

**SUMMARY OF:
TOWNSHIP OF BLOOMFIELD
MASTER PLAN VIRTUAL KICKOFF WORKSHOP
WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2023**

This document provides a summary of the proceedings and results of the Township of Bloomfield Master Plan Virtual Kickoff Workshop, which took place on May 17, 2023 via Zoom. 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 Virtual Kickoff Workshop

The workshop consisted of four main sections. All sections, excluding the Breakout Group Session, were recorded and available for public viewing. The Breakout Group Session was not recorded to provide residents a space to voice their visions, opinions, and concerns without reservation.

1. Introduction (Recorded)

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

2. Breakout Group Session (Not Recorded)

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

3. Report Back Session (Recorded)

- All participants were brought back from the Breakout Groups into one room.
- The Recording Secretary of each Breakout Group provided summaries of responses to each question of their respective groups.

4. Public Q&A (Recorded)

- The planning consultant team answered questions from residents.

Summary of resident responses during the Breakout Room Session

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 alphabetically labeled A through E.

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

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS

- Great location near New York City, Newark, Newark International Airport
- Diversity of population racially, ethnically, and economically
- Good transit systems: bus, light rail, railroad
- Walkability
- Residents have deep roots in the community
- Extensive Park system and recreational opportunities
- Downtown
- Historic charm and nature of Bloomfield

GROUP A

- Great location: near NYC, international airport, strong bus system
- Diversity of population
- Rich history
- Many residents have deep roots in the community
- Recreation Department
- Taxes are lower than neighboring communities

GROUP B

- Proximity to New York City
- Good transportation system
- Strong downtown and revitalization

GROUP C

- Agree with reasons cited by Groups A and B
- Slow population turn over – stable population

GROUP D

- Numerous commercial areas
- Multiple transportation options, light rail, train, etc.
- Walkability
- Park system

GROUP E

- Proximity to NYC
- Multitude of public transportation
- Walkability
- Socio-economic diversity
- Housing affordability compared to neighboring towns
- Many young professionals, long term viability of living in Bloomfield
- Untapped potential (Bloomfield Center, rec facility, railroad station)
- County parks

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

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS

- Concerns about future development and its impacts; both under construction and potential development on vacant sites
- Need more diverse and more affordable housing, specifically for seniors
- Traffic congestion and need for better pedestrian and cyclist circulation
- Parking concerns/capacity
- Future of the downtown, sustaining local businesses
- Maintenance and capacity of infrastructure including water, sewer, and stormwater management
- Concerns that taxes are increasing and existing residents will have to leave
- DeCamp bus line service that was terminated

GROUP A

- Higher taxes
- Discontinuation of DeCamp Bus Lines commuter service to and from NYC
- Future of vacant South Junior High School
- Divide between residents in North Bloomfield and residents in South Bloomfield
- Traffic congestion
- Over development

GROUP B

- Housing affordability: difficult for renters to move to home ownership; difficult for seniors to age in place

- Over development in South End (mentioned development on the former site of Stern's Royal Theater)
- Lack of code enforcement (illegal living situations, particularly in southeast section of the Township)
- Keeping taxes reasonable so existing residents can remain in Bloomfield

GROUP C

- Infrastructure capacity and maintenance: water, sewer, stormwater management
- Need more open/green space
- Need more parking

GROUP D

- Town needs a brand like Montclair and Newark
- Water quality issue
- Higher crime rate than national average
- Traffic and lack of bike lanes (bikes could alleviate traffic)
- Difficult for small businesses to survive

GROUP E

- Improved train station (aesthetically)
- More diverse house including senior citizen housing
- Zoning for more affordable housing to prevent pricing out of long-time residents
- Empower local business
- Improve business recruitment for commercial areas (one Township official to be in charge of business recruitment and help businesses expedite getting through permitting process, etc.)
- Work with County to improve pedestrian safety on Broad Street, county roads
- Better park safety
- Improve traffic circulation and parking

OTHER COMMENTS

- Maintain Bus service along Bloomfield's main corridors 7 days a week morning to evening
- DeCamp off peak bus service

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 affordable, specifically for existing residents
- Traffic congestion
- Maintaining economic diversity
- Balancing redevelopment with affordability and its other impacts

GROUP A

- Preserve character of Bloomfield College; concerns about what the merger with Montclair State will mean for the future of the college
- How can Bloomfield be better prepared for handling future storms, climate change, and future development given the Township's aging infrastructure
- Master Plan needs to examine permitted uses including drive-thrus to better manage development

GROUP B

- Infrastructure needs to be maintained and modernized to handle community needs
- Need to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety
- Need to provide more green open space
- Traffic on Glenwood Avenue and Broad Street during school pick-up and drop-off at Watsessing Elementary School
- Storm mitigation and need for enhanced infrastructure

GROUP C

- Lowering taxes to keep Bloomfield affordable; don't want to price out current residents

GROUP D

- Same answers as for Question #2
- Global warming, need for street trees
- Gentrification
- Affordability
- Maintaining economic diversity

GROUP E

- Traffic congestion
- Loss of residents because people no longer have to live near New York City
- Affordability of housing
- More development, potentially less green space
- Maintenance of older apartment stock to be more modern, while maintaining affordability

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

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS

- Concerns about future development both under construction and potential development on vacant sites
- Need more diverse and more affordable housing to retain residents
- Improved traffic congestion and need for better pedestrian and cyclist circulation
- Maintenance and capacity of infrastructure including water, sewer, and stormwater management
- More opportunities for green space and parks
- Downtown revitalization, maintaining business viability, reducing vacancies, having a mix of uses and attractions

GROUP A

- Did not address question 4

GROUP B

- Fewer empty storefronts in commercial areas
- More amenities downtown (theater for performing arts, a movie house, art exhibits, attractive cafes)
 - Especially needed along Bloomfield Avenue which has unoccupied spaces, as well as along the stretch of Broad Street between Bloomfield Avenue and the Bloomfield Green
- More affordable housing for elderly residents as Job Haines Home is operating at capacity
- More open space
- Improved pedestrian and cyclist safety

GROUP C

- Would like to keep Bloomfield affordable, maintain existing residents through affordable taxes

GROUP D

- More public art installations
- More historic districts, protect and preserve areas beyond Bloomfield Green
- Stronger Township brand identity
- Greater quality of retail stores
- More unique and local shops

GROUP E

- A theater or performance venue; more entertainment attractions downtown (more than just special events) – “a staple”
- Revitalized commercial areas, lessen need to go to Montclair
- More green space

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

MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED ACROSS GROUPS

- More pedestrianized/ green spaces
- Increased affordability, ADUs for different living arrangements

GROUP A

- Did not address question 5

GROUP B

- Not a lot we don’t like
- Would like to see a more pedestrianized downtown (closure of Washington st example)
- Potential expansion of Pre-k capacity for schools

GROUP C

- Township pool

GROUP D

- Schools with asphalt parking lots be restored with lawns or planted areas

GROUP E

- More affordable housing with accessibility for seniors; families; co-living arrangements
- ADUs with conditional permit use in residential zones (tiny housing)
 - Develop rules to codify it similar to other surrounding towns