

MEMORANDUM

TO: Smart Growth Steering Committee
RE: Keyport NJ Public Workshop: June 5, 2004
DATE: July 19, 2004

This memorandum summarizes a “placemaking” workshop that took place on June 5, 2004 at the Borough Hall in Keyport that was facilitated by Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS) with assistance from Phillips Preiss and Shapiro (PPSA). The workshop is part of the Redevelopment Area Study that is being undertaken by the Borough of Keyport with its consultants PPSA and PPS, but the workshop focused on the Downtown Waterfront Redevelopment Area and its surroundings. During the public workshop, Keyport residents worked with members of the Steering Committee and the Topical Committees, city staff and other stakeholders to create a vision for the future of Keyport’s waterfront and downtown.

The approximately 45 participants worked in small teams to evaluate four sites in the area, extending from Luppataong Creek Bridge on the west to Church Street on the east, and from the waterfront south to Third Street. Teams particularly focused on short and long-term improvements that could be made to the waterfront and the downtown commercial area along Front Street. After visiting the sites, teams discussed their findings, recorded them on maps and then presented their recommendations to the group as a whole.

Keyport’s Major Assets

Workshop participants described what they liked best about Keyport:

- Access to the waterfront
- Entrance to downtown
- Historic character
- Views to the bay, creek, marina activity, wildlife, marshes
- Potential for parkland
- Old town charm
- Walkability
- Potential for improvement
- Historic Architecture
- Safety
- Community involvement
- Fishing off the bulkhead
- Good Holiday/Christmas activities

A Vision for Keyport

Placemaking for communities

A New Waterfront Park

Most participants recognized the waterfront as Keyport's main attraction and saw this as a way to revitalize the town. Keyport has the potential of becoming one of New Jersey's coastal gems; while its waterfront is already a major recreational destination for boaters and fishermen, a new waterfront park could become a vibrant public space with activities such as performances, festivals, markets, etc. Key recommendations from the workshop participants included creating a gateway to this park at the end of Broad Street, where the old steamboat pier used to be, that would serve as a "Town Square" for Keyport: a gathering place for families, boaters and visitors that would evoke the history of the old seaport town. Participants recommended rerouting American Legion Drive to align with First Street on the east and extending through what is now Firemen's Parking Lot on the west. The street realignment would create a continuous waterfront park from Beach Park to Ye Cottage Inn that could even extend across Front Street to connect to a new greenway along Luppataong Creek. A promenade would extend the entire length of the park and continue as a boardwalk along the creek. By opening up the backs of the buildings along Front Street and 'facing' them towards the water, or even extending the buildings into the back yards, a great opportunity opens up for retail and restaurants to face the water.

The Design of a New Waterfront Park

- Realign American Legion Drive to create a continuous park directly on the waterfront
- Extend park across Front Street, to run along Luppataong Creek
- A promenade along the entire waterfront, extending as a boardwalk along the creek
- Create a "Town Square" at Steamboat Dock at the end of Broad Street with new Steamboat Dock Museum and new restaurant
- Add a faux lighthouse or beacon at the end of Broad St.
- Relocate Steamboat Dock Museum to larger existing building on waterfront to serve as anchor for historic seaport area
- Covered pavilions along promenade to provide seating with protection from sun
- Clean up Beach Park, should be larger and better planned
- Remove boat launch and its parking from Beach Park, or at least don't give the parking area the prime location
- Gazebo at Beach Park is being used as closet: should be larger, inviting, and used for waterfront activities
- Add public art
- Remove Dept. of Public Works junkyard
- Picnic area near Ye Cottage Inn
- Build a sitting area along the bulkhead
- Reverse the mini-park stage so spectators can look out towards the waterfront
- Maintain views of the water: no high buildings

- Bury utilities
- Move Post Office to a location away from waterfront and maintain a small satellite office on Front Street
- Reduce waterfront parking; put parking in underutilized lots along Front Street and build a parking deck in the municipal parking lot
- Build a parking deck at waterfront with a park over it

Activities and Uses for the Park

- Mini golf, bocce ball, shuffle board, outdoor checkers/chess tables
- A farmers market, flea market or
- Art fair or festival
- Oyster festival
- Rollerblading, biking and skating along promenade
- Concerts and outdoor theater (open air) plus build a structure for year round theater (like Ocean Grove, Highlands)
- More playground equipment for kids, with benches for parents
- Have festivals more often (rather than just a few times a year) with more live performances
- Put a welcome center in the kiosk at the waterfront
- Add and maintain nice public, permanent restrooms

Water-Related Uses

- Rebuild steamboat dock pier (the original piers) on existing piles
- Add a local harbor ferry: not commuter ferry
- Rent out smaller water crafts for public recreation: kayaks, paddleboats, rowboats
- Take advantage of boat tourism
- Allow ferry from Belford to dock here to encourage Manhattanites to visit
- Move the boat ramp to Browns Point to allow the waterfront public space to extend into this area
- Invite charter boats to do a dinner cruise from docks
- Allow transient dockage or mooring for visitors to encourage shopping and restaurant use
- Provide gas and pump-out facilities for boaters
- Water related recreational programs

Commercial Activities

- Need more restaurants and better variety
- Kiosks for retail vendors
- Add a good seafood restaurant w/ dockage on the waterfront
- Add a nautical themed market/restaurant in place of the Post Office
- Carousel

A Revitalized Downtown

The Borough of Keyport and the Keyport Business Alliance have worked hard to make the downtown along West Front Street attractive and pedestrian friendly. Participants suggested continuing the streetscape, improved sidewalks and lively commercial storefronts across Broad Street to help revitalize East Front Street and extending up and down Broad Street. The street trees and historic lighting should also continue down West Front Street to the Luppataong Creek Bridge, which could become a gateway to the downtown. Participants urged creating a better connection between the downtown and the waterfront by opening up the businesses to take advantage of waterfront views and creating attractive pedestrian paths (where currently public and private alleys exist) that link Front Street to American Legion Drive. They also recommended recruiting more water-related or nautical-themed commercial uses such as seafood restaurants, bait shops and convenience stores that cater to the needs of transient boaters.

General Comments

- Improve sidewalks and crosswalks throughout
- Create standards and incentives to maintain historic feel in new construction
- Maintain and enforce cleanliness
- Add more trees, flowers, banners
- Oyster shell pavers on walkways
- Enforce property maintenance: give tax incentives to owners to clean up the private properties (painting, landscaping, planting flowers)
- Need better code enforcement, traffic enforcement, litter enforcement

West Front Street

- Improve public and private alleys to link to waterfront: clean-up, add pavers, lighting, planting, and signage
- Reorient businesses on Front Street to waterfront
- Add layer of retail and restaurants on backs of buildings on Front Street
- Build a shared deck/promenade for restaurants, waterfront viewing, performances, and retail on backs of buildings
- Create an artisan cooperative, giving space to artists at a lower cost
- Beautify the sitting area – add fountain and flowers -- at 80 Front Street
- Private parking lot on Front Street could become an outdoor beer garden
- Widen W. Front St. sidewalks for sidewalk cafes and congregating
- Continue historic looking lighting down Front Street to the entrance of Ye Cottage Inn
- Add landscaping and street trees to Front Street (especially at the Post Office and Borough Hall)
- Turn benches around on Front Street to face the people (not the parked cars) and add more
- Create a pedestrian mall on Front St. between Main and Beers Streets
- Remove banners on Front Street
- Uniform signage in downtown to tie everything together

East Front Street

- Make East Front Street part of downtown once more
- Continue commercial streetscape (street trees, historic lighting, nice paving) down East Front
- Improve flood control at the flood zone (formerly a pond where Street is now)

Broad Street

- Enhance Broad Street as entrance to the waterfront: use wide sidewalks, landscaping, etc.
- Demolish buildings at Broad and First Streets in order to align American Legion Drive with First St.
- Create one-way traffic on Broad St. into downtown with interceptor parking lots on both sides

Retail Opportunities

- Public marina with restaurant
- Convenience stores and services to serve transient boaters
- Encourage redevelopment of businesses
- Sidewalk cafes
- Artist galleries
- Greater variety of types of retail
- Dry cleaners
- God bakery
- Pedestrian mall on Front Street
- Keep town open later at night
- Need space for larger events (a hall) for weddings, parties, celebrations, graduations, etc.
- Add a nautical food market to the waterfront (at Post Office site, for example)
- Add fish restaurants
- Improve the appearance of the hotdog stand
- Use backs of buildings for more retail: bait shops, nautical gift shops, galleries, cafes with outdoor picnic tables, a covered food market or kiosks
- Use parking lot adjoining post office of relocated Firemen's Parking Lot for events, green markets, etc.

Opportunities for Redevelopment

Although the proposed Aeromarine and marina redevelopment area sites were not part of the focus of the workshop, ideas emerged which could be applied to them. Continuous public access to the entire waterfront and more access points were often mentioned. Protection of creeks and wetlands as well as access via boardwalks for wildlife viewing were strongly recommended. The importance of maintaining the private marinas as a key

waterfront use, and a catalyst for revitalization, was also emphasized. Many participants felt that there should be no redevelopment on the site at Front and Beers Street (the “Apollo” property), but that it should be used instead as open space, a continuation of the waterfront park and access to the Luppapatong Creek wetland. If redevelopment must occur, it should be small in scale and should provide access from both Front and Beers Streets to the creek beyond.

Redevelopment at the end of Broad Street (removal of existing buildings) was thought to be desirable if it means realigning American Legion with First Street and creating a gateway or “town square” at the end of Broad. Reuse of some of the buildings for the Dock Street Museum or a new restaurant could be investigated.

- Restrict development of high-density housing
- Put a public market in Newberry’s building
- Move Steamboat Dock Museum away from waterfront and build a new building somewhere else, with more space
- Save the Power and Gas Building on Main Street- make it into hotel or B&B
- Create more B&Bs and possibly a small hotel
- Make the Apollo property senior housing, a park, low residential w/ park along the creek, or open space, and enforce maintenance while it’s vacant
- Make the Kara Homes lower in density or keep the area vacant for future ferry parking or open space
- Steer development away from waterfront
- Live/work space for artists, workshops- give tax incentives to encourage artists and change zoning along Front St. to increase utilization
- Create historic design guidelines for new construction and renovations
- Create walkways (boardwalks and viewing platforms) at the marsh and Luppapatong Creek as a wildlife observation area

Transportation and Parking Opportunities

Keyport could be better served by public transit, with improved bus service, more bus stops (that are more comfortable) and better connections to commuter rail. Although the consensus was that large-scale commuter ferry service was not desirable, participants did recommend that small, local ferries and water taxis could serve the borough.

Traffic calming and pedestrian improvements throughout the downtown and waterfront area, as well as better sidewalks and pedestrian connections to residential neighborhoods would encourage people to walk to town. Parking needs were often discussed, and although parking lots on the waterfront were generally not recommended, improved parking lots and parking decks were thought to be a good idea south of Front Street.

Transit Improvements

More bus stops along First and Front Streets

- Provide signage, schedules and bus shelters at bus stops
- Add shuttles to other towns and especially to railroad stations
- Better bike and pedestrian links to railroad stations in Mattawan and Hazlet
- Add small-scale water transportation rather than a large ferry
- Provide a shuttle bus/ferry or trolley service with designated stops and shelters, to rail stations for commuters

Streets and Traffic Calming

- More pedestrian crosswalks
- Traffic calming: sidewalk bump-outs and brick crosswalks at major intersections
- Reroute American Legion Drive intersect with Front Street at Ye Cottage Inn, thereby eliminating the dangerous intersection at Front and Beers Streets.
- Make a one-way loop in and out of town using Broad Street as the inbound and Beers Street as the outbound
- Create a one-way loop going west on American Legion Drive and east on Front Street
- Make stronger pedestrian links from Front Street to the waterfront
- Add safe, pleasant paths/walkways from south residential areas to waterfront
- Build cobblestones into American Legion Drive (to slow the traffic)

Parking Opportunities

- Provide angled or head-in parking on American Legion Drive in front of new retail or with view to water
- Move Firemen's Parking Lot next to Post Office and share parking lot with Post Office
- Enforce parking regulations in municipal parking lots on Division St.
- Merge parking lots on Division Street into one parking deck with Division Street leading into it from the north and south
- Build a parking deck in municipal lot to the west of Broad Street
- Create better entrances into parking lots to east and west off of Broad Street to intercept drivers entering the downtown

Marketing Keyport as a Regional Destination

Keyport has the distinction of providing one of the most protected harbors for recreational and commercial boating on the coast of New Jersey. The Borough and the Business Alliance should work with state, county and regional agencies and non-profit organizations to enhance this identity as a boat-related tourism destination. Along with an effort to provide the services and amenities sought by transient boaters, as well as the outsiders who keep their boats in Keyport marinas, Keyport should be marketing its waterfront location and seaport history as its most valuable asset. Waterfront and downtown events and festivals could reinforce this identity.

Market Keyport as regional boating destination

Hold events, festivals and outdoor concerts to celebrate unique seaport identity
Attract small businesses with a nautical theme
Encourage Bed and Breakfasts on or near the waterfront
Advertise and map Hudson Trailway and other pedestrian paths

Partnerships to Implement the Vision

The Borough and the Business Alliance could work with numerous partners at the state, regional and local levels to help implement the vision and manage it over the long-term. Potential partners include:

- KBA- Keyport Business Alliance
- Local government
- State and county agencies
- State Department of Smart Growth
- State Small Business programs
- Regional boating and fishing organizations
- Local schools
- Church groups
- Fire Department
- Community service provided by schools
- Senior groups
- Start a garden club
- Create an Adopt-a-Park or Adopt-a-Road program
- Girl/Boy scouts
- Historical Society and Steamboat Dock Museum
- Baykeeper environmental organization
- Keyport Yacht Club
- Local marinas

Next Steps

Next steps could include a “technical workshop” with the Steering Committee and other stakeholders to further discuss issues raised at the workshop and to refine the concept plan. Another step would be to involve state agencies in a discussion regarding Keyport’s role as a regional boating destination.

Placemaking for communities