SUMMARY OF:
TOWNSHIP OF BLOOMFIELD
MASTER PLAN KICKOFF WORKSHOP
SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2023

This document provides a summary of the proceedings and results of the Township of Bloomfield Master Plan Kickoff Workshop, which took place on May 13, 2023 in the Council chambers 1 Municipal Plaza, Bloomfield. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the community to the new Master Plan development process, and to provide a public forum for residents to provide suggestions and feedback to help guide the development of the Master Plan.

Proceedings of the Master Plan Kickoff Workshop

The workshop consisted of four main sections.

1. Introduction
   o Remarks by Mayor Michael J. Venezia
   o Presentation by Paul A. Phillips, AICP, PP, from the planning consulting firm of Phillips Preiss Grygiel Leheny Hughes, LLC.

2. Breakout Group Session
   o Participants were randomly assigned into one of 6 Breakout Groups and asked to discuss 5 questions.
   o Each group was asked to elect one Chairperson to serve as the facilitator;
   o Each group was asked to elect one Recording Secretary to take notes of the discussion in each group.

3. Report Back Session
   o All participants were brought back from the Breakout Groups.
   o The Recording Secretary of each Breakout Group provided summaries of responses to each question of their respective groups.

4. Public Q&A
   o The planning consultant team answered questions from residents.

Summary of resident responses from the Breakout Groups

The following sections detail the responses to the 5 questions given by each Breakout Group, as recorded by the Recording Secretaries of each group and shared during the Report Back Session. A summary of the most common topics/issues mentioned by participants are also provided for each question. Note that the Breakout Groups were listed chronologically from 1 to 6.

1. What are Bloomfield's greatest *assets and strengths*?

<u>MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS</u>
- Great location near New York City, Newark, Newark International Airport
- People
- Diversity of population racially, ethnically, and economically
- Good transit systems: bus, light rail, railroad
- Walkable
- Extensive Park system
- Library

<u>GROUP 1</u>
- Diversity of population
- Library
- Recreation Center
- Historic Green
- Parades and Events
- Parks
- Proximity to NYC
- Programs for elderly
- Balanced suburban and urban areas
- Historic Preservation Commission

<u>GROUP 2</u>
- Civic center has fantastic programs
- Library
- Diversity
- Location: Close to NYC but less expensive to live in Bloomfield
- Parks
- Young educated professionals

- Close to major educational institutions

GROUP 3

- People
- Diversity
- Downtown/business district potential
- Accessibility to NYC/public transportation
- Outdoor spaces/parks
- Inclusive of residents' views
- Growth/improvement over time
- Recreation activities in summer months
- Responsiveness of mayors/council (very engaged)
- Opportunities for Oakeside Bloomfield Cultural Center

GROUP 4

- People and diverse population
- Transit location (in and out of Bloomfield)
- Walkability
- Large population gives our people regional influence
- Balance between urban and suburban
- History and strong identify

GROUP 5

- Diversity
- Walkability
- Commuting/Location
- Green space
- Senior services
- Cleanliness
- Community programs
- Transparency
- Affordability
- Great fir-responder system

GROUP 6

- Fairly affordable
- Citified suburb
- Transportation/commutable to NY
- Diverse population

- Cultural institutions
- Walkable/sidewalks
- Young people; families- future is bright
- Essex County towns are beautiful
- Parks

2. *What are the most pressing **issues** Bloomfield faces **now**?*

<u>MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS</u>
- Separation between North Side and South Side
- Need more diverse and more affordable housing, specifically for seniors
- Traffic congestion
- Need for improved, safer pedestrian and cyclist circulation
- Maintenance and capacity of infrastructure including water, sewer, and stormwater management, especially in light of recent major storms (e.g., Hurricane Ida)
- Pest control and code enforcement
- Sustainability: need composting, better recycling, renewable energy, etc.

<u>GROUP 1</u>
- Infrastructure: water main breaks as example
- Disaster preparedness related to flooding—Hurricane Ida as an example
- As more people move here schools may become crowded
- Lack of affordable housing as most new developments seem to be "luxury."
- Pedestrian safety- Broad Street, specifically; Need better traffic control
- Health of street trees including trees on the Green
- Crime: stealing catalytic converters, shoplifting
- Traffic circulation: too much traffic, speeding, poor traffic flow
- Pest control: more rats, lantern flies, invasive species
- Public transit, specifically bus schedules now that Decamp has shut down service.
- Streets need to be repaved
- Separation between North side of town and South side of town

<u>GROUP 2</u>
- Traffic congestion; serious potholes
- Taxes are high
- PSE&G does not clean up
- Pedestrian and bike safety
- South End- no parking decks especially in winter
- Composting

- Township not zoned for stormwater runoff- need other emergency solutions
- Zoning Board of Adjustment too overwhelmed
- Downtown is not attractive: no performing arts, etc.
- Solar (issue with squirrels needs to be addressed)
- Developers should be required to dedicate green space

GROUP 3
- Resilience against climate change (specifically vulnerable populations and small businesses)
- Lack of playable sports fields for youth (who's responsible? How to own the issue with multiple stakeholders?)
- More retail business- too many empty stores (mutual benefit for surrounding communities; education on entrepreneurship; can Bloomfield do a better job promoting itelf?)
- Stormwater management
- North end vs. South end: vast differences/disparities
- Composting/food waste opportunities
- Rats
- Drinking water quality

GROUP 4
- Water quality issues and stormwater mitigation
- Overdevelopment in areas without a plan
- Conflict and divide between North and South sides (lack of language accessibility; separate resources and housing opportunities)
- Friction between industrial and residential land uses in South side.
- Historic preservation (development should be balanced)

GROUP 5
- Taxes
- State of infrastructure? Is there enough?
- Industrial, commercial landlords

GROUP 6
- Differentiation in care in different areas in town
- Open space/natural environment is dwindling
- Sustainability: need better recycling; investment in renewable energy
- Need to better preserve history of town
- Better integration with other towns
- Under utilized areas
- Need a community center

- Susceptible to flooding: what has been done about this issue?

3. *What might be the biggest **challenges** in the **next 5-10 years***?

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS
- Preparation of infrastructure for climate change and major storms
- Keeping Bloomfield an affordable place to live, specifically for existing residents
- Traffic congestion
- Amount of parking
- Better and safer pedestrian and bike circulation

GROUP 1
- Availability of affordable housing
- Crowded schools
- Balance of services and infrastructure with development
- Climate change planning
- Water infrastructure and safety
- Amount of parking
- Public transit
- Gentrification and immigration (specifically, language accessibility)

GROUP 2
- Improvement of open space
- Sustainability: composting, solar, etc.
- How do you balance and address sometime conflicting goals of younger and older residents; developers and people
- Better bike and pedestrian safety with safe and accessible bike lanes, pedestrian routes
- School population is growing
- What to do about middle school on Franklin Street [i.e., South Junior High School]
- Address needs of geriatric population
- Improvement of downtown area (better quality stores, performing arts spaces
- Infrastructure needs improvement: traffic management and stormwater management

GROUP 3
- Traffic flow/parking
- Stormwater management
- How to absorb population growth
- Costs to run schools keep climbing
- Air quality/heat islands (proximity to Garden State Parkway; vulnerable populations at greater risk)

- Pandemic recovery (more people working from home; what impact does that have?)
- Litter; trash; recycling
- Rat problem

GROUP 4
- How to integrate Essex Greenway
- How to deal with crime issues
- How to repurpose historic buildings
- How to help cyclists with accessibility in dense areas

GROUP 5
- Infrastructure
- Schools
- Retaining businesses
- Enhancing image (compared to Montclair)

GROUP 6
- Haphazard development will affect urban environment
- We're becoming a bedroom community
- Affordable housing for moderate/middle income residents
- Need more progressive, mixed-income, mixed-use development

4. *In the next 5-10 years, my vision for Bloomfield is…? I want Bloomfield to have…?*

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS
- More spaces for art and culture (performing art spaces, movie theaters, etc.)
- A leader in sustainability (more clean and solar energy, composting, etc.)
- Safe circulation for cyclists and pedestrians (optimize Essex-Hudson Greenway)
- Thriving and more attractive commercial areas with diversity of businesses
- More green space

GROUP 1
- Clean and solar energy
- Composting and other environmentally sustainable measures
- More space and activities for teens
- More ADA accessibility
- Greater emergency support and preparedness
- More spaces for arts and culture: theater, performing art space

- More economic development including retail diversity, more minority owned businesses, reconsideration of zoning in business districts to expand uses.
- Make civic engagement more accessible including zoom and hybrid meetings

GROUP 2
- More attractive downtown area with restaurants, theater/performing arts spaces; open spaces
- Safer streets: pathway to Essex Hudson Greenway and safe routes to schools and walking
- More ethnically and culturally integrated amenities for all segments of Bloomfield with equal investment in all areas
- More innovative inter-town transportation
- Secure sources of revenue for town grants

GROUP 3
- More green space
- Cleaner
- Central compost location (even better if it comes to residents)
- Sustainable growth
- High quality school system
- Optimize Essex-Hudson Greenway
- Hip stuff to do/places to congregate
- Become a leader in sustainability
- Have affordable retail options

GROUP 4
- More mixed-use and family focused development with the density and accessibility to discourage car use
- An infrastructure engineering and philosophy that supports walkability and cycling so become less reliant on cars
- Equity in development, seeing expansion happened proportionally across town. Additional housing, commercial, parking, etc. in all neighborhoods not targeting a specific area for ease of availability. Walkability and ease of access should be town wide.
- More green space in town enter and laws protection the space between multi-unit residential and single family homes. Township should move more towards bike lanes and making use of Essex-Hudson Greenway
- Must preserve a unique suburban atmosphere
- Expand green areas and historic district
- A clean town with adequate housing

GROUP 5

- A thriving downtown section
- Sense of safety
- To be looked at as a desirable place to live
- Stabilize taxes
- Increase ratables
- Thriving school system
- Smart street lights

GROUP 6
- Beautification of train station area
- Railroad area by Popeyes should be redeveloped
- Restaurant district
- Oakeside Cultural Center Space

5. *Any **additional topics** that you would like to bring to the Township's attention?*

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS
- Want improvements to streetscape and aesthetics of new development
- Want better communication between Township and residents

GROUP 1
- Want better streetscaping and walkability, particularly on the south side.
- Want more support for civic engagement; improved communication between Township and residents
- Balance development: zoning changes to separate residential and non-residential aras

GROUP 2
- Support pool construction
- Better communication between Township and citizens (eg: Clear and Strong; mailers, etc.)
- Town is dirty
- Mental health
- Make PSE&G accountable for cleaning up after itself
- Look forward to brighter, better future

GROUP 3
- Bloomfield Green Line (Essex-Hudson Greenway); parking for people out of town?
- Keep Bloomfield affordable
- Brownfields redevelopment
- Need standards for redevelopment that considers environmental impacts
- Microforest (see Environmental Commission)

- Bloomfield Avenue needs improvement (no trees; parkway views to town could be more appealing)
- We don't need more fast food in town; can we encourage other options instead?

GROUP 4

- Sacred Heart development: repurpose and adaptively reuse; do not tear down
- Aesthetics of new buildings
- Publicize events (Buzz- used to be published, reverse 911 to publicize events)

GROUP 5

- Littering
- Potholes
- Street cleaning/uneven enforcement
- Maintenance of accessible crosswalks

GROUP 6

- Dealing with trees that are blocking utilities
- Better traffic lights on Bloomfield Avenue and Ampere Parkway
- Better traffic lights on Orange Street and Bloomfield Avenue by the BMW car dealer
- Watsessing Tran Station development