

2016 City of Summit – Master Plan Re-Examination

Land Use Subcommittee

June 30, 2016 – MINUTES

Workshop #4 of the Land Use Subcommittee of the 2016 Master Plan Re-Examination met on June 30, 2016, at Summit City Hall, Whitman Room, 512 Springfield Avenue, Summit, New Jersey, 07901. The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m.

Present: John Zucker, Eric Mendelsohn, Jennifer Balson Alvarez, Karen Khalaf and Ken Stevenson

Krzysztof Sadlej from Topology

Absent: Bill Anderson, Subcommittee Chair; Diane Klaif; Kevin McGoey; and Phyllis Sank

Observers: Jeff Wagenbach, Chairman of the Planning Board

Agenda

- Review Schedule
- Top Goals from Prior Meeting
- Public Meeting Feedback
 - Does it align with goals?

Review Schedule

The 2016 Master Plan is on schedule to be delivered to the Planning Board for consideration in September. The next public meeting to vet the recommendations in the Master Plan has been rescheduled from the end of August to September 13, 2016. After some discussion of changing the date of Workshop #3, the Subcommittee agreed to meet on August 17th as scheduled.

The city has worked with coUrbanize on an online housing demand survey designed to quantify the needs and wants for housing including the demand to own versus rent. Response to the survey has been excellent. A second online survey to identify retail/entertainment demand will be launched later this summer.

Most of the data gathering will be finished following the meeting of the Economic Development Subcommittee on July 6th and meetings with the Department of Community Programs, Historic Preservation Commission and the utilities. The goal is to make the Master Plan implementable as the goals from previous plans were not defined or too vague. Therefore, Mr. Sadlej would like to reduce the number of goals to ten by the end of the month - and possibly even further- as well as mix the plan up and move away from the silo structure of the existing plan so that this Master Plan is more useable. Each goal would be supported by strategies for achieving the goal and specific action steps.

Discussion of Goals

Mr. Sadlej presented several goals identified at the Subcommittee meetings.

Connectivity – Strategies for this goal include promoting mixed use with development on the Broad Street Corridor; promoting active uses on the Village Green; and, encouraging multi-modal transportation. These strategies would be implemented through action steps that would include expanding the CRBD south of the railroad tracks and allowing concession stands with seating to serve beverages and food in the Village Green.

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Regional connectivity has come up in other discussions and in other Subcommittee meetings. The Subcommittee discussed connectivity within Summit, i.e., connectivity between east and west Summit, and regional connectivity. Mr. Wagenbach would like to see the Master Plan focus on what can be done in Summit first with a secondary focus on Summit's place in the region. Some believe that Summit is the most connected town in the area with trains and buses. High school students at a meeting with Topology, however, do not find the buses useful because they are limited to the main corridors and they would like to see jitneys to get to the train station or into town. Increased connectivity may cause more congestion but congestion is a sign of a vibrant downtown. Maybe there could be local jitneys for residents and separate jitneys for regional connections that drop passengers off at a point in town where they have to walk past and possibly patronize businesses on their way to their destination. Perhaps the Master Plan goal could be limited to increasing connectivity with supporting strategies and actions that would address local and regional connectivity.

Housing – Feedback from the public indicates a desire for housing opportunities for multi-generational families, millennials and empty nesters; however, Summit also considers itself to be a family town so trying to be a “millennial magnet” may not be a strong goal. The cost of housing in Summit is too high for some who might want to live here. A diverse population may be a good goal. Lack of diversity has come up as a weakness and a threat: At Topology's meeting at the high school, students indicated that they do not want to come back to live in Summit after college because they want more diversity. Fair share housing is now being handled in the courts, and every town is going to have court-ordered affordable housing. This will result in more economic diversity and will impact transportation with as there will be necessary to provide transportation for those without cars. Mr. Mendelsohn will send the Subcommittee a link to an article on fair share housing.

Expand the CRBD – The CRBD only covers half of the town. The CRBD should be expanded to include the area south of the train station. This area should be a focus of redevelopment.

Parking Deck – Does Summit want a parking deck? Mr. Sadlej described options for parking decks. Parking decks can be designed to be architecturally appealing. They can also be designed to have retail space on the ground floor which brings life to the street. Another option is a liner garage with a building on one side facing the street with offices that hide the garage. The Subcommittee discussed a parking deck on Cedar Street between the post office and the senior housing complex but Mr. Wagenbach said this has been considered but it's too small. The feedback was that the garage would have to be high to work. This location also seems far town although alleys could be used to access it and make it “cool.” The lot at Deforest and Woodland Avenues is a good shape but it's close to Lincoln-Hubbard school and the possible increase in traffic when children are walking to and from school is a consideration. The area behind the fire station might be a good location for a liner garage although it may be difficult to attract retail businesses. Offices or housing might work in a liner garage at that location. Ms. Balson Alvarez added that she and the team assigned to looking at the Broad Street Corridor also looked at this area as a possible site for a bowling alley or other entertainment use. The existing six-story parking deck does not provide enough parking for city employees and so employees park on the street. Only the first level is designated for retail parking. The lot behind the post office seems to be the best location for a parking deck and providing residential or office space makes it more viable. The space behind the fire station is also a good location.

Entertainment Venue - The DeForest lots would be good locations for entertainment venues such as a bowling alley. Mr. Mendelsohn expressed concern about building on the Deforest Avenue lots and doesn't think residents would be happy with a bowling alley. Generally there's resistance to building adjacent to a residential zone. The Subcommittee discussed drawbacks of an entertainment venue on DeForest Avenue including interim closing of the parking lot; the size of the building, which would have to be tall and large to hold a

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parking lot and entertainment venue, would be out of character with the neighborhood; location of the building which would be on the doorstep of a residential neighborhood and Lincoln School; and, an increase in traffic in an area that has 1,200 parking spaces within a two-block radius and already has traffic jams. Ms. Balson Alvarez believes Design Guidelines would be helpful in controlling what could be built. Several Subcommittee members would like to see carefully designed development on the Deforest Avenue lots for an entertainment venue. Another suggested location for an entertainment venue is on the south side of the railroad tracks, such as by the fire station, which is less residential.

25 Deforest Avenue – Is this a possible site for development? The plan for a five-story complex would have created the biggest parking garage in town and would have increased traffic. The lot is also adjacent to a residential neighborhood and is at the peak of the hill. Ms. Balson Alvarez would zone this to allow underground parking and two- to three-story townhouses. This is a transitional neighborhood so it can't have a lot of density. People have also proposed developing the parking lot area behind the CVS drugstore with underground parking.

Potential Sources of Revenue – Options for generating revenue to run the city include raising taxes or increasing the tax base through development. Residents generally don't want to see their taxes go up. The Subcommittee discussed other options for increasing revenue. Summit could move to Morris County but Summit would still have to pay off its share of Union County debt at the time of secession. Overlook Hospital is already the second largest tax payer. The city could look at allowing churches to do more development if they paid taxes as a way to increase the tax base.

World-Class Downtown – Feedback indicates that Summit wants a more vibrant downtown with better pedestrian walkways. Standards for the alleys could turn them into an attraction and increase their usage. Widening cross walks is very effective in improving walkability and increasing public safety.

Next steps

The other Subcommittees are identifying goals, strategies and action steps that will be fed to this Subcommittee.

The public meeting to vet the Master Plan recommendations prior to submission to the Planning Board has been rescheduled to September 13, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. at The Connection.

Next Meeting: August 17, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. subject to confirmation.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by Margaret Koontz.