

Sustainable Economic Development Plan: Survey Results

*Borough of High Bridge
Hunterdon County, New Jersey*

November 18, 2010



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Acknowledgements

Highlands Council
Mr. Mark Desire, Mayor of High Bridge
Mr. Douglas Walker, Administrator of High Bridge

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Phase 2 of the process to create High Bridge's Sustainable Economic Development Plan Element included the preparation of two surveys – a Business Owner Survey and Customer Survey. The surveys contained 16 questions each and were reviewed and approved by the Borough Administrator, Mr. Douglas Walker, before being placed on the internet.

On November 1, 2010 both surveys went live on the internet. A link was posted on the Borough's homepage and a blast email was sent to over 700 residents notifying them of the Customer Survey. The High Bridge Business Association sent the Business Owner Survey link to its members. An announcement was also made at the November 11, 2010 economic workshop regarding the online surveys.

Both questionnaires were available for 17 days. The Customer Survey had 91 respondents and the Business Owner Survey had 7 responses.

Questions

Questions on the Business Owner Survey were as follows:

1. What is the nature of your business?
2. What hours is your business open Monday – Friday?
3. What hours is your business open Saturday and Sunday?
4. Do you own or lease the building you are located in?
5. How many employees, including yourself, do you employ?
6. How long have you been operating this business in High Bridge?

ANNOUNCEMENTS BOARD

BOROUGH-WIDE LEAF PICK UP- OCTOBER 12 THROUGH DECEMBER 3

BRUSH PICK UP WEEK OF NOVEMBER 22

YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED! HIGH BRIDGE TO CREATE AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

WE WANT YOUR IDEAS ON THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN HIGH BRIDGE. THE BOROUGH HAS BEEN AWARDED A GRANT TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND WE NEED YOUR HELP. JOIN US FOR AN EVENING OF BRAINSTORMING AND STRATEGIZING TO CREATE A PLAN FOR OUR DOWNTOWN'S ECONOMIC FUTURE ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2010 AT 7PM AT THE HB FIREHOUSE.

CLICK HERE TO TAKE A SURVEY TO HELP WITH THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH BRIDGE

The Promise of Tomorrow with the Dignity of Yesterday.

Located in the rolling hills of Northern Hunterdon County, Western New Jersey, High Bridge is quintessentially small town America. Situated midway between New York City and Philadelphia, it is most easily found travelling on Route 78, exit 17, between the Round Valley and Spruce Run Reservoirs. Easily accessible to major roadways including Routes 78, 22, 287, 80, and 31, our Borough offers scenic natural beauty including the Ken Lockwood Gorge as the State's pre of High Bridge lies within Voorhees State Park that includes t

A host of recreational facilities are available for parents and t soccer, football, lacrosse, golfing and baseball, not to mentio Patriots Path, the State's longest mountain biking and jogging associated with big cities, economic opportunities for the ind educational system, which boasts the highest test scores in t New York Times are other attributes recognized by visitors. A metropolitan New York and Philadelphia.

TOP 100 TOWNS

BEST PLACES TO LIVE

METHODOLOGY: In compiling New Jersey's Best Places to Live, the Princeton University's Public Institute compiled 100 municipalities based on population, crime rate, school performance, and price of homes.

7. How would you characterize your current business activity level?
8. On average how many customers/clients do you have per week?
9. Where do the majority of your customers/clients come from?
10. Name three advantages or strengths you associate with doing business in High Bridge?

- 11. What are three challenges you associate with doing business in High Bridge?
- 12. Select all of the following activities that have a positive impact on your business in terms of foot traffic, sales, etc.
- 13. Would you be interested in a cooperative business marketing effort to attract customers/clients to High Bridge?
- 14. What business do you think should be recruited to High Bridge to improve its attractiveness to shoppers?
- 15. How would you rate High Bridge for the following?

- 12. What can High Bridge’s merchants do to improve their stores?
- 13. As High Bridge continues to evolve, what one thing would you want to keep the same about the Borough’s downtown area?
- 14. Conversely, if you could change one thing about High Bridge’s downtown, what would it be?
- 15. What do you think is High Bridge’s unknown or little known asset that should be emphasized to attract tourists, shoppers, etc.?
- 16. How would you rate High Bridge for the following?

Questions on the Customer Survey were as follows:

- 1. What activities do you do in High Bridge?
- 2. How often, on average, do you patronize High Bridge businesses?
- 3. What are the major advantages of shopping in High Bridge?
- 4. What are the major disadvantages of shopping or doing personal errands within High Bridge?
- 5. When you want to eat out, do you typically.....
- 6. When you want to spend an evening out of the house, do you typically.....
- 7. If you spend an evening outside of High Bridge, what activities do you do?
- 8. Do you think more restaurants are needed in High Bridge? If so, what type?
- 9. What do you think draws shoppers to High Bridge?
- 10. What types of stores do you think are needed and would you patronize in High Bridge if they existed?
- 11. What kind of leisure/entertainment services would you patronize in High Bridge if they existed? (i.e. yoga/pilates, art galleries, live music, etc.)

Customer Survey 0%

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is important in guiding High Bridge's future planning efforts for the Borough's overall economic health.

YOU, THE CONSUMER.

1. What activities do you do in High Bridge? (Mark all that apply.)

Shopping

Business/Work

Recreation

Other, please specify:

2. How often, on average, do you patronize High Bridge businesses?

Never

Monthly

Weekly

Daily

3. What are the major advantages of shopping in High Bridge? (Select all that apply.)

Convenient location

Fair prices

Friendly service

Less traffic and crowds

Within walking distance

Know the store employees

Other, please specify:



Chapter 2: The Results

This chapter presents the results of both surveys. However, it should be noted that due to the poor response (7 respondents) the Business Owner Survey results should not be interpreted to be a representation of the thoughts and opinions of the High Bridge business community.

The results are presented as raw data, except in two cases. The first instance is where respondents were allowed to enter answers for “other”. “Other” answers are summarized under each table. The second occurrence is where respondents of the Customer Survey were given an open-ended question that allowed them to enter their own answer. For example, “What do you think draws shoppers to High Bridge?”. In these cases, similar responses were grouped (i.e. charm and quaintness) and responses with less than two votes were grouped together under the classification of “other”.

Business Owner Survey Results

As there were only seven responses for this survey, all open-ended answers are included in the tables.

| Q1. What is the nature of your business? | | |
|---|----------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Restaurant | 0 | 0% |
| Retail | 1 | 14% |
| Service (salon, dance studio, construction, etc.) | 0 | 0% |
| Professional (architect, lawyer, etc.) | 3 | 43% |
| Finance/Insurance/Real Estate | 0 | 0% |
| Other, please specify: | 3 | 43% |
| Total | 7 | 100% |

“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: realtor, non-profit and solar.

| Q2. What hours is your business open Monday - Friday? |
|---|
| By appointment |
| By appointment |
| 10AM to 10PM |
| 8:30am - 8:30pm (in Clinton) |
| Regular business hours do not include weekdays |
| 8AM-6PM |
| 9AM to 6PM |

| Q3. What hours is your business open Saturday and Sunday? |
|---|
| closed |
| by appointment |
| 10-10.....12-8 |
| 9am-6pm(in Clinton) |
| Sundays 2-4pm at minimum |
| closed |

| Q4. Do you own or lease the building you are located in? | | |
|--|----------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Own | 3 | 43% |
| Lease | 4 | 57% |
| Total | 7 | 100% |

| Q5. How many employees, including yourself, do you employ? | | |
|--|----------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| 1 | 3 | 43% |
| 2 | 0 | 0% |
| 3 | 1 | 14% |
| 4 | 2 | 29% |
| Other, please specify: | 1 | 14% |
| Total | 7 | 100% |

“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: no employees, but volunteers.

| Q6. How long have you been operating this business in High Bridge? | | |
|--|----------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Less than 1 year | 2 | 29% |
| 1 - 4 years | 1 | 14% |
| 5 - 9 years | 2 | 29% |
| 10 + years | 2 | 29% |
| Total | 7 | 101% |

| Q7. How would you characterize your current business activity level? | | |
|--|----------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Business is rapidly expanding. | 1 | 14% |
| Business is moderately increasing. | 3 | 43% |
| Business is fairly steady. | 2 | 29% |
| Business is declining. | 1 | 14% |
| Total | 7 | 100% |



Q8. On average how many customers/clients do you have per week?

| | Number | Percentage |
|--------------|----------|------------|
| Less than 25 | 5 | 71% |
| 25 -75 | 1 | 14% |
| 76 - 150 | 0 | 0% |
| 151 + | 1 | 14% |
| Total | 7 | 99% |

Q9. Where do the majority of your customers/clients come from?

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|----------|-------------|
| High Bridge | 0 | 0% |
| High Bridge - Clinton - Annandale - Lebanon | 1 | 14% |
| Hunterdon County | 3 | 43% |
| Tourists | 1 | 14% |
| Internet | 0 | 0% |
| Other, please specify: | 2 | 29% |
| Total | 7 | 100% |

“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: all of New Jersey and tri-state region.

Q10. Name 3 advantages or strengths you associate with doing business in High Bridge.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Close to home | Small town, easy to advertise | Rents are less expensive than surrounding areas (but increasing) |
| engagement with community | comparatively low cost of doing business due to low rents | Main Street address |
| Local.. small town | none | - |
| good community spirit | opportunity to know neighbors/customers | - |
| 300 year history | Abundance of open space | Historical Structures, natural features |
| sense of community | keeping things local (providing jobs) | It's a great place!!! |
| Centrally located in a high-income region | Relatively low operational costs | Sense of Supportive Business Community |



Q11. What are 3 challenges you associate with doing business in High Bridge?

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| High Bridge's image as run-down | High taxes turning into increasing rents | Vandals, bad press for High Bridge from crimes |
| too little business activity on Main Street | too little variety of business activity | Main Street looks and feels like a business district in decline |
| high taxes | Customer base wants the cheapest they can find | off the beaten path |
| higher property taxes than competing towns | - | - |
| Challenging dealing with Borough government | identity...why is High Bridge special | remoteness |
| not a lot of foot traffic | not considered by some as a place to 'spend a night' | trying to continue to have a strong business segment (shops closing down) |
| The general current economy is rough, and high bridge's economy doing no better | Challenging to support a Main Street that has so many vacancies | I perceive that the area outside the village of HB is a bit clueless or unsupportive of High Bridge based businesses |

Q12. Select all of the following activities that have a positive impact on your business in terms of foot traffic, sales, etc.

| | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Community Day | 3 | 27% |
| Soap Box Derby | 3 | 27% |
| Tour of High Bridge Race | 1 | 9% |
| Pooch Parade | 0 | 0% |
| Movies in the Commons | 2 | 18% |
| Summer Concerts | 1 | 9% |
| Open Air Market | 1 | 9% |
| Total | 11 | 100% |

Q13. Would you be interested in a cooperative business marketing effort to attract customers/clients to High Bridge?

| | | |
|--------------|----------|-------------|
| Yes | 7 | 100% |
| No | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 7 | 100% |



Q14. What businesses do you think should be recruited to High Bridge to improve its attractiveness to shoppers?

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| bakery | restaurants | restaurants |
| arts oriented for feeling of creativity and vitality | retailers who's hours are well suited to compliment the three sit down restaurants, | retailers who's upscale product line compliments upscale dining at Circa and upscale wine at Riverside Wines & Liquors |
| Eating establishments | gift stores | caterers |
| convenience / hardware stores | small department store | bakery |
| Bakery/Coffee Shop (open late) | Hallmark Store (gifts/cards) | Knitting Store |
| Butcher | Convenience Store | - |

Q15. What 3 things would help attract customers/clients to High Bridge?

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| improved buildings | lower taxes | a more focused EDC |
| Arts | Music | Variety, "uniqueness" unavailable in national chains |
| clean | safe | friendly |
| lower taxes | parking on only one side of Main St. | beautification of Main Street |
| better business signage | better promotion through the county | Partner up with Clinton for an event held in High Bridge |
| more store fronts | continue sponsoring events/press releases | - |
| A less vacant Main Street | More 'Festivals' like the ones Circa holds | - |



| Q16. How would you rate High Bridge for the following? | | | | |
|--|-----------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
| Attractiveness of downtown area | 0 (0%) | 3 (43%) | 3 (43%) | 1 (14%) |
| Overall Borough cleanliness | 4 (57%) | 2 (29%) | 1 (14%) | 0 (0%) |
| Convenience of parking in downtown | 0 (0%) | 2 (29%) | 5 (71%) | 0 (0%) |
| Shopping hours | 1 (14%) | 2 (29%) | 4 (57%) | 0 (0%) |
| Friendliness of salespeople | 4 (57%) | 3 (43%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| Safety | 4 (57%) | 2 (29%) | 1 (14%) | 0 (0%) |
| Special events | 2 (29%) | 5 (71%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| Variety of goods/services | 0 (0%) | 2 (29%) | 2 (29%) | 3 (43%) |
| Places to eat | 3 (43%) | 3 (43%) | 1 (14%) | 0 (0%) |
| Borough/business cooperation | 1 (14%) | 4 (57%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (29%) |
| High Bridge Business Association effectiveness | 3 (43%) | 3 (43%) | 1 (14%) | 0 (0%) |

Customer Survey Results

The following tables present the results of the customer survey. This information will be useful in crafting the final Sustainable Economic Development Plan.

| Q1. What activities do you do in High Bridge? (Mark all that apply.) | | |
|---|------------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Shopping | 42 | 27% |
| Business/Work | 16 | 10% |
| Recreation | 68 | 43% |
| Other, please specify: | 31 | 20% |
| Total | 157 | 100% |

“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: dine, live, hair cut and library.

| Q2. How often, on average, do you patronize High Bridge businesses? | | |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Never | 9 | 10% |
| Monthly | 40 | 44% |
| Weekly | 37 | 41% |
| Daily | 5 | 5% |
| Total | 91 | 100% |



Q3. What are the major advantages of shopping in High Bridge? (Select all that apply.)

| | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Convenient location | 57 | 24% |
| Fair prices | 20 | 8% |
| Friendly service | 44 | 19% |
| Less traffic and crowds | 36 | 15% |
| Within walking distance | 30 | 13% |
| Know the store employees | 37 | 16% |
| Other, please specify: | 12 | 5% |
| Total | 236 | 100% |

“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: small town feel, do not shop in the downtown and there aren’t any stores in the downtown.

Q4. What are the major disadvantages of shopping or doing personal errands within High Bridge? (Select all that apply.)

| | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Poor appearance | 20 | 11% |
| Poor selection of goods/services | 63 | 35% |
| High prices | 7 | 4% |
| Limited parking | 42 | 23% |
| Limited hours | 24 | 13% |
| Poor service | 1 | 1% |
| Other, please specify: | 23 | 13% |
| Total | 180 | 100% |

“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: not enough businesses, poor parking, no place to shop and limited variety.

Q5. When you want to eat out, do you typically.....

| | Number | Percentage |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| Eat at a restaurant within High Bridge? | 18 | 20% |
| Eat at a restaurant outside of High Bridge? | 72 | 80% |
| Total | 90 | 100% |



Q6. When you want to spend an evening out of the house, do you typically.....

| | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Spend it within High Bridge? | 16 | 18% |
| Spend it outside of High Bridge? | 74 | 82% |
| Total | 90 | 100% |

Q7. If you spend an evening outside of High Bridge, what activities do you do? (Select all that apply.)

| | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Dining | 80 | 27% |
| Shopping | 74 | 25% |
| Movies | 65 | 22% |
| Theater | 38 | 13% |
| Concert | 33 | 11% |
| Other, please specify: | 9 | 3% |
| Total | 299 | 100% |

“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: visiting friends, observatory, coffee house and New York City.

Q8. Do you think more restaurants are needed in High Bridge? If so, what type?

| | Number | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Family sit-down | 55 | 33% |
| Sidewalk cafes | 38 | 23% |
| Fancy sit-down | 3 | 2% |
| Bar-restaurant | 8 | 5% |
| Fast food | 7 | 4% |
| Deli/sandwich shop | 40 | 24% |
| No more restaurants are needed. | 17 | 10% |
| Total | 168 | 100% |

Q9. What do you think draws shoppers to High Bridge?

| | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Nothing | 18 | 26% |
| Other | 4 | 6% |
| Restaurants/Liquor Store | 14 | 20% |
| Columbia Trail | 8 | 12% |
| History | 1 | 1% |
| Proximity/Convenience | 15 | 22% |
| Specialty Stores | 4 | 6% |
| Charm/Quaintness | 5 | 7% |
| Total | 69 | 100% |



Q10. What types of stores do you think are needed and would you patronize in High Bridge if they existed?

| | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Antiques | 24 | 7% |
| Books | 40 | 12% |
| Art Galleries | 13 | 4% |
| Gifts & Cards | 45 | 13% |
| Pet Supplies | 20 | 6% |
| Sporting Goods | 22 | 7% |
| Consignment/Used | 30 | 9% |
| Toys & Hobbies | 19 | 6% |
| Bakery | 73 | 22% |
| Other, please specify: | 51 | 15% |
| Total | 337 | 100% |

“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: restaurant, gym, dry cleaner, convenience store, apparel, coffee shop, bike shop and pharmacy.

Q11. What kind of leisure/entertainment services would you patronize in High Bridge if they existed? (i.e. yoga/pilates, art galleries, live music, etc.)

| | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Gym/Yoga/Dance Studio | 6 | 9% |
| Theatre | 5 | 7% |
| Movies | 13 | 19% |
| Live Music | 22 | 31% |
| Galleries/Art Studio | 8 | 11% |
| Other | 16 | 23% |
| Total | 70 | 100% |

Q12. What can High Bridge's merchants do to improve their stores? (Select all that apply.)

| | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Improve store appearance | 45 | 23% |
| Improve customer service | 7 | 4% |
| Promotions/advertise | 29 | 15% |
| Lower prices/sales | 16 | 8% |
| Expand store hours | 31 | 16% |
| Improve selection | 38 | 20% |
| Other, please specify: | 28 | 14% |
| Total | 194 | 100% |



“Other” answers included, but were not limited to: need more businesses, need more parking, stores open at the same time and bring something into the Borough that no other place has.

| Q13. As High Bridge continues to evolve, what one thing would you want to keep the same about the Borough's downtown area? | | |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Restaurants | 11 | 15% |
| Small town feel/charm | 33 | 46% |
| History/Architecture | 7 | 10% |
| Keep Borough Hall downtown | 3 | 4% |
| Other | 17 | 24% |
| Total | 71 | 100% |

| Q14. Conversely, if you could change one thing about High Bridge's downtown, what would it be? | | |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Parking Issues | 21 | 26% |
| Improve buildings/general appearance | 14 | 18% |
| Number of stores/variety of stores | 25 | 31% |
| Nothing | 2 | 3% |
| Other | 18 | 23% |
| Total | 80 | 100% |

| Q15. What do you think is High Bridge's unknown or little known asset that should be emphasized to attract tourists, shoppers, etc.? | | |
|--|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage |
| Columbia Trail | 27 | 37% |
| History | 12 | 16% |
| Open Space/Recreation Opportunities | 15 | 21% |
| Downtown | 6 | 8% |
| Nothing | 2 | 3% |
| Other | 11 | 15% |
| Total | 73 | 63% |

| Q16. How would you rate High Bridge for the following? | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
| Attractiveness of downtown | 3 (3%) | 29 (32%) | 46 (51%) | 13 (14%) |
| Overall Borough cleanliness | 16 (18%) | 50 (55%) | 22 (24%) | 3 (3%) |
| Convenience of parking in downtown | 6 (7%) | 16 (18%) | 42 (46%) | 27 (30%) |
| Safety | 30 (33%) | 45 (49%) | 14 (15%) | 2 (2%) |
| Special events | 24 (26%) | 39 (43%) | 27 (30%) | 1 (1%) |
| Variety of goods/services | 1 (1%) | 8 (9%) | 26 (29%) | 56 (62%) |
| Places to eat | 7 (8%) | 42 (46%) | 34 (37%) | 8 (9%) |