

2016 City of Summit – Master Plan Re-Examination
Citizens’ Advisory Subcommittee - Workshop # 2
June 28, 2016 – MINUTES

Workshop # 2 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 6:40 p.m.

Present: Rick Matias, Subcommittee Chair; Walter Gonzalez; Heather Marotta; and Tom Getzendanner.

Krzysztof Sadlej from Topology

Absent: Betsey Macpherson, Drew Maldonado, Melanie Wilson, Brooke Laughlin and Gabe Schiffer

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. As a result, the date for Workshop #3, currently scheduled for the week of August 22nd is flexible. Mr. Matias will poll the Subcommittee to see if it would like to keep the date or move the meeting to a later date in August.

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. 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 prior plan objectives with the Subcommittee’s priority scoring of those objectives; a list of goals that should be included in the Master Plan gathered at the public workshop; and, a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats also gathered at the public workshop. The Subcommittee reviewed the list of short-term priorities identified at Workshop #1 which were prioritized as follows:

- Connectivity between neighborhoods, community resources, the CRBD, and the region
- Mixed-use which acts as a regional center
- Relieve traffic congestion in the CRBD, and
- Assist developers, landlords, and merchants with the development process, especially in the CRBD.

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Discussion of Goals

Connectivity between east Summit and downtown is needed. While there is interest in mixed use and more residential space downtown, research from the Land Use Subcommittee revealed that downtown second-floor space is rented. Vibrant downtowns should have traffic. Rather than proposing to relieve traffic congestion, Mr. Getzendanner believes the Plan needs to propose ways to live with the traffic through the use of traffic subsystems and one-way streets. Parking will always be an issue. A thorough parking study needs to be done to get numbers and data to quantify the parking needs. The city has a Technical Review Committee (TRC) that can be used to assist developers, landlords and merchants with the development process; however, the composition of the TRC needs to be expanded beyond city staff. It’s beneficial for a developer to talk to the city first to ensure that what it proposes is in line with the Master Plan and is in keeping with the architectural style in town as feedback from the public workshop revealed that style is the leading factor in development over size and bulk.

Ms. Marotta proposed narrowing the four goals into three as follows:

- Increase connectivity between neighborhoods, community resources, the CRBD, and the region
- Create a world-class downtown, and
- Attract and retain businesses to foster economic growth

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.

The Subcommittee reviewed the list of goals the public would like to be included in the Master Plan. Several of these align with the Subcommittee’s three goals as identified above. Public goals falling under the category of creating a world-class downtown include: Mini buses or jitneys to connect to the train station and town; cleaning up the train station and improving the bathrooms at the station; more trees in parking lots and on the streets; a movie theater; and, a grocery store in town.

The Subcommittee discussed expanding the boundaries of the CRBD whose boundaries are smaller than those of the Special Improvement District: The CRBD does not include the Village Green. Most development is on the north side of the railroad track. Should there be a strategy to encourage connectivity to the south side of the railroad tracks with development? The Subcommittee will include expanding the CRBD with overlay zones as a strategy under the goal of creating a world-class downtown.

The Subcommittee also discussed walkability as a strategy under the goal of creating a world-class downtown although it acknowledged that walkability extends beyond downtown and may warrant being a separate goal in the Master Plan. The city is not responsible for sidewalks so there is some opposition to them because of the cost of installation and maintenance. One strategy would be to install sidewalks where people want them and join the sidewalks later. The state’s Safe Routes to School initiative can be used to promote sidewalks and walkability.

Downtown has to be fun and engaging so that it becomes a destination. Based on feedback from the public workshop, residents want a movie theater and grocery store in town. Toplogy met with students at the high

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school: High school students feel left out with nothing to draw them into town. DCP’s programs are not geared toward them. They would like a movie theater and a “fun” downtown.

The desire for a Trader Joe’s/grocery store in town has been a common thread in the Subcommittee meetings and public workshop and relates to both walkability and a world-class downtown. A grocery store requires a certain floor plate which presents limits as to location. The Subcommittee discussed contacting King’s to get information about how it selects store locations.

Summit has public art but it’s clear from the public workshop that residents would like to see more public art.

The Subcommittee discussed the homeless population at the train station and library. Shelters are expensive, but there are other ways to address the homeless issue. Special Improvement Districts will often coordinate programs for the homeless such as trash collection. While some believe that the private sector can handle the homeless issue, Mr. Sadlej stated it must still be addressed in the Master Plan.

The public would like to see more playing fields, turf fields and a baseball/sports complex. The transfer station offers the biggest place for a sports complex but would require DEP remediation. The Subcommittee believes that discussion of the public’s interest in playing fields belongs to the Parks/Open Space, Conservation, Community Facilities and Recreation Subcommittee.

Next steps

Mr. Sadlej will create a Google document with the goals so that Subcommittee members can add strategies and actions for each goal. Mr. Matias will prepare a summary of the meeting and send it to the Subcommittee to update those who couldn’t attend the meeting.

Mr. Matias will also poll Subcommittee members about rescheduling Workshop #3 from August 15th to a later date in August.

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 7:55 p.m.

Submitted by Margaret Koontz.