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Memorandum

To: Berkeley Heights Master Plan Committee

From: Keenan Hughes, AICP, PP
Dijia Chen, AICP, PP

Date: 2/17/2022

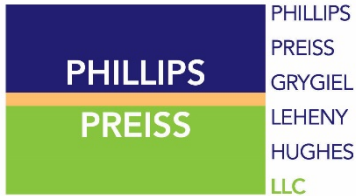
Re: Public Outreach to Date for the Master Plan

This memorandum summarizes the public outreach efforts our office has undertaken to date to develop the new Comprehensive Master Plan for Berkeley Heights.

March 2019: Project Kickoff and Initial Stakeholder Interviews

The Master Plan was kicked off in early 2019 under the leadership of the Master Plan Committee. In March of 2019, stakeholder interviews were conducted as part of the public outreach process. These meetings were facilitated by Mayor Devanney, Councilwoman Kingsley and Business Administrator Viana. Our office met with the following Township Boards, Committees and Departments to gain input for the Master Plan:

- Downtown Beautification Committee: discussed the vision to enhance the Downtown and update design regulations and guidelines to facilitate aesthetic improvements.
- Recreation Commission: discussed results of the Recreation Commission's survey, additional recreational amenities desired by residents, and ongoing initiatives to restore existing sports fields.
- Peppertown Park Committee: reviewed the concept plan for Peppertown Park and heard the Committee's long-term vision for the park.
- Berkeley Heights Business & Civic: discussed the existing business environment, successful events and initiatives, existing and perceived barriers to businesses and economic development, and suggestions for further revitalizing the downtown.
- Berkeley Heights Police Department: met with Police Chief to understand the most pressing traffic challenges and existing conditions of road and sidewalk networks.
- Environmental Commission: discussed open space and tree canopy protection needs, updates required to ordinances governing sensitive environmental features, and additional recreational opportunities.



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We additionally heard from a resident representative on commuter parking issues around the train station.

Summer & Fall 2019: Meetings with Master Plan Committee & Launch of Website

Using the input gained from the stakeholder interviews, as well as results of our research and analysis on the existing demographics, land use, and other trends, our office met with the Master Plan Committee on several occasions during the summer of 2019. With guidance from the Committee, we refined the scope of the Master Plan and identified key concerns, priorities, opportunities, and issues. We began developing a community-wide survey based on these insights.

Our office additionally coordinated with the Township’s Communications Committee to develop a website dedicated to the Master Plan. Progress updates on the Master Plan, public outreach efforts, notifications on new events, and related documents and graphics have been published on the website for public viewing since its launch.

December 2019 – February 2020: Community-Wide Survey

To capture a broad range of perspectives and understand the most pressing concerns and priorities for residents, an online survey was launched on December 17, 2019. The survey was made available on the Township’s website and promoted to residents via various social media channels, Township newsletters, and direct outreach by Township administration and Planning Board members. It was open for approximately 7 weeks until February 1, 2020 and received 404 responses total. Through the survey, residents were invited to anonymously share their views and concerns on four topics: Community Priorities, Future Land Development, Downtown, and Transportation. A summary of survey results, as well as full responses to all open-answer questions, were published on the website.

July 2020 – May 2021: Business Community Survey

The Master Plan process was halted in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, our office worked in the summer of 2020 with the Township’s Economic Development Committee to develop a survey aimed at the Township’s business community, including business owners and tenants, employers, and commercial property owners. The online survey was distributed by the EDC. Despite several pushes by the EDC to encourage the business community’s participation in the survey, the survey garnered a low number of responses. The survey was closed in May 2021, with a total of 19 responses.

June 2021 – September 2021: Outreach to Master Plan Committee & Stakeholder Groups

The Master Plan process was officially restarted in June 2021. Our office met with the Master Plan Committee on several occasions to develop and discuss draft visions, goals and objectives, and recommendations for the Master Plan.

We additionally reached out to various stakeholder groups to flesh out the recommendations for the Master Plan and acquire their feedback:

- Recreation Commission: attended Recreation Commission presentation on Recreation Master Plan. The Recreation Commission’s initiatives and



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recommendations are referenced and supported in the 2021 Comprehensive Master Plan.

- Environmental Commission: attended Environmental Commission meetings to discuss Master Plan recommendations and solicited written feedback from members.
- Economic Development Committee: attended Economic Development Committee meetings to discuss Master Plan recommendations and solicited written feedback from members. The Economic Development Committee's initiatives and recommendations in the Economic Development Strategic Plan are referenced and supported in the 2021 Comprehensive Master Plan.
- Downtown Beautification Committee and Business & Civics Group: circulated draft Master Plan recommendations to both groups. Offered to schedule meetings or receive written feedback, but did not hear back.
- Township Engineer, Department of Wastewater, Police Chief, and Business Administrator: discussed hazard vulnerability, ongoing and future infrastructure improvements, and community facility needs.
- Zoning Officer & Construction Code Official: discussed potential amendments to the Township's municipal land use procedures ordinance.

November 17, 2021: Planning Board Presentation & Public Session

On November 17, 2021, we presented the draft 2021 Comprehensive Master Plan at a Planning Board public meeting. The draft plan was shared with Planning Board members and posted on the website for public viewing a week before the meeting. At the meeting, we received feedback from Planning Board members and members of the public.

November 18, 2021 – November 30, 2021: Written Comments from Public

Following the Planning Board public meeting, we solicited written comments from the public on the Master Plan until the end of November.

December 2021 – February 2022: Revisions with Master Plan Committee

We have been coordinating with the Master Plan Committee to revise the Master Plan draft in accordance with the comments received from the community.