

Welcome residents of Washington Township, fellow citizens of Warren County, and all interested individuals! This is the first entry to our monthly Highlands Plan Conformance report. We are trying out this new feature on the Township website with hopes that it can provide proper transparency and enable resident involvement.

Many are unclear as to the benefits of Washington Township's decision to navigate the Plan Conformance process, ultimately opting-in with the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Let us take a quick peek at several examples.

- Grant funding opportunities (reduce taxpayer burden),
- Encourages Public/Private partnerships (Government should not be assuming any market risk),
- Technical assistance (licensed professionals),
- Smart planning (approach with aim of stable growth. Pay close attention to interconnectivity of environment and human development),
- Preservation of town character over special interests,
- Enhancement in overall quality of life (safer, sustainable area to reside within),
- Inter-municipal coordination (Regional planning: Act Local Think Regional),
- Future State aid (to conform with RMP [Regional Master Plan] is equivalent to State Planning Commission Endorsement).

The decision was voted on in April (2012) by the Township Committee to partner with Natural Systems Utilities as the lead consultant for this project. A Request for Proposal (RFP) submitted prior by Washington Township opened the bidding process to attract outside firms with expertise in projects similar to Plan Conformance. Natural Systems Utilities (NSU) of Hillsborough, NJ was awarded the project. NSU specializes in alternative/sustainable water management systems accompanied by planning/design services. Their expertise and assistance covers around 85 operational systems nationally along with a handful of new developments in the planning and design phases. With ecological-based principles NSU serves our mission to protect the existing character of the community, and promote an identity where environment and human development are not viewed as separate, but one in the same. You can view their website at; <http://www.natsysolutions.com/>.

To avoid length and any confusion this initial entry functions merely as a background introduction. A follow-up is to be posted soon with project specifics. This will outline what is currently being worked on and stages completed already in the Plan Conformance Process.

We encourage you to view this new feature with an open-mind and come to understand our chief goal is to facilitate a better way of life for each and every Township resident. We are here to serve you!