

**2016 City of Summit – Master Plan Re-Examination
Economic Development Subcommittee - Workshop # 1
May 11, 2016 – MINUTES - AMENDED**

Workshop # 1 of the Economic Development Subcommittee of the 2016 Master Plan Re-Examination was held on May 9, 2016, at Summit City Hall, Whitman Room, 512 Springfield Avenue, Summit, New Jersey, 07901. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 p.m.

Present: Jeff Wagenbach, Subcommittee Chair; Jessica Hobson; [REDACTED] Beth Welsh; Reagan Burkholder; Timothy Erday; Annette Dwyer; John Coughlan; Ginny Jordan; and Tom Conway

Krzysztof Sadlej, Dan Gordon, Phil Abramson and Colin Goam from Topology

Absent: None

Observers: Mayor Nora Radest; Mike McTernan, Council President; Richard Sun, Councilman at Large; Jennifer Balson Alvarez, Land Use Subcommittee; and, Amy Cairns, Public Information Officer

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Questions to consider
3. Re: vision process
4. Review master plan objectives
5. Identify focus areas
6. Mission objectives

Mr. Sadlej, Topology, reviewed the agenda and asked the Subcommittee to think about land use and economic development in particular in a broad range. Economic development overarches and touches other elements of the Master Plan. Mr. Sadlej encouraged the Subcommittee to think about how to create an implementable, actionable and useable plan.

Questions to Consider

The Subcommittee members were asked to anonymously answer the following four questions:

1. Describe Summit in one word... Summit is...
2. Describe the Summit of tomorrow in one word... Summit will be...
3. How do visitors see Summit? Visitors think Summit is...
4. You have \$10 million to invest in Summit, how would you invest the capital? (This response was not limited to one word)
5. Who needs to be heard during the Master Plan process? We have to get a point of view from...

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Initial discussion items tend to dominate the discussion. This exercise captured thoughts and ideas that will be used in the re-examination process without allowing them to dominate the discussion at the workshop. The responses were publicly posted but not further discussed at this point.

Re: vision process

The Master Plan Re-Examination process is not starting from scratch. A Master Plan was done in 2000 and a Re-Examination was completed in 2006. The Master Plan is an important document that guides policies and helps coalesce decisions the city makes. The current Re-Examination is a statutory requirement done every ten years and is undertaken to determine if the objectives of the prior plan are still relevant and, if not, to make alterations. The goal is go beyond fulfilling the statutory requirement and make the Master Plan Re-Examination document usable and actionable.

The Planning Board ultimately owns the document. The work done and recommendations proposed by the Subcommittee during the re-examination process will be moved up the chain with recommendations put forth to the Planning Board at the end of August. In addition to the Subcommittee workshops, two public workshops will be held to determine what's important to the public. Throughout the process a lot of data and information will be collected and distilled. Subcommittee members were encouraged to use their networks to reach out to those not typically involved in the planning process.

Phases of the Re-Examination process include: Define, Discover, Design and Develop. The Re-Examination is in the discovery phase. At this point, there are no "no's" or solutions/ answers as to what needs to be changed or added to the Master Plan. The purpose of the workshop was to ask questions, define and prioritize goals, generate ideas and identify stakeholders and what's missing from the Master Plan.

Review master plan objectives

The City of Summit has had many plans over the years:

- 2000 Master Plan
- 2003 Master Plan Re-Examination
- 2005 CRBD Master Plan
- 2006 Master Plan Re-Examination
- 2007 Village Green Master Plan
- 2008 Action Plan for a Sustainable Summit
- 2015 Downtown Improvement Plan
- 2015 Broad Street Corridor Plan

The Subcommittee broke into two groups. Each group was given handouts of the economic development objectives of the prior plans and asked to prioritize the objectives into three categories:

- Immediate priority – What is urgent and relevant and who are the stakeholders

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- Mid-term priority – What’s already started, making progress and still relevant, and
- Long-term priority – Things that may be considered down the road or are no longer as relevant or relevant. If not relevant, the groups were asked to identify why not

De-briefing Discussion

The objectives from previous plans are too “wish-y” like New Year’s resolutions. The objectives in the Re-Examination need to be actionable and more accountability is required to be able to show what was accomplished when the Master Plan is reviewed again in 2026. The 2016 Master Plan Re-Examination needs to be usable by the Planning Board. The requirements of the Development Requirements Ordinance (DRO) have to be consistent with the spirit of the Master Plan; therefore, it’s important to make the objectives of the 2016 Master Plan Re-Examination clear so residents have set expectations. In some ways, the Master Plan should really be two documents: One for land use and the other for strategic management. Some of the other plans seemed to be focused on the issue of the moment.

SDI (Summit Downtown Inc.) should have more responsibility for getting things done. SDI’s responsibilities need to be better defined. It’s not always clear what’s within the city’s purview and what’s within SDI’s purview. In addition, because of the similarity of the acronyms, there’s a lot of confusion between SID and SDI: SDI is responsible for marketing businesses within SID. The Subcommittee agreed that the Re-Examination objectives need to look beyond defining SDI’s responsibilities.

Twenty thousand people will be at the street fair on Sunday. The Subcommittee discussed the importance of figuring out how to capture visitors at a special event to get them to come to town Monday through Friday. Gathering e-mail contacts during a special event and contacting visitors after the event isn’t a very effective tool to get people to come back to town. Local retailers have to position themselves at special events. It’s hard to measure if an event has a long-term add-on value: It just has to be assumed that it does. Fewer and fewer businesses stay open on Sunday to attract people downtown.

Specificity in the goals to make them measurable requires data-driven recommendations. Data on who’s spending in town, who’s moving in/out, occupancy rates and rental rates may not be perfect but would be useful. Access to CoStar for commercial real estate data would be helpful. This may be available through the library or one of the Subcommittee members. SDI has Summit data. Burgis Associates, Inc, the city’s planner, completed a report that addressed trends in downtown Summit and other towns that would be useful. Would identifying the man/woman (Metro Man, Metro Woman) of the future help with development? Who is Summit trying to reach ten years down the line? Does the man/woman of the future want to live in Summit? What are they shopping for?

Summit is often described as a bedroom community. One Subcommittee member commented that this was not the case when she was growing up and Bell Laboratories was a “happening” place. There are no equivalent businesses like Bell Labs now to keep residents working locally. Many would rather commute to New York. However, more people commute in to Summit to work (over 16,000) than commute (over 7,500) elsewhere to work. Would it be useful to survey the 16,000 people that work in Summit to find out what kind of housing would attract them to move to Summit? Not all

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neighborhoods in Summit, however, are bedroom communities. Summit has “weekend” residents but it needs to have things happening Monday through Friday for those who work in town. No one wants to stay in Summit after work and prefer to go to Millburn or Morristown after work. JPMorgan Chase and Jefferies are coming to the Bouras building. Summit needs to have more restaurants, liquor licenses and outdoor seating to keep these employees in town after work.

Summit has five businesses districts and two industrial centers. The largest income cohort in Summit in 2013 made over \$200K per household. The second largest cohort made less than 50K per household. The income inequality index (Gini index) is higher in Summit than the national average.

Summit has a lot of churches, parks and non-profits that do not pay taxes. New sources of capital are needed besides commercial and residential taxes. Commercial and residential tax payers don’t want their taxes to go up to fund projects. Summit needs growth but there can be good growth and bad growth. Ideally it would be nice to have growth without changing the character of the town; however, this probably isn’t possible and something will have to give.

Most successful downtowns have a sense of place. People want to be near it and “play” in it. Summit has “stuff” but it doesn’t tie together. Things need to be tied together to keep people in town and living in Summit. There is no style guide for downtown that might create a sense of place.

Deforest Avenue is the only place for development besides Broad Street. The city needs to figure out what to do on Deforest Avenue. Maybe Summit needs to take a cue from Houston which is a very successful city but has no zoning. Deforest Avenue may require physical versus zoning planning. Some opposed the redevelopment of the Bouras property because they find the buildings on the former Summit Medical Center property and on Springfield Avenue to be unattractive and saw that it was the same developer. Perhaps the outcome would have been different had the developer given residents an opportunity to express what they would have allowed so that he could have designed a different building. Good design is not happening downtown and people don’t like what’s being built. Growth is needed but not at the expense of good development.

The Historic Preservation Commission does not have any say on development in town unless the property requires a variance. It would be helpful to set goals so that when a developer requires a variance, the Commission can advise the Planning Board. The Zoning Board of Adjustment will be hearing an application to raze a building on Deforest Avenue and replace it with a three-story multi-family building. It’s a very different building and raises the question as to whether the ORC zone is still viable. The zone has under-utilized properties and there’s more and more pressure to do something with them. Summit needs to decide what it wants the zone to be. It also needs to have a vision of what it wants in town. Past plans have been reflexive. Businesses function best if there is consistency and predictability. Developers would benefit from consistency of what is allowable. It might be useful to target areas for development.

The permit process is a “disaster” and the regulatory process is “awful.” What has to change to get a friendlier environment for developers and development? Is the current environment due to staffing, culture or rules?

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The Subcommittee prioritized economic development objectives as follows in order of priority (immediate, medium-term and long-term) as follows:

1. Business Improvement/Retention
 - Retain existing businesses and attract new businesses
 - Relax/enhance regulations to encourage economic vitality
 - Encourage investment, maintenance and re-investment
2. Connectivity/Walkability
 - Promote walkability
3. Guide character of businesses/development
 - Balance business with retail
 - Consider the balance of locally owned and national chain retailers

Identify focus areas

The Subcommittee again broke into two groups and using colored stickers identified areas of opportunity for the immediate, medium- and long-term objectives on a map of Summit.

There was no de-briefing discussion of this exercise because of time constraints.

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Next steps

The public workshop will be held on June 1, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. at the Elks Club, 40 Maple Street. Subcommittee members were encouraged to disseminate information about the public workshop to their networks.

Workshop #2 scheduled for June 29th at 8:00 p.m. will be devoted to reviewing and interpreting results of the public workshop; recommending initial shifts in objectives and priorities identified at this workshop and from the public workshop; and, identifying shifts and objectives/priorities per feedback and data.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.