



## MEMORANDUM

---



### Clarke Caton Hintz

Architecture  
Planning  
Landscape Architecture

100 Barrack Street  
Trenton NJ 08608  
clarkecatonhintz.com  
Tel: 609 883 8383  
Fax: 609 883 4044

John Clarke, FAIA  
Philip Caton, FAICP  
Carl Hintz, AICP, ASLA  
John Hatch, AIA  
George Hibbs, AIA  
Brian Slaugh, AICP  
Michael Sullivan, AICP

To: Master Plan Subcommittee

From: Philip Caton, PP, FAICP   
Elizabeth McManus, PP, AICP, LEED AP 

Re: Hamilton 2020 Symposium Analysis

Date: August 27, 2010

---

The Hamilton 2020 Symposium for the Route 33 corridor, held August 6<sup>th</sup>, went very well. The Township, in conjunction with the Hamilton Partnership, led a nearly four hour session on the strengths, weaknesses and ideas for improvements that resulted in many great ideas for how to improve the business climate, aesthetics and function of Route 33.

In advance of the Symposium, the characteristics of the corridor were analyzed and the corridor was split into four zones based on location and shared characteristics. They are as follows:

- **Zone A (Arts and Culture District).** Zone A extends from the Township's border with Trenton to the Route 295 overpass and includes such prominent places as the Arts and Culture Overlay District, the Suburban Plaza shopping center and the Army Reserve Center.
- **Zone B (Westbound District).** Zone B extends from the Route 295 overpass to Mercerville-Whitehorse Road and includes such prominent places as Mercerville and CVS.
- **Zone C (Central District).** Zone C extends from Mercerville-Whitehorse Road to Yardville-Hamilton Square Road and includes such prominent places as the Hamilton Shopping Center, vacant car dealerships and Acme shopping center.
- **Zone D (Eastbound District).** Zone D extends from Yardville-Hamilton Square Road to the border with Robbinsville Township and includes such prominent uses as the Forest Glen shopping center and Golden Crest offices.

For your convenience, I am attaching a copy of the handout and the maps from the Symposium.



## HAMILTON 2020 SYMPOSIUM ANALYSIS

---

Clarke Caton Hintz

The day began with a welcome address by Mayor John Bencivengo and Greg Blair of the Hamilton Partnership. Phil Caton then provided an overview of the Township as a whole and the Route 33 corridor in particular. Once completed, the attendees split into four breakout groups – one group for each corridor zone. A discussion in each group was led by a facilitator and a member of Township Staff – Phil Caton and Mike Guhanick worked with Zone A (Arts and Culture District), Beth McManus and Tim Amison worked with Zone B (Westbound District), Mike Pratico of the Hamilton Partnership and Rob Poppert worked with Zone C (Central District) and Greg Blair of the Hamilton Partnership and Rich Williams worked with Zone D (Eastbound District). Each group discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relevant to each zone.

After completion of the breakout group discussions, all of the groups reconvened and a representative of each group presented their findings to all of the attendees. This was followed with closing remarks by the Mayor and Maurice Rached, a traffic engineer from Maser Consulting that will assist with the Master Plan.

Mr. Rached spoke about the process for making changes to a state highway such as Route 33. Additionally, he spoke about access management options for Route 33. Currently, access management for the corridor occurs on a lot by lot basis during Planning Board and Zoning Board applications. Alternatively, the Township can work with the NJ Department of Transportation to develop an access management plan for the entire corridor in a more comprehensive manner.

There were several ideas shared by all or multiple groups. One common idea was the threat of crime; participants felt that crime, while not a major concern at this time, had the potential to be a negative influence on the corridor. A second common idea was that mixed use buildings, with second story residential, would be beneficial for revitalizing the area, increasing the customer base and providing additional income to property owners. Additionally, multiple groups spoke of the need for an improved streetscape – one that would be more accessible and friendly to pedestrians and would also be more aesthetically pleasing.



Below is a summary of each group's findings.

**Zone A – Arts & Culture District**

**Strengths**

- Access and capacity of roads
- Proximity to train station and bus lines
- Uniqueness (Grounds For Sculpture)
- Historic (NJ Fairgrounds)
- Municipal Building
- NJ Transit bus lines
- Public space (active and passive)
- Inexpensive property

**Weaknesses**

- Crime (Greenwood Avenue, Farmingdale and Bromley Parks)
- Security
- Accidents (Interstate 295 exit) and speed
- Lack of venues for performances
- Low density
- Appearance – industrial in nature
- Vacancy of Suburban Plaza

**Opportunities**

- Mixed use town center: retail, office and residential
  - Suburban Plaza
- Expansion of Grounds For Sculpture
- Children's entertainment/museum use
  - Vintage carnival ride or arcade to relate to historic Fairgrounds
- Hotel
- Incubate new businesses in inexpensive properties
- Complete Interstate 295 access to Route 33 (cloverleaf)

**Threats**

- Expectations
- Crime
- Continuing vacancies at Suburban Plaza



**Zone B – Westbound District**

**Strengths**

- Traffic – slow speeds allow motorists to see stores
- Potential
- Business variety
- Generational ownership
- Sense of community (Mercerville Merchants Assoc., Mercerville Community Assoc.)
- Walkability
- Building scale, style and appearance (two story, at sidewalk)

**Weakness**

- Traffic configuration – very dangerous traffic light at Route 33 and Nottingham Way
- Speed of vehicles
- Lack of enforcement for speeding and other traffic laws

**Opportunities**

- Better traffic flow
- Streetscape improvements
- New businesses
- Easements – open easements to provide improved parking and access at rear of buildings
- Second story residential (mixed use)
  - More customers, income for property owners
- Branding the area to increase its profile in the community and marketability

**Threats**

- Larger economy
- Crime
- Neglect of area

**Other thoughts and ideas**

- The zoning ordinance should be amended to permit mixed use with second story residential uses
- The Township should encourage or require rear shared parking and access
- The Township should provide information on resources – grants, technical assistance and other resources – that could help residents, community groups and the Township improve the area.
- The group felt that their neighborhood / business district included the area along Nottingham Way to 5 points. This is the Mercerville area.



**Zone C – Central District**

**Strengths**

- Slow speed on route 33
- Overall density – consumer population
- Diversity of properties / lot sizes / redevelopment (car dealerships)
- Easily recognizable landmarks
- Full service corridor
- Access to Route 130 and Interstate 295 (north and south)
- Completion of Estates Boulevard connection

**Weaknesses / Threats**

- Financing for larger projects, as opposed to smaller projects
- Widening of Route 33
- Other regional retail venues (Hamilton Marketplace, etc.)
- Taxes
- Car dealership franchise opportunities

**Opportunities**

- Planning for growth during the recession
- Bus park and ride
- Shuttle
- Destination shopping
- Transition uses

**Other Thoughts and Ideas**

- Revisit zoning regulations
- An infrastructure capacity analysis should be conducted (stormwater, sewer, etc.)
- Branding of Route 33 “Biz” should define what Route 33 is made of and provide an ability to exchange ideas



**Zone D – Eastbound District**

**Strengths**

- Limited vacancies
- Less traffic congestion
- Good business mix
- Access to parking
- Newer (modern) construction
- Benefits from proximity of Robbinsville Town Center
- Appealing to the eye

**Weaknesses**

- Inconsistent curbing and sidewalks
- Lack of decorative lighting along Route 33
- Traffic signals are a weakness to businesses
- Undeveloped properties are unappealing
- Number of residential uses pose a challenge to businesses
- Not pedestrian friendly

**Opportunities**

- Improve pedestrian access
- Promote activities (other than Septemberfest)
- Reestablish business group in area
- Turn weaknesses into strengths
- Create more identity when entering Hamilton

**Threats**

- Route 33 realignment will divert traffic from businesses
- Widening Route 33, particularly if dividers are used
- Economy
- Need for variances

**Other Thoughts and Ideas**

- Valuable uses for the area include the following:
  - “Mom and pop” shops
  - Unique shops
  - “Well known” business
  - Entertainment use (movie theater)
  - Retail
- Make new projects appealing to the eye
- Infrastructure improvements are needed
- Landscaping improvements are needed



## HAMILTON 2020 SYMPOSIUM ANALYSIS

---

Clarke Caton Hintz

The next step will be to incorporate these findings into the Master Plan recommendations of the Land Use, Circulation and Economic Development Elements. As part of this process, we anticipate reviewing the zoning ordinance for opportunities to address the concerns raised regarding shared parking, mixed use, etc., as well as working with Maser Consulting, the Master Plan Traffic Consultant, and Parsons Brinkerhoff, the firm completing the NJDOT-sponsored Pedestrian / Bicycle Plan, to address traffic, pedestrian and streetscape concerns.

W:\5000's\Hamilton - Mercer\5426.MP\Route 33 Symposium\100827 Follow-up memo.docx