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**STRATEGIC REVITALIZATION PLAN FOR  
WEST MAPLE NEIGHBORHOOD  
CAMDEN, MERCHANTVILLE & PENNSAUKEN  
MINUTES**

Task Force Meeting #4  
March 10, 2011, 10am  
Merchantville Borough Hall

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**Attendees:**

Charles MacAdams, Property Owner  
Marvin Gaskill, Resident  
Agnes Madden, Council person  
Bill Watson, Merchantville Zoning Officer  
Joe Garbarino, Masonry Pres. Group  
Mike Wisnosky, RDG  
Monica Sohler, Merchantville Observer  
Eric Dobson, Open Communities /  
Pennsauken resident  
Larry Cardwell, Pennsauken Econ Dev.

Wayne Bauer, Merchantville Police Chief  
Richard DePetro, Purchaser of 606 W. Maple  
Gina DePetro, Purchaser of 606 W. Maple  
John Adams, Pennsauken Zoning Officer  
Maz Radwan, RE Broker for 606 W. Maple  
Mara Wuebker, RDG  
Mr. Patel, Michael's Liquors  
Jeanne Collins, Merchantville resident  
Terry Carr, Pennsauken Economic Development

**1. Organizational Framework and Structure**

- a. Task Force Members –Two additional members will be serving on the Task Force: Agnes Madden and Patricia Huerta. Goal is to create a private-public partnership between residents, businesses, and municipal staff of the 3 communities in order to ensure long-term change in the neighborhood.
- b. Stakeholders – RDG sent recent e-mail status update to all stakeholders. A public notice appeared in Retrospect. Survey also served purpose of stakeholder outreach. Looking for contact for Sprint since substantial landowner in study area.

**2. Neighborhood Survey**

- a. Neighborhood Survey-
  - i. Volunteers delivered the survey as an insert in the Merchantville Observer. Borough Clerk's office mailed to Merchantville landlords. Pennsauken's Zoning and Economic Development Departments hand-delivered the surveys to Pennsauken's residents and will soon be mailing to landlords. RDG mailed to Camden's residents and property owners.
  - ii. We may do a second round of distribution on a Saturday, if needed. Approximately 20 surveys have been received thus far. Jeanne Collins is going to walk around neighborhood and collect more surveys.
- b. Public Visioning Workshop-
  - i. Workshop is scheduled for March 29, 2011 at 6:30pm at the Pennsauken Library. Public notice of workshop appeared in Retrospect. RDG will do press release and recently put on Merchantville facebook page.

Marvin will put on Merchantville blog. Municipalities will post on websites and Pennsauken will put on local tv channel. Task Force members and attendees will post in storefronts. We may want to utilize the schools to get public notice out for future workshops. The goal of the workshop is to get public involved and to begin to develop a vision for the neighborhood.

### 3. Neighborhood Planning

- a. Existing Neighborhood Activities –Rich DePetro, the contract purchaser of 606 West Maple Ave, provided a proposed rendering of 606 West Maple Avenue that shows exterior façade improvements, landscaping, window replacements, lighting, refurbished stucco. He will be the general contractor. He is involved in the due-diligence period and hopes to close in the next 30 days if everything goes well. Currently investigating oil tank. He has met with Mayor and other Borough representatives. 20 apartments are not occupied. There is an infestation problem. He does not see a need for displacement of residents as he would work on the vacant apartments first and then shift people around as the units become available. He intends to have an on-site manager. He has reached out to the adjacent property owner regarding parking, but has not heard back yet. Parking is needed in order to broaden the appeal of the property and to diversify the mix of tenants.
- b. SWOT Analysis of Neighborhood- RDG wants to engage Task Force to start thinking about recommendations for Neighborhood. There was a discussion of the strengths and challenges in the neighborhood, opportunities for improvements, and things that can hinder the neighborhood’s ability to succeed. Need to develop big picture goals and a shared vision. Vision should build on strengths and minimize weaknesses.
  - i. Strengths – (1) location, (2) availability of public transportation, (3) ‘great neighborhood,’ (4) existing infrastructure & utilities in place, (4) residences are in good shape, (5) Wellwood Park, (6) there are a mix of uses in neighborhood (commercial and residential) as well as (7) diversity in residential types, (8) resident network in place in part of the neighborhood.
  - ii. Weaknesses – (1) large transient population, (2) out-of-town landlords who don’t care about neighborhood, (3) lack of trees, particularly along Maple Avenue, (4) large number of Section 8 tenants, (5) concentration of persons in lower income strata, (6) litter and trash particularly from people moving in and out, (7) property maintenance (broken windows at rental buildings), (8) communication b/w municipalities and residents, (9) need for traffic calming, (10) visual clutter from Route 130, (11) need more parking for businesses and residents, (12) front yards paved over for parking, (13) unsuitable renovations (i.e., renovations that are

inconsistent with original architecture of building), (14) entrance into neighborhood from Route 130, (15) more recreation activities for young children and teenagers.

- iii. Opportunities – (1) create more parking, (2) traffic calming, (3) landscaping, (4) planters, (5) home improvement assistance, (6) lighting in alleyways, (7) bring back map to façade of Liquor Store- good for wayfinding and also has historic nostalgic component to it, (8) improving entrance into neighborhood from 130, (9) softening affect of Sprint Bunker.
- iv. Threats – (1) lack of funding to provide desired services and improvements, (2) costs of ownership is high especially for commercial properties (high taxes, high sewer & water rates (CCMUA & local) compared to other communities while rent is lower), (3) perception of neighborhood, (4) additional regulations on landlords that may not achieve desired outcome, yet may be financially onerous – already State inspections in place, may be able to solve problem with other tools already in place without adding additional level of bureaucracy, (5) community culture of what is and what is not acceptable – ex. trash/litter, (6) lack of coordination between three communities to improve neighborhood, (7) loss of ratables if remove some buildings.

#### 4. **Next Meeting and Upcoming Deadlines**

- a. Next Meeting- March 29<sup>th</sup> (public workshop) & April 14<sup>th</sup> (task force mtg). The April 14th Task Force will not be held at Borough Hall next month. Instead, the Task Force will be doing a site visit to the Neighborhood if the weather is nice.