

July 5, 2020

Mr. Alexander McDonald
Business Administrator
Millburn Township Town Hall
375 Millburn Avenue
Millburn, NJ 07041

Re: Downtown Area Vision Plan for Millburn Township
Response to the Township's letter dated June 30, 2020

Dear Alex,

Perkins Eastman
Architects DPC

Following up on your letter of June 30th, our team like to share our thoughts about adjustments to our scope and budget:

1. *Time spent forming focus groups, in particular but no limited to interviews with municipal staff and boards.*

- We suggest replacing three stakeholder focus groups with online surveys targeting those same groups. Although the focus groups meetings were always proposed to be virtual (with no associated reimbursable expenses) the online surveys may be just as effective and allow us to hear from more people rather than requiring participation in a one-time event. The three groups that had been proposed were 1) downtown property owners, 2) local realtors, and 3) residents of the two downtown-adjacent neighborhoods. With the elimination of the merchant survey, we suggest replacing our third focus group (residential) with a merchants' survey – a group we think it is vitally important to talk to.
- We had proposed a total of four virtual interviews with sets of Township representatives. These would have some overlap with the stakeholder focus groups, but more internal-facing. We could drop two of these (parks/rec and historic/cultural resources) but we would like to keep the infrastructure and zoning/development groups. Again, these were always proposed to be virtual, so no travel expenses. We would need to talk to these people anyway, and doing a couple of virtual group sessions is more efficient than a bunch of telephone interviews.
- Since the two public workshops will provide a good opportunity to hear from the general public, we suggest forgoing the public online survey.
- Given the the Executive Committee meetings – some, perhaps most, could be virtual. This would significantly reduce expenses, both for travel and for production. And for those that are in-person, we can be efficient with who attends (we may only need 2-3 people, and, if Susan is still working remotely and lives nearby, her travel expenses may be eliminated).

These changes would allow us to reduce our budget by \$12,000.

2. *Providing physical design schemes, including preparation of 3D concepts/perspectives*

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Physical design is central to developing a vision that can be implemented. Developing physical design schemes are essential to testing out development concepts for the Township owned parcels. Creating “test fits”, i.e. plans with dimensionally realistic prototypes, are needed to understand the development potential of the sites, whether our recommendations work, to illustrate the development potential developers, and flush out any potential “fatal flaws” with other agencies. Without the ability to test schemes, it will be difficult if not impossible to make recommendations with confidence that the various schemes can be implemented. We are happy to discussing the role of 3D perspectives, but we have found that people need to see a tangible illustration in order to understand what is being proposed, and they are ultimately the most effective tool in building consensus around an implementable – and approvable plan. That said, we will endeavor to employ a rendering style that is most suitable and economical, both visually, and with respect to budget.

3. *Conducting a business and merchant survey*

As we had discussed in our interview, inclusion of the Business and Merchant survey was something that we had included to give us an ability to gauge the downtown’s “baseline condition” amidst the uncertainty of early days of the Covid 19 shutdown. As we discussed in the interview, it was a question of balancing the need for a short term snap shot v. an understanding we could use for the long term. Our experience has taught us that in situations like this, the real challenge is not in developing solutions that look good, but rather, in *solving the right problems*. This is why believe the Analysis phase is the most critical. Without the baseline of the Business and Merchant Survey, we strongly recommend including a comprehensive retail diagnostic for Milburn focusing on four key areas of analysis.

- **Physical Environment Assessment:** An assessment of the public realm to identify elements of the physical environment that detract or contribute to a successful commercial environment. This includes an assessment of accessibility by dominant transportation mode (which will be determined based on demographic and census data) as well as the visibility of local businesses as reflected in location, signage and wayfinding.
- **Business Environment Assessment,** which will focus on the conditions of the local business environment – in particular the density, quality and type of offerings within areas of business concentration. We look closely at “retail microclimates” and the degree of business concentration they exhibit, as well as what anchors or destinations drivers are influencing customer traffic and affecting the type of businesses that are most likely to succeed.
- **Market & Demographic Data:** Sufficient buying power is critical to healthy commercial districts. We will calculate residential and non-resident demand (i.e. worker and visitor spending) to help build a comprehensive economic narrative of spending and determine how much retail can be supported in Milburn. This analysis will include an assessment of competitive districts to help define trade area as well existing market saturation, and result in an annotated PowerPoint summarizing findings, analysis and key recommendations for actions.

This will effectively result in a no net change to our budget.

4. *Evaluating the amount of time spent on stormwater management, flooding and green/sustainable infrastructure*

After conversing with the Committee and getting a better understanding of the Township's priorities and needs, we believe that the stormwater management consultant may be removed from our proposal. Because of our longstanding and close working relationship with we can Sherwood, we can reserve a limited number of hours from our budget, to be used in the event there is need for strategic stormwater advice. This would allow us to reduce our budget by \$25,000.

5. *The multiplier applied to both additional work and reimbursable expenses*

We understand the budgetary issues that the Township, and all municipalities are facing. Everyone is "tightening their belts." As you can see, our team has been very intrigued about the challenges facing Downtown Millburn, and even more excited about its tremendous opportunities. Accordingly we will make the adjustments we required to reduce the remaining fees by by over \$20,000 and our reimbursable expenses by over \$2,000, or 57%.

In total, these adjustments will result in a proposed fee of \$229,540, a reduction of over \$60,000 (over 20%) from our original proposal. We hope the adjustments to our scope, and adjustments to our budget will bring us to closer alignment with the Township's needs.

As a final note, and to reiterate my email from July 1st, I will be present at every key juncture in the development of Plan, and intend to participate in all public meetings and much of the outreach meetings. Engaging with stakeholders is something I enjoy, and the listening, and I strongly believe that the listening, and give and take process more often than not can only make the plan better. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share our thoughts, and we look forward to continuing the conversation on Tuesday!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eric Fang".

Eric C.Y. Fang AIA, AICP, LEED AP
Principal

McDonald, Alexander

From: Eric Fang <e.fang@perkinseastman.com>
Sent: Monday, July 13, 2020 9:46 AM
To: McDonald, Alexander
Cc: Mark Muster
Subject: Downtown Millburn Meeting Follow-up
Attachments: Millburn Project Timetable_071020.pdf

This message was sent from outside the Township of Millburn. Please do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the source of this email and know the content is safe.

Alex,
Hope you well. I held off on sending this, after I received your auto-reply message on Friday, but following up on our meeting last week, our team has taken another look at our scope to better align our fee with the Township's budget. As discussed, we believe there are two main areas that can be modified while still retaining our ability to meet the Township's key needs:

1. Engagement

We believe that, given the ongoing COVID-19 situation, it is looking more and more unlikely that a significant number of stakeholders will be able and/or willing to come to traditional open public workshops. Holding public meetings in this climate will also likely screen out people who are more at risk (i.e. seniors, etc.) raising access and fairness issues. Also, enforcing acceptable social distancing protocols given the formats we believe are most effect for these types of public meetings (e.g. small group roundtable discussions led by a facilitator, or one-on-one conversations with facilitators at different "stations" each furnished with display boards mounted on easels), will introduce a whole host of challenges that could remain with the project for the duration.

Therefore, we propose to replace these in-person meetings with "virtual town halls," conducted through Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or via the Social Pinpoint platform. The virtual format would eliminate the production costs for boards, and the travel costs associated with the two traditional public workshops we had retained in our revised scope. The Social Pinpoint platform would entail a small base cost and the cost of setting it up and managing it, assuming the use of the following:

- Standalone project website to host materials
- "Idea Wall" feature – this allows participants to share broad visions
- One interactive mapping exercise

In addition, we propose:

- one online survey/questionnaire for each of the following groups: 1) downtown property owners, 2) local realtors, and 3) downtown merchants. The results of these questionnaires will not be posted on the website, but rather will be used for our internal use in data gathering. We will most likely use very basic SurveyMonkey polling.
- two virtual group interviews for Township staff/boards/commissions, covering 1) infrastructure, and 2) zoning and development.

If the Township does opt to hold one, or both events in-person, we would propose scaling back the virtual platform accordingly. (including eliminating the interactive mapping exercise and/or using the Township's website in lieu of the standalone website, etc.) to keep the budget in line.

2. Timetable

We propose including a two week review period after the "Analysis" phase, to give the Township to review and confirm consensus on the conceptual direction and planning principles established at the conclusion of Step 1. We also propose holding four of the Executive Committee meetings online instead of in-person, and completing the "Options" phase in three weeks (a reduction of a week from the original schedule). This will allow the Team to work faster and more efficiently. We have attached a revised project timetable that summarizes the revised timetable.

In addition, we propose all deliverables be in “pdf” format, rather than in printed form. This will save on printing and delivery costs (not to mention, trees!).

In total, these revisions will result in a total proposed fee of \$199,690 (inclusive of project reimbursable expenses), a reduction of \$83,890 (31%) from our original proposal. We hope these latest adjustments to our scope and budget meet the Township’s needs.

The Townships’s properties, and especially the DPW parcel, are an invaluable public resource, and a once in-a-generation opportunity to put downtown on the right footing for the next 20 years. Our conversation and our walking tour only confirmed our enthusiasm about Downtown’s potential! While private developers will in the end be responsible for implementing development, the vision should be the Township’s. Visionary, but pragmatic design is essential to keeping the Township in the “drivers seat”, and compelling graphics, precedents, and renderings are the tools needed to accomplish that. Our team is very excited about Downtown Millburn and ready to get going! Please feel free to call should you have additional questions or need further information.

Yours,
Eric

Eric C.Y. Fang, AIA, AICP, LEED AP
Principal, Board Director

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