

**2016 City of Summit – Master Plan Re-Examination
Citizens’ Advisory Subcommittee - Workshop # 1
May 9, 2016 – MINUTES**

Workshop # 1 of the Citizens’ Advisory 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 8:07 p.m.

Present: Rick Matias, Subcommittee Chair; Betsy Macpherson; Donna Miller; Heather Marotta; Melanie Wilson; Tom Getzandanner; and, Ray Merrit.

Krzysztof Sadlej, Colin Goam and Phil Abramson from Topology

Absent: Walter Gonzalez, Drew Maldonado, Brooke Laughlin and Gabe Schiffer

Observers: 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 issues of important to the citizens of Summit in particular in a broad range. Issues of importance to the general population overarch 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. What conversation sparks debate? (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...

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.

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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 Subcommittees 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 now 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 this workshop was to ask questions, define and prioritize goals, generate ideas and identify stakeholders and what’s missing from the Master Plan.

Mr. Sadlej offered the Subcommittee two options. The Subcommittee can complete this workshop and Workshop # 3 to review and reach consensus on key recommendations/proposed changes to the plan) or it can complete all three workshops. The Subcommittee would like to participate in all three workshops.

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 objectives from the prior plans and asked to prioritize them into three categories:

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

There is a fair amount of redundancy among the prior plans. Some of the issues are global and others are so broad that it’s difficult to use them to pass ordinances or approve development in town. Perhaps more specificity in the objectives would be better. Because the goals were high-level, it’s difficult to tie projects back to the goals and to determine if the goals were met. It would be useful to have a score card or measurements for each goal. For this Re-Examination, a first step would be to determine if an objective is implementable and the second goal would be to make it measurable.

The Development Regulations Ordinance (DRO), which deals with commercial and residential development, was last updated in 1993. The DRO is piecemeal and needs to be stripped down and re-written from scratch. Several Subcommittee members commented on their experiences with the Planning Board and/or Zoning Board of Adjustment. The city’s zoning officer helps property owners make sense of the DRO as the ordinances are difficult to figure out for the lay person. The general experience with the Boards was a positive outcome with variance requests that were within the bandwidth of what the Board(s) would grant. The ordinances, however, add a level of expense and time for some things that don’t make sense. For example, to have to go to the Board for approval of a fence seems like a lot of expense that some homeowners who really need a fence may not be able to incur. For one Subcommittee member who put on an addition, the process was “ridiculous.” The rules kept changing and the process was challenging. Some people have moved out of town rather than go through the Zoning Board of Adjustment process. In addition, the time it takes to get inspections is long. The Subcommittee did not think that an instruction manual explaining the process would be useful. Contractors are already aware of the process and the length of time it takes. Topology would be interested in talking to some of the contractors.

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

1. Connection between neighborhoods, Central Retail Business District (CRBD) and community resources
 - Balanced growth
 - Reinforce the city as a desirable location
2. Strengthen the CRBD
 - Pedestrian friendly
 - Business recruitment
 - Regional center
3. Recreation and cultural programs
 - Strategic locations

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Identify focus areas

The Subcommittee broke into two groups and used color stickers to identify areas of opportunity for the immediate, medium- and long-term objectives on a map of Summit.

The Subcommittee members were also asked to identify objectives that are missing from the prior plans on an index card.

Next steps

Information about the public workshop will be available by the end of the week. Subcommittee members were again encouraged to disseminate information about the public workshop to their networks.

Post meeting note: The public workshop will be held on June 1, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. at the Elks Club, 40 Maple Street.

Workshop #2 scheduled for the week of June 27th 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 10:00 p.m.