

Planning & Real Estate Consultants

## Memorandum

To: Master Plan Steering Committee

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Date: November 15, 2023

**Re: Community Workshop Summary (October 11, 2023)**


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This memorandum provides a summary of the Master Plan Community Workshop on October 11, 2023, held at the Richard Rodda Community Center. The meeting was attended by approximately 50 participants. The workshop was organized around four topical discussions: 1) Housing & Affordability, 2) Aesthetics & Design, 3) Business Districts & Commercial Revitalization, and 4) Transportation & Mobility. The four topics were selected based on the Master Plan Kick-off Meeting, existing conditions research and analysis, stakeholder interviews, and community survey results. Initially, participants were split evenly between the four discussion groups, and then each cohort rotated through the four topic areas in 25-30-minute intervals during the workshop. The following summary is based on facilitator notes, participant notecards, polling, sticky notes, pins, and sticker placement on activity boards.

### ***1. Housing & Affordability***


The Housing & Affordability group discussion focused on how to expand and diversify housing options in Teaneck. The facilitators set the groundwork for the discussion by highlighting community concerns regarding a lack of diverse housing options, affordability, and also changing demographics (e.g., increase in senior population), as reflected in the research and outreach conducted in the initial phase of the Master Plan process. The discussion addressed various potential housing types and how/where each could or should be accommodated within Teaneck.

### Missing Middle Housing Types




**STACKED TRIPLEX**

👍👎




**TOWNHOUSE**

👍👎




**FOURPLEX**

👍👎




**COTTAGE**

👍👎



**SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX**

👍👎




**STACKED DUPLEX**


👍👎

**Types of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**


- ADUs are smaller, independent living units that are either attached to or detached from a single-family home.
- They benefit homeowners as they could provide rental income. They also help older residents age in place by providing space for family, home health aides, or tenants.




DETACHED




ATTACHED




INTERIOR (UPPER LEVEL)



INTERIOR (LOWER LEVEL)



ABOVE GARAGE



GARAGE CONVERSION

Would you allow for ADU's in your neighborhood?  
 If not, what are your concerns?

Image Source: AARP(2023) Open Publication: Re-legalizing Middle Housing

General Comments

- Almost all areas can handle accessory dwelling units (“ADUs”). The ADU concept was generally well received.
- North of Route 4 - too many tall buildings.
- Mixed-use development in business districts (residential above ground floor commercial use) was broadly supported.
- The lack of available land was cited as a challenge to addressing Teaneck’s housing needs.

- Many participants noted that current homeowners are priced out of new developments. All new townhome developments in the Township are far from being affordable.
- Some raised concerns about potential negative impacts of ADUs on property values.

Feedback on ADUs

- 30 out of 35 (85.7%) of participants who completed the handout activity would allow ADUs in their neighborhood and/or were in favor of ADUs.
- Factors that would make ADUs acceptable in the community included: 1) if ADUs are properly constructed, and 2) if the ADU design is compatible with the look of the main house.
- Participant consensus that ADUs would be a great use of space while maintaining the neighborhood.

ADU Concerns

- Parking - ADU residents will have additional cars which might make parking difficult.
- No way to ensure the aesthetic character of a neighborhood will not be impacted.
- Increase in traffic congestion.
- Could people claim trailer homes as ADUs?
- Parking; property values; environment.
- ADUs will become rent controlled and we cannot evict a bad tenant.
- Safety concerns.
- Should not be Airbnb.
- Should not be built too close to property lines.

Feedback on Missing Middle Housing

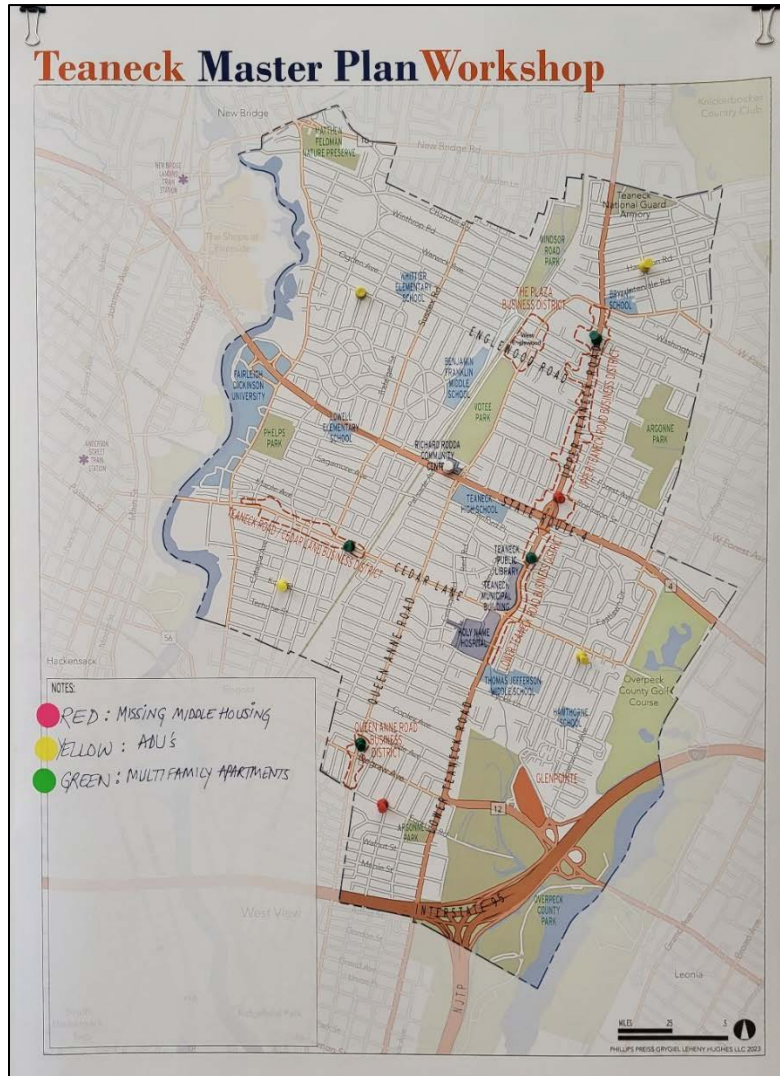
Housing Type	Responses in Favor	Percentage in Favor
Stacked Triplex	17/35	48.6%
Townhouse	25/35	71.4%
Fourplex	18/35	51.4%
Cottage	22/35	62.8%
Side-by-side Duplex	25/35	71.4%
Stacked Duplex	18/35	51.4%

- Multi-level townhomes are not fit for seniors due to inaccessibility of stairs.
- 3 stories and no more is appropriate

Location of Housing

- The group facilitator placed pins on a Township map to indicate where participants thought that certain housing types should be located, including: 1) "Missing Middle" housing, 2) ADUs, and 3) Multifamily apartments. Participants believed that:

- o Missing middle housing is appropriate within the upper Teaneck Road commercial corridor (north of Route 4) and in the neighborhood near Argonne Park, roughly south of DeGraw Avenue and west of lower Teaneck Road.
- o ADUs are appropriate in primarily single-family residential neighborhoods, including in the northwest (pin placed near Whittier Elementary School), in the northeast (pin placed near Bryant School), in the southeast (pin placed near Overpeck Park, Thomas Jefferson High School, and Hawthorne School), and in the southwest (pin placed near the intersection of Larch Avenue and Kipp Street).
- o Multifamily apartments are appropriate within the upper and lower Teaneck Road business districts, within the Cedar Lane business district, and within the Queen Anne Road/DeGraw Avenue business district.



## 2. *Aesthetics & Design*

The Aesthetics & Design group offered participants a design preferences activity on four development types: mixed-use/business districts, multifamily development, townhouses, and two-family dwellings. The group did not focus on single-family home design, as standalone single-family design decisions were less likely to be made by a developer and best left to individual homeowners. Photographs depicting a range of designs were selected and arranged on boards for each of the four development types. Participants were encouraged to add colored stickers to indicate favorability (green stickers = like, yellow/orange stickers = neutral, pink/red stickers = dislike) and to use sticky notes or index cards to provide comments. Participants were asked to think about why they liked or disliked the different photos, focusing on elements of design including but not limited to: building materials, colors, windows, roofline, height, flat walls vs. breaks in walls, landscaping, and setbacks; and for the mixed-use development type, to also focus on: lighting, signage, awnings/canopies, public features (benches, sidewalks, planters, open space, art, etc.), outdoor seating, landscaping, and variety vs. uniformity of styles. A summary of the feedback is provided as follows. A full collection of comments and preferences is provided at the end of this memorandum.

### Applicable to all development types:

- Preference for traditional architectural styles (Tudor, Colonial, etc.), with the most favored being the Tudor style.
- Least favorable ratings for “boxy” modern architectural styles or industrial styles.
- Favorability ratings were often related to landscaping, architectural vernacular, extent of detailing/variety (favorable), and the “bulkiness” of a building (unfavorable).
- Unfavorable ratings for parking garages in prominent locations at the front of a building. Preference for parking garages to be out of view (in rear or side yards).
- Strong preferences for full-foliage landscaping, lawns/courtyards, and greenery in front yards. The extent of greenery was more likely to sway the favorability of an image than was the building architecture.
- Unfavorable ratings for discontinuity of design in the same building - e.g., modern with traditional styles used within the same building.
- A few participants objected to the premise of design restrictions or guidelines. They preferred a free-market approach, believing that architects and developers should have freedom to choose whatever designs they believe are appropriate and feasible.

Mixed-use (residential/commercial) and business districts:

- Preference for variety of materials, colors, scale, height, and patterns in storefronts/signage, provided they were compatible in the same architectural vernacular.
- Preference for multiple, narrower buildings along a street, rather than one wide building, often seen in older mixed-use corridors.
- Preference for Tudor architectural style, particularly along Cedar Lane.
- Preference for public open spaces, plazas, etc.
- Unfavorable rating for one-story buildings in a business district (“strip mall look”). Taller buildings (2-4 stories) were rated more favorably in business districts.



- Unfavorable ratings for prominent corner features. Preference for subtlety and detailing, rather than large massing.<sup>1</sup>
- Preference for streetscapes with variety of plantings (e.g., full-foliage trees, low plantings, planters on sidewalks).
- Preference for wide sidewalks and outdoor dining.
- The presence or absence of decorative street lighting had no effect on favorability.
- Limited comments or consensus on signage. One comment suggested prohibiting flashing or neon signs.
- Five stories without a stepback<sup>2</sup> were seen as “too high.” Buildings with the appearance of four stories with reduced massing (e.g., using a stepback) were not deemed too high, with a caveat that the location for these buildings be in commercial districts and away from single-family neighborhoods.
- Preference for upper-floor building designs with traditional elements - i.e., double-hung windows, etc.

<sup>1</sup> Building mass: The three-dimensional bulk of a structure: height, width, and depth. (Source: Moskowitz, Lindbloom, Listokin, Preiss, & Merriam. *The Completed Illustrated Book of Development Definitions, Fourth Edition*. 2015. Transaction Publishers.)

<sup>2</sup> Step-back: Refers to the step-like recessions in the profile of a building. (Source: Urban Toronto. “Explainer: Setbacks and Step-backs.” April 14, 2022. <https://urbantoronto.ca/news/2022/04/explainer-setbacks-and-step-backs.47688>)

- Some noted that mixed-use design was their least favorite design concept.
- Some noted that building height should be determined based on the density that is appropriate to mitigate traffic and school capacity concerns.

Multifamily:

- Preference for visible open spaces - courtyards, plazas, landscaped setbacks, open space for "gathering," etc.
- Preference for street trees with full-foliage canopies.
- Unfavorable ratings for visible parking lots in the front yard or visible parking garage entries.
- Unfavorable ratings for architecture seen as too "bulky" (box bays,<sup>3</sup> flat rooflines, etc.)
- Preference for features that break up the bulk or massing of the building, e.g., stepbacks, roof dormers,<sup>4</sup> recessed portions of the façade, broken-up roofline, etc. Unfavorable ratings for flat building facades that extended the full height of the building.



- Preference for building designs with traditional elements - i.e., double-hung windows.
- Industrial architectural style was polarizing - some liked the natural materials and design, while some strongly disliked it.
- Unfavorable ratings for highly modern or "urban" design aesthetic.

Townhouses:

- Unfavorable rating for uniformity or "cookie cutter" patterns - seen as too "bland," "boring," or "cold."

<sup>3</sup> Bay: Any number of principal divisions of a wall, roof, or other part of a building marked off by vertical or transverse supports. (Source: Ching, Francis. "A Visual Dictionary of Architecture." 1997. Van Nostrand Reinhold). Box bay refers to a bay with rectangular shape.

<sup>4</sup> Dormers: A projecting structure built out from a sloping roof, usually housing a critical window or ventilating louver. (Source: Ching. "A Visual Dictionary of Architecture.")

- Preference for variety in architectural detailing and window treatments, as long as designs elements were compatible with one another.
- Preference for natural materials (i.e. stone, brick) or colors that were complimentary.
- Unfavorable ratings for prominent garage doors and hardscape areas (driveways) in the front yard / Preference for hidden parking (e.g., in the rear).
- Preference for buildings that included dormers and front-facing gables<sup>5</sup> punctuating a sloping roof.
- Preference for buildings that provided a small canopy over entries.
- Preference for lawns or landscaping along the full length of building frontage / Unfavorable ratings for plantings limited to ends of townhouse rows or in periodic planting strips between driveways.

Two-Family:

- Unfavorable ratings for dwellings with high stairs to reach 2<sup>nd</sup> floor entries - seen as prohibitive for seniors aging-in-place. More favorable ratings for ground-level entries or gradual front stairs with landings.
- Unfavorable ratings for prominent garages at the front of the building.
- Unfavorable ratings for large hardscape areas (driveways) in front yard.
- Preference for use of stepbacks, recessed entries or porches, and other changes in the façade plane (walls) to break up bulk.
- Lack of consensus on traditional vs. modern architectural styles.
- Preference for a balance in architectural detailing - not too "bland" or "cold," but not too "fussy" or "tacky."
- Preference for wider side yards.

**3. Business Districts & Commercial Revitalization**

The business districts in Teaneck included Cedar Lane, Queen Anne Road/DeGraw Avenue, West Englewood/The Plaza, and Teaneck Road. The discussion topics included what is holding back Teaneck's business districts, promoting residential growth in the districts, potential zoning changes to allow more flexibility, parking, branding/marketing opportunities, events programming, accessibility, and district management.

- The business districts in Hackensack and Englewood were viewed as competing with Teaneck.

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<sup>5</sup> Gable: The triangular portion of wall enclosing the end of a pitched roof from cornice or eaves to ridge. (Source: Ching. "A Visual Dictionary of Architecture.")

Gable roof: A roof sloping downward in two parts from a central ridge, so as to form a gable at each end. (Source: Ching. "A Visual Dictionary of Architecture.")



- Montclair and Ridgewood were frequently cited as model downtowns. Many participants also pointed to Englewood as an example of a vibrant weekend dining environment.
- There was general support for accommodating more housing within the business districts.
- The concept of creating a public gathering space along Cedar Lane for community events, concerts, outdoor dining and other activities garnered enthusiastic support. The existing Chestnut Avenue Plaza was deemed too small to support the community's needs. The Township should identify opportunities for plaza-type spaces in future development projects.
- Many businesses are closed on Saturdays due to religious observance, which poses certain practical challenges for the business districts.
- Participants also discussed the potential benefits of creating identities and identifying market niches for each of Teaneck's business districts. This could also help create a cohesive aesthetic for each district.
- The FDU population is a largely untapped market. Teaneck businesses should be capturing more spending from Teaneck students, faculty, and staff. It was noted that it is not particularly pleasant or easy to walk from campus to Cedar Lane.
- Maintenance of Cedar Lane has declined in recent years. It used to be more actively managed and maintained.
- The Cedar Lane area east of Palisade Avenue is not perceived as part of the business district, but could accommodate more mixed-use development, including ground floor retail.
- Parking availability is generally adequate on Cedar Lane, but not everyone is willing to walk 1-2 blocks from one of the municipal lots to their destination.
- The idea of constructing one or more parking garages is supported, but there was broad-based concern about allowing overly-imposing large garages that could impact surrounding neighborhoods.
- The Queen Anne Road/DeGraw Avenue district was noted by several participants as a potential location for residential or mixed-use development, which could provide additional support for the businesses.
- Teaneck Cinemas was cited as an important asset for the community. There is not enough dining and other entertainment available for visitors before or after movies.
- More restaurants and food/beverage options are needed.
- There was broad support for outdoor dining, but participants noted the lack of available sidewalk space to accommodate it.

- Participants were generally supportive of providing some flexibility to allow office uses on the ground floor in some areas while maintaining the retail-only requirement in the core of Cedar Lane.
- Teaneck Road is a long corridor that lacks a concentrated retail area. Participants generally supported the existing condition as opposed to trying to limit/focus the business district to one or more focal points.

#### **4. *Transportation & Mobility***

The Transportation & Mobility group discussed topic areas including pedestrian/bicycling issues, transit, and driving or traffic. The following provides a summary of the discussion on these topics.

##### General Notes

- Average attendee has lived in Teaneck for 15+ years.

##### Location-Specific Feedback

###### *Pedestrian/Bike*

- Intersection of Cedar Lane & River Road:
  - Challenging to cross the street on foot.
  - Multiple lanes to cross.
  - Many turning vehicles, “chasing the green arrow” or right-turn-on-red.
  - Vehicles turning in/out of the gas stations.
- Mid-block crossing of Cedar Lane at Teaneck Cinemas:
  - Difficult place to cross, despite the pedestrian signs.
  - Many drivers do not yield to pedestrians.
- DeGraw Avenue and Teaneck Road have long stretches without traffic signals, making it difficult for pedestrians to find opportunities to cross.
- Cedar Lane between Queen Anne Road and Palisade Avenue - no sidewalk on the south side of the street.
- Teaneck Road and Queen Anne Road both have long stretches with no traffic light, making it difficult for pedestrians to find a safe place to cross.
- Challenge accessing Cedar Lane from “behind”, often have to trek through parking lots.
- Sidewalk drops on the east side of Windsor Road south of the Avalon (Givaudan Drive).
- Interest in pocket park at Hargreaves Avenue and Ardsley Court.
- Pedestrian overpass on River Road between Bogota & Cedar Lane needed to allow for safe crossing for people wishing to utilize recreational facilities along the river (playground, tennis courts, walkway along river, swim club, etc.)
- Access to Overpeck Park from Teaneck very difficult, have to walk in the street crossing over NJTPK to access.

- Better speed reduction devices needed on Teaneck Road, Cedar Lane, West Tryon, and many other streets in Township.
- Public Parks needing some updating, Votee Park needs better walking surfacing.

*Transit*

- Access to the Route 4 jitney requires crossing the on-ramp. Need better access to the jitney.

*Driving*

- Vehicles double park on Cedar Lane, Teaneck Road, and Queen Anne Road (perhaps short-term or loading-only restrictions could help?)
  - Ample municipal parking is available, but people do not like to be inconvenienced.
- Route 4 has congestion issues due to narrowing of roadways, but difficult to address as it is narrow and a State road.
- Cedar Lane bridge to Hackensack needs to be replaced.
- Larch Avenue has no stop signs between Cedar Lane & Main Street in Bogota, so as a relatively wide street, it becomes a speedway. Stop signs could help discourage this (or speed bumps).

General Feedback

*Pedestrian/Bike*

- Older pedestrians need additional time to cross the street, slower walkers.
- Desire for more than just a pedestrian sign or a marked crosswalk - something to encourage more driver yielding.
- Interest in linear parks, pathways, and trails.
- Overgrown shrubbery along the sidewalk makes for difficult pedestrian travel.
- Need for easier ways to cross the river on foot.
- Consider restricting right-turn-on-red.
- Some major roads have sufficient width to add in bike lanes.
- It's good that the railroad crossings are not at-grade, but still need more opportunities to cross the railroad tracks.
- Sidewalk maintenance is an issue - uneven surface challenging to walk on:
  - This is on the landowner to fix, but often not enforced.
  - Could potentially be taken on by the town (paid through taxes), which may be cheaper for the residents than doing it individually.
- Where bike lanes exist, they often drop at the intersection or disappear without connecting to another comfortable facility.
- Often there are bike/ped conflicts.
- Need more curb ramps both for ADA as well as children who bike on the sidewalk.
- Need improved lighting, particularly for pedestrians.

- Stormwater issues on sidewalk after rain or in the street after snow (icy and slippery).
- Town could hold some events to promote cycling (open street event?)
- Interest in raised crossings to slow drivers down and raise awareness of pedestrians.
- Need for consistent treatments, driver education, and enforcement.
- Planning for e-scooters.
- Bike parking should be easily accessible.
- Teaneck is hilly - topography makes it difficult to travel east-west.
- Are there some streets that could be closed and just used for walking/biking?
- Lots of recreational walking in the parks, access to park is a priority (though many also drive to the parks).
- When one driver yields to pedestrians crossing the street, cars sometimes try to go around them.

#### *Transit*

- Buses to the city are full (e.g., 167), but there isn't capacity at stations in NYC to add additional buses .
- Hard to take the bus a short distance, easier to get into NYC than to neighboring communities or around Teaneck.
- Some transit routes that exist are poorly promoted (e.g., access to the mall).
- Need for better bus amenities, such as bus shelters or real-time arrival data. However, some bus stops are in front of people's homes, making it difficult to add this infrastructure.
- Desire for better lighting near bus stops.
- Consider review of nearside/farside bus stops for safe crossings.
- Congestion pricing is likely to impact transit use.
- Desire for (free) shuttle to Hackensack so people can take the train to the PATH.
- Desire for bus to the ferry in Edgewater.
- Interest in circulator or jitney.
- Existing shuttle for seniors (is it full? Could this be repurposed?)
- Parking revenue could be used for transit.