



Date: June 26, 2009

To: Upper Dublin Township Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

From: Marian Hull, Comprehensive Plan Project Manager

Subject: June 11, 2009 Community Workshop Summary

## Community Assessment Exercise Summary

Upper Dublin Township held a Community Visioning Workshop on June 11, 2009 to introduce its comprehensive planning initiative and to gain initial feedback from the community on a variety of issues that will be considered in the Comprehensive Plan. An interactive community assessment exercise presented ideas and asked questions on issues ranging from neighborhood quality of life to key development concerns.

Subsequent to the Visioning Workshop, the Township posted a survey on its website with questions based on those asked during the community assessment exercises. The survey was on the website for the entire month of July 2009. In general, responses to the survey were similar to those received at the Workshop. (See "Online Survey Summary")

The following summarizes the feedback received in the community assessment exercise. The findings in no way represent a statistically significant sampling of community issues; rather it "takes the pulse" of about 160 residents who chose to participate in a community workshop on a fine June evening. The Assessment was not designed to get meaningful research data but rather to probe at some "hot button" issues to hopefully gain an understanding of how to address them in the comprehensive planning process. The information summarized below will be used help understand how to educate people as to the implications of the choices that will need to be made during the planning process.

### Respondent Profile

There were 158 participants in the community assessment exercise. They tended to be older – 62 percent reported being at least 51 years old – and had long term roots in the Township, with 51 percent of participants reporting that they had lived or worked in Upper Dublin for 21 or more years.

<u>What is your age group?</u>	<u>Responses</u>	
Less than 18 years	1	0.63%
18-30 years	5	3.16%
31-40 years	16	10.13%
41-50 years	38	24.05%
51-65 years	54	34.18%
More than 65 years	44	27.85%

<b>Totals</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>How long have you lived or worked in Upper Dublin?</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
0-5 years	17	10.76%
6-10 years	26	16.46%
11-20 years	34	21.52%
21-40 years	52	32.91%
41+ years	29	18.35%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100%</b>

Together Fort Washington and Maple Glen residents made up nearly half of the audience. Nearly 20 percent of attendees were from Dresher. Many of the 18 percent who identified as being from an “other” neighborhood indicated that they were from Ambler. No other neighborhood made up more than 10 percent of the audience

<b>Where do you live or work?</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Abington	1	0.63%
Ardsley	1	0.63%
Dresher	31	19.62%
Fort Washington	36	22.78%
Jarrettown	2	1.27%
Maple Glen	38	24.05%
North Hills	5	3.16%
Oreland	11	6.96%
Willow Grove	4	2.53%
Other	29	18.35%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Responses to General Community Issues

When asked, the top three reasons stated for choosing to live in Upper Dublin were high quality schools, community character and that the Township is located close to their place of work.

<b>Why do you choose to live or work in Upper Dublin?</b>	<b>Responses (n=158)</b>	
Born/raised here	24	15.19%
Good schools	93	58.86%
Town character	66	41.77%
Friends/family	58	36.71%
Low taxes	14	8.86%
Close to work	66	41.77%

The issues most commonly cited as a potential reason to leave the Township were housing that no longer meets needs and taxes, both of which received a response greater than 50 percent

<b>What would cause you to leave?</b>	<b>Responses (n=158)</b>	
Overdevelopment	70	44.30%
Reduced school quality	51	32.28%
Housing no longer meets my needs	97	61.39%
Job change	45	28.48%
Taxes	94	59.49%
Reduction in community services	62	39.24%

When asked specifically about what is good in their neighborhoods, participants responded positively to nearly every issue raised. Most potential neighborhood amenities were identified as a neighborhood asset by at least 50 percent of respondents, except that only about a third thought that access to shopping and dining was an asset offered by their neighborhood.

<b>What's great about your neighborhood?</b>	<b>Responses (n=158)</b>	
Housing stock	81	51.27%
Neighbors	88	55.70%
Access to parks & recreation	78	49.37%
Access to shopping & eating	59	37.34%
Privacy	97	61.39%
Aesthetics	100	63.29%

Top neighborhood concerns were traffic speeds and volumes. Few selected crime as a concern.

<b>What concerns you about your neighborhood?</b>	<b>Responses (n=158)</b>	
Traffic speeds	95	60.13%
Traffic volume	80	50.63%
Lack of sidewalks	58	36.71%
Crime	24	15.19%
Noise	52	32.91%
Commercial development is too close	46	29.11%

On Township-wide transportation issues, two-thirds of respondents cited traffic congestion as their top concern. Limited public transit, road maintenance and lack of sidewalks were also frequently identified as concerns.

<b>What are your top 3 transportation concerns?</b>	<b>Responses (n=158)</b>	
Traffic congestion	105	66.46%
Lack of bike lanes	40	25.32%
Lack of trails	27	17.09%
Limited public transit	57	36.08%
Lack of sidewalks	55	34.81%
Parking problems	20	12.66%
Road maintenance	57	36.08%
None of the above	10	6.33%

Preservation and protection of natural resources was cited as a top concern for more than half of respondents. Nearly 50 percent cited additional open space as a top priority. The importance of open space and natural resource protection was emphasized later in the meeting as participants commented that open space should be considered as the best end use for the Township's limited remaining vacant land. In other recreation needs, local parks and playgrounds and walking and biking trails were also identified as priorities by more than 40 percent of the audience.

<b>What are your top 3 open space and recreation priorities</b>	<b>Responses (n=158)</b>	
Local parks & playgrounds	69	43.67%
Varied recreation programs	31	19.62%
Walking & biking trails	70	44.30%
Bike trails & lanes	30	18.99%
Preservation/protection of natural resources	94	59.49%
Playing fields	15	9.49%
Additional open space	75	47.47%
None of the above	13	8.23%

Participants were asked to identify their top development concerns moving forward. Open space preservation, the future of the Fort Washington Office Park and shopping centers and preserving neighborhood character were selected by at least two-thirds of participants. Vacant land development and increased diversity in housing were cited by fewer than half of participants.

<u>Prioritize your development concerns</u>	<u>Responses</u>	
Fort Washington Office Park	116	73.42%
Shopping centers	107	67.72%
Vacant land development	73	46.20%
Preserving neighborhood character	107	67.72%
Increased diversity in housing	67	42.41%
Open space preservation	122	77.22%

### Housing

Slightly fewer than half of respondents felt that the current housing stock meets current needs. Mixed-use neighborhoods were identified as a need by nearly 40 percent of the audience. More affordable housing options were named by about 30 percent.

<u>Is there a need for more diverse housing stock?</u>	<u>Responses (n=158)</u>	
No, homes suit the needs of families	72	45.57%
Yes, need more condos options	41	25.95%
Yes, need more townhome options	39	24.68%
Yes, need more rental options	23	14.56%
Yes, need mixed-use neighborhoods	62	39.24%
Yes, need more affordable options	49	31.01%

In terms of infill development, it appears that respondents felt that it was more important to match the scale and design of infill to existing development than the specific housing type. Less than 50 percent supported the concept of infill that matched existing development in type, but is of a different scale. Roughly the same number of respondents indicated that it was okay to match new development to scale but not type as said that new homes should match in both type and scale. Given that infill development in an established neighborhood tends to be controversial, this is a response that should be tested further.

**When new homes are built in an existing neighborhood they should match in type and scale**

	<b>Responses</b>	
Yes	104	67.53%
No	50	32.47%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>100%</b>

**When new homes are built in an existing neighborhood they should match in type, but not necessarily scale**

	<b>Responses</b>	
Yes	63	42.28%
No	86	57.72%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100%</b>

**When new homes are built in an existing neighborhood they should match in scale, but not necessarily type**

	<b>Responses</b>	
Yes	98	64.90%
No	53	35.10%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Commercial Services and Development**

Only about 20 percent of respondents indicated that Upper Dublin's existing shopping centers provide all needed goods and services. A similar amount said that existing facilities met their needs, but that they would like more choice; however, fewer than 10 percent said that they couldn't get what they need in the Township and that it was inconvenient to travel to another location.

**Do Upper Dublin's shopping centers provide the goods & services you need?**

	<b>Responses</b>	
Yes	30	19.35%
Yes, but I'd like more choice	33	21.29%
No, but I can get what I need nearby	79	50.97%
No, it is inconvenient to travel.	13	8.39%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100%</b>

The top choice for additional services was dining at nearly 50 percent. Based on audience response, a post office would have been a strong competitor for the number one position, had it been on the list. Entertainment and groceries were other common responses. Based on participant response, “post office” was added as a response to the online survey.

<b>Would you like to see more of the following available in UDT?</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
Grocery	35	22.15%
Pharmacy	8	5.06%
Clothing	19	12.03%
Gifts & specialty shops	16	10.13%
Furniture/appliances/household goods	9	5.70%
Dining	78	49.37%
Entertainment	51	32.28%

When asked about the future use of the Township’s existing shopping centers, about three-quarters of participants felt that the current single-story retail development was appropriate for each of the four centers. Reactions to mixed-use proposals at each site varied. About half of respondents were open to the idea of a mix of retail and office uses at the Upper Dublin Shopping Center and Dreshertown Plaza. Participants were less open to mixed-use scenarios that involved residential development. While nearly 42 percent thought this was an appropriate use for Dreshertown Plaza, nearly 54 percent felt it was not an appropriate use at any of the current shopping center locations. The potentially most intense mix of development – including retail, office and housing scored the lowest, with nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that it was not a good use for any of the proposed locations.

<b>Which of the following uses is appropriate for these existing shopping centers</b>	<b>(n=158)</b>									
	<b>Upper Dublin</b>		<b>Maple Glen</b>		<b>Fairway</b>		<b>Dreshertown</b>		<b>Not good for any of these locations</b>	
Single story retail	119	75.32%	124	78.48%	117	74.05%	118	74.68%	17	10.76%
Mix of retail/housing	53	33.54%	48	30.38%	51	32.28%	66	41.77%	83	53.53%
Mix of retail/office	76	48.10%	69	43.67%	69	43.67%	80	50.63%	65	41.14%
Mix of retail/office/housing	44	27.85%	40	25.32%	42	26.58%	53	33.54%	102	64.56%

Despite the results of the prior question more than half of participants thought it would be okay to develop multiple stories at the Upper Dublin and Fairway Shopping Centers to achieve mixed-use development. This number fell to 47 percent for the Dreshertown Plaza and about 40 percent for the Maple Glen Shopping Center. The somewhat mixed results between these questions point out a potential area for future study.

Would you consider increased density to achieve a mix of uses	Upper Dublin		Maple Glen		Fairway		Dreshertown	
No, limit development to one story	75	47.47%	89	59.33%	71	47.65%	82	53.25%
Up to three stories would be okay	60	37.97%	48	32.00%	59	39.60%	49	21.82%
Up to four stories would be okay	23	14.56%	13	8.67%	19	12.75%	23	14.94%

### Vacant Land Development

A set of questions asked participants to indicate their preferences for the future development of two important vacant parcels in the Township, the undeveloped portion of the Prudential Office Park site and the Dresher Triangle area across Limekiln Pike from Dreshertown Plaza. The table below lists respondents answers, it should be noted that there was considerable concern among meeting participants that “open space” was not offered as an option for the ultimate development of these sites. Verbally, many indicated the desire to choose this option for each site, reinforcing the emphasis the community places on preservation of open space. Based on this feedback, “open space” was added as an option in the online survey.

What types of development would be appropriate at these locations	Prudential		Dresher Triangle		Not good for either location (n=158)	
Office campus	84	53.16%	25	15.82%	62	39.24%
Shopping Center	36	22.78%	36	22.78%	100	63.29%
Mixed-use	78	49.37%	57	36.08%	70	44.30%
Residential with limited retail	74	46.84%	57	36.08%	57	36.08%
Traditional neighborhood development	53	33.54%	51	32.28%	82	51.90%
Age-restricted housing	48	30.38%	38	24.05%	82	51.90%
Assisted living	39	24.68%	40	25.32%	89	56.33%
Townhouses or garden apartments	44	27.85%	46	29.11%	93	58.86%
Single family subdivisions	43	27.22%	34	21.52%	104	65.82%