

OUR TOWN CENTER

A COMMUNITY WORKSHOP FOR THE FUTURE

NORTH BRUNSWICK, NJ

WINTER 2006

Community Input Vital to Plan Success

A series of community workshops sponsored by North Brunswick TOD Associates will take place over the next six weeks that will incorporate the expertise of a variety of experienced, nationally-recognized professionals and result in a plan for the town center of North Brunswick. Many communities use this method when designing traditional neighborhood developments (TNDs) and transit-oriented developments (TODs). Residents are encouraged to be contributing members of the

Continued on page 2



Citizen participation is an integral part of the workshop; this photo is from the 2003 Knight Program workshop in Coatesville, Penn.

What Happens at a Community Workshop?

A community workshop is an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers. More importantly, it allows everyone who participates to be a mutual author of the plan.

The workshop is located at the project



Citizens at a community workshop help plan the design of their town center.

site. The team of design experts and consultants sets up a working studio, complete with drafting equipment, supplies. Formal and informal meetings are held throughout the event and updates to the plan are presented periodically.

Through brainstorming and design activity, many goals are accomplished during the workshop. First, everyone who has a stake in the project develops a vested interest in the ultimate vision. Second, the design team works together to produce a set of finished documents that address all aspects of design. Third, since the input of all the players is gathered at one event, it is possible to avoid the prolonged discussions that typically delay conventional planning projects. Finally, the finished result is produced more efficiently and cost-effectively because the process is collaborative.

Community workshops are organized to encourage the participation of all. That includes everyone who is interested in the



J. Robert Hillier will lead a team of professionals and a community through the design process.

making of a development: the developer, business interests, government officials, interested residents, and activists.

Ultimately, the purpose of the workshop is to give all the participants enough information to make good decisions during the planning process.

Mayor Womack Encourages Community Participation



Francis "Mac" Womack

From the Mayor

Dear Residents:

I hope that you will take advantage of the opportunity to share ideas and concerns with North Brunswick TOD Associates L.L.C., the contract purchaser of the large tract of land located at 2300 U.S. Highway 1 (commonly known as the Johnson & Johnson North Brunswick Campus). Information and knowledge of an informed citizenry are the keys to making the right choices.

*Sincerely,
Francis "Mac" Womack*

Our Town Center is sponsored by North Brunswick TOD Associates, LLC. North Brunswick TOD Associates, LLC is not an affiliate of Johnson & Johnson.

North Brunswick TOD Associates, LLC
3546 Highway 27
Kendall Park, NY 08824

Community Input

From page 1

workshops (see schedule for meeting times) and to attend the presentations. It is thought that by including as many community members as possible in the process, a better plan for a “great place” is arrived at more efficiently.

During these planning sessions, formal and informal meetings will be held with various approving agencies and interest groups. Updates to the plan are periodically presented affording the public an opportunity to ask questions and give immediate feedback to the planners. Ultimately, the purpose of the workshops is to give those concerned enough information to make rational decisions.

On Thursday, February 23, the workshop series will kick off with a presentation about “smart growth.” The presentation will be held at Johnson & Johnson North Brunswick Campus, Yellowbird Reception Center and will begin at 6:30 p.m., with the presentation following at 7:00 p.m. Dessert and coffee will be served and all are welcome to attend.

THE TOWN PAPER

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THE TOWN PAPER

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The History of the Property

The subject of the community workshops is 2300 Route 1, a 212-acre site bounded by US Route 1, Commerce Road, and the Northeast Corridor Passenger Rail Line. This property is commonly known as the Johnson & Johnson North Brunswick Campus. North Brunswick TOD Associates, LLC, a major New Jersey developer, currently has an agreement under which it may elect to purchase the property.

The rectangular site benefits from over 4,000 feet of frontage on US Route

1 and over 5,000 feet of frontage on the Northeast Corridor Rail Line. The primary access points to the property are full access, signalized intersections at Commerce Drive to the north and Aaron Road on the south end of the property.

The office, manufacturing and research facility was constructed in 1955 and expanded in the 1970s and again in the 1980s to encompass the current 1,133,000 square feet of space under roof. 2300 Route 1 has been zoned I-2 Industrial for many years with manufacturing, research and

testing, office, medical clinics, hotels, warehouse and distribution uses permitted. The I-2 zone provides for a 75-foot height limit with density and coverage limits that would provide for in excess of 3.6 million square feet of space and associated parking.

As the community works through developing a new Master Plan for the Township, it is hoped the Community Workshops will serve to stimulate discussion on choices that can lead to the creation of a great place in North Brunswick.



Workshop Series Schedule

Hosted by North Brunswick TOD Associates, LLC

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23

6:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Opening Presentation on Smart Growth

THURSDAY, MARCH 2

6:30 - 9:00 p.m.
What do you want to see in our town center?

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Thursday, March 23 - Tuesday, March 28
Schedule and sessions to be published at a later date.

WORKSHOP LOCATION

Yellowbird Reception Center
Johnson & Johnson
North Brunswick Campus
2300 Route 1
North Brunswick, NJ 08901

Enter at Aaron Road.
Follow signs to Yellowbird on left.

Why Should I Get Involved?



By Joyce Marin, Knight Fellow '01

Have you ever wondered, “Why don’t THEY fix that?” or “How could THEY let that happen to our neighborhood?” I have learned, since we live in a democracy, when the questions of “Why don’t THEY fix that?” come to mind, “THEY” actually means “WE,” as in “We, the people.” Increasingly, I have also come to appreciate, even more personally, that “we” often means “me.” If it comes to me that a special quality in my community needs to be protected, preserved or lifted up, if an idea has hit me like a thunderbolt, if it’s nagging at me or keeping me up at night, then I have come to accept that it’s my responsibility to move that idea forward.

In many communities when challenges arise, the citizens move out. But what if you don’t move out? What if you stay? What if you stay and fight for the health of your community, finding solutions for its problems? Citizen activism is about rising above the specific negative circumstances that your community faces, whatever those challenges may be. Plus, any community can be improved upon. A community doesn’t need to be troubled to benefit from your efforts.

Benefits. The communities in which the citizenry is actively involved benefit in many ways. If your idea improves the quality of your life, then it may improve the quality of life for your neighbors as well, demonstrating that what benefits

one, benefits all. For this reason, true activism is not for the selfish or the self-serving, but rather for those with a generosity of spirit. However, when an idea improves a community’s quality of life, that improved quality of life is often translated by the real estate market into a tangible benefit: stabilizing or improving property values. If you own your own home, you can be financially rewarded by being actively involved as a citizen in your community.

Sense of Community. As you work together toward a common goal with your neighbors, another benefit of activism is that you will make friends and experience a feeling of belonging. Not unlike the barn raisings of old, neighbors who work together on community projects share a common sense of pride and a heightened sense of community.

Making Your Mark. Another of the benefits of citizen activism is that it preserves and strengthens a community’s identity and its sense of place. A unique community identity results from the individual identities of people who get involved. When you get involved, you make your mark. This results in your living in a community that is unique because it reflects some quality unique to you.

Why do people get involved? People are called to action and stay involved because they care. In fact, the persistence and patience needed to be effective in community work is often the real test of how much a person does care.

Sometimes activism is reactive. A highway is planned through a neighborhood. A power plant is planned in the countryside. The people organize to say, “This thing going on is not who we are. This does not belong here.” They talk to

their neighbors, organize meetings, circulate petitions, write letters to the editor, fill up municipal meetings, hire attorneys and fight. While this type of activism gets headlines, it also sometimes gives a bad name to activism. You don’t need to wait for a community crisis to be involved.

Other times, activism is proactive. Just one person with an idea of how their community can be improved formulates the idea, articulates it and moves it forward. They say, “We need a skate park, community garden or bike trails.” This type of effort can improve an already strong community or can represent the first efforts to turn around a neighborhood with serious problems. It all starts with an individual willing to make an effort. With community activism, just one person can make an enormous difference in a place.

But how? In our democratic form of government there are some natural ways to make your voice heard. You can get involved by calling your elected or appointed officials. You can start attending and speaking out at regularly scheduled public meetings of your municipality. You can write letters to the editor, talk to your friends and organize them for action, join a service organization, or volunteer to chair a committee.

There are many ways to improve our neighborhoods and most of them start with you.

Joyce Marin is a borough councilwoman in Emmaus, Penn., where she has been involved as a citizen activist. She has also worked in commercial real estate finance and downtown revitalization.

It’s All About Mixing the Uses

Town-making principles begin and end with the premise that uses within a neighborhood [residential, lodging, office, retail, manufacturing and civic] should be laid out in such a manner as to benefit the entire area. This approach represents an attempt to replicate the planning of our country’s older towns rather than continue the more recent practice of developing separate single-use pods.

Traditionally, American town planning was the work of pragmatic pioneers, government consultants or, in the early 20th century, developers using architects and town planners. After the Second World War, however, planning practices took a complete about-face. Zoning ordinances were adopted by thousands of municipalities in a sweeping movement across the country. Using these conventional zoning ordinances, master plans were drawn up for individual municipalities marked with symbols like R-1, R-2, R-3 (residential); C-1, C-2 (commercial); and I-1, I-2 (industrial). These symbols stipulate the use and density in each area. Single-family homes were completely separated from townhomes and apartment buildings. Commercial buildings could only be built in spaces marked with the “C” code, totally segregated from the residential areas. High-speed roads, or “collectors,” were designed to connect all of the separated uses. Under these conventional zoning practices, “open space” is provided in the form of buffers, easements and setbacks instead of traditional parks and squares.



This drawing was prepared for East Beach, a new traditional neighborhood development in Norfolk, Va. It illustrates the disposition of mixed-use buildings within the neighborhood.

What planners did not foresee was the outcome that would result from the endless repetition of this pattern. Instead of roads moving people swiftly from home to work to play, they have become clogged with traffic. People spend hours every day in the car shuffling children and themselves from one use to the other. Gaining access to cultural and social experiences has become a frustrating, time-consuming experience.

Traditional town planners are now making an effort to recover the wisdom of the past — intermixing uses within neighborhoods and developing plans with flexibility. This is not always easy: In order to accomplish mixed-use planning, local governments must either grant numerous

variances to overcome the restrictions of current zoning policies or adopt entirely new ordinances that allow for this type of zoning.

Dozens of municipalities are currently adopting traditional neighborhood development (TND) ordinances that restore the option of creating new development in traditional patterns. These ordinances enable a broad range of activities within a neighborhood. People are able to move with ease from home to shopping and workplaces and automobile reliance is reduced because biking and walking options are provided.

This article provided by The Town Paper.

C S D

Conventional Subdivision Development

VS.

T N D

Traditional Neighborhood Development

Automobile Domination

Houses are set back away from the street on a street pattern of cul-de-sacs and loops. Through-traffic is possible only by means of a few "collector" streets which, then, become easily congested. Parking lots and garages dominate the landscape. Wide streets, and turns are constructed with large turning radii to make it easy for cars to maneuver at high speed.



Uniform Housing

Housing ranges from garden apartment to single-family houses, but each market segment is segregated. Moving up or down within your existing neighborhood is not possible. When children leave their childhood home or individuals reach retirement age, they must move out of their community.



Strip Shopping

Commercial establishments are located in strip malls along high volume collector roads. Residents must rely on their cars to fulfill all their daily needs. Buildings are not held to the architectural standards found in neighborhoods. Nondescript "boxes" are the norm.



Fragmented Plan

The development is a disorganized collection of pods, built to the scale of the automobile.

Residential areas, shopping centers and business parks are included, but they are isolated in pods.

Open space is in the form of buffers, easements, setbacks and land between pods.

Civic buildings are placed on undistinguished sites.



Automobile Integration

In traditional neighborhood developments, people are given priority over the automobile. Building size and placement gives spatial definition to streets and squares. Narrower streets are laid out in a network so that there are alternate routes to most destinations. Trees, sidewalks and on-street parking are provided. Garages are typically located in alleys.



Housing Choice

Traditional neighborhoods are comprised of a variety of types of residential homes — single-family, townhomes, cottages, accessory units above garages. This allows for a wide range of pricing within the neighborhood. Moving up or down within the existing neighborhood is possible.



Town Shopping

Because traditional neighborhoods are zoned mixed-use, commercial establishments can be built within the neighborhood. Walking to a book store, the pharmacy or a restaurant is once again possible. This reduces the amount of time spent driving for homeowners living within the community.

Coordinated Plan

The neighborhood area is limited in size, with clear edges and a focused center.

Shops, workplaces, schools and residences for all income groups are in close proximity.

Squares and parks are distributed and designed as specialized places for social activity and recreation.

Well-placed civic buildings act as symbols of the community identity and provide places for purposeful assembly.



Certain Residents Suffer Particularly From Suburban Sprawl:

* **The young**, who are below the legal driving age and are therefore dependent upon adults for their social needs. They are bused from schools, because they are located far from the neighborhood, and isolated at home until their working parents arrive. The alternative is to relegate one parent to a career as the child's chauffeur. The single-family house with the yard is a good place for childhood only if it is structured as part of a neighborhood, where the child can walk or bicycle to school, to play, to the

store, to the movies and to friends.

* **The middle class**, which is forced into multiple automobile ownership. The average yearly cost of car ownership is \$4,500 — the equivalent of a \$40,000 mortgage payment. The possibility of owning one car less is the single most important subsidy that can be provided towards affordable housing. Furthermore, by forbidding mixed-use areas, the investment of personal time in the activity of commuting is mandatory. A person who drives

two hours a day spends the equivalent of eight working weeks a year in the car.

* **The elderly**, who lose their self-sufficiency once they lose their drivers' licenses. Seniors who would otherwise be capable of independent living are consigned to specialized retirement communities in sprawl. This isolation has negative consequences for society at large and for the seniors themselves