

Planning & Real Estate Consultants

Memorandum

To: Master Plan Steering Committee

From: Keenan Hughes, AICP, PP
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Date: November 15, 2023

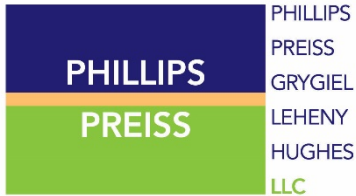
Re: Community Outreach - Stakeholders Interviews Summary

Over the past several months, the project team and Subcommittee members engaged with a diverse group of stakeholders through virtual meetings in order to listen to their valuable insights and explore the best possible ways to integrate their inputs, ideas, and concerns into the upcoming Master Plan.

These discussions proved to be highly informative and brought to light a range of critical topics that would be essential to address in the Master Plan. The table provided below includes details of the discussions between the project team and the stakeholders and organizations interviewed:

Table 1: List of Conducted Stakeholder Interviews

Interview Date	Role/Title	Affiliation
7/7/2023	Commercial - Real Estate Agent, Managing Principal	CRESA (commercial real estate firm)
9/6/2023	Interim University Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs	Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU)
9/19/2023	Members (4)	Teaneck Chamber of Commerce
9/27/2023	Commissioners (2)	Teaneck Historic Commission
10/3/2023	Members (3)	Senior Citizens Advisory Board (SCAB)
10/6/2023	Graduate students, transfer students, Student Government Association (SGA) members, on-	FDU students



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	campus residents and commuters, Director of Student Affairs	
10/17/2023	Vice President of the Teaneck Community Chorus; Executive Director of the Teaneck International Film Festival; a singer/musician and university professor/administrator.	Arts, Culture, & Entertainment
10/25/2023	Assistant Director; Principal Facilities Planner	Transit Friendly Planning at NJ Transit
10/31/2023	VP for Government Affairs and Community Engagement Strategic Initiatives; VP for Facilities	FDU Facilities

The following provides highlights from these interviews, while the Appendix to this memorandum provides detailed meeting notes from each interview.

CRESA, Real Estate

The CRESA representative highlighted the current retail challenges and the need for diverse retail and entertainment options in Teaneck, with a particular emphasis on the Cedar Lane business district and Upper Teaneck Road. He believed that addressing these issues in the Master Plan could contribute to the economic growth and vitality of the Township.

Chamber of Commerce

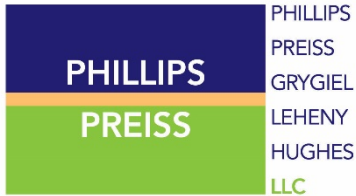
The members emphasized the unique identities of each business district and a desire for creating more destination-oriented businesses. They expressed their interest in a transportation system that would connect all these districts. They shed some light on the current parking challenges in these districts, identifying some areas with these issues.

Historic Commission

The members recommended that the list of historic properties should not be limited to houses but should also include any cultural landmarks, artifacts, or items of significance. The members also agreed to collaborate on the Historic Preservation Element for the Master Plan and assist with working on changes to the ordinances, where required.

Senior Citizens Advisory Board

The members identified several opportunities for improvement in the community including the need for more accessible park spaces for seniors, business district improvements, the need for an arts center, and establishing



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senior-friendly facilities in upcoming housing developments. They also suggested better communication and engagement with Fairleigh Dickinson University to offer courses for seniors.

FDU Students

The students provided insights into their experiences in visiting Teaneck, particularly with regard to retail stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Many talked about traffic safety concerns, especially on River Road and Cedar Lane. They also expressed interest in participating in social and volunteer events in the community.

Arts, Culture, & Entertainment

The members highlighted the difficulties in booking venues for cultural events and thus the need for an independent, mid-sized arts center in the Township, preferably near business districts. The members also expressed difficulties in retaining local talent because of the lack of space and events.

Transit-Friendly Planning at NJ Transit

The NJ Transit representatives talked about the challenges with capacity on some NYC-bound bus routes from Teaneck due to limited storage space at Port Authority depot. Potential solutions that were discussed included creating a new bus route to the NYC ferry in Edgewater and improving connections to train stations in Hackensack and Hoboken. They also discussed residents' interest in a local circulator system in Teaneck and expressed concerns that such an option may not be entirely effective, as residents desire both proximity and frequency, which is challenging to achieve together.

FDU Housing & Facilities

The team emphasized the need for better housing facilities for students and faculty within the campus, and the need for building academic facilities and student amenities nearby. There was a discussion on collaborating on potential future development plans. Additionally, FDU expressed active interest in developing the concept of University Based Retirement Communities (UBRC).

Greenway Advisory Board

Although the project team did not meet directly with the Greenway Advisory Board, the group sent a message requesting a recreation easement on the "DPW site," specifically on portions of the site running along the Hackensack River, with the intent of preventing stormwater runoff from entering the river.

Appendix: Stakeholder Interview Notes

Real Estate CRESA - Meeting Notes

Interview Date: July 7, 2023

- Representative has been involved in selling half of Cedar Lane in 1982 as a real estate broker.
- Cedar Lane was a Special Improvement District (SID) until 2010, discontinued after push back from the Council.

What are some of the retail challenges a real estate developer faces in business districts?

Cedar Lane:

- Religious restrictions (Blue Laws) limit business operations on Cedar Lane from Friday sundown to Sunday.
- Restrictions on the types of restaurants allowed, with a focus on kosher establishments.
- Parking problems and police ticketing on Sundays, which discourage business.
- Lack of drive-through options; there is need for more clothing stores.
- Tenant instability, especially among mom-and-pop stores, and low office occupancy.
- Cedar Lane's historical importance as Teaneck's primary shopping district; there is a need to preserve it.
- Parking challenges : (a) Garrison Avenue (Near Veggie Heaven), angled parking did not work. (b) There have been changes in the area due to Holy Name Medical Centre leading to parking problems.
- Facade improvement programs in Cedar Lane have been initiated.
- The entire stretch of Cedar Lane properties is owned by a single entity.

Upper Teaneck Road:

- It has mixed land use and is not considered upscale like West Englewood.
- The potential for redevelopment in Bogota area.
- Examples of booming areas include Ridgewood and Westwood.

Comments on Arts & Entertainment spaces in Business Districts:

- Teaneck Cinema is essential for the downtown area, and restaurants catering to moviegoers.
- All of FDU campus primarily goes to Hackensack because there are no spaces of recreation in Teaneck. It is a lost opportunity.

Teaneck Chambers of Commerce - Meeting Notes

Interview Date: September 19, 2023

- Teaneck has six distinct business districts, each with its unique culture and flavor.
- Cedar Lane: A mixed-use district.
- Glen Pointe: Home to corporate offices.
- North Teaneck: Known for its African American and Caribbean culture.
- South Teaneck Road: Dominated by Holy Name Medical and service professionals.
- West Englewood/Plaza: A unique demographic, primarily Jewish/Middle Eastern with kosher food establishments.
- Queen Anne Road: Known for its Asian cultural influence.
- Cedar Lane is not very accessible to pedestrians (reference to previous Bicycle/Ped Plan) - Allowing bicycle lanes; Need to connect all these districts with a transportation system, potentially a shuttle system.
- Cedar Lane still operates under a Special Improvement District (SID) model. A good reference for business district is the example of Ridgewood- looks very contemporary.
- Provide education and tools for business and property owners to guide them through the development process.
- Emphasis on regulating and capping certain types of businesses, with a focus on creating destination-oriented businesses.
- A desire to discourage medical offices near the movie theatre and promote retail stores for shopping.
- Mention of a need to encourage shopping centers on Cedar Lane, as well as the history of numerous baking stores in the area.

Parking Issues:

- Challenges with parking availability (on-street parking on Degraw Street, the CVS parking lot on Queen Anne Road, and 5-story parking lot at Cedar Lane near Walgreens); Farmer's market
- Opportunities identified, including the Verizon building project, the potential for Historic Newbridge Landing to provide outdoor spaces, and the farmer's market in the Garrison parking lot (with a slight reduction in parking spaces).

Has event programming occurred to attract people? Does it work?

- Events - 4th of July Parade; Teaneck Day; Memorial Day Street Fair - pedestrian walkway, vendors from outside participate, very few Teaneck vendors; National Night out; Rotary Club and Chamber have collaborated on many activities. There is a need for encouraging local businesses to get involved in these events.

Additional Comments:

- Recommendation - Sample various business types and interview them.
- Explore the mixed-use concept for business district; A strong focus should be on parking solutions for both customers and merchants.
- "Garden Clubs" concept - the potential for community gardens in underutilized spaces; residents at Care One also expressed interest in this idea; Idea of raised garden beds for people with disabilities.

Teaneck Historic Commission - Meeting Notes

Interview Date: September 27, 2023

- The historic commission is currently in the process of revising/updating its inventory list.
- They are guided by the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Standards of consideration are listed in the ordinance.
- The master plan will have a historic preservation element, for which THP (Teaneck Historical Preservation Commission) has agreed to collaborate.
- The goal is to expand the list and include other items of significance, not limited to houses. Artifacts and landmarks should also be considered.
- The Township has been historically significant in many ways, some historical sites discussed - BLM mural, midcentury colonial Dutch houses, the 1964 school integration, the Armory, etc.
- They might also have to refer to the Federal standards (section of municipal guidelines) in the process of renewing the list. For example, how specific should Colonial shutters be maintained?
- Ultimate vision is to 'Protect and celebrate'
- Guide to historic landmarks is dated 1995 (Centennial celebration)
- Greater list is in the Bergen County historical survey with 2004-2011 updates. It has a formally designated list for Teaneck.
- THC has worked on Google pin map with placements for Teaneck's historic houses and sites.
- There are more properties that could be pursued but that involves requesting owner's consent. In the case of qualification, a certain amount of manpower is required to maintain it (financial limitations).
- Even after recommendation, the council would have to approve a new historic list.
- There is a public library (virtual library) virtual village where all historical sites can be referred (teanecklibrary.com).
- The Commission would assist in the drafting of goals, objectives, and recommendations for the Historic Preservation Element.

Senior Citizens Advisory Board - Meeting Notes

Interview Date: October 3, 2023

What are some biggest challenges for senior population around your neighborhood?

- Hargreaves/Ashley - close to Englewood - there is space on both sides for passive open spaces/ pocket parks. There is a need for improving walkability/accessibility. Existing Park space is hilly; it is needed for a plain area to be converted into parks for senior citizens. Dogs should not be allowed in some parks.

What about Business Districts Improvement?

- Cedar Lane downtown needs to be improved. Some better examples - Englewood and Hackensack. It needs to better advertise itself. The Chamber of Commerce website is not active/updated, lacks communication. No celebration when a new place opens.
- Need to open more cafés and coffee shops.
- Chestnut plaza - there is an opportunity for a better downtown experience for the public. Provide central gathering spaces. Some benches have not been painted; the pavers are broken.
- Beautification of all business districts: Plants in light poles along Teaneck Road. No downtowns are thriving. Potential for live performances around the lanes, make it more festive, install checker tables for kids and adults. Take measures that draw people to business districts.
- Parking Issues in Cedar Lane - parking lot near Thursday farmers market should remain. Most seniors don't like using garage parking due to dim lights. Double parking is a problem.

Public transportation/Mobility challenges?

- Mobility challenges - all 4 quadrants not well connected. There could be a trolley system/ senior bus that could go around all districts. Northeast to library - someone took 2 buses. Poor public bus system.

Affordable Housing

- New private residences are very expensive. New developments don't offer senior amenities. There is a need for affordable housing. Garden apartments - walk in Arbor Terrace - costly.

Arts and Culture

- Teaneck International Film Festival.
- Votee Park - has skits, live performances, place is packed. There is tremendous talent in Teaneck. Top jazz people - all should be brought forward.
- Rodda Center - Senior center - there are waiting lists, always overcrowded. Need an arts center.
- FDU - offer free courses to senior citizens; need better relationship with them.

FDU Students - Meeting Notes

Interview Date: October 6, 2023

- Participants - a graduate school student, undergraduate students, and a university staff representative.
One participant has lived on campus undergrad days, stays 10 minutes away, currently drives or Ubers from home to school; has worked on campus throughout her time in the University. One participant carpools sometimes. Another is a commuter from Saddlebrook; usually drives or is dropped off to campus.

Off campus visits - What parts of Teaneck do they frequently visit?

- On Cedar Lane: 7/11, CVS, IHOP, Affordable Savings, some cafes.
- Amazing Savings is very affordable, but students usually prefer Target in Hackensack; Riverside Commons retail stores in Hackensack are favored more by students even though Amazing Savings is a shorter distance to walk. Cedar Lane has less options. Want more entertainment or indoor recreation.
- Students go to Barnes & Nobles, Cheesecake Factory.
- AMC is better known than the theatre on Cedar Lane.
- Students venture out to Hackensack more.
- Students prefer going home on weekends.
- On and off campus experience - 50% percent live on campus. Many undergraduate students like to stay on campus for its active social life. Most nursing/medical students stay on campus because it's convenient.

What would they like more of?

- Affordable places to eat; quick service restaurants: more cafés where they could socialize.
- Entertainment centers; rock climbing gym.

How do students commute to these off-campus destinations?

- Undergrads usually walk everywhere.
- Others use Uber or carpool in a group if going to Walmart or other destination places.

Where do students work/intern? Where do they get jobs after college?

- American Dream; Madison; Englewood Cliff; LG Electronics
- In New York City
- BD; engineering heavy placements
- Do medical students go to Holy Name or Hackensack Medical Centers for internships?
No, their courses are academically heavy.
- Regarding job fairs - local employers from Teaneck hardly show up. Not marketed at all. Very low representation. There is a disconnect.

Grocery shopping experience & needs:

- Walmart, Shoprite, and Target are top options for groceries though some of these are far.
- Most dorms and accommodations on campus don't have a fully functional kitchen.
- Some places off campus are less expensive than dining halls or meal plans.

How is the experience of walking to Cedar Lane?

- Not too much activity so students prefer to go in groups; less streetlights; there is a cross walk but still a little security concern

Do you attend any social events off campus in Teaneck?

- A lot of parks are not suitable for organizing events. There were a lot of charitable events in Bogota and Ridgewood that collaborated with some departments.
- There is potential for retirement homes, shelter homes, soup kitchens to reach out to university so that students can volunteer. But accessibility is an issue.

Traffic and mobility

- Lots of students are mass transit users; they wait in bus shelters if available; bus stops don't have benches and shelters.
- Traffic on River Road is heavy during rush hour; difficult to cross.
- There is a protected crosswalk now. There should be a speed limit. But only one further down the road.

Arts, Culture, and Entertainment - Meeting Notes

Interview Date: October 17, 2023

- Puffin Foundation is an artistic organization that funds TIFF and many other projects and events around the town (environment related events, school events)

Some issues that the arts & culture community faces in Teaneck at present:

- Hard time booking venues for events. Difficult to schedule events depending on availability.
- Need an independent arts center; mid-sized that fits 150 to 200 people at once.
- All other neighboring towns already have a dedicated art space - Bergen PAC (Englewood), HACPAC (Hackensack), NJPAC (Newark), Barrymore Film Center (Fort Lee), Jacob Burns Film Center (Pleasantville, NY).
- Currently, TIFF doesn't have office space. They meet in school buildings.
- Need municipal support: there's lack of money, everybody volunteers, low on budget.
- Need a home for our community - Not just space for performing arts or hosting events but also a retail and commercial space which could be used to sell art and merch. (Montclair had done that).
- Need to look at art in a holistic sense; an entire building with rooms dedicated to music practice or dance; visual arts and performing arts.
- There was an effort made to look for a space with the Chamber of Commerce, but nothing materialized (Verizon building).
- Ideally it should be located downtown, in business districts - not far away. Contributes to revitalizing business districts.
- Mom & pop theatre - Teaneck cinemas, went out of business during COVID - TIFF supported it and revived it.
- Something is needed to drive people to business districts. Teaneck is in competition with all other towns of the county.

Vision for Teaneck:

- We are a unique township with great diversity and our history should be part of what we show in arts & culture.
- Preserve the identity of the town by unifying all business districts. Currently they are segregating; business growth needs to be streamlined.
- Currently, the downtowns don't reflect the socioeconomic background of the people living in town.
- Retain talented people - lots are leaving Teaneck.
- Teaneck should be a destination township and TIFF can be a big part of it.

Transit Friendly Planning, NJ Transit - Meeting Notes

Interview Date: October 25, 2023

- While some of the buses going into NYC are currently at capacity, NJT cannot add more buses to these routes because there is not enough capacity to store them in Port Authority.
- Potential alternative solutions to this issue - Improved access to the City by a potential bus route to the NYC ferry in Edgewater; Improved transit connections to the train stations in Hackensack (NJT) and Hoboken (PATH).
- Awaiting transit ridership data for the bus routes in Teaneck. (Staff at NJ Transit could potentially obtain the data, if necessary)
- Discussed a potential circulator system within Teaneck. The consensus was that transit was effective for getting to NYC, but not often convenient for local trips.
- While there is desire for a circulator, this type of service might not be too effective, as residents appear to want both a route close to home and a route that comes frequently, which is difficult to achieve in tandem.
- Transit Friendly Planning team's work is more focused on land use that supports transit. The team has offered to remain involved in the project and agreed to review recommendations or draft plan. The team has also offered to connect us with their Government & Community Liaison staff to help us navigate which staff at NJT would most align with the plan's needs.

FDU Housing & Facilities - Meeting Notes

Interview Date: October 31, 2023

On-campus and off-campus housing in FDU; Occupancy Rate

- Metropolitan campus (Teaneck & Hackensack) has more international students (South Asia -India, Pakistan, etc.)
- Do not have list of off-campus locations where students reside
- Hard to convince students to live on-campus; recognize the need of co-locating academic spaces and other facilities in vicinity
- Requirements of kitchen; meal plans; need for new dorms
- No faculty housing in campus

Parking facilities in campus

- There is a parking space within 10 minutes everywhere within campus
- No EV charging on campus

Future development

- Strategic planning committee - no external member from Teaneck
- No plans on new parking spaces; there are some existing buildings which could be repurposed or demolished for new development
- Surplus Land Plan - Would coordinate with Township for the next 4 months and collaborate on master plan for sections dealing with development on campus

University based retirement village

- FDU is actively interested in collaborating for building senior housing & facilities
- Interested in the concept of university-based retirement communities (UBRC); Fairleigh Dickinson's International School of Hospitality and Tourism Management and Fairleigh Dickinson's School of Nursing and Allied Health, both can play significant roles in the creation of UBRC on the FDU Metropolitan camp: win-win for both FDU and Township

Collaboration on revitalization of business districts, etc.

- There is opportunity in the business districts because institution needs to retain students, there's a lot of competition for colleges in North Jersey
- Important to collaborate on making streets safer; Physical connection is crucial between campus and Township (Esp. places like Cedar Lane) that incentivizes students to stay.
- They plan to invite Teaneck's Mayor and the Council to the Men's Basketball tournament. Would like community members to attend the games.
- Student can work with community groups for their co-curricular activities, internships

Sustainability measures within campus

- Less fuel consumption; less water usage than before
- Campus is the lowest point of Teaneck; storm water management exists

Town-gown relationship has not been very organic

- People from Teaneck do visit campus from morning walks (dog walks)
- They visit river walk, pedestrian bridge

Historic Preservation: There is one Teaneck historic property on campus; currently not inhabitable; in need of major repairs. This property should be considered for the site of potential Teaneck Museum, as has been discussed by the Teaneck Historical Society.