



The Borough of Highland Park

Sustainable Highland Park

County of **Middlesex**, New Jersey

P.O. Box 1330

HIGHLAND PARK, NEW JERSEY

TEL. (732) 572-3400 FAX (732) 732-6006

SHP Minutes, September Meeting - 9/27/23

In Attendance: Tina Weishaus, Matt Hale (mhale@hpboro.com), Matthew Hersh, Council liaison to SHP, (mhersh@hpboro.com), Lisa Kaplan Noss, Randall Solomon, Meli Shiu, Irene Riegner, Sheree Neese Todd, Claudia Farber, Ira Mintz, Skip Rogers (z.rogers@verizon.net), Alison Wilkes (wilkesar@gmail.com), Paul Sauers, Mark Lesko, Irene Lipstein, Alexis Thomason, Gutami Sharma

Invited Guest, Matt Hale, Councilman for Economic Development to talk about redevelopment:

Recap of [redevelopment tracts, A, B, C, D](#), go to hpboro.com under Government for documents

Tract C is the main focus for today's discussion - located mid-block between S.2nd & 3rd Aves and bounded by Raritan Ave and Magnolia Street.

Once there are drawings there will be a chance for the public to weigh in.

Garden Homes - acquired additional properties. Will need to do amendments to the redevelopment plan. The public is going to have the opportunity to weigh in.

Garden Homes developed the new property on River Rd/Walter Ave, called The Frederick, no problems cited.

This is not all happening but they are talking about: (They are going to have to make tradeoffs, according to Matt Hale)

things like shuttle to the train

Internal courtyard

Public space/benches as part of this

There has to be a % of affordable housing & they can add more

Can add in things like environmental requirements

If you look at the Downtown Redevelopment Plan 5.7.11 (stormwater management & green infrastructure) & 5.7.12 (sustainable design) in the Redevelopment Plan (tracts A-D) on the website it's all about sustainability in these areas.

<https://www.hpboro.com/government/redevelopment>

Also working on opening up S 3rd Ave as a public plaza.

Has put in application to the NJ DOT (Dept of Transportation) to close off access to Rt.27 at S. 3rd, awaiting approval

Fully designed, planned public park on S. 3rd

Working w/ Main St HP

The borough owns the parking lot next to the yellow brick school & the house next to it
Larger than the current farmer's market size

Put in grant for tech assistance to help the boro identify what is needed for all of the events

There will be a full public process for S 3rd to make it a full public plaza

Move all events from tract C to that plaza

Supermarket - in negotiations on things like who is going to fix the freezer

Land owner wants to rehab existing store until it gets up to standards, get long-term tenant & possibly do development work down the road

Matthew Hersh - recommends SHP members take time to look over the redevelopment & email in comments about sustainability. This is a big opportunity for sustainable redevelopment in the downtown.

Sustainable priorities that SHP members want to make sure are part of the plan:
(Matt can't promise they will all be there but he wants feedback)

Randall Solomon - walkable communities like HP are rare & important. We want to have more people living here to benefit from this walkable community. Redevelopment directly addresses the things we want in a vibrant downtown like (non-vacant) properties. We shouldn't lock us into a developer until we know we have everything seamless, all the permits locked up.

Should SHP be making a public statement? Laying out our sustainability priorities? And talking about the farmers market too.

Skip Rogers - we have an issue with parking in town & Rte 27 which is NJ state regulated. How many people are just driving through (Benner & Magnolia too)? How do you stop that? Pollution issue. This is not just a town issue, it's an NJ state-wide issue.

Randall - We can't control Route 27 but it doesn't mean we shouldn't do anything that is in our control. The people who live in HP & walk have a lower carbon footprint. That's a solution for climate change & we need to make our downtown work even better.

Meli - Missing from redevelopment plan: geothermal heat pump. Glaring omission. Very sustainable heating system. Prices comparable to solar & hasn't been addressed anywhere. Better than solar.

Randall - geothermal & building electrification in general are the current state of best practice for building energy efficiency & should be part of this.

Tina - Networked geothermal. Can dig deeper & do for a number of properties at once.

Randall - economies of scale for larger projects

Ira Mintz - farmers market - is there a backup plan if the state doesn't approve opening S 3rd?

Matt Hale - yes. There's the parking lot & house on S 3rd. The boro has also had conversations w/ Rite Aid about extending the property that way. There's also track D behind the Bridge restaurant as another possible place for a public space. Are thinking of other alternatives but believe they are going to get the permit from DOT.

Ira - concern about lawsuit against Garden Homes with the EPA & DOJ.

Matt - legal question so he's not sure but they did build 31 River Road

Tina - Gardens Homes was charged for stormwater management & that is one of our big concerns in HP. Want to ensure that the higher environmental standards/best practices continue.

Ira - Rite Aid parking lot. It's been reported Rite Aid may enter bankruptcy & close many stores.

Matt - the store hasn't heard anything about closing.

Irene Riegner - section 5.7.11 in redevelopment plan lists all sorts of green possibilities for the new development. Concerns: we have a problem w/ stormwater & also heat islands. (Ex: Stop & Shop and Rite Aid parking lots). Maybe there should be more specific mentions of things instead of some recommendations for standards.

Matt Hale - interprets those as the baseline starting points, the requirements. And then we figure out the additional.

Randall - no net water runoff from the property would be a nice standard

Meli - any new boro construction has to have something about permeable surfaces that enable runoff. It can't be built fully as concrete. Older structures being rebuilt need to be semi-permeable. Ordinance in HP from about 10 years ago.

Matt Hale - that ordinance would still be in play for new redevelopment work

Matts to find that ordinance

Irene - add impervious paving to the plan

Randall - NJ DEP recently passed new statewide aggressive stormwater rules that probably accomplish everything we want. All we need to do is enforce the new rules.
[More info.](#)

Matthew Hersh - HP adopted those requirements earlier this year

Matt Hale - reiterates that everything is on the table. Need a list of our wants for the redevelopment.

Skip - HP has a lot of natural springs (a lot of water). It's not just storm runoff, also from the springs, and we have to consider when doing redevelopment work.

Alexis Thomason - excited about a population boom here. Lives in triangle. Wants to see more public transportation to Edison & NB train stations

Alison Wilkes - look into urban heat landscapes, think about trees

Matt - neighborhood preservation grant

<https://www.hpboro.com/government/neighborhood-preservation-program>

To continue conversation, committee will not discuss how to proceed.

—

Upcoming:

Tuesday, Oct. 3 - "The Climate Crisis: What You Can Do In Your Home & Locally To Combat It" 7:30pm at the Reformed Church

Sat - autumn festival - can anyone table? (Tina will send an email)