



Municipality of Princeton

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Princeton Planning Board

FROM: Justin Lesko, AICP, PPJL

DATE: November 28th, 2023 Revised

SUBJECT: **Recommendations on the Draft Princeton Master Plan Following the November 9th Hearing**

Background

Following a public engagement process of over a year and a half - comprised of surveys, open houses, listening sessions, a steering committee, Board, Commission and Committee meetings, ongoing updates at the Planning Board, tabling, a presentation at the Planning Board on October 19th, and other methods of outreach - the draft Princeton Master Plan was published on October 30th. A public hearing was held on November 9th, beginning with a presentation from myself and followed by comments from members of the public. The public hearing was continued until November 30th to hear from members of the public who had not yet had a chance to speak by the end of the meeting.

The Planning Board Chair tasked me with providing a list of recommendations to incorporate in the draft plan in response to the public comment at the hearing as well as other comments received via email. This memo does just that and is broken up into two parts: The first part covers changes related to historic preservation in the plan that were recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission after an additional meeting with them on November 21st as well as those stated on the record by a local historian and preservationist. The second part of the memo covers any additional comments that warrant changes, particularly those that are based on clarifications or errors.

The intent of this memo, and any subsequent changes to the plan that are made as a result of it, is not to change the vision or assumptions as articulated by the community over the past year and a half. Rather, these changes would strengthen the document and aid our intent to update the vision of Princeton that dates back to 1996 in our current plan. The community vision is stated on page 17 of the draft Master Plan; a more detailed picture of the outreach can be found on pages 4-18 of the draft Master Plan.

Historic Preservation

Contrary to some of the comments made at the hearing and misrepresented by others afterwards, the Historic Preservation Commission and Historic Preservation Officer have been involved throughout this master plan process. I spoke at the Historic Preservation Commission's monthly meetings in September 2022 and December 2022 about the master plan. In February, our consultants sent requests for information to the HPC and a response from the HPC was received in mid-March. A lengthy discussion was held with the Historic Preservation Officer and a member of the Commission, one who previously served as Historic Preservation Officer for the former Township and Municipality, in mid-March as one of the "technical resource interviews." In June, the Historic Preservation Commission's master plan subcommittee provided information in the form of an update of the existing Historic Preservation element and that information was instrumental in the creation of the draft Historic Preservation element.

The Master Plan Steering Committee's subcommittee working on the Historic Preservation element had additional questions based on the June HPC submission and other information that was still missing. Unfortunately, the HPC's response was delayed, as they spent that time once again rewriting and expanding the existing element. Much of that effort did not provide the information needed and it was received after the Steering Committee finished meeting about the draft Historic Preservation element and were comfortable with the element as drafted. It is also true that the Historic Preservation Commission did not get a chance to review the draft Historic Preservation element until the plan was released on October 30th.

To rectify some of the errors noticed by Commission members and to recognize their expertise in historic preservation, and – most importantly – to create the strongest Historic Preservation element possible, a working meeting was held on November 21st. The Historic Preservation's Steering Committee was able to put together a list of 'errata' and prioritize suggested historic districts in the short time period between the hearing and the working meeting. Planning staff, the Planning Board Chair, a Board member who was on the Master Plan Steering Committee subcommittee that reviewed the Historic Preservation element and the Planning Board member who also serves as the HPC Chair were in attendance, as were members of the Historic Preservation Commission's master plan subcommittee, the Historic Preservation Officer and the Council Liaison to the Planning Board.

As a result of that meeting, I offer the following recommendations for changes to the plan, followed by a few points that were agreed not to be changed:

-Pg 138: the part shown with a strikethrough should be removed, "Pg 138 Drumthwacket, remove "Drumthwacket, at 354 Stockton Street, ~~was constructed before the American Revolution, and is the official residence of the Governor of New Jersey.~~"

-Pg 139: "mid-1770s" should be changed to "1772" in the sentence, "The site, located at 500 Mercer Road, includes Clarke House, built by a Quaker farmer in the mid-1770s."

-Pg 139: “The famous Mercer Oak, believed to have been present during the Battle of Princeton, stood in the middle of battlefield until it collapsed of old age in 2020” should be changed to “..of old age in 2000” to correct a typo.

-Pg 140: Two typos should be corrected to state, “In 1987 the property was purchased by Princeton Township for open space and has been known since **2013** as the **Billy** Johnson Mountain Lakes Preserve.”

-Pg 192: A caption should be added alongside the historic image of Baker Street. I have reached out to the Witherspoon-Jackson historian and will report back proposed language at the hearing.

-Pg 193: In the paragraph regarding the year 2013, “A consolidated historic preservation commission was created” should be added. The paragraph about 2014 should be changed to say, “The consolidated Municipality adopted a new Historic Preservation Ordinance.”

-Pg 196: “Witherspoon/Jackson Street Historic District” should be revised to “Witherspoon-Jackson Historic District” in the chart at the bottom of the page.

-Pg 197: On the map of Local Historic Districts, the Prospect Avenue Historic District should be corrected to accurately reflect the parcels in the district as included by ordinance.

-Pg 198: Change back to text from current element and correct, “The district contains the site of the Battle of Princeton, the Stony Brook Quaker Meeting House, Mercer Street bridge over the Stony Brook and the Stony Brook bridge on Route 206.”

-Pg 202: “Secretary of the Interior” should be capitalized.

-Pg 200: Update the text from the current element to follow guidance from the Municipality by adding in the bolded words, “Located at the intersection of Nassau and Harrison Streets, this area was **first settled by Europeans** in 1695.”

-Pg 206: Revise “Since historic buildings and structures, such as bridges, may be in areas where these risks are higher, recommendation modifications may include elevation or replacement” to “elevation or relocation.”

Following the introductory paragraph on page 205, Section 8.5 Historic Resources for Potential Local Designation should also be updated to include the below districts listed following the introductory paragraph in one list. New additions are in italics:

“-The Princeton Historic District is a very large National Register Historic District that is partially represented by three locally designated historic districts: Bank Street Historic District, Central Historic District, and Mercer Hill Historic District.”

-Deer Path and Clover Lane – This is a 1950s development designed by David Savage and Herbert Kendall, architects. The former Township’s Office of Historic Preservation conducted a study of this neighborhood in 2007.

- Tree Streets* – Laid out in the 19th century, the streets were given or eventually given the name of trees: Chestnut, Pine, Maple, Linden and Spruce Streets.
- Morven Tract – The Morven tract, stretching north of Stockton Street, west of Bayard Lane, east of the west side of Elm Road, and south of the north side of Cleveland Lane, derives its name from the Stockton family’s original ownership of the land as part of the Morven estate.
- Greenholm (c.1910-20) – This cul-de-sac residential subdivision was developed by Colonel William Libbey of Thanet Lodge. The subdivision consists of eight properties built in a variety of styles or moved to this private lane, which was formerly a playing field used by undergraduate students. In 1869 it was the site of the second-ever intercollegiate football game (Princeton vs. Rutgers), which was Princeton University’s first-ever home game.
- Institute for Advance Study – Include Fuld Hall and the visiting members’ housing designed by Marcel Breuer, as well as the Maxwell Lane neighborhood, which contains a collection of mid-century modern houses.
- FitzRandolph and Broadmead Area – This includes properties fronting both sides of Broadmead Street and FitzRandolph Road.
- Greenlands (Textile Research Institute [TRI]) – This property, at 601 Prospect Avenue and the corner of Prospect Avenue and Riverside Drive East, is the site of a once-private residential estate.
- Westminster Choir College* – This includes the original Colonial Revival buildings with a period of significance from 1934 to 1967 at 101 Walnut Lane.
- 1128 Great Road (Princeton Academy of the Sacred Heart, formerly Our Lady of Princeton) – Constructed in 1930, the Manor House is likely the largest and most elegant house designed by Rolf Bauhan during that period.
- Markham Road – A collection of four-square and bungalow houses situated with similar setbacks from the street on smaller lots creating a cohesive neighborhood streetscape from Sergeant Street to Patton Avenue.
- Rosedale Road – This district has a distinct historic style, and the Historic Preservation Commission should conduct a study to determine whether it should be locally designated.
- Battle Road Neighborhood – This district has a distinct historical style, and the HPC should conduct a study to determine whether it should be locally designated.”

At the November 21st working meeting, the comments and recommendations about historic buffer districts were discussed. It was agreed that the language in the draft master plan to consider other ways to regulate these areas, including by adding them to designated historic districts, is adequate and preferred.

Additionally, the two sites that were brought to the Board’s attention by members of the public as ones that the HPC had recommended to designate as historic districts in a 2019 memo were discussed. It was agreed not to include them in the master plan as they are already preserved through other means preventing development, and the NJ Historic Preservation Ordinance has already studied and issued an opinion on them. A concern was raised that publicizing the sites may lead to attempts from unscrupulous people to find and take artifacts. These sites are now on the radar of the Planning Department and Office of Historic Preservation and will be considered in future efforts.

Planning staff supports making the following changes to further promote historic preservation in Princeton, as commented on by members of the public, most prominently the historian and resident Clifford W. Zink. The Commission agrees with this effort.

-Pg 19: Add a 10th Land Use goal stating, “Protect and preserve designated historic districts and sites by ensuring that development follows local and national preservation guidelines.”

-Pg 46: Revise Land Use Recommendation 15 to: “Consider developing and adopting design review guidelines or a Design Element of the Master Plan to share development to express Princeton’s priorities. Include guidance related to architecture, landscape architecture, **historic preservation, urban design**, and other elements of design.”

-Pg 209: Revise Historic Preservation Recommendation 16 to: “Develop, adopt, and maintain historic preservation design guidelines to improve review of proposed alterations and new construction at historic sites and in historic districts. **Follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.**”

Other Recommendations

The following recommendations originate from comments from the public at the November 9th hearing as well as comments from professionals and members of the public upon reviewing the document. Some are errors or typos. We regret these and apologize for them; rather than overlook them, we bring them to the fore here to correct them. Others are clarifications that align with the intentions of the plan as found through public input and guided by the Steering Committee.

-Pg 21: Utility Goal 34 should be revised to remove “wind” for consistency with the “Wind” paragraph in the Utility Element section 4.4 Energy (pg. 100).

-Pg: 42 Land Use Map - A note should be added to the Land Use Plan map on page 42 similar to the one on the Generalized Existing Land Use Downtown map on page 31. It should read: *“Note: As stated on page 40, this Land Use Plan map is generalized and indicates a series of land use categories, not individual zoning districts – which govern what could be developed on a parcel. These land use categories are simplified and based on the general characteristics of the underlying districts in terms of land use and lot sizes. A detailed review is needed to determine if and how any potential changes are made to standards for each zone based on the general guidance in this section. The ranges of dwelling units per acre in residential categories should be just one factor when making land-use decisions, alongside the vision, assumptions, goals and recommendations as described in this plan.”*

-Pg 49: Recommendation 19 should be corrected to say, “The area is developed with the **Princeton Community Housing**-run, Elm Court and Harriet Bryan House,” not “..Princeton Housing Authority-run..”

-Pg 82: Under the “NJ Transit Princeton Branch (The Dinky)” section, “The conceptual redesign of the Dinky transitway is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan and has the full support of the Municipality” should be changed to “Continued assessment of alternatives to improve service on the Princeton Branch, including redesign of the Princeton Branch right-of-way for multi-modal service, is consistent with the goals of this Master Plan and has the support of the Municipality.”

-Pg 91: Revise Mobility Recommendation 30 to say, “Encourage NJ Transit to take steps to maintain and improve the existing Dinky service while also working with NJ Transit to explore proposals for the Dinky service, and work with community partners to maximize coordination between Princeton’s transit services and proposed improvements to the Princeton Branch.”

-Pg 105: Footnote 7 should be updated from “sustain.princeton.edu/sustainability-action-plan” to “<https://sustain.princeton.edu/sustainability-action-plan/stormwater-management>”.

-Pg 141: The Hun School should be listed as a 6-12 school, not a 9-12 one.

-Pg 140: The paragraph regarding the Princeton Railroad Station should be revised to say that “94 University Place formerly served passengers traveling between Princeton Junction and Princeton,” not that it was “the original building.” Additionally, “460 feet closer to the Princeton Junction station” should be changed to “460 feet to the south.”

-Pg 157: On the map of “Existing Open Space and Recreation Facilities,” “Shared Use Paths” should be changed to just “Paths” so as not to cause confusion with the generally accepted definition of shared use paths as ones that allow for bicycles whereas some of these mapped paths do not allow bicycles and others might only be traversable by mountain bikes, in addition to their use by those on foot.

-Pg 171: While the list of criteria in Open Space and Recreation Recommendation 27 is only suggested (“May include”), the bullet for “Forestry Potential” should be removed as was discussed by the Steering Committee prior to the final document.

-Pg 173: Revise Open Space and Recreation Recommendation 50 to remove “prior to the acquisition or creation of additional assets” from “Prioritize maintenance and stewardship of existing resources prior to the acquisition or creation of additional assets” so as not to create contradictory advice within the element.

-Pg 190: Economic Development Recommendation 12 should be revised to add in Witherspoon Street to align with the section on page 186 about “Nassau Street/Witherspoon Street/Palmer Square” as intended. It should state, “Preserve and strengthen Nassau Street, Witherspoon Street and Palmer Square..”

The following two revisions are the result of a misinterpretation of a 2015 Passive Open Space Advisory Committee report. They were not caught while the Municipality’s Open Space Manager position was (and is) vacant. We have since verified that the proposed language is correct with the former Open Space Manager.

- Pg 156: remove “The Municipality maintains its County owned open space with funding provided by Mercer County.”

-Pg 167: revise to ~~“Three properties in Princeton have been preserved using funds from the County open space trust fund.~~ **Mercer County owns three properties restricted to conservation and recreation use:** (1) Princeton Country Club, (2) the Powell property, and (3) **15 acres of** the Tusculum property. As of 2023, the County has not identified any additional properties in Princeton for preservation.”

There were comments made about the “Race and Ethnicity” data on page 12. While it is technically correct, the text may come off as hard to understand or misleading. (Note the 2010 data is not just from the Borough as suggested; it is combined from both the pre-consolidation Borough and Township.) The text should read:

“The consolidated Princeton has gotten more diverse since 2010, with, most notably, an increase of 3.3 percentage points in the number of residents who identify as Asian-American, an increase of 1.1 percentage points in the number who identify as Black or African-American, and an increase of 2.9 percentage points in the number of those who identify as two or more races. The portion of Princeton’s total population that identifies as other than White increased by 8.3 percentage points.”

The last line about residents who identify as Hispanic or Latino would remain unchanged. Some have asked why we are separating Hispanic or Latino from the charts to the right on “Princeton Population on Race.” Both the American Community Survey and the decennial Census ask separate questions about race and ethnicity so it is not possible to truly compare these numbers as parts of a whole. An October 16, 2023 New York Times article titled, “An American Puzzle: Fitting Race in a Box” is a good primer on the ways in which the Census Department has asked questions about how people identify themselves, both historically and currently:
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/10/16/us/census-race-ethnicity.html>

If requested, we can add a footnote that these questions are asked separately and thus displayed separately. As stated in the article and in proposals from Washington, there is hope that feedback received on how people identify themselves can lead to change on future questionnaires for better representation and recognition.

Additionally, the source in the chart on the lower right should be corrected to state it is from ACS 5-Year Estimates 2006-2010.

cc: G. Muller, Esq., Planning Board Attorney
K. Philip, Planning Board Secretary
E. Kim, Historic Preservation Officer

