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MINUTES OF MEETING

By: Darlene A. Green

Meeting Date: September 27, 2012

Place: Bloomfield Civic Center

Re: Watsessing TOD
Stakeholder Meeting
MC PROJECT NO. BLM-024

Attendees: Darlene A. Green, Maser
David G. Roberts, Maser
John J. Jahr, Maser
Paul Lasek, Township Engineer
See attached sign-in sheet for other attendees

Meeting began at 7:15pm.

Dave Roberts provided an introduction to the project, its process and the anticipated work product. He described the preliminary study area boundary and then opened the floor to the public for general comments as well as remarks on the proposed study area boundary. Public comments are as follows:

- People might walk across Bloomfield Avenue to get to the Watsessing Station as it is a one seat ride, therefore we should include the area east of Bloomfield Avenue
- The project shouldn't cut out East Orange and the people from it who use the Watsessing Station.
- Station needs a "kiss'n'ride" drop off point.
- Bloomfield Avenue isn't an unbridgeable street.
- The intersection of Bloomfield Avenue and Watsessing Avenue is one of the worst intersections in the Township.
- Station lacks parking.
- More housing equals more people, which equals more children. The schools are overcrowded now.
- Bloomfield School District closed some facilities, which might have caused the "overcrowding".
- Westinghouse should be industrial. What about a freight village? Recent New York Times article on manufacturing in Brooklyn residential neighborhoods.
- Should redevelop Westinghouse as a decontamination "farm", with plants that would pull the contaminants out of the ground.



- Can we build a pedestrian bridge over Bloomfield Avenue?
- The lights on Bloomfield Avenue aren't coordinated for pedestrians to cross safely.
- There are a potential of 1,000 new units already approved (Prism and Hartz), we don't need more residential units in the neighborhood. (Prism has been approved for roughly 725 units.)
- The neighborhood is going to eventually need a parking facility with all this new development.
- What about a corporate office park on Westinghouse? The train is an asset to potential workers.
- Bloomfield College has a large animation department, what about animation/commercial uses? It could be a technology village.
- The Township could partner with Bloomfield College to see if they have relationships with companies to locate within Watsessing.
- Don't give up on the freight rail.
- Where does the freight rail line go? Does it go to the port?

At this point in the meeting, Maser conducted a Community Vision Survey (CVS), which uses photographs to gain a sense of what participants think is appropriate for the future of the study area. The CVS was divided into four categories – streets, pedestrian realm, building typologies and parking.

After the CVS was completed, another exercise ensued that reviewed the goals from the Office of Planning Advocacy. Participants were asked to review the goals from the State and amend as they see fit. Attendees could delete goals, change words and even add new goals.

Next, a “Susceptibility to Change” mapping exercise was conducted. The participants were divided into three tables and asked to focus on the $\frac{1}{4}$ mile area around surrounding the Watsessing Station. Participants were asked to color the $\frac{1}{4}$ mile area one of three colors:

- Red for areas/buildings that should be preserved as they exist today, which do not need change.
- Blue for areas/buildings that might need a minor change, such as a façade facelift.
- Green for areas/buildings that need to be transformed, whether it is through demolition and redevelopment, infill of new structures, etc.

Finally, a “Circulation Improvements” mapping exercise was completed. Once again the participants were divided into three tables. Attendees were given colored dots and markers and asked to focus on the $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius area surrounding the Watsessing Station. A key was distributed to the groups:

- Red dots for areas where there are pedestrian/car conflicts.
- Yellow dots for areas where traffic calming is needed.
- Blue dots for places where bike racks are needed.
- Green dots for places where bus rider amenities should be installed.
- Purple lines for locations where sidewalks should be installed.



- Orange lines for locations where bike lanes or paths should be installed

The meeting ended at roughly 10:00 p.m.

Other comments from participants that were heard during the course of the exercises included:

- There is a perception that the Watsessing Station is not safe, especially after dark.
- The neighborhood has no "gathering place".
- Drivers speed down Watsessing Avenue towards the train station.
- Drivers speed in/out of the Home Depot entrance off Orange Street.
- Children ride their bikes along Arlington Avenue to the recreation complex on Floyd Avenue.
- The \$0.99 and Discount Depot site at the intersection of Arlington Avenue and Watsessing Avenue is underutilized and unattractive.
- The Garden State Parkway underpass on Myrtle is not inviting to pedestrians, especially at night.
- The Watsessing neighborhood should have a cohesive design (same streetlights, etc.) to provide a sense of place.
- Many of the buildings around the train station just really need a good cleaning and some minor façade repairs to look better and enhance the aesthetics of the neighborhood.