

Great Places in NJ – Nomination for Broad Street, Hopewell Borough (Mercer County)

Originally settled in the early 1700's and later incorporated in 1891, Hopewell Borough today remains one of New Jersey's most quaint and historic treasures. Travelers passing through the Borough in 2012 can easily imagine days of yesteryear, when horses and trolleys carried passengers through town or to Trenton and nearby destinations. One glance down Broad Street with its many unique restaurants, unique and antique shops, specialty service or professional establishments and centuries-old residences, and it is understandable why New Jersey Monthly magazine consistently ranks Hopewell Borough as one of the "10 best small towns in NJ" and one of the "25 best places to call home in the Garden State."

The magic that is Broad Street was no accident. It has been, in fact, a concerted effort by town officials, business owners and residents to retain the character, charm and historic integrity of the Borough while helping to usher it into a new era. Sound planning was critical. Community commitment was absolute. The result is impressive - and particularly so since the transformation largely occurred within the past decade, a decade in which demographically similar towns witnessed the closing of businesses and the loss of valuable ratables. Hopewell Borough has weathered the economic storm remarkably well. Not only have investors and entrepreneurs thrived, but residents have welcomed visitors and new neighbors with improvements and accelerated maintenance of their own properties. The pride that was real but somewhat contained not so many years ago is now revived and in full bloom, much like the flowers that now adorn the planters throughout the center of town.

The vibrancy of Broad Street (CR518, the main thoroughfare through town) received a huge shot in the arm when the Borough received initial funding in 2005 from NJDOT through a federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant to begin streetscape improvements in the central business district. Phase I of the project - improvements to the intersection of Broad and Greenwood Avenue - intentionally set the tone for future phases of the work and for the full design that would ultimately and hopefully encompass the entire business district, from Mercer Street to Elm Street. Phase I included the removal of deteriorated concrete and bituminous sidewalk and curbing, installation of new red and grey brick sidewalks, hitching posts, landscaping, pedestrian scale lighting, and other improvements - and it was a success.

In its entirety, the streetscape plan was to provide an attractive, pedestrian-friendly zone along the historic business district, promote and showcase local businesses and promote traffic calming along heavily-traveled Broad Street. Encouraged by the overwhelming success of Phase I, the Borough actively sought funding for Phase 2 and was rewarded with a massive \$917,000 grant

from the NJDOT TE grant program in 2008 to continue the work up and down Broad Street. Phase 2 improvements, which added new handicap sidewalk ramps, street furniture and ornamental planters in addition to the elements in Phase I, were completed in 2011. Supplementing the partnership with the State with the federal government through the grants, the County of Mercer greatly assisted with streetscape needs above and beyond the grant limits. As an example of that commitment, the County re-paved a portion of Broad, installed 4 additional crosswalks and even installed a flashing beacon crosswalk device to assist pedestrians in the busiest stretch of town. The improvements have accomplished much to increase pedestrian safety and slow vehicular travel, so much so that Hopewell Borough is now featured as a key model for the Complete Streets initiative. The Borough is currently seeking funding for its third and final phase of the streetscape plan to complete work on the east end of Broad and in certain key areas unimproved in the earlier phases and it hopes to complete the project fully by the end of 2013. In the meantime, several new businesses have incorporated streetscape elements in their plan designs, as have residents and stakeholders all throughout town. NJDOT recently completed a year-long bridge replacement project just off Broad, on Greenwood Avenue, that featured streetscape and historic appurtenances completely respectful of the town's historic heritage and complimentary to the renovated train station (now community center) on the adjacent parcel.

Broad Street today is a destination in itself, particularly in the center of town. At any time, on any day, a glance down Broad will reveal a wide array of community types – parents pushing strollers, joggers, cyclists, friends enjoying coffee or a meal together, folks leisurely walking and shopping and stopping at every turn to greet neighbors and visitors. With so many unique eateries and stores and offerings, there are countless reasons to spend time downtown. Events – ranging from cruise nights to block parties and nearby outdoor concerts – keep Broad Street humming - and there's nearly always something fun or cultural to do.

A major improvement to the east end of Broad Street was completed earlier this year, when the Borough opened its new Borough Hall and Courthouse, further cementing its identity and its commitment to serving the needs of the community. The project involved converting a 1950's era former Masonic Temple into an ADA-compliant facility and doing so in the same welcoming way and tone as other Broad Street improvement have – by embracing the character of the community while fully respecting its charm and historic heritage. A stone's throw from the new Borough Hall is another major improvement well underway; later this year Hopewell Borough will be home to a fully sustainable farm-to-table market like no other in NJ. The buzz in anticipation of this opening is nearly deafening already!

From east to west, from Elm to Mercer and tucked in side streets and pockets of town in between, the excitement and pride for Hopewell Borough has never

been stronger. We've realized goals entirely consistent with our Master Plan for development and we'll never be "done". Time will bring new challenges but our focus to maintain the quality of life Hopewell Borough residents expect and deserve will be unwavering. We welcome first-time visitors and invite all to return again and again. Broad Street, with its excellent restaurants and shops and unique character, is a "Great Place in NJ" indeed. We respectfully request consideration of this worthy title, formally, at this time. We will wear the title as a badge of honor, a feather in the cap of the best little town in NJ. We thank you for your consideration of this request.