



Minutes from 1.14.16 Community Meeting in Clara Barton Neighborhood of Edison Re: Amboy Avenue Revitalization

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*Note – apologies regarding any misspelling of names

Introduction to the Area by Susan and Fred – discussing current condition and zoning. Open it up and ask the audience to tell them what the neighborhood would like to see, or would not like to see, within the Area. What do people like about the Amboy Avenue area? What don't they like?

Resident

- Downtown area is a mishmash of stuff
- What is the thought about cohesion for the area?
- There are a number of good businesses but many that are not
- Has the new building even been rented yet?
- Reluctance to national retail but is the thought to combine national and local retail?

Portia Richardson – Doesn't live here but friend owns business at 1091 Amboy Ave – Tech Company

- Restaurants have big failure rate
- Are we considering tax breaks for small businesses?

Edna Michael – has lived here for 35 years on 6th street

- Heard there is supposed to be low income housing in the neighborhood – what's the story with this?

Eileen Teffenhart – resident for 30 years – former council member, teacher at Middle School

- Against adding housing because of burden that puts on schools
- Need parks
- The schools are overcrowded and there is no parking
- People park up the residential streets, especially for a particular business and leave beer bottles on the street and are out at all hours of the night.
- There are 35 students to a classroom at the middle school



- The area doesn't have a downtown train transfer station like other places that have downtowns
- Wants park land – (when asked what she would like to see along Amboy Avenue she responds with “parks”)
- Worried something similar to Metuchen will happen here – too many vacant stores there
- The area doesn't have a need for more residential
- Can't get down the road because of bump outs – hates the bump outs. People agree.

Resident –

- What about the old Stewart Rootbeer property and Dr. Acello's property?
- What about their retail store? Will be require certain retail?

Dr. Acello – owner of vacant lot with a pit

- Half of the first floor will be his offices, half will be an undetermined retail store
- He's only building one-bedroom apartments so as to not overburden school system – this was criteria given to him by the Township. Is trying to accommodate them and the community.
- He's sensitive to the context of the area
- Had a hard time getting a loan – banks consider this area dilapidated

Lois Hurley – grew up here

- Thinks Edison could use more housing for seniors
- Doesn't mean low income senior housing but wants nice options for seniors – rentals and condos
- Wants to see continuity in the area
- Will there be continuity of design?

Delia Landolfi – resident – lives on 5th street

- Don't need any more condos or apartments for seniors – the Clara Barton retirement community already exists
- Wants ice cream shop (EVERYONE LIKES THIS)
- No one likes the hookah shop



Rose Pittenger – has lived here for 15 years

- She is part of the neighborhood preservation committee
- Helped plant the trees and flowers
- Does cleanup of the area
- Needs residents to be more involved
- Parking is a problem
- Would like to see more connections to the Greenway

Amanda Radwon – grew up on 6th street – now lives on Ecco Street

- Her old neighborhood didn't feel safe because of the Section 8 housing so moved back to Clara Barton
- Doesn't want to feel unsafe here – no affordable housing
- No bars or clubs
- Revitalize buildings that are already here as opposed to building new buildings
- Loves the coffee shop (EVERYONE LIKES THE COFFEE SHOP)
- Misses Donna's Deli

Resident –

- Edison is a community of 100,000 people and there is no downtown
- Wants people to broaden their view to the whole township

David Ostrowsky – of Provident Bank

- We have three malls here that will never have a boutique shop
- Wants health food stores
- Boutique eateries
- Council should take a poll about what the community will like

John Aitken – resident on 3rd street

- Concern is traffic
- Bump outs are a problem – especially for firetrucks and emergency vehicles
- Parking added by Dr. Acello will add to the traffic
- Hates bump outs
- Cars drive too fast down 3rd street



Fanie Toscanos – resident of area for 40 years

- Lots of cross streets in the area – if someone has to make a left turn the whole area backs up
- Traffic is bad

John Poyner – newer resident – bought house here in June

- Moved here because of the charm – wants to make sure the area retains the charm
- No 4 or 5 story buildings here
- Would not enjoy parking garage
- Issues are a matter of scale
- Would like to see local as opposed to national businesses

Nancy Eggert – resident of Pleasant Avenue

- She was in the neighborhood before it was a “downtown”
- Doesn't like buildings way up to the street
- Doesn't want to be like Westfield, Metuchen, or New Brunswick
- Wants larger setbacks – this creates charm for her

Tom

- King George Road is where Clara Barton actually starts
- Doesn't think businesses will survive unless people patronize them
- People will come if you build something that's nice and priced right

Resident –

- Revitalization has been the plan for 15 years – there is nothing new presented here
- Doesn't like exact same height along building façade
- Doesn't like when buildings are up close to the street
- Amboy Avenue is very dangerous, especially the truck traffic
- Wants to open up road somehow

Pat Rubin – resident and business owner

- Keep the street festivals going
- No performance stage for the dance studios of the Township
- Would like to see a gazebo/stage so people can come out for performances



Joe Coyel – grew up on 6th street

- Closed Raritan Bakery recently
- Wants the community to stay charming but understands moving forward
- Bring back pharmacy
- There are currently four empty store fronts along Amboy Avenue
- Services don't balance the charm we're looking for
- Wants to see a butcher, pharmacy
- The community should be proud there isn't graffiti in the area

Dr. Acello

- If you build businesses people will come

Susan posed the question – What does everyone think about the two bookend projects

Dominique Meurer-Chung – resident of Hoover St since 2002

- Prefers businesses on the sidewalk
- Loves the coffee house
- Likes walking from store to store
- Doesn't want section 8 housing
- Wants dog park

Robin Both – resident of 4th street whole life

- Downtowns don't mean houses
- Children will want pizza, sodas, ice cream, etc.
- Middle school kids will spend their money on Amboy Avenue

Walt Stochal – resident and with greenway coalition

- Wants a place to park bikes and easier access to Greenway
- Suggested the second or third story be stepped back (people seemed to like this idea)
- Compared to main street of Disney World
- Wants something that's not imposing
- Wants to preserve the Clara Barton Lawn as Town Square – where they light their Christmas tree and host other events (EVERYONE LIKES THIS)



Resident -

- Doesn't want straight rooflines

Resident -

- Loves greenway
- Concerned people don't clean up after their dogs on the Greenway

Maria Orchid – resident

- What can be done to make businesses stay here and not move to Woodbridge

Resident -

- Concerned about how bad the streets are – unpaved and bumpy – manholes sticking up past the pavement.

Sally Yabra – owner of coffee house everyone loves

- Not enough parking – her businesses shares parking with the salon
- She sometimes has to park her car at Jade Dynasty
- The coffee shop brings in live music but they want more of a downtown, they thought they were getting a downtown
- Need more in the area
- There is no green grocery – sometimes she runs out of tomatoes or something and there is no easy place to go grab more
- Also – no breakfast place in the area – would love to see a breakfast restaurant
- Wants things for children to do

Council Member – Vice President

- Every road in Edison will be paved over the next four years
- Making changes to the permit process to be more business friendly

Man who owns one of the “bookend” buildings – didn't say which one

- Condo units – notes that he cannot sell any of the condo units
- No turn over for past 8 years
- Had two successful businesses



The following is a summary of what people like/don't like for the Area:

- Businesses people want to see:
 - Ice cream shop
 - Grocery store
 - Health food
 - "Green" grocer
 - Deli
 - Pharmacy
 - Butcher
 - Places kids can get pizza, soda, etc. after school
 - Everyone loves the coffee shop
- Businesses people DON'T want to see:
 - Bars
 - Clubs
 - Hookah shop
 - Some concern about restaurants
- People's preference for the area:
 - No buildings above 3 stories
 - More connections to the Middlesex Greenway
 - Bike parking
 - People would like to see a gazebo space/town green space on the front lawn of the Clara Barton building
 - No parking garage
 - Yes parking garage
 - Doesn't like buildings at the sidewalk
 - Likes buildings at the sidewalk
 - Wants continuity throughout the area – design – seemed most people still favor Victorian style architecture for the area
 - Does not like straight rooflines
 - Would like to see more parks
- Big issues with the area:
 - Not enough parking
 - Too much traffic



- Several people have issues with the bump outs, however several also like the bump outs
- Several people are worried about Section 8 and other affordable housing coming into the area