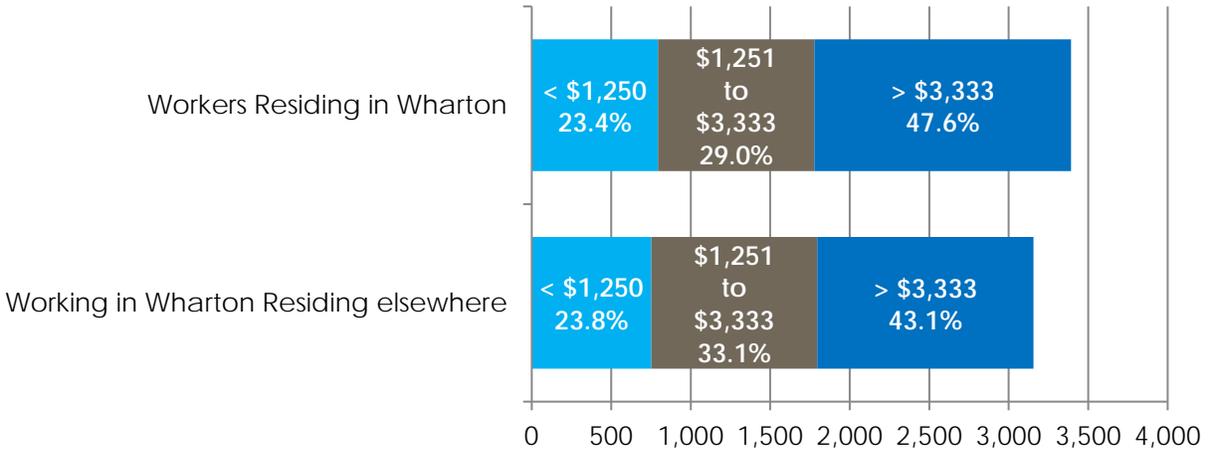
### Worker Ethnicity



**Figure 11: Worker Ethnicity**

A higher percentage of Wharton workers are Hispanic or Latino compared to those working in Wharton and residing elsewhere.

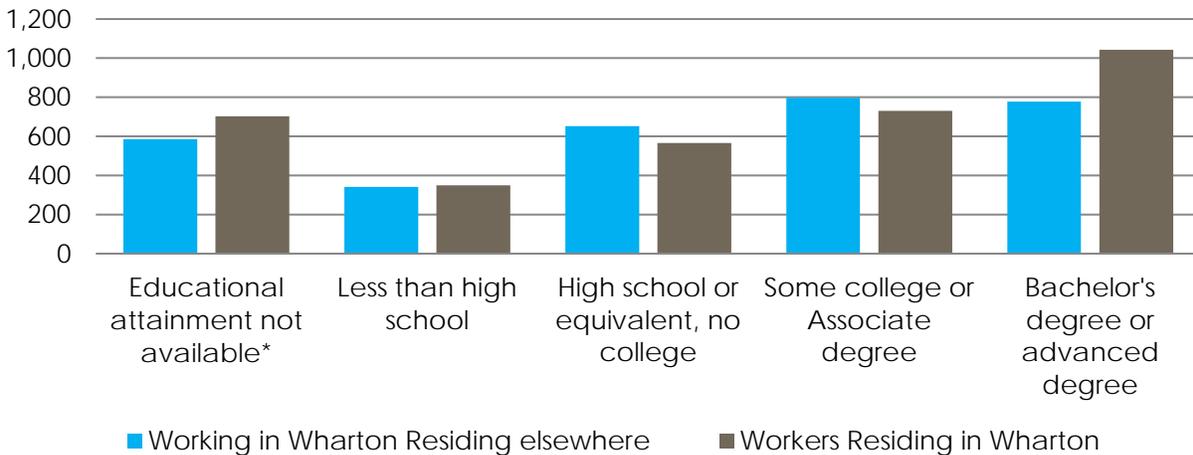
## Worker Monthly Earnings



**Figure 12: Worker Monthly Earnings**

Monthly earnings are typically higher for workers residing in Wharton than those working in Wharton but residing elsewhere.

## Worker Educational Attainment



**Figure 13: Worker Educational Attainment**

Workers residing in Wharton are generally attained a higher level of education than those working in Wharton and residing elsewhere.

## HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the LEHD data, the Morris Economic Development Corporation provided a community profile on the Borough. This profile shows the Borough's total daytime population for 2016 as 6,071 people. Out of the total daytime population, 2,772 are estimated to be workers and 3,299 are estimated to be residents. Further, the data identifies a total of 287 businesses in the Borough, with a total of 3,441 employees for the year 2016. The Borough has an employee to resident population ratio of 0.5/1. The employee to resident ratio for residents in the labor force is 0.9/1. The sizable workforce population is a market driver for retail, restaurant and service businesses in the area including neighborhood eateries, cafes, and delis to serve the demand for goods and services of this daytime population.

### Industry Data

Industry data was obtained from the LEHD using NAICS categories. NAICS stands for North American Industry Classification System and is the standard for Federal statistical agencies (Census, Bureau of Labor and Statistics, etc.). Below is a table showing the LEHD data for both those workers living and Wharton (HOME) and those working in Wharton but residing elsewhere (WORK).

**Table 5: NAICS Classifications**

HOME		NAICS CLASSIFICATION	WORK	
0.0%	1	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0.0%
0.1%	2	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%
0.6%	20	Utilities	19	0.6%
3.8%	130	Construction	116	3.7%
9.6%	327	Manufacturing	340	10.8%
5.5%	188	Wholesale Trade	413	13.1%
10.7%	364	Retail Trade	625	19.8%
2.8%	96	Transportation and Warehousing	173	5.5%
2.2%	74	Information	38	1.2%
4.5%	153	Finance and Insurance	23	0.7%
1.6%	55	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	9	0.3%
8.2%	278	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	109	3.5%
2.3%	79	Management of Companies and Enterprises Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	1	0.0%
10.3%	348	Educational Services	889	28.2%
8.7%	296	Health Care and Social Assistance	151	4.8%
13.3%	450	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	70	2.2%
0.9%	30	Accommodation and Food Services	0	0.0%
7.6%	258	Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	97	3.1%
3.4%	117	Public Administration	17	0.5%
3.7%	126		66	2.1%

## HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The largest percentage of Wharton’s employed population works in healthcare and social services (13.3%), followed by retail trade (10.7%) and Admin Support (10.3%). These may be due to the close proximity of Saint Clare’s Dover Hospital and the Rockaway Mall, which is one of the largest sources of retail employers in the region.

The largest employer by NAICS sector in Wharton Borough is the Admin and Support services (28.2%). The largest employer in this sector is likely Whitlock Packaging. (listed as a service industry code, specifically as a “Packaging and Labeling” business). The next largest sectors for jobs in Wharton are Retail trade (19.8%). Costco and Shop Rite likely provide the most jobs in this sector.

*The Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services sector comprises establishments performing routine support activities for the day-to-day operations of other organizations. These essential activities are often undertaken in-house by establishments in many sectors of the economy. The establishments in this sector specialize in one or more of these support activities and provide these services to clients in a variety of industries and, in some cases, to households. Activities performed include: office administration, hiring and placing of personnel, document preparation and similar clerical services, solicitation, collection, security and surveillance services, cleaning, and waste disposal services.*

North American Industry Classification System

Further, when you look at the employment characteristics, it is clear that following educational services and healthcare, the second largest segment of the employed population is in the retail service industry, followed by those in the manufacturing, arts, entertainment and recreation and accommodation and food services. However, the overall jobs categories are well-distributed amongst the top four categories, with approximately 12-15% in each category. This shows a good distribution of jobs across industries, which indicates sustainability. This is true because no single industry is the sole source of employment in the area, as was the case in prior decades.

Table 6, Employment by Occupation, on the following page also shows a roughly even distribution of jobs across four (4) major categories: service occupations; management, business, science and arts; sales and office; and production transportation and materials moving occupations.



# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Table 7: Commuting Patterns**

Wharton Borough	2015 Est.
Worked within State	98.8%
Worked in County	78.8%
Worked outside County	20.0%
Worked Out of State	1.2%
Worked at home	11.6%
Worked outside home	88.4%

Source: 2015 American Community Survey

It is interesting to note that about 11.6% of the employed population works at home. This would be another market for businesses in Wharton, particularly daytime businesses such as internet cafes. The work from home population may also need business services such as printing and copy shops, office supplies, shipping and other similar services.

Another important element to study is the means of transportation to work. The Borough is located near major highways such as Route 80 and Route 46. Further, Route 15 also traverses through the northern part of the Borough. Since the Borough does not have a train station, the majority of commuters, commute alone by car.

**Table 8: Transportation to Work**

Wharton Borough	2015 Est.
Workers 16 years and over	3,306
Car, Truck or Van	91.4%
Drove alone	71.7%
Carpooled	19.8%
Public Transportation	3.9%
Walked	3.3%
Bicycle	0.0%
Taxicab, motorcycle or other means	0.5%
Worked at home	0.8%

Source: 2015 American Community Survey

## Market Analysis

Morris County Economic Development Corporation prepared a Market Analysis for the Borough of Wharton, dated May 2016. The Market Analysis included a market profile and demographic overview to provide insight into current economic and jobs conditions as well as understand where opportunities exist for growth. The Market Analysis showed that there is considerable wealth in and around Wharton along with substantial disposable income in the Borough itself and in the surrounding region. Additionally, there is a high level of traffic within and around the Borough. Both findings point to a high potential to increase retail businesses and economic development in the Borough.

Many of the census related demographics were outlined in the prior section; however, the Market Analysis reviews the demographics in two key areas, the Primary Trade Area, Wharton Borough, and the Market Trade Area, which includes Roxbury Township, Borough of Victory Gardens, Mine Hill Township, the Town of Dover, the Borough of Mount Arlington and the Borough of Rockaway.

## Income

The primary trade area, the Borough itself, generally has lower incomes than Morris County as a whole. It is interesting to note that median income has dropped in the Borough in the last five (5) years by about 9% from \$73,571 in 2010 to \$67,205 in 2015. There was also a corresponding shift in population by age, where larger groups of young adults (ages 25-35) are living in the Borough, which could correlate to the drop in median income.

The market trade area for Wharton has a higher median income than the primary trade area, \$87,116 in 2015, which also provides an opportunity to bring people into the Borough for retail goods and services from the immediate surrounding area.

## Spending

Effective Buying Income (EBI) for the Borough of Wharton is defined as “gross income less personal tax and non-tax payments”, more commonly known as disposable income, which measures the amount of money available to consumers for expenditures on goods and services. The EBI report was generated from the Nielson Company’s online segmentation system. The report indicates an EBI of \$44,982 in the primary trade area for each consumer. The EBI can be used to estimate consumer expenditures in goods and services. The annual consumer survey published by the U.S. Department of Labor and the consumer expenditure reports generated by Costar indicate that most spending in the primary trade area is in transportation and maintenance followed by expenditures in food and alcohol.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

What is also interesting to note in Wharton is that the effective buying income, EBI, levels income disparities between the primary trade area and market trade area. While the primary trade area has a median income of \$67,206, the EBI is \$44,980. The secondary trade area has a median income of \$87,116 with an EBI of \$48,474. The median income in the primary trade area is almost \$20,000 less than the market trade area; however, the EBI is only about \$3,500 less. This may be due to the relative affordable cost of living in Wharton. At any rate, consumers in the immediate trade area for Wharton have between \$45,000-\$50,000 per consumer to spend on goods and services annually. This equates to about \$1.8 million annually. The EBI in Morris County is \$73,814 and, in the tri-county area (Morris, Essex and Union), the EBI is \$51,516. In general, there is a large amount of disposable income in the immediate trade area and broader region. The Market Analysis notes that the New York/Northern New Jersey regions have higher than average spending in most market spending categories.

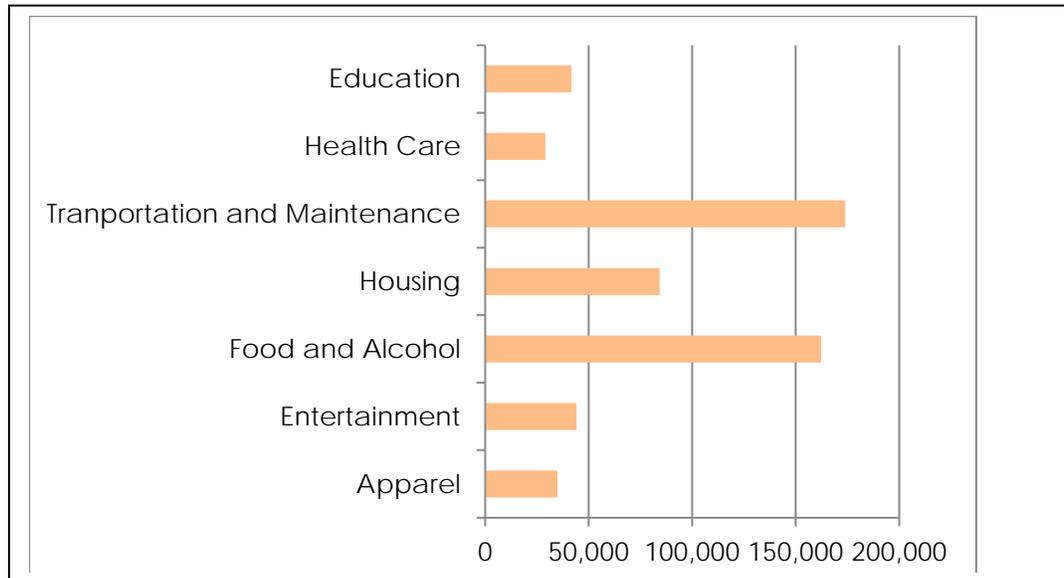


Figure 15: Spending by Category for Wharton  
Source: BLS Consumer Expenditure Survey, Costar Realty Information, Inc.

## Market Demand and Market Leakage

A review of the existing retail businesses in Wharton reveals that there is a diversity of establishments including furniture stores, electrical supply companies, salons, bagel stores, restaurants and eateries, liquor stores, pharmacies, photo labs, grocery stores, specialty products stores, packaging stores and banks. Auto-related uses are also present including repair, rental and sales. Retail services include hair salons, nail salons and massage therapy, and professional services include computer-related services, web design, medical professionals, contractors and real estate brokers. Commercial recreation includes fitness centers and a haunted house/escape room.

Despite this diversity of businesses in Wharton, the existing businesses and services are not servicing the bulk of demand in the trade area. Of the 32 retail goods and services reported as being in demand in Wharton, only seven (7) of the categories had less than 90% leakage. This means that in most cases more than 90% of demand for goods and services within the Wharton trade area are serviced outside of the trade area. The categories that captured the most local spending included grocery stores, general merchandise stores, specialty food stores, liquor stores and drinking establishments. Restaurants captured just 3.5% of local demand. Also, 20 of the 32 categories had 100% leakage, meaning that no money is spent in Wharton on these goods and services including department stores, clothing stores, shoe stores, book stores, florists, jewelry stores, lawn and garden stores, etc. While the Borough is never likely to serve 100% of local demand, this review of market demand versus leakage presents tremendous opportunity to capture leakage of demand for goods and services in the area. It also shows which businesses have been the most successful in the area, namely food and beverage establishments.

## Economic Development Strategies

### Business Development Strategies

- Focus on Main Street businesses
  - Implement a façade improvement program
  - Market goods and services to people in the area (Shop Local Program)
  - Develop a business attraction and retention program
  - Continue infrastructure improvements (streetscape, parking, road improvements)
  - Promote local events and tourism to bolster businesses
  - Identify wayfinding opportunities to direct people to businesses and sites of interest
  - Develop marketing plan for the Borough (branding/tag line)

### Redevelopment & Planning Strategies

- Redevelopment/hardscape
  - Review Main Street areas for redevelopment opportunities
  - Continue hardscape/streetscape improvements
  - Review Master Plan & ordinances for opportunities to improve the Center
  - Update Open Space & Trails Plan

### Tourism Strategies

- Sense of place/tourism
  - Continue development around the Canal to promote tourism
  - Identify trails, open space opportunities to support tourism
  - Continue work on historic restoration and improvement of historic resources
  - Develop marketing tools for tourism, i.e. online maps, business locators, etc.
  - Cross-market local businesses at tourist locations
  - Consider creative placemaking along Main Street

### Municipal Strategies

- Municipal opportunities to impact economic development
  - Identify ways to improve fiber-optic and internet access
  - Continue positive budget work
  - Continue engagement with community
  - Continue investment in streets/sidewalks and walkability
  - Identify opportunities associated with municipally-owned utilities
  - Consider marketing & branding the Borough through municipal website

## Highlands Center Plan Planning Background

Past, present and future land use decisions can shape economic development and promote sustainable center development within the Borough. This plan seeks to identify ways to improve the development atmosphere in the Borough to promote economic development, support stable property values for local residents and improve the quality of life in the Borough.

A review of past planning efforts assists in directing future land use decisions. The current Wharton Master Plan was adopted in 1994 and Master Plan Re-examinations were completed in 2005 and 2015. A mine study was completed in 1998 to determine the location of mine shafts in the Borough and surrounding areas. An Open Space and Recreation Plan was adopted in 2001 which identified opportunities for open space preservation. A Main Street Study and Improvement Plan was adopted in 2008, which reviewed opportunities for improving Main Street. Updated Housing Elements and Fair Share Plans have been adopted in 1998, 2005 and most recently 2016 to comply with changing regulations and court decisions related to affordable housing.

### Master Plan and 2005 & 2015 Master Plan Re-examination Reports

The 1994 Master Plan focused on a variety of issues that faced the Borough with respect to an aging housing stock, loss of industry, the need for redevelopment and the desire to improve the Borough's Central Business District. Property maintenance, the protection of single family residential neighborhoods from surrounding development and limitations on the impact of changing single family residences into two and three family residences were noted. The Borough sought to increase commercial development along the Route 15 Corridor and upgrade the Central Business District by creating a unique identity through streetscape improvements. The redevelopment of vacant industrial areas was also a key focus. The need for additional open space and parks in the Borough was also noted.

## HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2005, the Master Plan was reexamined, similar themes were noted as in the 1994 Master Plan; however, progress had been made on protection of single family residential neighborhoods, increased commercial development along Route 15 and some improvements to the Central Business District were made. A bypass road at North Main Street and Dewey Avenue was identified along with a redevelopment designation for the former Air Products Site. The redevelopment of several former industrial sites along Harry Shupe Avenue was noted as new industry occupied and redeveloped aging industrial areas. Pressure to increase residential densities in the Borough was noted, along with the need to comply with new affordable housing regulations.

The 2015 Master Plan Re-examination Report identified the Borough's petition for Plan Conformance to the Highlands Council, which was approved in August 2011. The Master Plan Re-examination reviewed the Borough's 2005 Master Plan for consistency with the Highlands Regional Master Plan and identified the planning tasks which needed to be completed to conform to the Highlands RMP including development of this Center Plan and adoption of ordinances to implement resource protections. The report also identified that the Highland's Council designated much of the Borough as a Center Area. Further, the report identified two redevelopment areas for incorporation within the Master Plan.

The report noted that several buildings in the Main Street Corridor have been recently upgraded with aesthetic improvements and that streetscape improvements along much of Main Street had been completed. It indicated that the identity of the Central Business District needs to be further established. For example, the report notes the proximity of the Morris Canal to the downtown and how that and other historic points in the Borough can be used to support Wharton's unique identity and attract growth in the Central Business District. (CBD)

The 2015 Master Plan Re-examination Report also identified two potential redevelopment areas. These are:

- a. The Meadow Ave Industrial Area: This area is located east of North Main Street adjoining Route 80 to the south and is primarily developed with light industrial uses, fronting on Meadow Avenue. These parcels are located in close proximity to major roadway connections, such as Route 15 to the north, and are situated between residential and commercial uses. The Re-examination Report recommends redevelopment of the area with a mixed commercial and residential use as a viable option for these parcels.
- b. The second site that is recommended for redevelopment is commonly known as the Air Products Site. This site is located opposite the new multifamily residential development known as Avalon Wharton. The site has frontage on East Dewey Ave and options for more modern uses should be explored.

## 2008 Main Street Study and Improvement Plan

On March 11, 2008, the Borough of Wharton adopted the Main Street Study and Improvement Plan. This was done as a response to the 2005 Master Plan Re-examination Report and Land Use Plan that recommended methods for upgrading the community's Main Street as a planning priority. The study area consisted of properties along Main Street between the railroad to the north and Route 46 to the south. The study also included some of the municipal properties not on the Main Street, such as the municipal building and the Fire Department, which are both located on Robert Street.

The study identified the area as a mixed-use area with several vacant commercial spaces, which lacked a thematic context in terms of design and streetscape guidelines. The study proposed several design guidelines from façade improvements to sign regulations and streetscape improvements. Some of these improvements have been implemented through revised ordinances for development in the downtown and through streetscape improvements by the Borough.

## Highlands Regional Master Plan

The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act passed in 2004 with an overarching goal to protect drinking water resources, along with open space and natural resources. The act was followed by adoption of the Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) in 2008, which laid out the goals and policies for the Highlands Region.

The Highlands Region is divided into the Planning Area and the Preservation Area. The Borough of Wharton is located completely within the Planning Area. Further, the Highlands Regional Master Plan identifies the Borough of Wharton as a "Center" in its Planning Area. "Centers" in the RMP are defined as "an area where development and redevelopment is planned and encouraged". Highlands Centers are intended to support balance in the Highlands Region by providing for sustainable economic growth, while protecting critical natural resources. Some of the goals and objectives of the RMP that the Borough of Wharton identify with are as follows:

**Goal 6F:** Support compact development, mixed-use development and redevelopment and maximization of water, wastewater and transit infrastructure investments for future use and development within the existing community zone (ECZ).

**Policy:** To promote compatible development and redevelopment within the ECZ.

**Policy:** To promote restoration and redevelopment of brownfields particularly those located in or adjacent to transportation corridors.

**Policy:** To ensure that development and redevelopment are compatible with the existing community character.

**Center Area Description**

The Wharton Center is a Designated Highlands Center where compact, mixed-use development exists and additional development and redevelopment within the Center supports the Goals of the Highlands Regional Master Plan and the Borough Master Plan.



## Overview

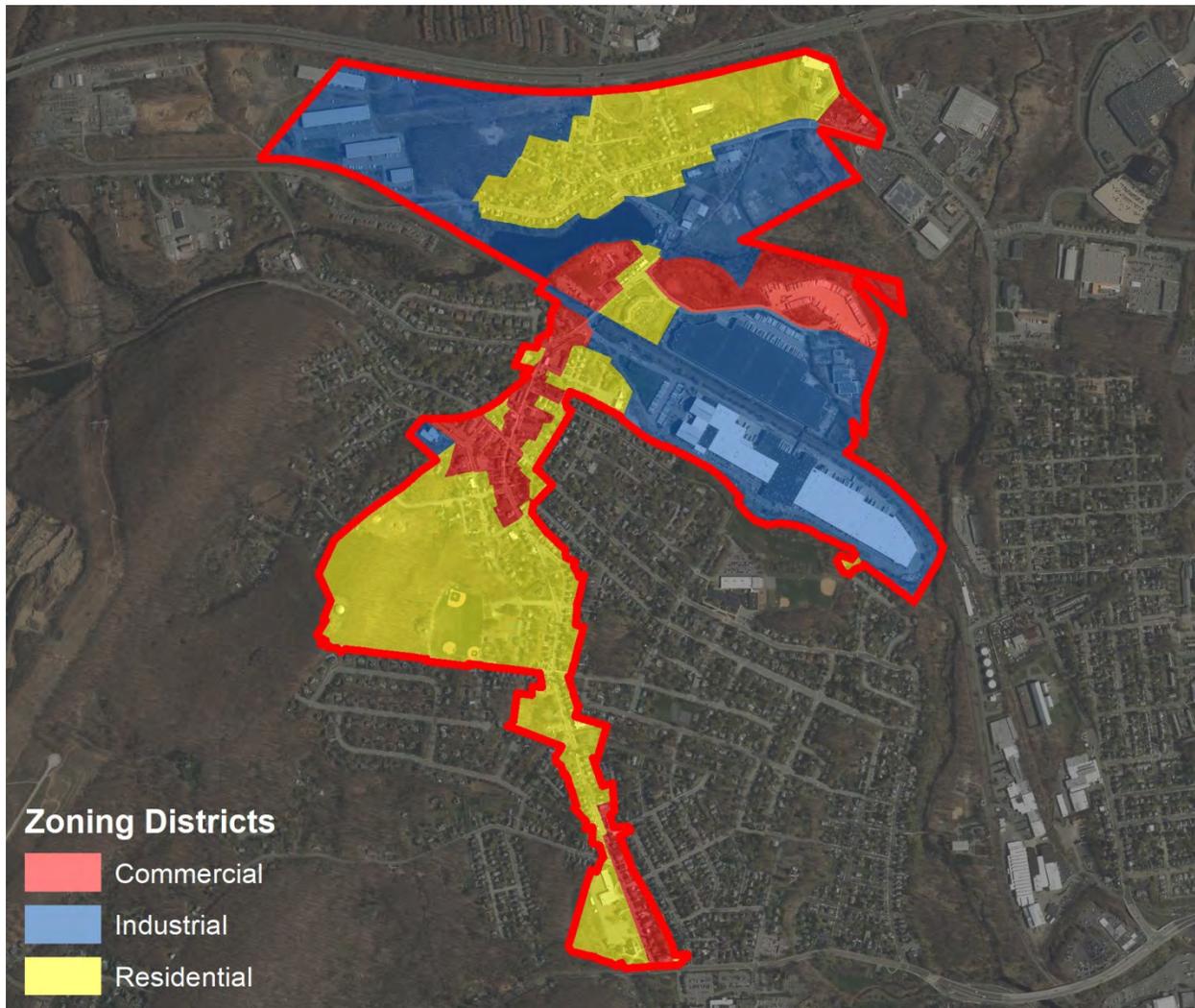
The Borough of Wharton is located entirely within the Highlands Region, and contains approximately 1,362 acres, all of which are in the Planning Area where conformance to the Highlands Regional Master Plan is optional for the municipality. On December 8, 2009, the Borough of Wharton submitted a petition to the Highlands Council to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan. On August 3, 2011, the Highlands Council approved Wharton Borough's petition for Plan Conformance for all lands lying in the Planning Area and designated the Highlands Center within the Borough. This Highlands Center designation requires specific planning to identify development and redevelopment opportunities within the context of resource protection for Highlands' area resources. The area outside of the Highlands Center requires planning in the context of the Highlands Planning Area, including but not limited to incorporating a variety of Highlands Resource protections consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Given the small area of the Borough, just 2.2 square miles, finding ways to consolidate planning and ordinances across the entire Borough to cover both the Highlands Center and the Highlands Planning Areas would create efficiency and ease of implementation. As a result, the purpose of the Highlands Center Plan is twofold: promote positive development and redevelopment within the Center; and provide direction for implementing resource protection within the Borough outside of the Highlands Center.

The Center covers 425 parcels and approximately 417 acres in land area, roughly 30% of the Borough's land area. The Center covers a significant portion of the Borough, primarily the Main Street corridor and surrounding areas south of Route 80. The properties within the Center include a mix of uses: small neighborhood commercial, large scale commercial, industrial, offices, mixed-use residential, multifamily and single-family residential uses. The larger scale developments are located closer to the major transportation corridors while smaller scale neighborhood commercial and mixed-use residential uses are located closer to Main Street in the CBD. Two designated redevelopment areas are located within the Center and additional areas may be considered to bolster redevelopment of dilapidated sites.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Center Zoning

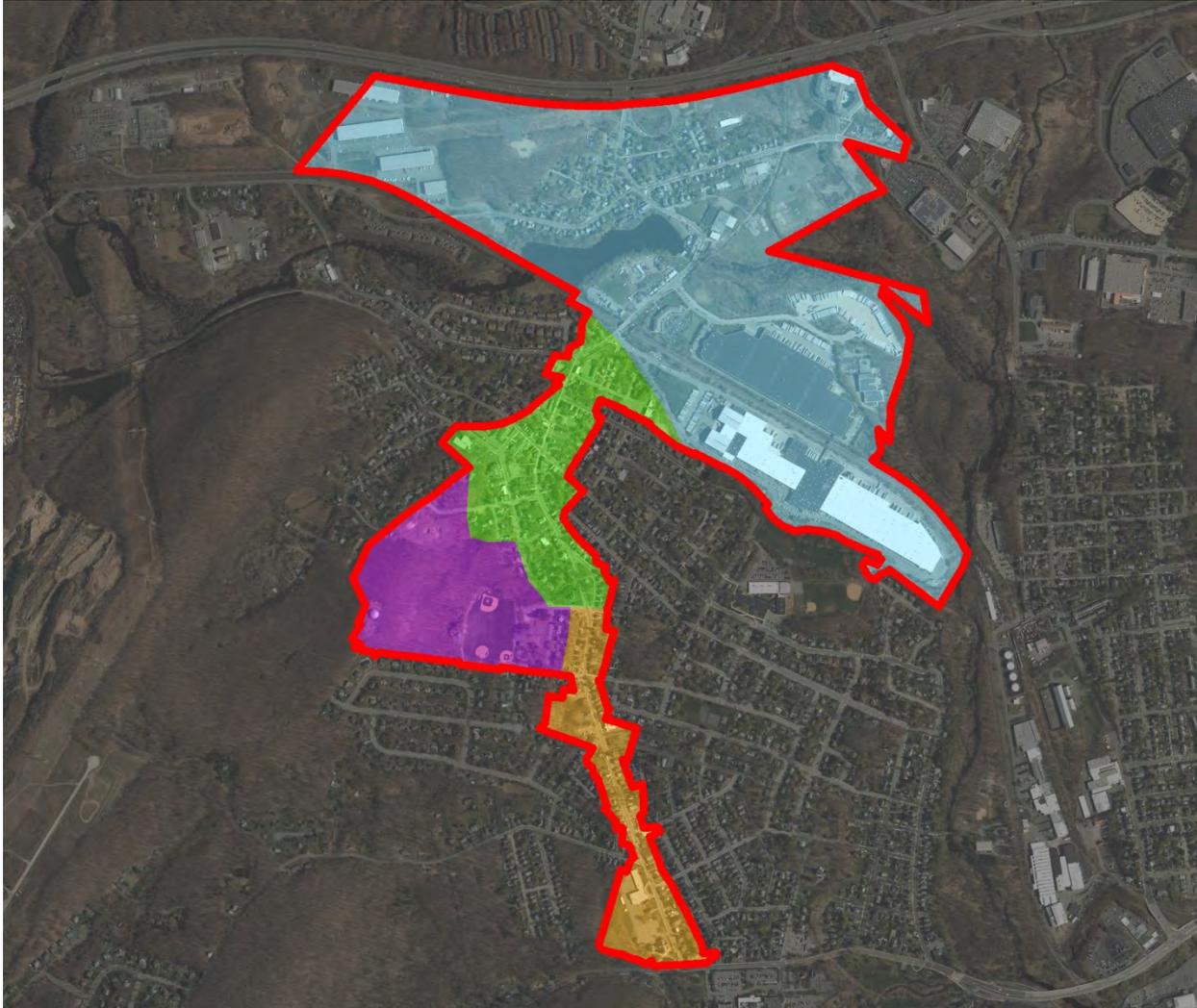
The zoning for the Center is dominated by Industrial Zones (45%) and Residential Zones (40%), with the remaining areas in Commercial Zones (15%). While Industrial Zones comprise a large percentage of land area in the Center, it only accounts for a handful of parcels. This is primarily due to the fact that Industrial Zones typically require larger parcels.



# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Analysis of Existing Land Uses

The Center can essentially be subdivided into four sub-areas for ease of further study: **North**, **Central**, **Robert Street Park** and **South Center** Areas.



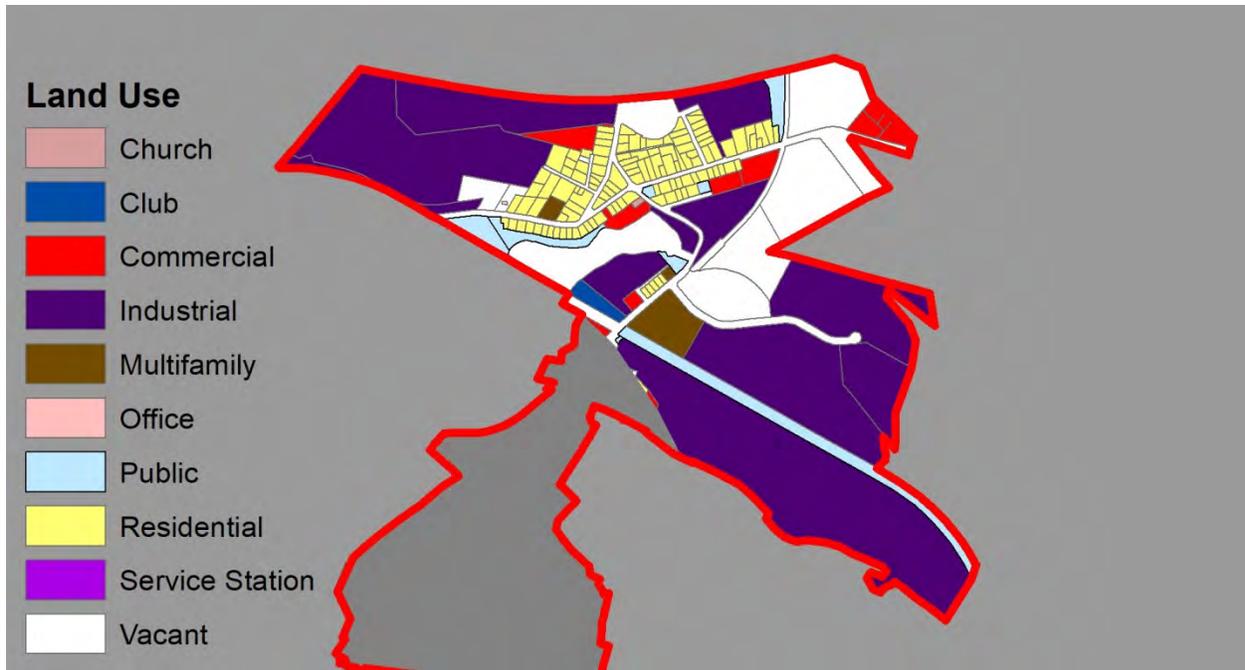
## North Center Area



The North Center consists of properties north of the Conrail Railroad and bounded by Interstate Route 80, which is the Center's northern boundary. This area comprises the largest percentage (68%) of the Center's land area. This is primarily due to the inclusion of large industrially-zoned properties and Washington Pond.

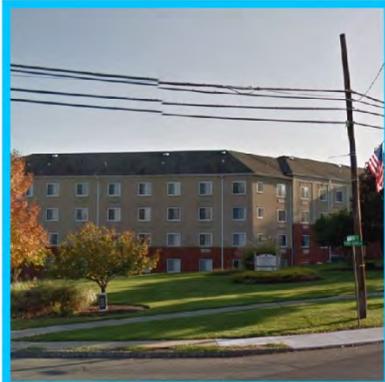
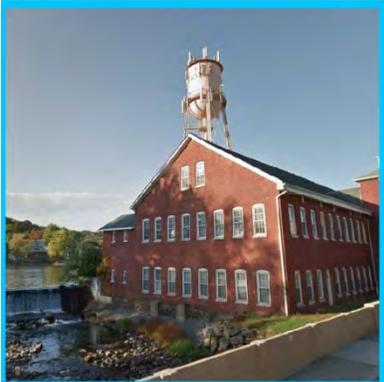
Properties in the North Center are a mix of commercial, mixed-use, residential and industrial uses. Several of the industrial areas are currently used for warehousing and logistical industries, and several have been converted into commercial or storage uses. This area also consists of the Washington Forge Pond and an affordable Senior Housing Development.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The North Center contains several large tracts of vacant lands. These lands fall into all three zoning districts: commercial, industrial and residential. A large swath of adjacent vacant land is located along the Wharton Rail Trail. This area includes the property commonly known as the Air Products site, which has been identified as an area in need of redevelopment. This area also includes the Rockaway River and constrained lands from wetlands and flood hazard areas.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The photos above show typical land uses in the area, including the mixed-use, vacant industrial, multi-family housing and typical low-density residential uses.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Central Center Area (Central Business District)



The Central Center consists of what would commonly be referred to as the Central Business District. It is bounded by the Conrail Railroad and bridge to the north and Thomas Street to the south. This area is a mix of neighborhood commercial, mixed-uses, office and residential.

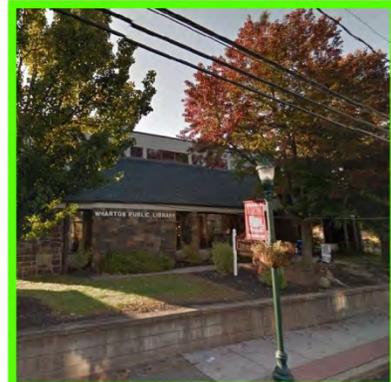
The Central Business District is the primary commercial and jobs producing area for the Borough. It also contains several key civic uses such as the library, the municipal complex and the fire department.



## HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A review of properties in the Center revealed that several of the Main Street properties are in need of façade improvements, improved design or redevelopment. Properties along Main Street provide the key neighborhood commercial core for the Borough. It has local character, small-scale neighborhood commercial uses and a low-density character from a Main Street standpoint. The area would benefit from improved façades, increased density in both residential and commercial uses, as well as redevelopment that promotes restaurants, arts and entertainment. Additional residential uses over commercial developments could provide more support for local businesses and additional centralized parking would provide easier access to the CBD.

The large scale commercial and industrial areas would benefit from a review of parking, access, efficiency of use and potential for expansion, redevelopment and rehabilitation of the existing developed areas.



The photos above show typical land use types in the Central Center including mixed-use commercial and residential, public uses and lower density residential.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Robert Street Park Center Area



The Robert Street Park Center area includes the residential areas adjacent to the park. Robert Street Park is utilized for active recreation, including baseball, softball, football, basketball and tennis facilities. The predominant land uses in the area are public uses, active recreation or Borough Open Space.



# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The photos above show typical land use types in the Robert Street Park Center area including parks, open spaces and low density residential.

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## South Center Area

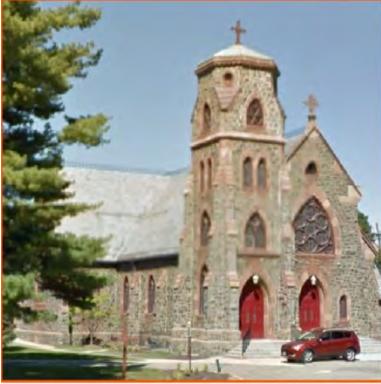


The South Center area lies along Main Street between Blackwell Street (US Route 46) and Clarence Street. The South Center is comprised of predominantly residential land uses with intermittent neighborhood commercial service uses. The St. Mary's Catholic Church and the American Christian School's North Campus is located at the southern end of the area.



# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This area also consists of properties just north of Sterling Street and bounded by Mill Street. These properties were included in the southern area due to their more residential character and separation from the CBD.

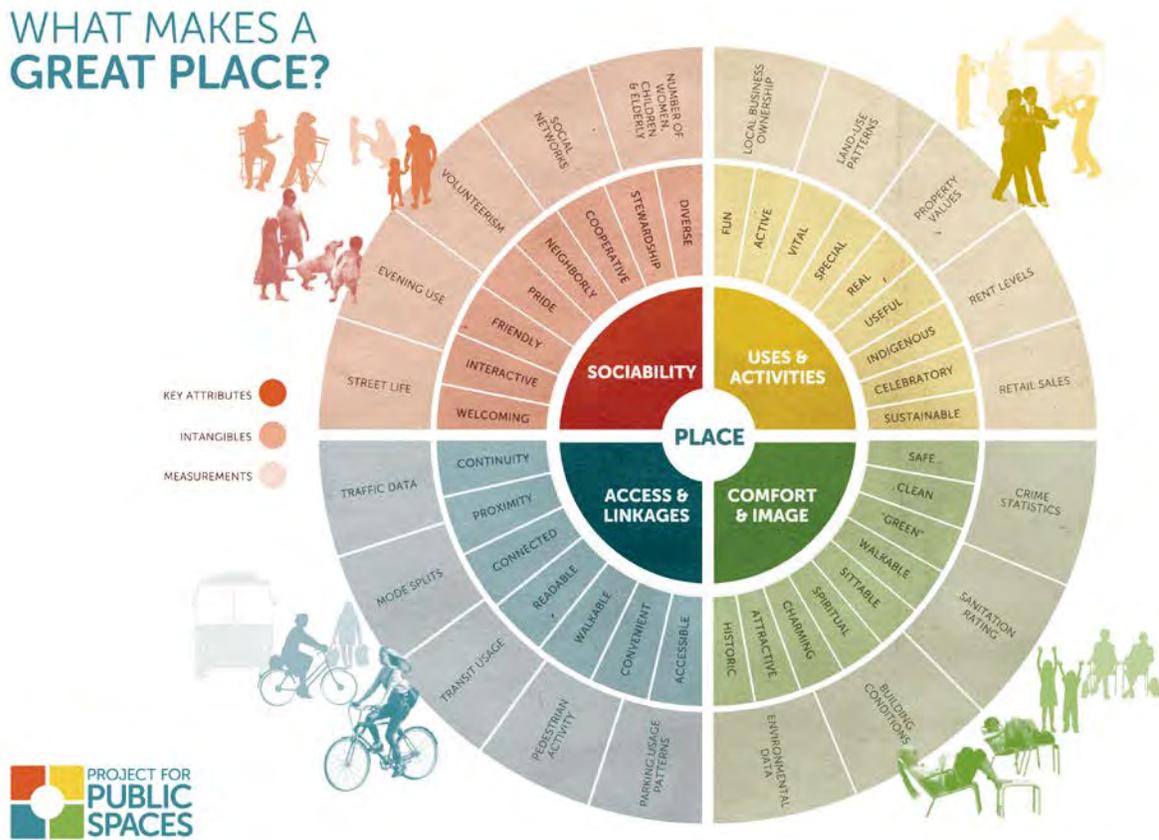


# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Placemaking

*“WHAT IS PLACEMAKING? As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.” –Project for Public Spaces.*

### WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



## HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Four (4) distinct places were identified for placemaking opportunities within the Wharton Center, one within each sub-area of the Center. These distinct places can be seen as providing opportunities for Wharton Borough to increase the unique sense of place associated with the each of these distinct areas within the Center. Using concepts developed by the Project for Public places as a guide, the following “things to do” within each identified area are presented below. Additionally, Project for Public Spaces case study examples are included for each area. These case studies were chosen as possible implementable actions for each identified place.



Center Map with North (1), Central (2), Robert Street Park (3) and South (4) Center Areas

# WASHINGTON POND

Washington Pond serves as the defining destination for the North Center Area of the Wharton Center. It provides a gateway to Harry Shupe Boulevard and Centennial Court Apartments. The primary businesses located in the Washington Pond area include Hot Rods Restaurant and SMP Sussex Market. Washington Pond serves as a recreation area for boating, fishing and relaxing. Additional opportunities exist for enhancing boat access, a boardwalk, and lounging areas.



Created by designers at Iyiofis, in Izmir, Turkey, with help from the Izmir University of Economics, a project called Think Micro is lining the city's waterfront with small floating parks that show the potential of local, small-scale public space improvements. Izmir's coastline, defined by its monotonous, flat open spaces, offers little variety, while Think Micro's docks act as modular, multi-functional spaces that address the various needs of users. A long pier serves fishermen, for example, while another single dock provides an intimate seaside meeting spot. These structures—lightweight, easy to assemble, and cheap to construct—allow citizens to interact with their waterfront in new and ever-evolving ways.

<https://www.pps.org/places/think-micro/>

## MAIN STREET CBD

The Central Center Area, or Main Street Central Business District (CBD) represents the primary business district in the Borough. The Borough Library is located on Main Street. The Borough Municipal Building and Police Department are also located within the CBD but just off of Main Street. The CBD contains neighborhood commercial including retail and restaurants. Additional placemaking strategies for the CBD include encouraging outdoor dining areas, additional areas for seating and providing a more appealing visual environment to encourage walking along Main Street.



Most cities have a limited supply of open spaces, which gives incredible value to those places that do invite relaxation and socialization. In light of this fact, one neighborhood in Montreal has worked to create mini-parks, or “parklets,” in the parking lanes of its streets, an idea that gained global traction since San Francisco’s Parklet Program. The project was named Placottoir, meaning “a place to chat.” With the help of the borough government, shipping containers have been recycled into new public spaces that have been colorfully painted by local artists, and include cut-out windows, abundant seating, and pleasant greenery. The containers occupy three parking spaces and serve pedestrians looking to eat, socialize, and people-watch.

<https://www.pps.org/places/placottoir-a-place-to-chat/>



# ROBERT STREET PARK

Robert Street Park Center Area, also known as Concialdi Park, offers softball, baseball, football fields, playground equipment, a picnic area and two tennis courts. In addition to the active recreation areas, the Robert Street Park area contains approximately 19 acres of undeveloped Borough Open Space.



For decades, Interstate 5 in Seattle—an elevated freeway, built in 1962, that divides Eastlake and Capitol Hill—was a source of isolation, noise pollution, and frustration for its neighboring communities. For many years, the stretch of shadowy, secluded land beneath I-5 has been unused and in disrepair. Today, it is a whole new world under the freeway, an area that has been reclaimed as public space and an important asset for adjacent neighborhoods. The transformation began in 2000, when Seattle's Parks and Recreation department dedicated funds towards cleaning up and improving the seven-and-a-half acres beneath the freeway. In response, the Eastlake Neighborhood Council began discussing potential strategies for further repurposing the space. One proposal by Simon Lawton, local resident and owner of the Fluidride bike shops, suggested the creation of a mountain bike park in the space. The idea gained traction with the community-based Eastlake Neighborhood Council, a nonprofit group called Urban Parks, as well as the Seattle parks department.

<https://www.pps.org/places/colonnade-freeride-park/>



# MAIN STREET SOUTH

This area of the Center is the southern gateway to the Borough Center from Blackwell Street and Dover Hospital, which represents a large potential customer/visitor base for the Borough. This gateway should feature community signage and attractive landscaping that help to establish the Borough's image in the mind of visitors. The presence of this gateway to the Borough should be clearly visible. This can be accomplished through streetscape features poles and flags, monuments, archways, etc. The St. Mary's Catholic Church and American Christian School are located in this area, as well as small neighborhood commercial. Opportunities may be available to partner with the Church and school to host public events to encourage visitation through the gateway to the Borough Center.



In Portland, Oregon, a community organization called City Repair Project transforms ordinary intersections into vibrant public spaces. Working with communities and volunteers to paint giant murals onto intersections, they focus on turning car-centered roadways into lovable places. Two of the most impressive components of its Intersection Repair initiative are its quick results and cost effectiveness. As a first step in this Placemaking process, community members are invited to paint together, which helps to connect people from of different ages and walks of life in a project of co-creation. The resulting mural then turns the intersection into both a gathering place and a point of pride for the neighborhood, and it ultimately helps in calming traffic and making streets safer.

<https://www.pps.org/places/intersection-repair/>



# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Borough-wide Placemaking Strategies

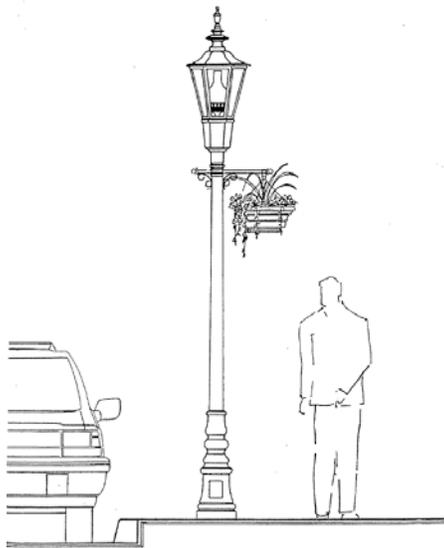
1. **Wayfinding Signs.** Well-designed wayfinding signage helps put visitors at ease when they enter a town, can reflect the character of a municipality, and provides a more enjoyable experience. These signs would put a system in place to guide them to their destinations. Wayfinding signs program characteristics include:
  - Signs will be readily identifiable with Wharton.
  - Exhibit common characteristics that will help create a “brand” for Wharton
  - Includes new community gateway signs that welcome visitors to Wharton and reflect the unique character of Wharton.
  - Incorporates trailblazer signs that reinforce “place-making” by directing visitors to major attractions and shopping districts.
  - Customizes street-level signage to orient the visitor to their location.
  - Places public parking signs and pedestrian level signage so that they work together to make public parking easy to find and then provides more detailed information to help them find their specific destination.



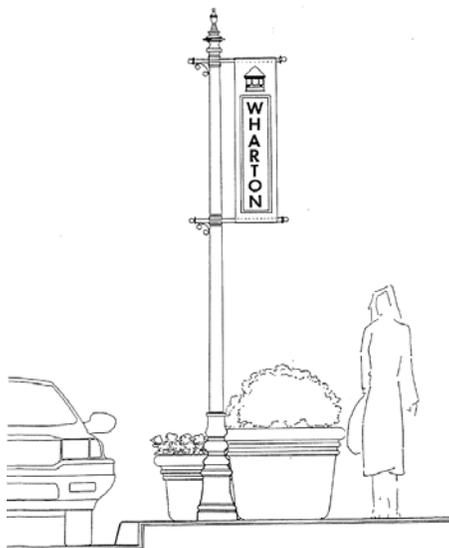
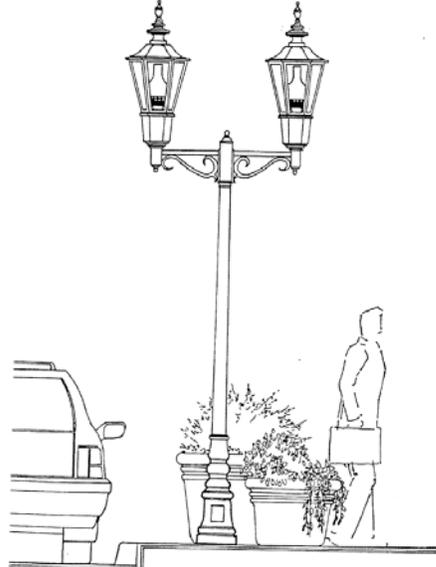
Sample Wayfinding Signage

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

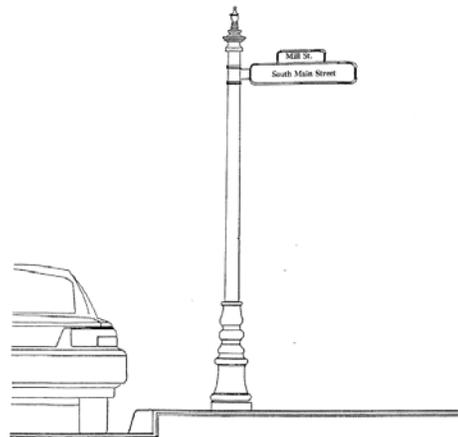
2. **Streetscape Improvements.** The Borough Master Plan “recommends that the Borough utilize a “preferred” streetscape and landscape plan which includes examples of the types of street trees, benches, awnings, trash receptacles and signage.” A unified streetscape throughout the Highlands designated Center would promote the visual aesthetic character, community identity and help foster a sense of place within the Center.



**Sample Streetscape Lighting**



**Sample Streetscape Banners**

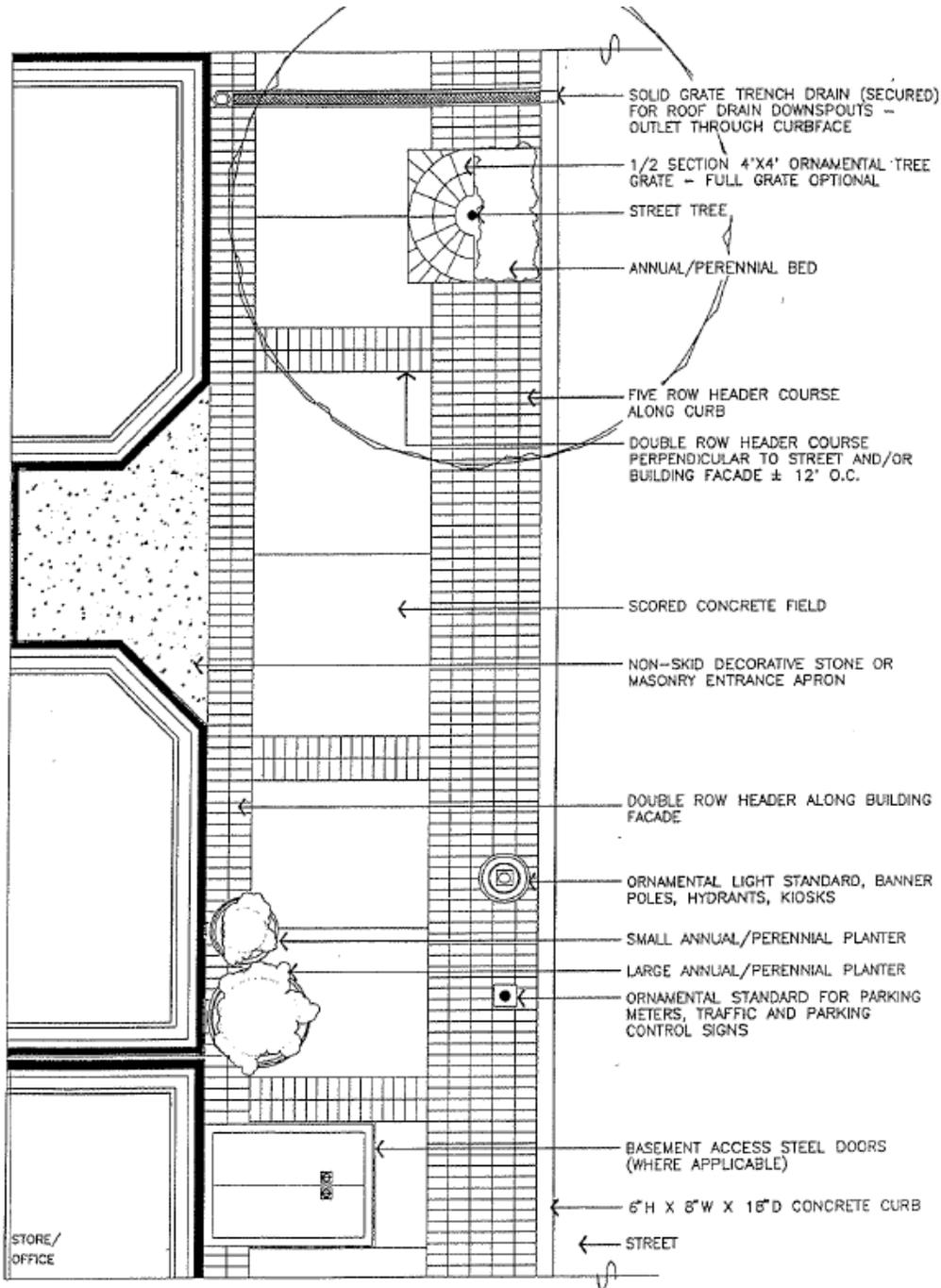


3. **Outdoor Dining.** A placemaking activity that should be encouraged throughout the Borough Center is outdoor dining. Broad sidewalks of 10 feet in width or greater encourage sidewalk dining. Local restaurant owners can accomplish these using privately owned patios, decks and the like. However, not all restaurants in the Borough have access to privately-owned outdoor dining areas. The Borough should consider parameters that would allow for outdoor dining in publicly held rights-of-way and sidewalks. These parameters should include minimum sidewalk width, distance to restaurant entrance/exits, hours of operation, etc. Where adequate area is not available for sidewalk dining, the Borough could consider developing a plan to utilize “parklets” on a temporary basis. Parklets are typically developed as a mobile open space or seating area that is placed in the right of way. These parklets are sized and configured to utilize one vehicle parking space. Guidance for the use should include any fees, duration, placement, customer and staff access, and traffic barriers. San Francisco California is known as a leader in the use of parklets.



**Examples of Mobile Outdoor Dining Parklets**

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



**Sample Streetscape Design with Wide Sidewalk for Outdoor Dining Opportunities**

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4. **Public Art.** Public art can add interest and uniqueness to a place. Temporary art installations can add a tourism draw and correlate to history or tradition in the area. As shown below, temporary art installations such as the Cow Parade have been successful as a placemaking and tourism strategy. For the Cow Parade and similar events, a standardized sculpture is decorated by local artists and displayed around the area. The installation increases visitors, can be sponsored by local businesses and decorated sculptures can be auctioned off at the end of the event to raise funds. Regional examples include “Miles of Mules” Bucks County, PA. “Cat’n Around Catskill!”, Catskill, NY. “Have a Seat”, Glenn Falls, NY.



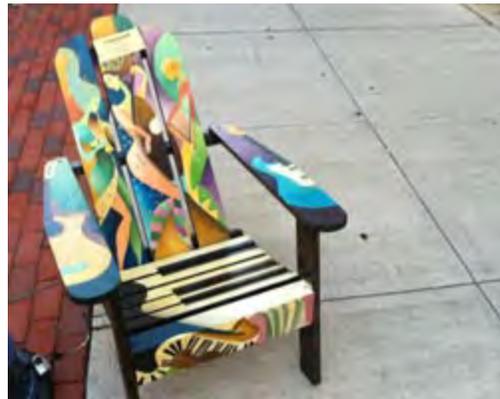
**Cow Parade – Zurich, Switzerland**



**Cat'n Around Catskill, Catskill, NY**



**Miles of Mules, Doylestown, PA**



**Have a Seat, Glen Falls, New York**

# HIGHLANDS CENTER PLAN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

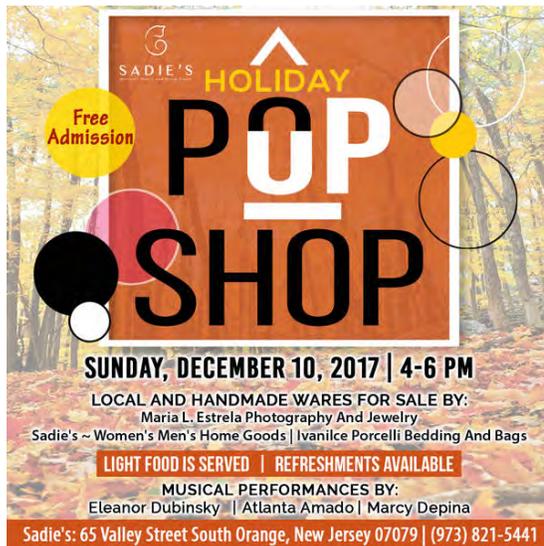
5. **Pop-up Shops and Events.** Pop-ups are temporary commercial or non-residential uses that can be creative or artisan in nature but they can also be almost any type of temporary use. Pop-up shops are a \$50 billion industry in the U.S. and a retail method that is growing in popularity in the era of online shopping as traditional retail struggles to attract new shoppers.

Pop-up retail establishments, or “pop-ups,” generally refer to stores, restaurants, or events with a short duration. Pop-ups are typical for seasonal retail products, like Christmas or fireworks, but they have become common for designers (clothes, furniture, toys, etc.), restaurateurs (i.e., dinner clubs, food trucks), or other performers (concerts, parties) to conduct a one-time event, to test out new markets or products, or to begin operating while looking for a permanent location.

Some examples of Pop-Ups include:

South Orange & Montclair have both sponsored seasonal pop-up shops.

- ▶ Temporary shops specializing in local artisan crafts.
- ▶ Sponsored by Downtown Improvement Districts.



## Center Plan Recommendations & Strategies

Center Plan recommendations and strategies are broken down into two (2) categories: Land Use and Planning Strategies and Placemaking Strategies. Recommendations for each category are listed below:

### **Land Use and Planning Strategies:**

- Review Main Street for redevelopment opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to improve Center zoning for increased development in the Center and as recommended by Center sub-area.
- Update Master Plan to incorporate recommendations from this Plan.
- Update ordinances to incorporate recommendations from this Plan.
- Update Open Space & Trails Plan.

### **Placemaking Strategies:**

- Identify opportunities for public art and events.
- Identify opportunities for placemaking through municipally-sponsored activities, grants and public-private partnerships.
- Develop gateway features at both gateways into the Center.
- Sponsor pop-Up events/uses and work with businesses to encourage pop-up events/uses.
- Continue work on streetscapes.
- Identify opportunities to widen sidewalks, encourage outdoor dining.
- Develop wayfinding signage.