

Bloomfield Life

Proposals to revive Center to be aired Corporation to implement changes is recommended

By Steve Galvacky

Tonight, Feb. 5, merchants and property owners in Bloomfield Center will begin examining a plan for reviving the downtown area.

The Bloomfield Center Steering Committee, set up by the Township Council in cooperation with the Bloomfield Business Advisory Board and the Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce, will hear strategies outlined by its hired consultant, Donald Smartt.

Smartt said Tuesday that the plan—which recommends establishment of a non-profit corporation to implement strategies—will be “basically designed to attack the perception that Bloomfield Center has nothing to offer.”

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. in the law enforcement building.

Smartt, principal of a consulting firm, The Community Advocates, met with members of the steering committee last year to draw up what is termed a “work plan” for the Center, where signs advertising vacant commercial space for rent are common.

The plan has two stated goals:

- “The first is to solve the very real problems faced each day by business owners, shoppers and investors in Bloomfield Center,” the proposal states.
- “The second goal challenges the intangible sense felt by visitors and business owners, conveyed by the media and acted upon by investors that even more is wrong with Bloomfield Center than there really is,” the proposal continues. “This goal challenges the perception that things are really worse than in fact they are and, in doing so, seeks to get the good news about Bloomfield Center—about its personal service, its products and goods, its investment and rental opportunities—out

throughout the region.”

The work plan identifies strategies in five areas: parking improvements, business recruitment, public relations and marketing, creation of a revitalization and advocacy organization for the Center, and ways to fund that organization.

It recommends that the township investigate whether new

parking spaces are available through the elimination of no-parking zones, create free or low-cost dedicated parking for employees and owners of businesses, and work with New Jersey Transit and other partners to explore the possibility of additional parking in several specified areas.

The plan further encourages the township to promote investment and recruitment through new partnerships with organizations such as

Bloomfield College and The Home Depot, commission a public space study focusing on traffic and pedestrian access, and investigate and initiate financial incentives to attract investors.

It outlines a public-relation plan that includes education and a reward system to supplement the enforcement of township codes, implementation of a community policing program to increase police presence, and signage and promotional events to act as “unifying elements” in the Center.

Finally, it recommends creation and support for “a non-profit tax-exempt” organization to, implement the plan. It would be funded by voluntary contributions from stakeholders in the organization and other members of the business community, as well as “general and dedicated municipal commitments.”

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The Community Advocates

