

# Memo

To: Brian Hall, Media Council President; Jeff Smith, Media Borough Manager

From: Peter Angelides, Vice President and Principal; Brittany Forman, Director; Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI)

Date: February 13, 2018

Re: Media Economic Development Implementation – Facilitation Session Results

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## **BACKGROUND**

Last year, The ESI project team developed an Economic Development Strategy and Implementation Plan for the Borough of Media. The plan was a result of a 10-month long process of data-driven analytics, spatial assessment, industry expertise, and significant public engagement. This approach yielded recommendations in the areas of economic development, retail attraction, place-making, and transportation. In addition, a set of short and long-term action steps were created, which served as a roadmap for the next five to ten years to advance the economic health of the borough.

In November, the Plan was formally adopted by Borough Council. In order to help prioritize and guide the next implementation steps, the ESI project team – including The Riddle Company and JVM Studio – facilitated a session with all council members on January 27, 2018. The purpose of the session was twofold: 1) to document implementation ideas and 2) help the council come to a consensus on how to proceed.

## **PROCESS**

The facilitation session used a multi-faceted approach to elicit individual preferences, encourage discussion, and identify council-wide priorities. Techniques included both an analytical ranking system as well as qualitative exercises, which are described below:

- Initial Voting – Council members completed a preliminary round of voting to identify their individual preferences based on their understanding of the report recommendations and the current fiscal climate.
- Preference Identification Exercise – Members were asked to personally identify with a choice of visuals that invoked specific aspects of economic development. During the final task, they chose the overall category that represented their highest priority. Four members chose Retail as a top priority, two chose Place-making, two chose Economic Development and no members identified Transportation as their first priority.

- *Brainstorm Session* – Council raised the following five supplemental ideas for consideration.
  - o Create a landlord/business owner committee, which could potentially be housed under the revamped MBA.
  - o Develop a shuttle system to bring people to and from key areas such as the train station and senior living facilities. This could be in partnership with the County.
  - o Create more open spaces that become gathering places beyond the business district.
  - o Support growth along Baltimore Avenue by enhancing the pedestrian experience of perpendicular streets linking to State Street.
  - o Integrate the wayfinding program with the Economic Development Plan [Note: this was ultimately dropped as the Borough is currently undergoing implementation of the wayfinding program].
  
- *Constraint Discussion* – The project team and council discussed the constraints and capacity that should be considered before prioritizing recommendations. These aspects were included in the ranking system and are 1) whether the borough has staff to accomplish the recommendation 2) whether the borough has funding available, 3) the expected level of cost to implementation, and 4) the expected level of impact of the recommendation.
  
- *Voting on Priorities and Consensus Discussion* – Council completed a second round of voting. The project team tallied the votes and facilitated a council discussion around each item in detail, particularly whether council preferences aligned with the input of the project team and borough administration comments.

## RESULTS

All of the original report and new recommendations were ranked using a weighted system (see Appendix for the full list of results). Each factor was given a specific weight, which helped to balance council desires with project team expertise and the borough’s current capacity.

Factor	Range	Weight (%)
Cost	1-5	30
Level of Impact	1-5	30
Availability of borough staff	1-5	20
Funding availability	1-5	10
Council preference <sup>1</sup>	0-160	10

The top fourteen recommendations had high scores in both council preferences and other ranking categories and therefore are considered “Priority Recommendations.” These are listed below and also include whether there is current progress or funding available, as provided by the borough. In addition, the project team has identified the potential mechanism of implementation for each recommendation

<sup>1</sup> Note: Each council member received 20 total points to distribute among the recommendations. With eight members of council, any recommendation could technically receive up to 160 points. As a result, council preference had a larger overall impact than the other factors. Therefore, council preference was weighted at 10 percent because the total amount of points received could be more than 30 times the maximum in other categories.



based on our experiences in similar communities. The potential ways to carry out these recommendations include ad hoc council committees, council votes, external stakeholder committees, executive actions, or grant processes.

### **Retail Priority Recommendations**

- Realign function and focus of the MBA (Year 1)- Score 68
  - o Discussion – This received the highest score of all recommendations and was seen as one of the highest priorities for the council.
  - o Funding/Progress – Borough provides funding to MBA each year. The realignment of MBA's focus is in progress as the MBA has already formed a committee to start working on the Plan recommendations.
  - o Mechanism – Ad hoc committee of council members to coordinate with the MBA
  
- Launch a retail business recruitment plan (Year 1)- Score 50
  - o Discussion – This item was seen as one of the top implementation steps under the Retail category.
  - o Funding/Progress – Borough provides funding to MBA each year. The realignment of MBA's focus is in progress as the MBA has already formed a committee to start working on the Plan recommendations.
  - o Mechanism – Ad hoc committee of council members to coordinate with MBA
  
- Enforce building codes to address access and physical elements (Years 2-5)- Score 49
  - o Discussion – Maintaining the attractiveness and the accessibility were mentioned as important aspects.
  - o Funding/Progress – None identified
  - o Mechanism – Executive action
  
- Seek "Main Street" designation/status (Years 2-5)- Score 46
  - o Discussion – Council felt that they already have embraced the fundamentals of the Main Street program into their current operations. Instead, they wanted to amend the recommendation to specifically seek the official Main Street designation.
  - o Funding/Progress – According to the administration, this can be started right away. The Borough can pursue Keystone Community funding from PA Department of Community and Economic Development
  - o Mechanism – Grant process (state designation approval <https://padowntown.org/>)
  
- Adopt a proactive approach to marketing (Year 1)- Score 42
  - o Discussion – This would not only be for retail recruitment, but also for general promotion of borough activities and successes.
  - o Funding/Progress – Borough is in process of hiring a PR person
  - o Mechanism – Executive action

- Create a committee / forum between landlords & businesses- Score 40
  - o Discussion – New idea raised that would work to improve landlord and business owners relations.
  - o Funding/Progress – None identified
  - o Mechanism – External stakeholder committee

### **Economic Development**

- Creative industry "Pink Zone" (Years 2-5)- Score 50
  - o Discussion – Called Pink Zone to allow for lessening the bureaucratic red tape and encourage artisanal businesses to open and operate in the area. Suggestion to change the name since pink has many connotations. This recommendation was highly rated because members felt the area could become a location for the new businesses that the borough attracts.
  - o Funding/Progress – None identified
  - o Mechanism – Ad hoc committee of council members
- Mixed-use walkable development corridor along Baltimore Ave (Years 2-5)- Score 49
  - o Discussion – Some zoning fixes are needed to implement this recommendation. Council members are eager to see retail and growth along Baltimore Avenue.
  - o Funding/Progress – Council is already working on this
  - o Mechanism – Ad hoc committee of council members

### **Placemaking**

- Pilot Project: Convert traffic signals on State St (Year 1)- Score 40
  - o Discussion – Council discussed whether this should be a longer term project because they recently learned from DVRPC that SEPTA has concerns about the signals and the new trolley stops. The project team reiterated that a “pilot” is an alternative to conducting speculative studies of an idea before making it permanent, recommended a weekend (Friday-Sunday) trial to test the idea, and suggested that reduced signalization could be consistent with future trolley modernization.
  - o Funding/Progress – None identified
  - o Mechanism – Executive action
- Integrate Plum St Mall & Trolley into seamless design (Years 2-5)- Score 38
  - o Discussion – Some votes from Council on this, however they felt the timeframe is further down the road and not an immediate priority.
  - o Funding/Progress – None identified. Incorporate into continued Plum Street Mall design.
  - o Mechanism – Executive action

### **Transportation**

- Endorse configuration to Modernize Trolley Infrastructure (Year 1)- Score 51
  - o Discussion – Council felt that this is an easy first step to a long-term process that is ongoing. Clear affirmation of a preferred alternative gives SEPTA confidence to move forward with it.



- Funding/Progress – Ongoing project with SEPTA
- Mechanism – Council vote
- Assess parking pricing (Year 1)- Score 40
  - Discussion – The borough completed this in recent years. They decided to keep the cost of the meters down and increase the cost of parking violations.
  - Funding/Progress – None identified
  - Mechanism – Executive action
- Request more frequent Regional Rail service (Year 1)- Score 39
  - Discussion – This did not receive any votes from council, but was discussed as an easy request to move forward with.
  - Funding/Progress – None identified
  - Mechanism – Executive action, potentially coordinated with Delaware County
- Reduce the number of Trolley stop locations (Years 6-10)- Score 38
  - Discussion – Council decided to drop this recommendation because SEPTA is already doing this through the trolley modernization project.
  - Funding/Progress – N/A
  - Mechanism – N/A

## **NEXT STEPS**

The adopted Plan included a strategic vision, which stated: *the future of Media will be a sustainable community with a vibrant, walkable downtown that offers an authentic and memorable experience for people of all ages. It will be a regional destination of retail, dining, the arts and community events. As Media attracts residents, visitors, and workers, it will be a diverse and welcoming community that remains “Everybody’s Hometown.”*

The facilitation session produced more than a dozen action steps for Media to implement in pursuit of this vision. These priority recommendations were developed through both ranking system and qualitative discussion and represent the collective will of council.

It is important that council and the administration begin to implement these recommendations quickly and effectively. The project team provided suggestions on how to implement the priority recommendations based upon our familiarity with Media and our experience in other communities. However, we suggest the council review our implementation mechanisms, update as appropriate, and complete a similar process for the remaining recommendations on the list. Regardless of the mechanism employed, it is ultimately the council and administration’s responsibility to ensure that the implementation of the Plan remains a top priority for the borough. With sustained attention and funding, the Borough of Media will remain a thriving community that is poised to grow in coming years to the benefit of residents, workers, and visitors.



**APPENDIX- FULL LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS WITH SCORING AND COMMENTS**

	Staff Available	Funding Available	Cost	Level of Impact	Council Preference	SCORE	RANK	Borough Comments
	Possible Score 1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	0-160 (20 pp)			
	Weight 20%	10%	30%	30%	10%	100%		
Category	Recommendation							
Retail	3	4	4	5	31	68	1	<i>This is a project--a series of meetings and conversations with MBA. Council needs to meet with MBA to go over goals of Plan--not only this point, but the other MBA-related recommendations. May take longer than a year.</i>
Realignment function and focus of the MBA (Year 1)								
Transportation	5	5	5	5	6	51	2	
Endorse configuration for Modernize Trolley Infrastructure (Year 1)								
Retail	1	4	2	5	23	50	3	<i>Most of the retail recommendations require MBA to hire a marketing person. Funding is available for many of the retail recommendations, but not all at once. Subject to desires of Council.</i>
Launch a retail business recruitment plan (Year 1)								
Economic Development	5	5	4	5	8	50	3	<i>Future planning grant?</i>
Creative industry "Pink Zone" (Years 2-5)								
Retail	4	4	5	5	7	49	5	
Enforce building codes to address access and physical elements (Years 2-5)								
Economic Development	5	3	4	4	12	49	5	<i>Future grant; Requires Grant funding with Borough match.</i>
Mixed-use walkable development corridor along Baltimore Ave (Years 2-5)								
Retail	4	4	5	5	4	46	7	<i>Karen can be directed to pursue "Keystone Community" funding (PA's umbrella category for Main St. &amp; Elm St. Funding). This can start right away &amp; apply for grant</i>
Adopt the "Main Street" fundamentals (Years 2-5)								
Retail	1	4	3	5	12	42	8	<i>Most of the retail recommendations require MBA to hire a marketing person. Funding is available for many of the retail recommendations, but not all at once. Subject to desires of Council.</i>
Adopt a proactive approach to marketing (Year 1)								
Placemaking	3	5	5	3	5	40	9	<i>Requires Council discussion &amp; buy-in</i>
Pilot Project: Convert traffic signals on State St (Year 1)								

		Staff Available	Funding Available	Cost	Level of Impact	Council Preference	SCORE	RANK	Borough Comments
Transportation	Assess parking pricing (Year 1)	5	5	4	3	4	40	9	
Retail	Committee / Forum between landlords & businesses	5	5	5	3	1	40	9	
Transportation	Request more frequent Regional Rail service (Year 1)	5	5	5	3	0	39	12	
Placemaking	Integrate Plum St Mall & Trolley into seamless design (Years 2-5)	4	3	2	5	6	38	13	Future grant; Requires Grant funding with Borough match.
Transportation	Reduce the number of Trolley stop locations (Years 6-10)	5	5	5	2	2	38	13	
Retail	Fine-tune the purpose for and the process of collecting the Mercantile Tax (Years 2-5)	1	4	5	5	0	36	15	Most of the retail recommendations require MBA to hire a marketing person. Funding is available for many of the retail recommendations, but not all at once. Subject to desires of Council.
Transportation	Pilot Project: Separated bike lane on Jackson St (Year 1)	5	5	4	3	0	36	15	Requires more discussion.
Transportation	Add bike rack posts or corrals (Year 1)	5	5	4	3	0	36	15	We have many bike racks in town. They appear to be invisible as people keep chaining bikes to parking meters. Considering putting up tall, red? Bike parking signs at each rack.
Transportation	Enforce current parking rules (Year 1)	5	5	5	2	0	36	15	
Transportation	Station area development partnership (Years 2-5)	5	5	2	5	0	36	15	Future grant; Requires much planning and buy-in from all parties. Incl Upper Providence Twnshp
Transportation	Increase Trolley service frequency (Years 6-10)	5	5	3	4	0	36	15	
Transportation	Review additional long-term parking considerations (Year 1)	5	5	4	2	2	35	21	
Transportation	Modify bus route 118 (Years 2-5)	5	5	3	3	2	35	22	
Transportation	Do not prioritize additional Regional Rail parking (Year 1)	5	?	5	3	0	34	23	Requires more discussion.
Economic Development	Redesign high traffic intersections along Baltimore Ave (Years 2-5)	5	3	2	3	6	34	23	Requires Grant funding with Borough match for both planning & implementation; DCED-MTF Grant secured for vividly painted, stamped asphalt crosswalks on Balt Ave & Prov Rd. Grant also funds most of the Wayfinding Plan.

		Staff Available	Funding Available	Cost	Level of Impact	Council Preference	SCORE	RANK	Borough Comments
Economic Development	Consider expanding parking meters along Baltimore Avenue (Years 6-10)	5	5	4	2	1	34	23	Requires Council discussion.
Retail	Expand MBA marketing focus beyond events (Year 1)	1	4	3	5	3	33	26	Most of the retail recommendations require MBA to hire a marketing person. Funding is available for many of the retail recommendations, but not all at once. Subject to desires of Council.
Placemaking	Begin a "parklet" program (Year 1)	3	3	4	4	0	33	26	Businesses would fund this--right? Also requires Council discussion & buy-in
Transportation	Implement bike sharrows (Year 1)	5	5	4	2	0	33	26	
Transportation	Pursue transportation advertising opportunities (Year 1)	5	5	3	3	0	33	26	
Transportation	Advance planning for Media-Smedley Connector (Years 2-5)	5	5	3	3	0	33	26	
Retail	Adopt a social media policy for downtown and other commercial areas (Year 1)	1	4	3	5	2	32	31	Most of the retail recommendations require MBA to hire a marketing person. Funding is available for many of the retail recommendations, but not all at once. Subject to desires of Council.
Retail	Relocate the MBA out of Borough Hall (Years 2-5)	1	4	3	5	2	32	31	Most of the retail recommendations require MBA to hire a marketing person. Funding is available for many of the retail recommendations, but not all at once. Subject to desires of Council.
Placemaking	Consider modifications to events on State Street (Years 6-10)	1	5	4	3	2	30	33	New marketing person.
Placemaking	Install public art at Trolley and Regional Rail station stops (Years 6-10)	4	3	3	3	1	30	33	Requires grant funding + Borough & SEPTA match?
Transportation	Increase bus service frequency (Year 1)	5	5	3	2	0	30	33	
Transportation	Create shuttles to downtown from various origins	5	5	1	2		30	33	CMAQ grant offers funding for planning, personnel & vehicles for 1st 3 years.
Placemaking	Better connectivity between Baltimore and State	3	3	2	4	6 3	30	33	Future grant.

		Staff Available	Funding Available	Cost	Level of Impact	Council Preference	SCORE	RANK	Borough Comments
Retail	Undertake a physical storefront condition audit (Year 1)	1	4	3	4	2	29	38	
Placemaking	State-Baltimore Connector and incorporated civic art project (Years 2-5)	3	3	2	4	2	29	38	Future grant; Requires Grant funding with Borough match.
Economic Development	Create inventory of underutilized locations (Year 1)	1	5	5	2	1	29	38	Yes. Best to do after new marketing person comes on board?
Transportation	Promote the Trolley and Market-Frankford line (Year 1)	1	5	5	2	0	28	41	New marketing person.
Retail	Develop and track metrics that appeal to target audiences & industries (Years 2-5)	1	4	3	4	0	27	42	New marketing person.
Retail	Create a testimonial campaign (Years 2-5)	1	4	3	4	0	27	42	New marketing person.
Retail	Maintain consistent store hours (Year 1)	1	4	2	4	2	26	44	Most of the retail recommendations require MBA to hire a marketing person. Funding is available for many of the retail recommendations, but not all at once. Subject to desires of Council.
Placemaking	Station connector (Years 2-5)	4	3	2	3	0	26	45	Future grant; Requires Grant funding with Borough match.
Transportation	Develop metrics to assess future Trolley expansion (Years 2-5)	1	3	4	3	0	26	46	This requires Council discussion and a planning study. Would require a grant.
Transportation	Promote multi-modal benefits of the rail pass (Year 1)	1	5	5	1	0	25	47	New marketing person.
Retail	Consider a promotional retail event that correlates with food and special events (Year 1)	1	4	2	4	0	24	48	Most of the retail recommendations require MBA to hire a marketing person. Funding is available for many of the retail recommendations, but not all at once. Subject to desires of Council.
Placemaking	More open space for public gathering	3	5	1	2	2	22	49	Grant secured for purchase of 5th & Broomall Park. Land is purchased.