



Town of Montville – Route 32 Investment Plan Steering Committee No. 2

Thursday, October 30
5 pm

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

BJH Advisors

- Steve Jacobs – Principal
- Arthur Samuel (via Zoom) – Senior Analyst
- Asher Hoyt (via Zoom) – Analyst

Pirie Associates

- Laura Pirie – Principal
- Matt Spears – Project Designer

Steering Committee

- Meredith Badalucca – Land Use Assistant (Town of Montville)
- Lennard Bunnell – Mayor (Town of Montville)
- Chris Clarke – Representative (Mohegan Tribe)
- Dennis Goderre – Director of Land Use and Development (Town of Montville)
- Meracus Hernandez – Vice Chair (Montville Economic Development Commission)
- Ron McDaniel – Administrator (Montville Water Pollution Control Authority)
- Bill Pieniadz – Chairman (Town of Montville Building Board of Appeals)
- Stacy Radford – Zoning/Wetlands Officer (Town of Montville)
- Nick Sabila – Council member (Montville Town Council)

Other

- Jim Butler, Grant Manager

Project Updates and Introductions

- Steve Jacobs of BJH Advisors opened the meeting by introducing the Revise and Renew 163-32 project and its goals.
- Laura Pirie from Pirie Associates will lead the planning and community engagement discussions.
- The Steering Committee meeting is designed to be interactive, encouraging input and brainstorming from attendees.
 - The committee discussed potential revisions to the goals for the Route 32 and Route 163 Investment Plan.

Goals and Objectives for Route 32 and Route 163 Investment Plan

- Steve Jacobs presented the five refined investment plan goals.
 - Emphasis on the importance of creating public spaces, supporting housing for working families, and remediating brownfields.
 - Pirie highlighted the need for community input on these goals to ensure they reflect local priorities.
 - The committee also expressed the significance of leveraging natural resources for economic development.

Community Engagement Updates

- Steve Jacobs outlined the project's progress, noting that data analysis is nearly complete and community engagement has commenced.
- The team has shifted from traditional town hall meetings to more personalized approaches, including focus groups and events at local venues.
- Upcoming community engagement sessions are planned for January and April to present findings and gather feedback.

Demographic and Housing Analysis of Montville

- Steve Jacobs presented the Market Assessment, which indicates that Montville has experienced a 4.6% population decline over the past ten years, contrasting with a 2% decline in the surrounding study area.
 - While the overall population is decreasing, there is notable growth in the 25 to 35 age group.
 - Montville's median income is \$85,400, which is higher than the Study Area's median income.
 - Montville also has a lower rate of cost-burdened households.

Housing Projections and Development Challenges

- Steve Jacobs shared findings from a housing study conducted by Camoin Associates for the Town of Groton, which projected a demand for 5,000 new housing units over ten years in the Groton area following the expansion of General Dynamics' Electric Boat in Groton
- Montville's absorption rate for multifamily housing is currently estimated at 200 units per year, with the potential to increase to 500 units if strategic investments are made.
- There are 530 approved units in Montville that have not yet begun construction.

Retail Analysis

- Steve Jacobs presented data showing that Montville's retail space per capita is below the regional average, with only 46 square feet available.

- The area has experienced fluctuations in vacancy rates, which have improved significantly over time.
- Additionally, it was noted that Montville's retail market has shown consistent absorption of space, suggesting potential for accommodating 30,000 to 40,000 square feet of new retail over the next five years.

Market Analysis and Community Feedback

- Steve Jacobs emphasized the importance of understanding the retail landscape in Montville, particularly in light of the impact of e-commerce on traditional retail.
- Community feedback revealed a strong interest in social gathering spaces, with residents expressing a desire for cafes and elevated dining options.
 - This input aligns with the data analysis, suggesting a need for more experiential and service-oriented commercial spaces.

Community Engagement Strategy Discussion

- Laura Pirie highlighted the significance of engaging young families in the planning process, noting their busy schedules and the challenges in reaching them.
- Pirie shared insights from recent interactions at the farmer's market and Mohegan leadership, along with plans for various community meetings to gather feedback from different groups, including the Economic Development Commission and the Rotary Club.
 - Community suggestions should be channeled into a structured plan
- The committee discussed the importance of setting realistic community expectations for the development timeline.

Identifying Key Investment Areas

- Laura Pirie outlined six key areas for investment, suggesting that focusing efforts on specific nodes can create vibrant community hubs.
- The first area discussed is the intersection of Route 163 and Town Hall, which has existing civic infrastructure and retail.
- Additionally, the committee explored the potential for a village center around Bridge Street, leveraging existing town-owned properties for development.
- Strategically located investments are important, particularly in concentrated areas that would attract private partners and produce targeted/effective developments.
- Mayor Bunnell emphasized the importance of creating pedestrian and bicycle-friendly spaces.
 - The committee discussed the potential for a town green, noting community excitement about the concept.
 - Pirie drew parallels to Burlington, VT, where industrial properties have been repurposed into breweries and recreational spaces, including unique features like swings along walking paths.

Action Items

- Pirie Associates will provide an update on the community engagement initiatives and the nodal framework during the next meeting.
- BJH Advisors will confirm whether the prison population is included in the census data used for the market analysis.
- The team will conduct a series of focus groups and community engagement sessions to gather input from various stakeholders, including a meeting at the Senior Center on November 13th
- The team will arrange a Young Families event, aiming for November 20th, to engage with that demographic. NOTE: THIS IS NOW CONFIRMED
- The team will publicize the investment plan website, renew163-32.com, to encourage community engagement.
- Pirie Associates and BJH Advisors will document the ideas discussed during the meetings
- Pirie Associates will clarify expectations for the community regarding the timeline and outcomes of the investment plan.

Key Questions

- What are the specific community engagement initiatives planned for the upcoming months?
- Is the prison population included in the census data used for the market analysis?
- How can the town make Route 32 (or parts of Route 32) more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly over time?
- How can the town link Route 32 and Route 163 to the Thames River and Town Fishing Pier?
- How can the town leverage Oxoboxo Brook and create trails (and build upon existing trail networks) to link Oakdale and western Montville to the Thames River
- How can the Thames River be integrated into Investment Plan (think of a “blue trail”)?