How can we be more innovative in connecting our people and places to promote our unique assets, drive sustainable economic development and invigorate the Skylands region?

Creative New Jersey is dedicated to fostering creativity, innovation, and sustainability by empowering cross-sector partnerships in commerce, education, philanthropy, government, and culture in order to ensure dynamic communities and a thriving economy.

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Preface: Creative Skylands – Where New Jersey Gets Wild

The Skylands region, also known as the New Jersey Highlands, is a region that encompasses multiple State and National Parks, lakes, working farms, and wineries. Arts and culture activities, historical attractions and family resorts pepper the rich landscape. And did you know that this region also provides clean drinking water to over 5.4 million people in our state? That’s more than half of New Jersey’s residents!

The Skylands region is important and our recent Creative Skylands: Call to Collaboration underscored the urgency felt by residents, business owners, nonprofit and community leaders and elected officials to design creative strategies to strengthen the connectivity of the region, promote their outstanding natural assets, and drive sustainable economic activity.

The Call to Collaboration, held on June 1 and 2, 2015, and hosted by The Growing Stage—the Children’s Theatre of New Jersey in Netcong, was the culmination of an engagement process that champions creativity and creative-thinking, advances dialogues on critical issues, and weaves networks of individuals who are willing to embrace a culture of creativity and step outside of their established business models. This leap can yield innovation, unexpected fruitful partnerships and collaborative practices with a goal of creating communities that are culturally, economically and sustainably prosperous.

Stephen Fredericks, Co-Chair of Creative Skylands and Executive Director of The Growing Stage said, “The Creative New Jersey Skylands Convening provided our region with a unique opportunity to scale down the wide breadth of the area we cover to a meaningful dialogue of what we have, and what we can share. Focusing on Sussex County as well as parts of Morris and Warren allowed us to pinpoint our similarities as well as our differences; our challenges as well as our accomplishments; and most importantly, the connections that we have that will enable all sectors of our region to thrive. This convening allowed us to reach beyond the preconceptions that we entered with and leave with a renewed energy of potential.”

Our work in Skylands marked a number of “firsts” for us at Creative NJ:

1) This was the first Call to Collaboration that encompassed such a large geographic area—a tri-county region; we invited and welcomed a diverse group of individuals from throughout Sussex County (from Highpoint to Stanhope), along with northern Warren County and northwestern Morris County.
2) The Creative Skylands Host Team marked the first time that one of our team’s had two high-school students on the creative team.

3) The Skylands Call to Collaboration convening had the largest percentage of individuals under 35 years of age than any other community convening held in NJ to date (this milestone is all the more important for Skylands because of the sharp drop in the millennial population throughout the region).

Despite unseasonably cold weather and deluges of rain, Creative Skylands participants took the opportunity to take action and plan next steps. The vibrant conversations and diverse perspectives at the Call to Collaboration included a contingent of business students from Centenary College, high school students from Mount Olive High School, as well as business owners, representatives from chambers of commerce, the environmental sector, agriculture, arts and culture, education, philanthropy, local government, economic development offices and the media. The participants were an exceptional group of community thought-leaders; these are the people at the forefront of the region’s economic, social, civic and educational sectors---find out more about who participated and read through the notes of the breakout sessions here.

Set against the beautiful backdrop of The Growing Stage’s magnificent murals, nearly fifty dynamic discussions took place over the two-day convening and topics included:
- agri-business & agri-tourism,
- attracting and involving younger residents,
- regional identity and branding,
- creating vibrant downtowns and encouraging creative placemaking,
- increasing school pride,
- connecting seniors, the disabled community and low income residents and workers to services they need, and
- encouraging investment and an entrepreneurial climate.
Creative Skylands Co-Chair Suzanne Ishee, of the Center for Creative Placemaking, encapsulates the experience: “Creative NJ knocked it out of the park once again when it came to the Skylands! Common themes emerged over our two day convening and we walked away with a clearer definition of who we are, what we have and what we can do to promote and reinvigorate our beautiful region. Clusters addressing all of this have formed and are already working towards stimulating our area. I’m looking forward to the next time we convene as a whole group to begin to cobble all of our activities into a cohesive effort!”

Based upon our experiences of working in other communities, we know that in the coming weeks and months we will see existing ideas gaining traction while new ideas will spark and take root. We know that unlikely partnerships will flourish and we’ll see an expansion of cross-sector and multi-generational collaboration. It was our great pleasure to work in the Skylands region and we look forward to celebrating their creative ideas taking hold!

Creative Skylands Host Team members included:
Mark Avondoglio, Perona Farms; Stephen L. Fredericks (Co-Chair), The Growing Stage-The Children’s Theatre of New Jersey; Suzanne Ishee (Co-Chair), Center for Creative Placemaking; Jared Janish, Mount Olive High School; Andrea Kirchuk, Mount Olive Area Chamber of Commerce; Courtenay Mercer, Regional Plan Association; Brian Mok, Mount Olive High School; Kristin Muller, Peters Valley School of Craft; Nancy Paffendorf, Centenary College; Jason Sarnoski, Warren County Freeholder; Jim Sheldon, Hackettstown Business Improvement District; Greg Stewart, Mount Olive Area Chamber of Commerce; Laura Szwak, NJ Conservation Foundation.

Special thanks to our partners: The Growing Stage, Centenary College and hospitality sponsor ReNetco Supermarkets, Inc.!

~ Elizabeth A. Murphy & Kacy O'Brien
Originally posted on the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Blog (6.15.15).

Elizabeth A. Murphy is the part-time Director of Creative New Jersey. She also regularly consults with other nonprofit and philanthropic organizations.
Kacy O’Brien is Creative New Jersey’s Program Manager and is currently a member of Lead New Jersey’s Class of 2015.

If you’d like to connect with any of the Creative Skylands participants and follow the conversations, please visit the Creative New Jersey website, join us on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter.

Creative New Jersey is dedicated to fostering creativity, innovation, and sustainability by empowering cross-sector partnerships in commerce, education, philanthropy, government, and culture in order to ensure dynamic communities and a thriving economy.
Day One

Session #1: How do we define the Brand?

Convener: Gil Roessner

Participants: Lori Lawrence, Kathy Robbins, Tom Romano, Suzanne Ishee, Robert Hathaway, Lisa Brett, Leander Lacy, Nancy Madasci, Tim Rowe, Mary Jude Haddock-Weiler, Kathy Naasz, Gloria Kieley

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):
   - We have a lot of knowledge and experience available to the group, both specific to local legislation and tourism, and local business/customers of the Skylands region
   - Established interested group who will carry-on progress from today to further advance the cause of defining our brand and how to best execute it:
     o Leveraging existing medias that support Skylands region (magazines, website, etc.)
       1. Organize
       2. Mobilize
       3. Action Plan
       4. Execute
       5. Quantify & Audit

2.) Who is taking the Lead?
Gil Roessner will initiate the carry-on e-mail thread

3.) Who else do we want to invite? (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
   - Governing bodies, tourism alliances, etc. Highlands/Skylands
   - Sustainable Jersey – legislation
   - MOCO – Monmouth County/Creative Monmouth

4.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
E-mail thread engaging interested volunteers from the group.

   1. Organize Group
   2. Certification Committee
3. Asset Mapping Committee
4. Case Study Committee
5. Set Next Physical Meeting

5.) **What resources would be useful in moving forward?** *(human, technological, financial, etc.)*

- HUMAN: Review existing best practices (what has worked for other, similar regions, why?)
- TECHNOLOGICAL/FINANCIAL: Wireframe website to offer suggested trips/boarding/activities/restaurants based on occasion of trip, interests, number of travelers, etc. *(match.com for Skylands region exploration)*
- FINANCIAL: Access to existing state and local funding that supports tourism

6.) **Next Meeting:**

E-mail thread to be created and next physical meeting TBD
Session #2: Why are the politicians claiming they are going to find jobs for people - which jobs are they referring to?

Convener: Michael Giacomantori

Participants: Denise English, Gloria Kieley, Mary Saarman

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Establish the “Citadel of Economic and Environmental Entrepreneurship”
- In this environment – people hired will produce environmental products for many industries, aerospace, hospitals, schools, agriculture, factories, and airlines
- 6 patented inventions that Michael is looking for a location to build prototypes
- Veterans, disabled, immigrants will be the population who can work on building these prototypes
- Many orgs present today will share these ideas with their organizations/associations
- Looking for property – vacant factories and space to create new factories
- Looking for investors & orgs that will benefit from the this company
Session #3: How can we service teenage youth in the Skylands region to value the cultural and natural resources?

Convener: Kristin Muller

Participants: Ed Fritsch, Paul Meacham, Oliver Spellman, Catherine Rust, Jared Janish, Brian Mok, Mary Saarman, Gloria Kieley, Mitzi Campbell

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):

Interactive History
Challenge:
- Focus of teens in inward
- Oversubscribed in Time
- Any project has to be about THEM
- FORMAT
  - Get in Schools
    - Contact PTAs & curriculum Directors
    - Board of Ed, and teachers
    - Link to cross curricular activity

Distance and transportation

- How TO ENGAGE:
- Ask them how and what
- Ad to be in their terms
- Together they are productive w/ each other
- The breakout into smaller focus groups
- Personality what people are interested in
- Oral History Project – connect personally
- Show pride linked to breaking walls down
- --- recued but potential very inspiring
- School assemblies
- School clubs
- There has to be a connection
- Have to have FOLLOW Through
- Motive staff – school boards & PTA
• Show what is available RIGHT NOW
• Ask them to participate
• Information and opportunities Available. Ranger visits invites to participate
• YOUTH COUNCIL (National Parks system) MODEL for getting students engages
• Provides a LEADERSHIP opportunities.
• Ask students for technology expertise in the field
• Make the connection visible: WHY do I need this?

2.) Who else do we want to invite? (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
• Invite Youth Councils
• PTA

3.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
• Historical society reach out to leaders in the school system (youth)
• Find a listing of FBLI Contacts/teachers – send to History and Parks representative
• Go straight to the board with all these field trip ideas (and connections to student participation)
• Make it DIVERSE
• Connect with leadership groups  FBLA
• Have Youth Council created
• Connect with History Theater arts clubs
• Board of Ed Teachers Parent Organizations
• Foster field Trips – diverse options
• Making information and opportunities available – ranger visits invite to participate
Session #4: How can we bridge the generation gap by restoring the connection between young adults and the seniors in our community?

Convener: Dave Woods

Participants: Nancy Paffendorf, Jonathan Andrews, Meghan Hunscher, Megan Miller, Brittany Weinstein, Scott Morley, Denise English, Dave Woods

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):

We need to find common grounds/interests – activities that can be shared

Challenges -
- Senior Communities defeat the opportunity to interact by keeping Seniors segregated
- These two groups initially lack common interests, are fearful of how they are perceived by the other.
- Time constraints keep many from getting involved with the other
- No way to know how to get involved

Opportunities –
- Colleges offer a chance for interaction
  - Senior/youth shared housing for exchange students
  - Interviews and written history of life experience open up channels of discussion
  - Volunteer opportunities to assist seniors with day to day activities (rideshares)
  - Adopt-a-grandparent language can be condescending
  - Auditing classes – shared learning experience in the classroom would benefit both
- Activities/Clubs for shared interests
  - Dinners/cooking classes
  - Knitting, sewing, needlepoint, etc. (Passing skills on to the next generation)
  - History and mementos from earlier times
  - Playing board games
  - Interactive Game shows – including both age groups
    ▪ Jeopardy, Family Feud, Wheel of fortune
- Develop a database for people to people with similar interest to connect.
- We don’t want to lose this link to the past
- Patience, understanding and compassion is needed

2.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:

Nancy Paffendorf (Centenary College) and Dave Woods (HOTGS Senior Community) will meet to discuss establishing a coalition/opportunities for further involvement
Session #5: How do we create an environment that supports children/students?

Convener: Gloria Kieley

Participants: Mary Saarman, Brian Mok, Jared Janish

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):
   - Create a culture that welcomes and supports.
   - Make CONNECTIONS with teachers, current course work and the future
   - Advocate
   - Create opps for students to feel they BELONG to the school and in school.
   - Create opps for students to feel that they have a stake in what they learn.
   - Lessen distractions and increase inspiration from faculty, community, families, friends.

2.) Who else do we want to invite? (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
   - Students, teachers, community leaders, school administrations, psychologists, social workers, education experts.
Session #6: How to take advantage of the Beauty of the Skylands Region?

Convener: Julia Somers

Participants: Janine Munoz, Sara Brelvi, Mitzi Campbell, Kathy Haake

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):
1. Make region more tourist friendly:
   a. Need Tourism Bureau (like Morris County)
   b. Connect hiking trails (public lands, a private where connectivity needed)
   c. Make campgrounds more attractive
2. Promote the region:
   Who benefits:
   What is in it for me?
   How can State Government benefit?
   a. Need Tourism Bureau
   b. Attract visitors from greater metro areas
   c. ADVERTISE through both state and county levels/MARKET region
   d. Use social media
   e. Establish standards that are supportable
3. Where will people stay:
   a. Hotels
   b. Bed and breakfasts (must be permitted by local ordinance!)
   c. Camp grounds
   d. Friends/family
4. What will people do when visiting? How will they spend their time/money?
   a. Hike
   b. Antiques
   c. Photography
   d. Agro-tourism
   e. Eco-tourism
   f. Eat local foods
   g. Visit: restaurants
      Craft beer breweries
      Parks
      Farms
      Vineyards
      Boating
      Fishing
      Cycling
Sports
Museums
Historical sites
ATV park
h. Hunting
i. Festivals
j. Pick Your Own (fruits, vegetables, Christmas trees)
i. Motor/motor cycle touring
5. Promote parks (state, county, municipal, private)
a. Historical
b. Themed events
c. Special interest tours
d. Arts
e. Theatre
6. How to get people who live here to love/appreciate this region:
a. School (at all levels) field trips
b. Media should focus more on region
c. Encourage volunteer participation/support for local sites/events
d. Appreciate quality/encourage high standards
e. Promote education at all ages/levels
f. Work with local community colleges

2.) Who are the Collaborators?
- Residents
- Government – state, county, local
- Visitors
- Tourism Bureaus
- Agricultural Boards
- Craft beer brewers

3.) Who else do we want to invite? (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
- Across all interest groups (farmers, educators, media, government agencies, non-profit groups, residents, small business owners, chambers of commerce, craft beer brewers, etc.)
4.) **Immediate Actions/Next Steps:**
   - Establish Tourism Bureau
   - Market/advertise
   - Support legislation making it easier for craft beer brewers to sell their product

5.) **What resources would be useful in moving forward?** *(human, technological, financial, etc.)*
   - Media
   - Social media
   - Government leadership
   - Non-profit support
Session #7: How can we utilize and promote Local Food?

Convener: Kate Munning

Participants: Leigh Ann Von Hagen, Mitzi Campbell, Jonathan Cloud, Kate Yaskovic, Sue Zukoski, Andrea Kirchuk, Jane Pumeriano, Kathy Haake, Bill Leavens, Michael “G” Giacomantori, Greg Gorman

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):

- Food pantries: challenges of making fresh food available, storage and refrigeration issues, control and communication, how to find them (Foodshed Alliance is compiling a food asset map for North Jersey right now)
- Promoting organic food—overcoming the perception that it’s only for wealthy people
- Technical support, marketing for farmers; training for new farmers
- Can we use the tools of Slow Money/Financial Permaculture to promote food in our region?
- Importance of consumer education to emphasize local food, farms, local businesses—healthier choices, keeping money in town strengthens local economy, supports small and family businesses
- Finding balance between big box stores and local businesses
- Improving consumer accessibility to locally grown and produced foods is critical, especially to people with limited time, budgets, attention spans
- How do we build the infrastructure to support local food businesses and educate consumers?
- Mt Olive Area Chamber of Commerce could address this next year (Andrea and Kate)
- Adding value to locally grown food through processing (marketing to restaurants, alcohol distillation, nutritive dehydration) can help local farms
- Marketing local businesses—we need to harness the diversity of different media (print, radio, TV, online, social media billboards) to be effective
- Start educating kids (middle school or earlier) about farming being a career option; offer training at local colleges, Genesis and NOFA-NJ have apprentice programs that do this
- Teaching kids about the value of food and where it comes from can help
- Local foods in the schools—dealing with Sodexho and other vendors, how to make this happen, who will do the work?
- What would a regional food system look like? Would it be a physical location? A cooperative of farmers? A network of local businesses?

2.) Who is taking the Lead?

We’re all doing our part, many of us are talking about our roles in this huge, overwhelming problem. Kate, Andrea, Bill, and Sue will be following up to take these ideas further after this conference.
3.) Who are the Collaborators?
   We all are! Everyone who eats, and especially those who produce food.

4.) Who else do we want to invite? (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
   - Farmers
   - Restaurateurs
   - Municipal governments

5.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
   Kate and Andrea will be having a conversation about connecting food producers with each other and with government in the Mt Olive area and in Warren County. Bill and Kate will be talking about how the Watershed Association and their headquarters (currently being renovated) can be used as a site.

6.) What resources would be useful in moving forward? (human, technological, financial, etc.)
   - Human: Consumer education is huge, getting people to bring their attention back to their local community to fulfill their needs. Getting farmers to work together and with other business owners. Getting local government to support and promote local food.
   - Financial: A regional food cooperative would act as a focal point and a clearing house for both producers and consumers, offering support and resources to overtaxed and overwhelmed producers and giving consumers an easy, affordable, and convenient point of access. A co-op makes marketing, branding, and fundraising easier. This is happening on a larger scale in NJ (with the Rutgers Food Innovation Center and the Delaware Bay Oyster Coop), but we need to bring these efforts to smaller producers.

7.) Next Meeting:
   Not sure, but cards were traded, contact info was exchanged, and several action items were identified for follow up.
Session #8: How do we improve and promote our trails network?

Convener: Laura Szwak

Participants: Megan Kelly, Gerry Scharfenberger, Laura Szwak, Sandie DiDomenico, Paulette Hussey, Jennifer Kavanaugh, Leigh Ann Von Hagen

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Need maps of existing & planned trails—to identify gaps, highlight existing, promote connections
- Need to superimpose trails on data layer of preserved lands—a layer that does not exist currently
- Need to have convincing evidence (research, working models, etc.) that trails provide economic benefits, health benefits, essential values for healthy communities
- Promote & show that trails are ESSENTIAL infrastructure to promote healthy communities
- Barriers continue to be neighbors, private property owners who fear for their safety because trails are used by the public, even those with nefarious intentions.
- Biggest resistance to trails (at least in suburbs) is safety for children. Research is available to show trail safety but adequate research is still needed, esp. for economic development benefits.
- Need to “program” using existing trails—guided hikes, engage bike clubs to develop routes, show routes that lead to community resources such as the local diner, grocery, parks, libraries, farm markets, history routes, etc.
- Promote the Complete Street policies—town by town. Encourage towns to visit others that have engaged in this policy to show how it works (Somerville was listed as an example of a good model, walkable community & the businesses in the town support the policies because their business grows). These policies are engaged in town by town. We’d like to promote ped/bike options as a requisite for obtaining public funding—to build these facilities as part of the infrastructure of the town.
- There is no parks & recreation dept in Sussex. This dept could oversee development & maintenance of trails & support trails that connect.
- Tie in trails with the North Jersey Health Collaborative—continuing the linkage of trail accessibility for all ages & abilities to sustain health for residences. Ties in the medical community.
- Trails recognized as essential infrastructure to make places attractive for living, working and playing.
- Trails often become politically partisan issues, esp. in Morris, Warren and Sussex Cos.
- Emulate Massachusetts & California—Create “County Healthy Community Coordinators”. Connect these coordinators to land use boards/officials.
- Tie DCA funds to incorporating walking/biking facilities. Add “healthy outcomes” to the funding checklist, again something done in other states and by the metropolitan planning organization.
- One participant said that each person should promote this idea with their constituents—whether it is to promote health with medical personnel, create exciting places with historic and art features, local businesses recognizing that their customer base may grow if people could access their business in various ways.
• Some state transportation funding (didn’t record the funding source) that requires 10% of the grant to be used for bike/ped options have been allowed to be used for maintenance, i.e. diverted.
• NJ is #2 in the nation for the amount of obese low income children. Yet this group gets other state funding to address health care for these children. It would be a great research project to show how much state funding could be saved if trails, recreation facilities & places for these children to be active were readily accessible in the community. Would also promote healthy practices for all community residents.
• Add provisions to zoning ordinances.
• Network communities, using Morris Canal Greenway process.
• Arrange for tours of communities that incorporate safe ped/bike options.
• COAH (& other provisions for state funding) should evaluate the use of the funds to show health outcomes.
• Engage pharmaceuticals to help. Braille trail in Mt. Olive listed as example. New Brunswick should be the healthiest community in the nation!
• Create trails to build on the region’s attraction as destinations for second homes. B&Bs supportive of trail networks that connect them (like the Vermont model).
• Trails create sustainable economic development—i.e. accomplishing long distance trails segments at a time.
• Develop guides, such as backroads of NJ, to highlight the region.
• Look to neighboring states & how they use trails & how they realized econ development benefits.
• Recognize trails as alternate transportation routes, i.e. Seasonal workers riding bikes getting to jobs. Right now, hazardous conditions in sharing roads.
Session #9: Can a regional Skylands plan help the individual counties?

Convener: Robert Hathaway, Jr

Participants: Nancy Madasci, Kathleen Robbins, Lisa Brett, Andrea Kirchuk, Jim Sheldon, Jonathan Andrews, Megan Kelly, Gerry Scharfenberger, Kristen Muller

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- How to compete with other NJ regions?
- How to brand the Skylands?
  - How is it defined?
  - What are the municipal needs?
  - How to combat the large population exodus? Especially among those under 40 years old
  - Local bids/munis are competing for shrinking market share
  - How attract visitors, residents and businesses?
  - Challenges: Highlands restrictions, regulations, taxes, signage, loss of population due to pharmas moving further away

- What to market? The value of living in this region
- Region lacks cultural quality of life, lacks mass transit (trains)
- What’s unique about this region? Create a regional brand, that allows municipalities to differentiate

- Who is the customer? Who are we marketing the region to?
  - Customer of convenience?
  - Service oriented? Service industries location are driven by demographics: income, educational attainment.
  - Goods oriented?

- What are the attractors of the Skylands region?
  - Agro/eco-tourism (NOFA example) → entrepreneurial
  - The reality: farms are closing, eco-tourism creates low-paying seasonal jobs
  - Non-outsourceable assets: mountains, scenery, history/arts, national park

- Revenue sources: hotel tax, business retention surveys, the importance of the strategic partner
- Create a Skylands Master Plan to define the region needs and marketing
  - Jobs
  - Transportation
  - Farming
- Education
- Zoning/Planning
- Premium Branding
Session #10: Fostering Clean Energy & Resilience?

**Convener:** Jonathan Cloud

**Participants:** Bill Leavens, Ed Fritsch, Gil Roessner, Greg Gorman, Jane Pumeriano, Julie Gause, Laura Szwak, Gloria Kieley

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1.) **Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):**

- Biggest obstacle is lack of awareness and communication. Need more PR, and to get people excited about new technologies
- Not immediate, but part of the answer may be 4th generation nuclear technology (thorium reactors)
- Decoupling utility rates from consumption, so the utilities don’t have an incentive to always sell more
- Widespread misconceptions, e.g., about how to finance solar
- The reality vs. the promise
- Industry opposition (e.g., from the fossil fuel industries)
- Problems with backup generators, which many people installed after Sandy
- Geothermal – is it viable in NJ?

- Key is making it affordable, expediting approvals, and fostering distributed generation

2.) **Who is taking the Lead?**

- Contractors
- Town Councils
- Counties
- Nonprofits like the Sierra Club
Session #11: How can we create & maintain cool, hip, vibe (vibrant) and healthy communities/downtowns to inspire people to want to live/be in the area?

Convener: Mitzi Campbell & Leigh Ann Von Hagen

Participants: Gina Pierson, Sandie DiDomenico, Megan Miller, Jennifer Kavanaugh, Kate Yaskovic, Paulette Hussey, Suzanne Ishee, Leander Lacy, Brittany Weinstein, Danny Campos, Lori Lawrence, Steve Fredericks, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Meghan Hunscher, Tom Romano, Scott Morley, Kathy Haake, Tom Werder, Kate Munning, Denise English, Dave Wood

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Identify assets including:
- Baseball
- Theater
- Farms
- Markets
- Skiing
- Hiking
- Trails
- Bicycling
- Hotels/ B&Bs
- Resorts
- Wineries/breweries
- Antiquing
- Fishing/Boating
- Forest & rivers
- Historic sites
- Clean Air
- State Fair
- Colleges to bring youth population
- Downtown areas (underutilized/ unattractive)

Needs
- More B&Bs
- Overcome fear of change
- Public transportation and non-motorized transportation connectivity
- Promoting college towns
• Quality of shopping
  o (diversity of shops)
  o Quality of products
  o Diversity of products
• Lack of nightlife
• A way to root/keep millennials in the area
• Get people to spend and keep money in area (Buy Local)
• Gathering places (coffee shops, roof-top dining, patio dining, pubs)
• Linking colleges to towns
• Forming partnerships between businesses (large and small) and town core.
• Proper balance of parking (assess the need but don’t kill a down vibrancy with too much)
• Address isolation (of seniors, college students, teens, those who can’t drive, etc.)

• Community groups that address ethnic & cultural diversity

What makes a vibrant community?
• Walkable
• Bikeable
• Access to trails
• Access to arts/music and cultural events
• Areas where you can live, work and play
• Diversity of (people, ages, backgrounds, families)
• Meets the needs of people 8 to 80
• Good schools
• Good transportation options
• Teen hangout
• Places for seniors to socialize
• Sense of adventure

2.) Who are the Collaborators?
• Community leaders (elected)
• Planners (municipal, county, regional, state)
• Creative community (arts)
• Faith-based
• Educational community
• Businesses (small and large)
• NGOs / non-profits
• Municipal and county staff and consultants
3.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:

- Make region wide plan
- Attract and keep people
- Connect isolated events
- Improve perception of area as “the boonies” “I had no idea this was here!”
- Integrate generations
- Develop our existing downtowns to provide outdoor dining, festivals, gathering places, music and arts and nightlife etc…
- Bring attention to existing resources
- Evaluate parking/ over/under
- Strengthen community based businesses

GOALS/INTENDED RESULTS

- Improve/maintain a balance in property value
- Make people want to come to “hang out,” have fun, shop… stay the weekend… linger after an activity or event
- Improve quality… upscale does not have to mean expensive
- Zoning standards, standards of design, signage, way-finding, taste, style, balance, affordable, sustainable, clean (no eyesores) and nice
- Connect to city councils/ planners, officials
- Building the town for people, not for vehicles…
- Tasteful aesthetic
- Tie to history and natural beauty
- Model who we want to be
- Make it about the experience… inspire people to create an experience… visitors, business, programmers… bring people together who wouldn’t normally get together
- Create a HUB
- Encourage local communities to maintain continuity across administration changes

4.) What resources would be useful in moving forward? (human, technological, financial, etc.)

- Asset mapping
- Regional planning… bring counties and towns to work together
- Youth involvement
- Tourism board
- Senior involvement
- Regional transportation plan
- Look to emulate model towns
- Identify core businesses; what “should” be in town/area (regional small business incubator program)
- Beware of box stores that take money out of the community
- Develop best practice for standards of design/style/streetscaping
- Technology: availability of public wifi, marketing, social media,
Session #12: How to Increase School Pride throughout the Skylands Region?

Convener: Brian Mok and Jared Janish

Participants: Janine Munoz, Oliver Spellman, Sue Zukoski, Nancy Paffendorf, Gloria Kieley, Kathy Naasz

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):
   - Find uniqueness
   - Student led activities
   - Make people proud of their school
   - Instagram page
   - Make leaders
   - Groups do things together (People come together) for community

2.) Who is taking the Lead?
   - Brian Mok and Jared Janish

3.) Who are the Collaborators?
   - Brian Mok and Jared Janish

4.) Who else do we want to invite? (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
   - Different types of students and Board of Education

5.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
   - Instagram page and talking to administration about our different ideas

6.) What resources would be useful in moving forward? (human, technological, financial, etc.)
   - Cooperation with the administration and the community

7.) Next Meeting:
   - Action required before having the next meeting 😊
Session #13: How can we better user (and value) the arts as an economic engine for our communities and region?

Convener: Catherine Rust/ Paul Meachum

Participants: Gina Pierson, Jonathan Andrews, Jim Sheldon, Nancy Paffendorf, Janine Munoz, Kate Yaskovic, Brittany Weinstein, Mary Saarman, Tom Werder, Kristin Muller, Gil Roessner, Scott Morley

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:
Communicate the TRANSFORMATIVE value of the arts better
Need to teach WHAT ART IS (younger generation)
Need to describe the benefit of the arts to our civilization
How does art facilitate creative Problem Solving (in any discipline?)
Takes us out of VIRTUAL REALITY
  - Fostering collaboration
  - Human connections
  - Ties us together as community
  - Learning EMPATHY
QUALITY is an issue (Juried?)

Pro/Amateur issue (is everyone an artist?)
“Meet Me in Morristown” MODEL - $20 vendor fee, 3rd Thursday each month; Artists line the sidewalks (starts in afternoon with sidewalk sales by businesses.

Value
Artists meet each other
Brings families and consumers to town who meet up and mingle with the bar crowd (connections)

Communicate PERSONAL CREATIVITY value of the arts

How can we bring to the Skylands?
ORGANIZE (capitalize on existing ideas)
  - Boonton Art Galleries  1st Fridays
  - Meet me in Morristown
    o Invite these artists to participate in “Meet me in Newton” (2nd Thurs), “Meet me in Hackettstown, (1st Thurs), etc. etc.
  - Share lists of artists? State Wide LISTSERVE for Artists?
How do we get artists involved?
- Create a relationship with Artists
- Free alcohol (meeting invitation!)

Entrepreneurship
Requires Town Ordinance – Special Permit to allow “pan handling” on one day each month.

Consider;
Risk to artists’ work (valuable pottery, etc., which can be damaged)

Who are the consumers?
Regular business employees often seek out art in their off-hours

Collision of difference groups (bar crowd with families, etc.) – as a good thing!
(More like a European model)

First Fridays in PHILLY
So big that even college students not attend in large numbers (unexpected age group>
Session #14: How can people communicate on local issues?

Convener: Bill Leavens

Participants: Kate Manning, Tom Romano, Danny Campos, Lori Fredericks, Gloria Kieley, Jane Pumeriano

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Thinking of print medium but whatever happens is going to be web-based.
- Who is going to be referee? How are discussions going to be relevant?
- Low cost, cobble together in modular fashion, who is going to do the work and who is going to continue to do the work.
- Generate revenue. Somebody has to get paid.
- Straus has a good model with demographics that show it can’t expand.
- Dodge Foundation, local media project. Studying successful models.
- How do people get their news? 10 years ago bought the star-ledger every day.
- social media,
- Relevant to your life.
- USA Today on line. NYT.
- Connecting with each other to share ideas on a regional basis. Subscription-based here’s the news, with forums.
- NJ.com regionalizes.
- We send out email blasts all the time. People aren’t opening. Sending out postcards.
- Things are deeply flawed. Meetup, use all the time. Turned me on to things I didn’t know were going on in my area, connecting like-minded people. Now charging. Nobody wants to pay. Danny joined one group that closed because of charges.
- Could do a Facebook group. Hackettstown Life is a mess, but people get their news from. Public forum, loosely moderated. Super active. Lots of people get their news. Lots of people use. H’town BID posts under several different names, under the radar. Useful for local biz, govt and organizations.
- If on Facebook, you’re going to see it. Nostalgia thing. Turns into a grievance fest.
- How do we harness the good stuff? Feel they are being heard.
- Are these the folks you would pay attention to in the first place?
- People don’t know about the things I’m working hard to promote.
- A conversation needs to be had, useful conversation.
- Unless it’s edited.
- All Patch is the paid views. Useless click-bait.
- Controversy, people buy the tabloids. But at one point want to get real info.
- Weekly newspapers serve a lot of that function, buy life happens a lot more quickly. Something moderated, edited, email distribution, links to moderated forums. Revenue model. Got to be subscription. Was a model where people would buy their news?
• They don’t realize it’s not the same product. Going to be nearly impossible to get people to pay for a new service. Get them to feel a part of something. Model after meet up with a personal component. Tended to be liberal crunchy people and libertarians. Have to offer something special.
• Is meet-up a reference?
• Other people are piggybacking on meetup, Create a mini-org within meet up. Invite Center for the New American Dream.
• How plug into each other.
• People who pay are the organizers. Center for the New American Dream is a sponsor...
• At one point everybody’s got to pay. MWA has one and pays for it. Cheap enough. Part of marketing effort. Getting new people aware of us.
• Homogeneous community.
• New Jersey Avenue, works in a discreetly defined community. Lot of people use the town website. No outreach from the website. Email goes out. Not every day going to go to a website. See something and read about it.
• Times has alerts.
• Evening. There is no more evening newspaper. Danny, is no right time.
• Depends on the topic.
• Targeting might come in handy. This is going on in your town.
• Something like the Growing Stage, needs advance ticket sales.
• 4,000 emails weekly, of which 22% are opened.
• What has been proven to work?
• The barbershop is still quite successful.
• Person to person. People cocooning. People watch TV. Not subject to local info.
• What parameters. Mostly news. Events. Entertainment. People who are or want to be engaged in their community
• Self-selecting. If have click links within can measure what goes into other sites.
• Something to take the place of the morning newspaper.
• Option of an in-person component. Meet like-minded singles in your area. Offer something different. Meet around a certain topic. Topical components under that umbrella.
• Region can’t decide what it is.
• Online social site free set it up. Post monitor post. Have to differentiate your side.
• Facebook.
• Skylands region. Tons of groups out there. Getting people to this area. Focus on what the Skylands region is.
• What you need to know is your tagline, with links. Canvas every site. NJ Avenue tried to cut a deal with NJ Transit to go for bus info. They didn’t like us.
• Do we throw out a question at the end?
• How does it get paid for? Maybe the solution is to go to Newhouse.
Session #15: Multiple Benefits of Nature to Communities in the Skylands Region?

Convener: Leander Lacy

Participants: Greg Gorman, Oliver Spellman, Jennifer Kavanaugh, Sandi DiDomenico, Lisa Brett, Gerry Scharfenberger, Suzanne Ishee

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Benefits of Nature to Communities:
- Health and Wellness
- Aesthetics
- Species Habitat
- Economic
  - Vendors
  - Rentals
  - Hotel Stay
  - Tourism
- Regeneration
  - Fresh Air
  - Forested Land
  - Habitat
  - Water Purity
- Media
  - Topics to cover
  - Communication of assets to outside world
- Community Building
- Tourism
  - Appalachian Trail
  - Hiking
  - Skiing
  - Biking
  - Ice Skating
  - Kayaking
  - Canoeing
  - Tour Guides
- Agrotourism
- Therapeutic
- Job Creation
• Stress Reduction
• Vitamin D
• Agrobusiness

What are we doing currently?
• Duke Farms is subsidizing river restoration
• Newton is creating water parks to revitalize rivers
• Dam removal
• Returning of migratory fish species
• Flood reduction projects
• Foodshed Alliance is working with farms and restaurants
• CSAs – Public linking to farms

What are we missing out on?
• Health/Exercise benefits
  - Getting fit
  - Reducing insurance costs
  - Providing access for all abilities
• Nature-based experiences for personal growth
  - Increased Intelligence and Creativity
• Promoting our Food and Water assets
  - We are a source of clean water
  - We have farmland that feeds families

What can we do to be more inclusive of communities to invest in nature and restoration?
• Work with the recreational businesses to promote cross promotion
• Environmental groups could join Chamber of Commerce
• Environmental groups should invite other groups to environmental meetings/workshops
• All groups must be willing to work across boundaries
  - Natural assets aren’t limited to a township or county
• Look for opportunities to influence policy
  - Watershed Plan
  - Storm water Runoff
  - Improving local economy
• Get involved in local/county/state planning process
  - Look at both the positive and negative impacts of all decisions
  - Go beyond the short-term benefits (e.g. installing a road or bridge, allowing Wal-Marts)
  - Planning should include environmental, health, non-motorized, and other considerations to be more comprehensive and reduce future impacts
  - All levels of gov’t need to collaborate
  - Bring in health experts
- Create an inventive program that gives more money to projects that are comprehensive and include the multiple benefits of nature

2. Who is taking the Lead?

Leander Lacy will look at a way to incorporate this information and look for an appropriate project that will begin to link various groups together and explore ways to quantify the multiple benefits of nature to communities in the Skylands Region
Session #16: To gain awareness and action on economic viability of region to gain economic sustainability for businesses and individuals?

Convener: Kathleen Naasz

Participants: Meghan Hunscher, Andrea Kirchuk, Denise English, Paulette Hussey, Kathleen Robins, Robert Hathaway, Megan Miller, Sue Zukoski

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Jobs
- 34% commuting outside the country for work

Why here?
- Easy access to highways
- Proximity (NYC, Phil.)
- Colleges

Charlotte Case Study
- Small stores not big box?

Co working Space
- Connecting skills that we already have
- “make the collisions occur”

Inventory
- What we have right now
  - Wild West City
  - Land of Make Believe

Meetup.com for Warren County
- Entrepreneurs
- Garden State Women

Student Skills
- Technology
- Writing
- Communications (Verbal)
- Professional Image
  - Dress
  - Behavior
- Social Media for business
  - Your offering, your audience
  - Awareness (ESL)
Identify Areas:

- Demographics
- Lower price per square ft. higher population density
- Transportation quotient
- What type of business does this attract?
- Understand our uniqueness
- Pockets of tourism
  - Farm to Fork
  - Bike trails
Session #17: Housing, employment, recreation...how do we connect the disabled community?

Convener: Sue Zukoski

Participants: Kathleen Robbins, Lisa Brett, Lori Lawrence, Mary Saarman

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):
- Create communication for towns counties and businesses for listing volunteer ops
- Use families as resource of what is accessible what is a good experience
- Work with local schools to share resources...did you know forum (sharing resources)
- Creation of website for Skylands region of ADA compliant recreation, housing, shopping and employment opps
- Social media technology – a central site for sharing where the good experience is.
- Are towns accessible – educate on the resources and partnership opportunities
- Skylands Tourism – a listing of what tourism attractions are ADA accessible, disabled friendly
- Linking transportation across counties and towns
- Educating employers on work opportunity tax credits

2.) Who are the Collaborators?
- NJ Disabilities resources
- County Human Services disabled and senior services
- Local non profits
- Skylands Tourism and visitNJ.org

3.) Who else do we want to invite? (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
- The business community, local officials

4.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
- Sharing business website links to disabilities websites – driving traffic to each other’s business
- Look for existing resources for sharing information

5.) What resources would be useful in moving forward? (human, technological, financial, etc.)
- Educating employers and businesses on resources and partnering with the disabled community
Session #18: How do we encourage entrepreneurship and the “maker” economy for sustainable economic development for the next generation?

Convener: Meghan Hunscher

Participants: Janine Munoz, Sandie Di Domenico, Jennifer Kavanaugh, Nancy Paffendorf, Jim Sheldon, Tom Romano, Steve Fredericks, Danny Campos, Megan Kelly, Kristin Muller, Scott Morley, Tim Rowe, Brittany Weinstein, Megan Miller, Paul Meacham, Robert Hathaway, Kate Morning, Tom Werder, Bill Ceareos, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, Kathy Naasz, Oliver Spellman

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Challenges to entrepreneurship and maker culture:

- Taxes
- Inhospitable regulatory environment (e.g. too expensive, barriers to entry high)
- Lack of support from local government (e.g. expensive permitting process, inability to answer questions about starting a business or connecting with resources)
- Real estate is expensive
- Competition from on-line stores
- Parking constraints
- High rent and inability of landlords to budge on rent
- Need for capital investment
- Disparate geographic areas prevents creative “collusions” from occurring.

Opportunities

- Tax underutilized property
- Program to encourage / subsidize occupancy of empty buildings
- Have a contest for occupying empty space
- Have a “shark tank” type of event
- Offer services from local colleges to jumpstart business with website presence
- Use public relations strategy to attract diversity of people
- Create engagement and outreach initiative
- Provide shared work spaces and resources like “tech soup”

2.) Who is taking the Lead?
• Non-profit established for the Skylands region to bring together Counties and leverage resources for the region

3.) Who are the Collaborators?
• Counties, residents, businesses, schools and universities, government officials (local and state), non-profits

4.) Who else do we want to invite? (individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
• See number 3

5.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
• Identify the lead organization and create a strategic plan for moving forward.

6.) What resources would be useful in moving forward? (human, technological, financial, etc.)
• Human, technological, financial – resources of higher education, investors with seed capital, professionals with skill sets in marketing and PR
Session #19: How do we reduce traffic congestion?

Convener: Greg Gorman

Participants: Leigh Ann Van Hagen, Brian Mok, Jared Janish

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):
   a. Traffic Congestion Participants
      i. Commuters to Work
      ii. Commuters to School
      iii. Short trips less than a quarter mile for any other reason
   b. Opportunity to reduce congestion
      i. Bike racks for school buses
      ii. Jitney buses
      iii. Carpool Opportunities
      iv. WAZE
      v. Study regarding suburb to suburb commuting
      vi. Raise gas taxes.

2.) Who are the Collaborators?
   • Regarding school bus policy: School boards, PTA, student Council, student clubs, and municipalities
     (insure safe bikeways and walk ways)
   • Regarding Jitney Buses Municipalities/County. TriCounty Trans Options, Chamber of Commerce. Use
     Faith based groups to help communicate opportunities and program

3.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
   • Develop events to encourage walking and biking to school
   • Consider remote drop off point for all bused students to walk ¼ mile school. Students who walk to
     school do better in school. Walk makes student alert.
Session #20: How to reach the underserved population to gain health care in our region?

Convener: Paulette Hussey

Participants: Denise English, Andrea Kirchuk, Gloria Kieley, Mitzi Campbell, Kate Yaskovic, Nancy Madacsi

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):
   - First thing is to be proactive on living healthy, be more informed and educated
   - Culture-
   - Who are the underserved?
     - Undocumented
     - Farmworkers- migrant workers
     - Unemployed
     - Reach out to Social Services, Homeless Connect and Churches
   - Outreach to Prenatal Clinics
   - Develop trust
   - Identify **Local Leaders**
   - Reach out to Bodegas and Asian Markets and Farms
   - Hand out Flyers to inform Healthcare providers, Housing Groups, NAMI
   - Outreach to other nonprofits agencies
   - Reach out to Dr. Bonnet( Located in Franklin, N.J)
   - Reach out to the local Libraries to get information to the underserved.
   - Contacting school nurses
   - Overcoming prejudice
   - Education
   - Streamlining of the system
   - Place Healthcare information on agencies databases
   - **Negative** experiences prevent doctor visits
   - Need an advocate mentality
   - Boosting the economy
   - Depression fosters drug use
   - Behavioral Health issues
   - Accessibility to Providers
   - Speck with one voice for all

2.) Who are the Collaborators?
   - All Participants
3.) **Who else do we want to invite?** *(individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)*
   - Local Leaders
   - School Nurses
   - Local Libraries
   - Call Local Representatives

4.) **Immediate Actions/Next Steps:**
   - Giving information to the Libraries
   - Reaching out to Social Services
   - Reaching out to the Mental Health Agencies and Community
   - Reaching out to the Churches
   - Reach out to Prenatal Clinic
   - Handout Flyers to Bodegas, Asian Markets and Farms

5.) **What resources would be useful in moving forward?** *(human, technological, financial, etc.)*
   - Trying to educate communities with handing out information on the services the State and Federal government provides.
DAY TWO

Session #21: Go Jump in the Lake - new branding for the region?

Convener: Steve Frederick

Participants: Jim Sheldon, Danny Campos, Lori Lawrence, Andrea Kirchuk, Nancy Madasci, Kate Yaskovic, Suzanne Ishee, Robert Hathaway

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - The Skylands designation is too big covering 5 counties with too many competing agendas with an unclear brand.
   - We need to take ownership of the area we represent, disconnect from the State designation and establish a new brand and slogan.
   - We can establish the brand by taking a unique feature of our region like the lakes that exist in Sussex, Warren and Morris Counties and build out from there to develop support.
   - Identify our assets like: mines, railroads, canals, outdoor activities, wineries, history, resorts, arts, crafts, farming and link them to the new brand.
   - We connect the dots by highlighting the “nature our area promotes.”
   - Establish our destination points that immediately connect to the new brand then the $ market will follow creating a trickle-down effect that could potential spread into the entire communities served.
   - How do we communicate the new concept or identity? Steps defined were:
     o Set up a group from this conference.
     o Make direct contact with Chambers in the area.
     o Utilize social media.
     o Take commerce centers that immediately connect to slogan and build out.
     o Contact social profit groups for support and action.
Session #22: How can we save, promote and leverage Agriculture (Agri-business, Agri-tourism)?

Convener: Dave Woods

Participants: Sue Zukoski, Andrea Kirchuk, Gil Roessner, Jim Sheldon

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:
Agriculture is one of our most identifiable assets – we should preserve the historic aspect while developing new opportunities

Agri-tourism –
- Christmas tree cutting, Pumpkin picking, Apple orchards, Hayrides, corn mazes
- Growing the farmers market concept
- Festivals, charity events, holidays
- B&Bs providing the farm experience (Farm-cation)
- Historic preservation (non-profit, Luscroft, Alstead, etc.)

Agri-Business –
- Connecting growers with markets (farm to fork)
- Specialty/niche opportunities (raising buffalo for cheese, Barley hop & grain for Craft brewers)
- Utilize vacant office space for hydroponic (Abilities is working with hydro growers to harvest crops)
- Land trusts buying distribution centers nearer the farms

Opportunities –
- Agriculture curriculum in County colleges
- Superfarms offering more than just agriculture (Tranquility, Donaldsons, Windy Brow, etc.)
- Education and rehabilitation experiences for at risk students
- Space lends itself to Solar (Green) Energy
Session #23: How do we help young people to make connections and get inspired to impact their future life work (career) and our area?

Convener: Gloria Kieley

Participants: Kathy Naasz, Megan Miller, Brittany Weinstein, Tim Rune, Kathleen Robbins, Lisa Brett, Mitzi Campbell, Scott Morley, Jared Janish, Bill Leavens

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Schools may be becoming institutionalized systems that may be squelching creativity and encouraging the development of independence.

There is a need to increase student awareness of the world outside of their bubble

There is a limited connection and availability of resources/experiences between local High Schools and Colleges/Community Colleges

It is important to increase awareness in students by meeting them where they are and where they want to be reached

Important to build desire and internal motivation though connections

Focus: How do we build connections to increase communication between local HS and community colleges and 4 year colleges to support them and hopefully keep them in the area?

First Steps:
1. To find ways to get into schools – make connections with leaders, exchange contact info
2. Arrange meetings – in person and online
3. Develop and present programs to build exposure to the outside world using people at the colleges, community colleges, local business sharing their experience
4. Help the students become AWARE of opportunities to evolve and contribute
5. Contact the schools and discuss options of presenting during Summer School, lunch periods, give TED talks, classroom visits
6. Develop “Magic Makers and Money” - use the talent at Centenary College, Sussex Community College, and Scott Morley to present the introductory program that will be used to begin the process
Session #24: Optimal Mix of Profit, Non-profit and Governmental entities to revive communities?

Convener: Jonathan Andrews

Participants: Gina Pierson, Megan Kelly, Ed Fritsch, Jennifer Kavanaugh, Jared Janish, Paul Meacham, Denise English, Paulette Hussey

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - Cooperation between all three is critical.
   - Government buy-in necessary for progress.
   - Incentives can be provided to encourage ‘for-profit’ businesses
   - Proliferation of non-profits, many spend much effort pursuing grants.
   - Politicians needed to participate in events such as these.

2.) Who is taking the Lead?
   - Depends on community

3.) Who are the Collaborators?
   - All in the community
Session #25: Sustainable Tourism?

Convener: Maryjude Haddock-Weiler

Participants: Tom Romano, Leigh Ann Von Hagen, Greg Gorman, Sharon Pontier, Kim Latham, Julia Somers, Oliver Spellman, Leander Lacy, Kate Munning, Janine Munoz, Kristin Muller, Meghan Hunscher, Megan Kelly, Laura Szwak

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion (bullet points are great!):
   - A great diversity of assets
   - Need data to understand options/successes
   - Need supportive infrastructure
     - Hotels/B&Bs
     - Technology (internet, energy sources, etc.)

Who is taking the Lead?
   - This is the BIG question – our key next step is to identify an entity to take the lead

2.) Who are the Collaborators?
   - Small businesses (restaurants, bike shops, hotel/B&B operators) local gov’ts, county chambers of commerce, Highlands Council, State tourism, social profits, local residents

3.) Who else do we want to invite? (Individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)
   - Invite everyone who shares the vision or has a related vision

4.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
   - Need to identify an entity to take the lead – suggestions include a county chamber of commerce, a social profit (such as Creative Skylands), Highlands Council
   - Possibly reach out to Rutgers Bloustein School to get this topic as a graduate level studio course

5.) What resources would be useful in moving forward? (human, technological, financial, etc.)
Need supporting data:
   - Assets
   - Where do people come from?
   - Money brought in from Arts/Cultural activities
   - Hotel/Motel/B&B info- Hotel/Motel Association
   - Division of Tourism
- Clearinghouse of Information
- Agriculture Boards
- Availability of land to access as part of tourism industry

6.) **Next Meeting:**
- Will be sending out an email to each of the participants to gather possible dates going forward
Session #26: How do we educate our community about the impacts and importance of supporting local business?

Convener: Kim Latham

Participants: Paul Meacham, Julie Gause, Sharon Pontier, Paulette Hussey, Denise English, Meghan Hunscher, Gina Pierson, Kathleen Robbins, Leigh Ann Von Hagen

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - Currently, community members go to local businesses for eating (restaurants/café, delis), nail salons and hair salons.
   - Benefit of local businesses are the relationships that are created. Better service. i.e. Home Depot vs. local hardware store in providing support.
   - Supporting local business is a choice.
   - How to make local businesses welcoming and inviting. Specific stories were relayed where some local businesses were not welcoming and willing to support other local businesses. Suggest to educate business owners regarding why they would benefit.
   - Discussion about how many people prefer time-saving aspect of going to Target. However, shopping local is an experience where the local community is supported.
   - Ideas to promote welcoming downtown – entertainment/art shows. Capitalize on restaurants – sidewalk seating and arts on the sidewalk. “Meet me in Newton” has been proposed and will be happening.
   - Important to create an experience of supporting community.
   - Pop-Up Stores was proposed. In the past there was a Pop-Up Store concept in some parts of NJ. Short-term leases (1-3 months) allowed in empty storefronts for small businesses.
   - Promotion of the Arts and activities, such as “Wine & Paint”.
   - Big issue in some cases are landlords – should be addresses by local government in terms of consequences. Also suggested to share best practices in how other communities are dealing with this.
   - Example given of Easton vs. Philipsburg. Easton has a Farmers Market in the center of town and outdoor seating. Across the river in Philipsburg is very run down – not attractive.
   - Local businesses need to support and promote other local businesses.
   - Example to engage community – fund raiser to give back to local community. Connection to something personal in the community is the key.
   - Vacant storefronts – how to make attractive. Some towns create art in the windows to make the town seem vibrant.
   - Suggested repurposing vacant stores – i.e. College use for off-site training
   - Unique stores, i.e. Van Gogh’s Ear Concert Coffee Shop
   - Provide professional marketing for downtown.
   - Local governments sometimes provide barriers in terms of permits/inspections. City workers should have a friendly tone and better relationships.
- Slow Money – this is a movement that promotes/provides education about how individuals can invest in their local community as an alternative to Wall St. In other words, citizens can choose to invest their money (typically small amounts, $500 - $5000) or form investment clubs to support a local business.

2.) Immediate Actions/Next Steps:
- Participants can attend their local business association meetings and convey their ideas
- Encourage local businesses to “think outside the box”.
- Encourage local landlords/business associations to consider the shared space concept – this is working in other areas. I.e., Fed Ex and coffee shop in shared space.
- “Green Drinks” concept – invite others to gather and discuss these issues in your local community on a regular basis.
- Share these notes with your local business association/local government.
Session #27: Identify and Support political leaders?

Convener: Suzanne Ishee

Participants: Julia Somers, Kristin Muller, Tom Romano, Oliver Spellman, Leander Lacy, Steve Fredericks, Jon Andrews

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   -- Who are our political leaders? Local Political Clubs, Mayor, Freeholders, Council, Assembly Members, Committees (Economic, Community, Public Safety, Parks, Open Space Land Use) Town Manager, Planners

   -- Identify the people with whom we already have relationship and why this might be important or resonate with them.

   -- How do we do this?
     Come with a plan
     Have a funding resource and/or a plan
     Create an approach on several fronts including target groups
       Community Forum to achieve “buy-in.”
       Build upon successes that you have already achieved (recognize small successes and build upon them)
     Create advocates
     Business Leaders and community leaders
     Empower these leaders as “problem solvers”
     Demonstrate how this is not just local
     Politicians listen to constituents (take your constituents with you)

Here is the order of influence (Think an upside down pyramid with community leaders on one side and gov’t. officials on the other)

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Voter
Grassroots Organizations
Local Leadership (Chamber, Social Profit Leaders
Staff in Major Offices
State agencies (DOT, DCA, DOS, DEP, NJSCA, Div. of Tourism)
Fed agencies (NEA, NEH,
GOVERNMENTAL LEADERS
Elected Officials
Appointed Officials (e.g. town planner, town manager)
County Freeholders
County Planner, Administrator
Assembly
Congresspersons

Final word—This takes strategy and patience!
Session #28: Identify premium brands of the region known and unknown and unknown?

**Convener:** Robert E. Hathaway, Jr.

**Participants:** Jennifer Kavanaugh, Kate Yaskovic, Gil Roessner, Greg Gorman, Laura Szwak, Lisa Brett

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1.) **Highlights & key points from your discussion:**
   - Need to develop a cohesive theme of identified premium brands in the region
   - Identified a great number of brands thematically connected to “where NJ gets wild”
   - Importance of connecting people to the region through a communicative message that businesses will utilize to advance their markets

2.) **Who is taking the Lead?**
   - It is presumed that if a grass roots group (creative Skylands) creates a valuable marketing tool or brand that connects established premium brands in the region to consumers that those brands will drive the tool to their advantage thereby creating the marketing identity and region

3.) **Who are the Collaborators?**
   - Primarily premium brand marketing businesses> evolving into larger impacted markets through proliferation of success

4.) **Who else do we want to invite?** *(individuals, organizations, agencies, etc.)*
   - NJ Dept. of State

5.) **Immediate Actions/Next Steps:**
   - Agree as an intellectual group to a unified branding message that connects most of our premium brands
Session #29: Leveraging Student resources to advance the region?

Convener: Megan Miller

Participants: Jim Sheldon, Sue Zukoski, Andrea Kirchuck, Tim Rowe, Brittany Weinstein, Kathy Naasz, Tom Werder, Janie Munoz, Nancy Madacsi, Danny Campos, Lori Lawrence

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:
Connecting Students to Business
- Internships
  - Unpaid?
  - Class projects
- Career Services
  - 4 year colleges/ Universities
  - County colleges
- ENACTUS
- Companies are open to new and creative ideas
- Increase Community involvement
- Networking is important!
- Leverage connection

How to strengthen connection
- Keep clients happy!
- Communication/ positioning

What companies are looking for
- Help with marketing through social media
- Digital marketing
Session #30: What institutions are needed to encourage the creation of rational revenue models - more than commercial jobs but non-profit funding, too?

Convener: Bill Leavens

Participants: Ed Fritsch, Kate Munning, Megan Kelly, Michael Giacomantori, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler

1.) Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - County, state, local govt, economic dev commission, chamber of commerce.
   - One suggestion was re-creation of an organization like Morris 2000 that advocated for many issues directly related to the quality of life in the region.
   - What needs to be in place, and what would the characteristics of a supportive infrastructure be?
   - Cooperation—why are people resistant to it?
   - Morris 2000—collaboration of people that came together from municipal and county govt, banking, others with economic and social interests in the area. They defined the most important factor in the region is quality of life.
   - NJ Transportation Planning Authority does Together North Jersey—transportation, land use, housing, environment on sustainability, just released regional plan after 3 years
   - Look up regional and individual CEDS