



NJLM 2018 Conference Report

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Tuesday Arrival - Show Floor Tour

Vendors, vendors and more vendors. Met two people I've spoken with on Report It and NYS (National Youth safety) – background check program inclusive of 3 state search SOR and national registry, along with annual rechecks. Brief meeting with Downtown NJ Association and outdoor recreation companies on equipment, field programs and maintenance services.

Session 1 – The Heart of Downtown Renaissance

- Mayor of Paterson – “Great Falls. Great Good. Great Future.”
- What is our Slogan in Phillipsburg? This should be your focal point, your town logo and part of your art, education, and food/services. Everyone should know what you are about.
- Programs for positivity – “Chalk about it.” Positive words in parks for people to walk/see (Art incorporation into parks).
- Fill storefronts with local art/photography – even if amateurs. We (town administration) should welcome every businesses with a piece of Phillipsburg history or signage that represents the town. Every piece should have a story or be inspiring.
- ACAFF – Atlantic City Art Foundation
- Trenton – “Out all night”
- Economic Development Authorities drive all these activities and events. If they aren't, they should be your hub in conjunction with driving your local groups to be interactive with one another with your CDC.
- **“Creative Placemaking** – Art and culture enhance building a strong brand to support boosting your local economy. Artistic and cultural activities strengthen a community, particularly when they reveal and celebrate its character and identity. Support your residents coming together to make social, physical and economic changes in their neighborhoods through the arts and culture. You have to do more than cleanup your parks and streets to bring people in.



Session 1 – The Heart of Downtown Renaissance (Cont).

- People won't come back to downtown filth. Start by cleaning up and getting tough on enforcement, add your history to everything you do. <Marketing 101>
- Mistake most towns make is they think if you bring people in, they will see potential and become an investor. It's actually the exact opposite. You bring people in to show them you are serious - you start by showing pride in your area by keeping it clean and presentable. They'll come back when they leave with a good impression.
- Have artists engaged in the process, not just a "pretty it up approach". When cleaning up a park, have artist come in and paint, add landscaping, and add rock gardens or fencing. Give something as basic as an empty lot an identity that has community input and organizational support.
- Create public policy
- Identify your cultural assets (display them – talk about them)
- Plan & map out a timeline
- Secure municipal, county, NJSCA grants, federal NEA, clean community grants. Mistakes from other municipalities discussed. NJ Art Council, Zoning all must be in place first to ensure you don't have the common pitfalls of lack of enforcement.
- Utilizing NEA grants – "Our Town" funding was a constant way and source to fund change rather than asking taxpayers to invest.
- Geraldine Dodge Foundation – Excellent source of grants.
- Read your local ALICE report. It will tell you your town compared to state, county and national averages. More valid than google searches and used as a reference where several grants fact check your stats.
- Hackensack – began in 2014 with "creative placemaking" taking off, but was about a 10 year process.
- Zoning is critical to success. You need multi use areas, do not try to be too restrictive and limit use. Yesterday's manufacturing could be an open market concept for young entrepreneurs.
- Rethink how you re-engage with open space. Can you create space? Is there unused space that is going to waste and not revenue generating? You need a balance of open space and ratable to attract today's generation of city dwellers, not suburbs.
- Housing and arts/funding go hand in hand because art is shown to become a Safety improvement. It should be permanent, not seasonal. It should have value and not be commercialized. Commercialized dress up = vandalized.



Session 2 – Navigating Change in your Downtown

- Public Space Specialists
 - BIDS (Business Improvement District), SIDS (Special Improvement district), Economic Development
 - GID – “Get it done”
- What should BIDS, SIDS look like and what are they?
 - Economic tools for towns. Problem, they often become event driven and the role of economic development becomes a party planner. *big mistake. Party planners should not be town employees; they should be directed by businesses stakeholders who understand business.
 - Need stakeholders – planning, zoning, local council and involvement with all government leaders to have fit, food and beauty kick off any downtown. These categories don’t compete with the internet, are sustainable long term.
 - All new businesses should have someone from the government working with them. Guidebooks to the town, how to be successful, people to meet and events to attend to get the word out. You need your local town staff engaging businesses and helping them every step of the way, not a hindrance to their business.(Party planner v. Business specialist)
 - While special events great, they should be supportive of local businesses or existing town-wide programs, not competing. What local business or restaurant wants to contribute to an event with outside food trucks and vendors that do not contribute to the community? While trendy and popular, they actually prevent businesses from settling or supporting events. While they may be short term fun, they aren’t a good use of local funds or worth the risk of upsetting your stakeholders. Use those funds to cleanup physical assets to stakeholders of your town. Not travelers.
 - Clean streets/safety before you launch and have it working consistently.
 - Unfortunately, UEZ towns are exempt from funding and participating.
 - Video – you tube – “How to get owners/stakeholders” – recommended viewing.
- Review your planning/zoning ordinances. Often these need cleanup to fit the plan moving forward, they are more reflective of what you have.
- Be realistic on who can come in to your town and what the revenue potential is.



Session 2 – Navigating Change in your Downtown

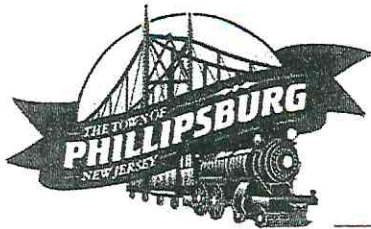
- Themed districts do work – industrial, professional, historic, art, music, dining, services, etc.
- Show your stakeholders you are interested in their success.
- “Planting in the Park” – create your next space
- “Have you met Newark” – Event in Newark that now sells out. Affordable way to take people new to the area to visit several restaurants, tours for an affordable evening out. Create it as a “restaurant week” theme – small groups of 20-25. Funded through your BID/SID/UEZ – This is what funding is for, to support the businesses you have. They are your stakeholder and it should be the BID/SID/UEZ mission to be supportive of them.
- CDC – Community Development Committee is often part of the town, but should be partnered with your UEZ/EDC/BID/SID. Your CDC staff members should be your point of contact with the stakeholders.



Wednesday, November 14th

Session 1 – Affordable Housing Update

- Ave. NJ Rental rates \$30-\$40/Sq Ft.
- Tax Credits
 - 4% Tax credits are 30% of what a builder may need for financing. When you have layers of equity – HFMA “BY Right”
 - 9% - 48 applications in, 27-28 are being funded in NJ. Often these are 3 to 1 odds. Not many apply – but it is available. <Needs more research for CDC>
 - NJ Finance Association – 2018 report and application process should be available for download
 - This can also be used for rehabilitating properties
 - HMFA – First time homebuyer credits 10k for 5 years, 67k annual income, average age of HFMA loan is 35 YO
 - Takeaway – review town code for repeat reference of inclusionary zoning. Establish guidelines to introduce to planning board and engineer/council adoption samples.
 - LIHTC Tax Credit Dev.
 - Market to Affordable Units
 - Extension of expiring controls
 - Group Homes
 - Conversions
 - Accessory Apartments
 - Rehabilitation
- \$15 min wage is going to have a big impact on affordable housing rates as many are based on salary and income levels. As their income rises, so will their rent, defeating the intent of the wage act. To date, this was not addressed and will impact lower income the most, % of what people pay on assistance.
- 5-6 sources of revenue show there is a direct correlation to crime rate with better housing conditions. As housing conditions improve, crime decreases. (Handout provided with stats)
- Recommend partnerships of section 8/housing authorities with the local PD. They would have weekly calls with tenants/police, business admin, CDC and address issues nonstop until they cease.



Session 2 – The vacant property epidemic

- Legally occupied- 6 months. If the property has been vacant, no utilities for 6 months, it is considered abandoned.
- Criteria for Abandon Properties listings
 - Need to have a rehabilitation program
 - Construction start/stop dates
 - NO Construction ever started
 - Delinquent taxes
 - Is property considered a nuisance
 - Season property list – it cannot be on your seasonal list.
- Special Tax Sales
 - Property must be rehabbed to qualify
 - Must be in a public interest to be taken over
 - Purchaser Must post a bond to favor until rehab is done
 - Purchaser Must be converted to single family from multi-family
 - This can all be written into the town zoning and code language
- ORD and person in charge (designated) should be the person creating the list and citing, following up.
- Fees – tax lien holders can't be charged
- You must have backup for all fees you assess
- Center for urban sustainable living at Rutgers has had great success with Geo Map. (GUS mapping technology). Perth Amboy, EDA sponsored program for accuracy and updates of vacant, abandoned properties and digitally documented them.
- Once you inventory the list, you identify as vacant, photograph and answer basic questions
 - Took 7 weeks
 - 9 students, 9 phones
 - Cost - \$.75 per parcel. Both residential and businesses
- Water use is an effective way to determine vacancy.
- **“Receivership” helps finish the process. (18 months)**
 - Case study – the town bonded \$1m to send a message regarding receivership. They put a blighted property into receivership and took action. Picked 1 house, budgeted \$170k. Sold for \$200k. Ideally you resale for \$1 – the bank keeps the profits from the sale, but you have a renovated home, a possible first home buyer and happy surrounding neighbors whose property value now increases. After this example, 40 building permits were issued.



- **Session 2 – The vacant property epidemic**
 - It had an immediate ripple effect because people saw it was being taken seriously.
 - This town had 120 vacant homes, now they have less than 20. They only had to invest in 2. The rest followed. (Collingswood Mayor James Maley)
 - Habitat for Humanity is a great fit for receivership and abandon lots.
 - Receivership vs. Eminent Domain – Receivership is more favorable.
- **QRE – qualified Redevelopment Entity.** They acquire and rehab within 6 months. They are different and recognized as able to rent out properties, while rehabbing them, until the court settles. (Opposite of what happens in town – where people take this and leave it to rot. <D to contact firm that spoke on QRE for more info>
- **State Law 1229, PL35** helps go after banks. If you have abandon/foreclosures and are not using this law daily, you are “missing the boat”. This takes “**vacant to value**”. If creditor does not meet terms, they can be fined up to \$1500/day.

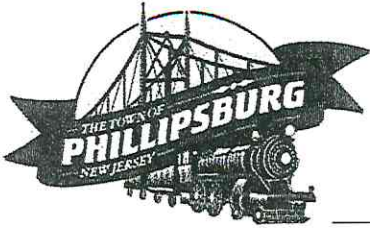
Session 3 – MEL-JIF Risk Management

Session 4 – Women in Municipal Government Awards Event

Thursday

Session 1: Planning for Tomorrow’s Infrastructure (gas, Electric, Phone, water, Wastewater and Storm water Treatment)

- Statewide problem – decaying fast statewide need replacement
- Emergent contaminants are a new problem (Teflon)
- Biggest problem areas are older homes – lead in laterals
- Combined sewer/storm water systems complicate issues
- Sewer collection & WWT – rain handles both and volumes is too great to handle.
- Smart Systems exist- but most municipalities cannot afford the investment.
- Lead, PFC, PFA – all need to be addressed, but prioritized.
- Asset management planning forces you to look at long term vs. short term. It is not practical to borrow to replace aging infrastructure. Plans must be to do it within your municipal capital budgets. There isn’t enough lending available to do it all at once for everyone who needs it.
- DEP is helping



Session 1: Planning for Tomorrow's Infrastructure (gas, Electric, Phone, water, Wastewater and Storm water Treatment)

- 83% WWTP have been asset inventoried
- 81% have long term strategies.
- EP financing/State Revolving funds
 - Loan forgiveness for low income areas up to 90%
 - Balance problem with interest. Financing first in first out.
 - Should be a way to prioritize and capitalize to meet the local needs rather than borrow and spend.
- Storm water – lack of investment statewide
- Creation of a storm water utility is becoming new to arrange financing and keep separate from sewage.
- Gas Tax joke- 85% of the funds from the gas tax went to county and municipalities despite earmarked for roads.
90% of municipalities received funding – 505 out of 565
 - DOT grants available through Transportation
 - Bike paths 'Safe routes to school
 - Ibank – you can use funding to use our funding to use as an opportunity and use to repay banks Applications opened in July
 - TAP program – transportation app program
 - Pedestrian services – bike lanes, bike trails (23M)

Session 2: Code Blue and Homeless Support

- Signed into law by Governor Christie – PL1942. This is a way for counties to act in the event of cold weather. Create warming spots or homeless and "At Risk". Those at risk include anyone outdoors, living in parks, streets, vehicles, or poorly insulated structures. (Any place lacking heat)
- Prevent weather related exposure/death
- Once a year, mandated count is taken of the homeless but the accuracy is weak statewide. The problem with the law – it was an unfunded mandate.
- Requirements – must be food, water on premises. Transportation to the locations must be provided or coordinated, laundry services, restrooms and hygiene should all be available, along with cots.
- Assembly 4556 – Added Code Red addition for excessive heat. 95 degrees or above for 2 or more days – implements cooling locations as well.



Session 2: Code Blue and Homeless Support

- Most are churches, staffed by volunteers and facilities with food access & storage for emergencies. Examples – Bridgeton <Cumberland County>
- \$0.00 funding. Over 300 volunteers privately fund the program and organize fundraisers to keep program running.
- Improvements community wide can include blue light implementation, designated nonprofits receive payment for use of services in emergencies, and creation of public private partnerships are what make this work. It cannot be volunteers alone and achieved by Government alone. There should be a govt official working with someone in the private sector.
- Through this program, Bridgeton placed 60 people in permanent housing through programs to rehab vacant properties and create home ownerships and decrease homelessness.
- Est. cost to operate and revitalize in their community - \$5 per person/per day. Annually spend \$20-25 for ads, volunteers, food, cots, ads and media awareness.
- Collect socks, sweaters, blankets, coats, gloves, hats and scarves for emergencies.
- 211 or 24/7 county hotlines for the homeless. In Hudson County – this is run by DYFS and the local YMCA. Use community block grants to fund the program. Coordinate with their police and local churches for overflow.