

Maplewood Mall Stakeholder Meeting Summary | July 29, 2013

As a part of the reconstruction of Maplewood Mall in Central Germantown, 8th District Councilwoman Cindy Bass and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) are directly engaging Mall stakeholders and the general public through various methods and venues. The purpose of this outreach is to ensure an open and transparent process that incorporates public opinion into the design and function of the new Maplewood Mall and keeps the public informed of project details. This outreach begins now, with the pre-design phase, and continues through to the design and construction phases.

The second outreach event was conducted on Monday July 29, 2013 at the Prince Hall Mason's Lodge on Maplewood Mall. **This effort was directed toward businesses, residents, and property owners on the Mall.** Approximately 20 attendees were present. The meeting was facilitated by Matt Wysong of PCPC.

The purpose of this meeting was to:

1. Disseminate all information to date regarding the reconstruction process,
2. Share the results of the Maplewood Mall Block Party Design Workshop, and
3. Conduct a listening session in which stakeholders could share their needs, desires, and aspirations for the Mall as it relates to reconstruction

The listening session is summarized below, with comments grouped into the various themes that materialized over the course of the meeting:

Safety

- Cameras should be installed on the Mall - one on each end and one in the middle of the block
- Cameras could also serve as webcams to showcase what's going on at the Mall for marketing purposes
- Heavy tree cover in each plaza reduces visibility and sense of safety, and should therefore be minimized
- Install better lighting on street and in parking lots for greater visibility
- The pedestrian light posts recently installed on Germantown Avenue should be used ("brown rounds")
- Use solar lighting
- More police presence and faster response times are needed
- A collaboration needs to be formed with the 14th Police District in concert with this reconstruction project

Street Alignment/Use/Access

- The majority opinion was to keep Maplewood Mall open to traffic for reasons relating to access, loading, drop-off, parking, and business visibility/viability
- Some suggested that it be returned to being a city street, much like it was before the creation of the Mall
- Others favored a "hybrid" approach in which the Mall could be closed off to vehicular traffic at certain hours of the day or certain days of the week. Church Street in Burlington, Vermont was used as an example.
- One person was in favor of a fully pedestrianized space, but had questions regarding emergency access
- The street should be straightened out to remove "jogs"
- The red bollards should be removed
- The street should have one traffic lane and one parking lane
- The street design should be simplistic, but classic

- The Mall should be wheelchair accessible
- Emergency access needs to be maintained
- Loading and drop-off considerations need to be taken into account
- Look into the possibility of a dedicated loading zone
- Outdoor dining should be encouraged
- The Mall needs nightlife - restaurants and piano bar
- One person suggested having a store for locally grown food or a farmers market
- The Armat Street side of the Mall needs attention/fixing up - new sidewalks, a colorful mural
- Unused land to the rear of properties between Maplewood and Chelton Avenue should be used for a community garden

Parking

- Businesses need a better parking situation in order to survive
- Parallel on-street parking should be provided on the Mall
- An area for angled on-street parking should be identified
- Armat Street should be made one-way westbound to allow for parking on both sides of the street
- More free parking should be provided
- A multi-use approach to parking must be utilized
- Interfaith House should be approached about sharing Verizon's lot so that their lot could be returned to private use

Perception/Identity

- Users of nearby addiction treatment and mental health facilities are seen as a major obstacle to improving the attractiveness and perception of the Mall - their behavior and presence have a negative effect on the Mall
- There is doubt that beautification projects alone will help to create place that people want to shop and visit
- The Mall needs a theme to attract users and businesses - a hook to get people to come and spend money
- The Mall should serve as a destination for visitors and be integral to the tourist economy of Germantown

Landscaping/Plazas

- Install hanging plant baskets on light posts
- Make the Mall greener and "softer" (less hardscape)
- Trees are needed, but visibility needs to be maintained
- A usable pavilion structure should be constructed along Germantown Avenue to create a presence for the Mall at the corner and enhance its visibility
- The plaza at Greene Street should be designed to allow for small and intimate outdoor concerts

Utilities

- The underground PECO transformer floods during storms and should be fixed
- Phone lines should be buried
- Sagging lines to the rear of buildings should be fixed

Maintenance/Upkeep/Longevity

- Building materials should hold up well over time and be maintainable (unlike existing brick and cobblestone pavers)
- The City needs to provide support for maintenance and upkeep after the reconstruction is complete
- Utility companies need to properly repair the roadway when they make underground repairs

Social

- There are social issues that need to be addressed
- We need to make sure that existing businesses and residents are not displaced by a potential rise in property values or rents.

Finally, it was requested that representatives of the Philadelphia Department of Commerce and the 14th Police District be present at the next stakeholder meeting to discuss grant/loan programs for businesses and ways to collaborate with the 14th on crime and safety issues.