

Town of Ramapo - Northeast Ramapo Strategic Plan & Future Land Use GEIS
SUMMARY OF PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING –
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2018 AT RAMAPO TOWN HALL

Meeting Time: 7:30 to 9:45 p.m.

Attendees:

Yakov Berger – *Village of New Square*
Harry Grossman - *ERCSD*
Wetzer Jeannot - *Gracepoint Church*
Sandy Kohl – *Businessman*
Alex Marrero - *ERCSD*
Paul Nagin- *Skyview Homeowners*
Eddy Sopin – *My Brother’s Keeper initiative, ERCSD*
Ephraim Tarber - *Spring Hill EMS*
Raphael Zigler - *Member of an area fire department*

Also Attending:

Michael Specht – *Town Supervisor*
Michael Klatsky – *Town Director of Planning & Zoning - Building, Planning & Zoning Dept.*
Mona Montal – *Town Chief of Operations*
Ben Syden, AICP, Vice-President – *Laberge Group*
David Gilmour, AICP, Senior Planner – *Laberge Group*
Jason King, AICP, Principal – *Dover Kohl & Partners*

I. **Introductions** – Attendees made introductions.

II. Preparations for (rescheduled) January 23, 2019, 2018 Northeast Ramapo Strategic Plan Work-in-Progress (WIP) Community Presentation

Mr. Syden said there was a request to reschedule the WIP meeting to a later point in order to enable more public input. The Town is interested in getting a variety of types of input. This will also generate an opportunity to perform more meeting publicity and outreach. In conjunction with this input gathering and organizing of outreach and publicity, Mr. Syden said there will be an enhanced project website as well as survey research.

III. Land Use Concepts Exploration

Mr. Syden introduced Jason King, of Dover-Kohl, who facilitated a discussion with this group based on Dover-Kohl’s findings and analysis from the November 2018 Charrette. Mr. King made a PowerPoint presentation, showing possible land use recommendations. Mr. Syden noted there is a need for more input, including from the PAC, to make sure suggestions are on track. Mr. Syden acknowledged meetings setups need greater publicity, but there is intent to increase efforts at public engagement and Laberge has been empowered to reach out to constituent groups so there is awareness of upcoming meetings.

Mt. Ivy Park / rail trail - One location examined is at Station Road, where there is an entry into the large open space. In November there was exploration of potential ways to enhance the rail right of way that runs through Mt. Ivy Park to this location. Mr. King said the treatment is shown as gravel. There has been talk about need for more bike parking. He said there will be symbols on plan diagrams corresponding with types of public improvements.

NYS Route 202 Environment – Mr. King showed a notion for a single story retail strip located northeast of the site where Stop & Shop grocery is on the south of side NYS Rte. 202. Mr. King said it's an example of a site / land use that is not performing optimally. On the opposite side of NYS Rte. 202, in 'CS Zone', there were two big boxes proposed. Within the Town, the site plan primarily involves construction of large, asphalt parking areas. He asked whether it is a desirable land use – it seems like it is not a destination. He inquired if it could be beneficial to develop this as more of "a place" which is inviting and community-centered. That location is zoned for mixed-use, but he said that regional retail uses and parking is what the market brought there. Rather than get too involved/ immersed in technical zoning for the area at this point, Mr. King asked what people want to see for land uses on both sides of NYS Rte 202? Discussion covered:

- NYS Rte. 202 bike facilities and road and desirability to alter street configurations;
- Small businesses/ business incubation
- How many dwelling units could be possible under notion shown? Mr. King said yield in terms of dwellings is not yet known. At this stage, there is more interest in exploring form of land use. He said detailed technical analysis comes after a vision is defined.
- It was asked whether it is possible to show NYS Rte. 202 thoroughfare as two lanes in each direction. Mr. King said we can show concepts, such as for more complete streets. Don't know how NYSDOT will respond; but can ask for desired treatments.
- There was more dialogue about NYS Rte. 59 corridor – pros and cons of retail settings and pedestrian environments there. An example was cited of a pleasing retail-oriented environments in Edgewater, NJ. Misters Klatsky and King asked whether the defaults should be changed, with different layouts for developers to follow?

Stadium Site – Mr. King presented notions for alternative forms on-site. These showed different arrangements of civic space and infill on segments and associated circulation and parking configurations.

Ms. Montal expressed concern for loss of 30 parking spaces by the front entrance to the ballpark, including universally accessible spaces. It was inquired whether it is possible to position new land uses more to the sides, as these areas seem under-utilized?

There was a question - if housing is part of the mix at the stadium - who would want to live there? Also, who would do the development? Mr. King noted an example of a stadium in Montgomery, AL. Housing was established by the stadium. Mr. Syden noted efforts around Joe Bruno Stadium in Albany. He said the property in Ramapo is owned by the Local Development Corporation which is an affiliate of the Town. One typical approach might be for a partnership arrangement, where there is request for proposal process and a publicized process to find development partner(s) that build a desired product. Alternatively, the property could be sold. Mr. Klatsky asked attendees how they felt about monetizing the property? One comment was there is a need affordable housing somewhere.

There was discussion about parking. To some a parking garage makes sense. Mr. King said compared with surface parking, a typical garage accommodates over 500 spaces. One garage could satisfy parking supplanted by a conceptualized first stage limited-mix of a plaza and some retail. There was an comment that many garages could be needed overall. One person noted the stadium could die, if we don't do something (it is built – that can't be undone). Another opined there is not an urban mindset in and for this area.

It was noted by Town officials there will be a study of what to do with the Stadium. It will establish options on how to organize it so that it is not fiscally cumbersome. Kick-off for that study occurred today. Misters Syden and King emphasized it is imperative for the planners for this Project to be part of the process for that study. It was identified that all options are up for exploration, such as adding turf and a bubble to generate income. There was a comment that it will be desirable to create more unity regarding the future of the stadium.

Gracepoint – A site notion formed by Dover-Kohl was presented for the property at the corner of New Hempstead and Buena Vista Roads. There were no substantial comments. Mr. Syden advised focusing on the layouts of the circulation system and buildings on-site in relation to natural and other features. He said people should be thinking in terms of massing and arrangements of buildings and streets and less so on the 'skin' of buildings, as those design features come during a different aspect of land use regulations refinement.

Golf course (former Minisceongo GC fronting on Pomona Road by Camp Hill Road) – Dover-Kohl presented graphics that it formulated. There was a meeting between the Planners and the owner's team in order to review the site owner's notions. There was discussion of objectives advocated by Dover-Kohl. Mr. King said it may be beneficial to think of the degree there is a mix of uses. There was a comment to preserve this site. Another opinion was that future development should match the allowance under existing zoning.

There was a side discussion that Town of Ramapo terminology is unique: 'Downzone', which per a search engine like Google means establishing ability to derive less density, is the opposite in Ramapo, where it is common for the term 'Upzone' to mean cases where there is a reduction in density allowed.

Conklin Road – In discussing 'Stryker' property, it was noted that a Town Asset Review Committee (TARC) is reviewing various lands the Town owns. There was a comment that the Stryker property should be considered as permanent open space. Mr. King asked what people thought about conserving part, or sending development rights to another place? There was some skepticism about feasibility of this.

Open Discussion – Mr. King opened-up the floor to general questions and dialogue.

There was a comment that in many places 'retail' is dying. Is there going to be market demand if there are additions of these type services? Another person noted that there are retail places that are surviving and thriving in the current market. One commenter felt there will be demand for convenience.

In response to a question about the retail mix and whether there could be promotion of too much non-residential space, it was noted that if a development like Patrick Farms were constructed, there could be elevated retail and services demand within the broader area. People could respond to having a destination to go to. Mr. King noted there could also be some allocations / portions of spaces developed targeted for non-profits. Another commenter asked if there is targeting to develop space for information-age businesses, is there a way to design these spaces so that they are not obsolete in 10 years with rapid technological change? One person noted that for an empty nest household, for people at or approaching senior age, the unit types, sizes and settings shown could be appealing.

There was discussion about project outreach. It was noted that there are numerous people that are not electronic / social media savvy. So, there is a need to contact them – this will help hit all elements of the community. Likewise, there are ethnic groups like in the Ecuadorian and Haitian communities within the larger area to reach out to and connect with.

There was discussion about a need to plan for emergency services and to plan for this as the area grows. The northeast area is not setup (arranged) well now for this. Mr. Klatsky said an approach is to promote organization of large sites so there can be efforts to provide for / include services on them like fire or ambulance stations/ facilities. There have been efforts to alert developers about needs and voids. Also, circulation improvement can help alleviate congestion, like when there are stadium events. It was suggested to conduct an educational session on how services are organized in NY State, in terms of fire and ambulance districts and how state laws influence this. It can help planning. Mr. Syden noted that state-level initiatives promote consolidation and governmental efficiency. Yet, this is a complex topic in Ramapo and this topic is mostly outside of the scope of this Project.

One speaker said there is an adequate supply of housing for seniors, young couples, and empty nesters. It was opined the supply has to be more reflective of the diversity that is present in terms of cultures, ages, household sizes and incomes. Mr. King believes if there is a range of housing types, the market will saturate (demand and fill) these.

There was an opinion expressed that the northeast part of Town has rural and open space characteristics that should be preserved. The speaker felt a yield of 100 houses under large lot zoning on the former golf course is sufficient – why allow more? There was a response that we all want greenery, but we need to provide affordable and senior housing. The alternative to refining zoning and land use codes is for owners of sites to approach the Town now with Planned Development Districts (PDDs) – that is an option available.

There was a comment that there will be a need for schools to accommodate future growth (public and private). It was asked whether developers can be asked to make contributions to schools? That is challenging and it was noted that the operating-side of the school equation cannot be addressed.

Mr. Klatsky believes the County can support the Town designing and helping activate trails on County lands. Mr. King noted that with plans developed for projects like improving the Conklin orchards site to establish a small B&B and cidery, or with plans presented for establishing trails

within Mount Ivy Park, there can be pursuit of State and federal government grants for desired improvements.

It was noted there is a need to educate the public on why we're doing this project what is being explored. It was encouraged for there to be small group meetings to establish broad reach and project awareness and participation. If PAC members have groups they want to identify to receive one-on-one presentations, it is possible to do a roadshow. There should be notes sent to Planner Klatsky with suggestions. A public opinion survey is forthcoming. It can be administered to people at small group meetings. This is a task for members.

The meeting concluded with more discussion of the purpose of the Town Asset Review Committee (TARC). It was noted that sale of a property, like the quarry the Town owns in Suffern, could aid Town finances. There will be evaluation of sites that host summer camps and pools.

There was a reminder of the January 23, 2019 WIP meeting at Pomona Middle School.