

**2016 City of Summit – Master Plan Re-Examination
Circulation & Transportation Subcommittee - Workshop # 2
June 29, 2016 – MINUTES**

Workshop # 2 of the Circulation & Transportation Action 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 8:05 p.m.

Present: Judy Mandelbaum, Subcommittee Chair; Aaron Schrager; Beth Lovejoy; Craig Gangi; Davis Gates; and Thomas Mineo. Krzysztof Sadlej from Topology.

Absent: John Christmann, Claire Toth and Chris Cordaro

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.

The Subcommittee discussed what the Master Plan Re-Examination document should look like. Feedback from Workshop #1 is that the goals from previous plans were not defined or too vague. This workshop is an opportunity to discuss goals and how to present them in the Master Plan. 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.

Top Goals from Prior Meeting

Mr. Sadlej distributed copies of goals that the public would like to see incorporated in the Master Plan as well as a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats gathered at the public workshop. Many of the objectives from prior plans are action oriented and may fall into broader goals. The Subcommittee reviewed the list of 15 short-term priorities identified at Workshop #1 which were prioritized as follows:

- Encourage alternative modes of transportation (Biking, walkability, mass transit, etc.)
- Connectivity between transit modes, with an emphasis on sidewalks
- Emphasis on a balanced, unbiased approach to parking; possibly achieved through the use of a parking trust fund.

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Discussion of goals

While not on the list, Mr. Sadlej stated that congestion has come up at other Subcommittee meetings although the amount of congestion may be skewed because of the Morris Avenue bridge closure. Reducing congestion could be a goal with the use of alternate modes of transportation as a supporting strategy. Mr. Sadlej reported that the Citizens' Advisory Subcommittee believes that congestion is a good problem because it means that the city has a vibrant downtown. The Subcommittee discussed improving traffic efficiency so that streets can be used by everyone including vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. Complete Streets promotes use of streets for all users regardless of the mode of transportation and has been adopted by Council. Mr. Sadlej will send the link for Complete Streets to the Subcommittee which agreed that promoting Complete Streets is a good Master Plan goal but it doesn't cover connectivity. The Engineering Department is developing a map for cyclists to identify roads by congestion and grade.

The Subcommittee discussed the definition of connectivity. Mr. Mineo, representing Union County, stated that county roads should be considered in the discussion of connectivity and a strategy developed to direct motorists to use county roads to get to Routes 78 and 24 rather than residential streets. Mr. Schrager does not think many residential streets other than Hobart Avenue and Briant Parkway are used to access Route 24. He's not clear how this traffic could be re-routed. There needs to be more connectivity between east Summit and downtown: It's a long walk and Springfield Avenue under the railroad bridge is not walkable. Also, there is a lack of sidewalks on Morris Avenue and the triangle by Glenside Avenue, which is a truck route out to Route 78, is intimidating.

The Land Use Subcommittee has discussed more development south of the rail road tracks and the need for connectivity in town as well as connectivity to east Summit. Students from the high school without drivers' licenses would like to have buses/jitneys to connect to town and the train station. Jitney/buses to bring employees from Celgene and people from the Recreation Center into town would help promote Summit's desire to have a vibrant downtown. Celgene could open up its jitney service to non-employees or the city or private contractor could operate jitneys at an affordable fare. Mr. Sadlej added that jitneys/buses can help with economic development if the jitneys/buses drop riders off in an area where they have to walk past businesses to get to their destination. The strategy to make use of jitneys to connect areas to the train station, Summit's biggest asset, fits with the Citizens' Advisory Subcommittee's goal of creating a world-class downtown and making Summit a regional hub.

Many of the short-term priorities are strategies rather than goals. The Subcommittee distilled its short-term priorities into two goals:

- Promote Complete Streets
- Increase connectivity

Parking could be considered as a separate goal. An unbiased parking strategy is needed. This requires a traffic study to obtain numbers and data so that parking solutions are data driven.

Public Meeting Feedback

The public workshop was very successful with over 120 people attending and 1,500 Post-it® notes of input from the public as to what should be included in the Master Plan. Responses to the housing and retail/entertainment surveys were also strong.

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Discussion of transportation opportunities identified at the public workshop

Walking Only City – This goal needs to be reviewed carefully as there are repercussions from cutting off streets to vehicles. The city could look at places where one-way streets might be appropriate to improve traffic or parking such as a portion of Maple Street. Mr. Schragger believes there's an appetite to look at this although a previous effort to make Woodland Avenue one-way toward town did not go anywhere.

Underground Parking – Underground parking is expensive to build. Summit could offer incentive to developers as it did on Franklin Place although no one has taken advantage of this incentive.

Traffic Rotaries – These require space. Mr. Sadlej cautioned against recommending specific places for rotaries. Besides the rotary by the train station, Mr. Schragger couldn't think of any other places where a rotary would be beneficial.

Bike Paths and Racks – Maps of biking routes and locations of bike racks might encourage biking. Retailers usually like bike racks in front of their stores; however, Mr. Schragger noted that the sidewalks in Summit are not wide enough for racks. He's a proponent bike shelters. Summit is looking at a bike depot that will accommodate 36 bikes but needs New Jersey Transit approval. If this works, there's space in the Broad Street parking lot for another one.

Parking – Parking is a politically charged subject and requires a rational, common sense discussion. The Subcommittee discussed sprinkling parking strategies throughout the Master Plan rather than making it a separate goal. Mr. Sadlej noted that any plan for a parking structure should have a conversion plan as parking will change within the next 20 years with driverless cars.

Miscellaneous Discussion

Charging Stations – Charging stations make a city “slick” and create the perception of a world-class downtown. Charging stations can be included as a strategy. Issues to consider with charging stations: Does the city want to monetize them right away and how many parking spaces does the city want to give up?

Next steps

Mr. Sadlej will create a Google document with the circulation and transportation goals so that Subcommittee members can add strategies and actions for each goal. Subcommittee members should contact Mr. Sadlej prior to adding a goal or goals to the Google document so that it/they can be discussed first.

Workshop #3 is scheduled for August 17, 2016.

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.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Submitted by Margaret Koontz.