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Chamber lays groundwork for central business district revitalization

Rahway Chamber of Commerce President James Kennedy called a special meeting to reveal the results of a master plan for the city, developed for the Chamber of Commerce. The meeting was hosted by Merck & Co., whose cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce made the study possible.

The more than 40 attendees including representatives of the retail, industrial, banking, real estate and publishing community. Hariz Mountain, city has contracted with the city to develop the tract behind City Hall, also was represented.

Harvey S. Moskowitz Inc. and Planners Diversified showed maps of the downtown area with recommendations for making a dramatic change within the area.

Marcia Shiffman of the Moskowitz group gave a report on the survey that was mailed to 220 downtown merchants. She noted that replies were received from 75 and commented on their concerns.

"One problem is a very high vacancy rate in the buildings, about 11 percent," said Shiffman. "It still hasn't turned around completely."

She also spoke of the influence of the Rahway Corporate Center deal behind City Hall and the downtown train station.

"The extent of present retail space also is very small," said Shiffman. "There is over 400,000 square feet of space to use in that area, but only about 150,000 is retail."

The area being considered for improvements stretches from Main Street up to Seminary Avenue and Irving Street and across from Campbell Street to the Rahway River.

Shiffman said most of the buildings in the area are well-kept, but do not offer a great physical appeal. She

said large numbers of historical sights are being overlooked for their potential, and that a third of all downtown buildings were constructed prior to 1900.

"Parking is also a major concern and is always an issue," said Shiffman. "There is a lack of short-term parking, commuter parking and there is overzealous parking enforcement."

Following the report, recommendations were made, including splitting the area into two sections to work within.

The first area, south of the railroad station, is mostly retail shops which should expand on their markets and add parking, Shiffman said.

"This includes the largest piece of vacant land in the downtown," said Shiffman.

North of the railroad tracks includes mostly institutional land for banks, clubs and freestanding residential areas, Shiffman said. Zoning laws, she said, should be changed to de-emphasize retail in this area and bring in development.

Other recommendations included:

■ Strengthening the commitment to the downtown area by establishing an organization, solely dedicated to the project, including a manager and adequate budget.

■ Develop a marketing and public relations campaign.

■ Encourage a 24-hour presence in the downtown area through rezoning and upper-story residential development.

■ Encourage private investment and create design standards.

■ Provide for future parking expansion and link development with Rahway Corporate Center plan.

While no specific cost estimates have been announced, several financing possibilities were discussed,

including private investment, the Union County Economic Development Corporation, N.J. Urban Development and the N.J. Economic Development Authority.

"We can look at all these different programs," said Fred Michael of Planners Diversified. "We have to figure out a program that will turn around the downtown."

Moskowitz said a detailed plan could be available for implementation within a year, and the recommendations should be in place within five years.

Rahway Community Development Director Thomas Connell said city officials are glad to see all different facets of the community in one plan. He noted that in the past, "we have never been able to assemble all of the players. Jim Kennedy of the Chamber of Commerce should be congratulated for this accomplishment."

Chamber President Kennedy said this plan differs from similar initiatives in past years because all necessary groups are involved.



RAHWAY REVITALIZATION PLAN... James Kennedy, President of the Rahway Chamber of Commerce, is shown with Marcia Shiffman of the Harvey S. Moskowitz Inc. planner's organization studying a map of the revitalization at a special Chamber of Commerce meeting at Merck & Co. Shiffman explained the results of their 8-month study of the Rahway downtown district. Maps were displayed to show how and what would have to be done to bring about the revitalization. Kennedy said meetings for that purpose will be held at regular intervals with all participants in the targeted area.

Residents see health hazard in stored RR ties

City criticized for lack of action

by Pat DiMaggio

Despite promises of improved community relations between the City and railroad executives, two residents asked the Municipal Council for help in alleviating what they called a "health hazard" caused by Amtrak.

Sal D'Addario of Broad Street and Richard Riker of West Albert Street, cited Amtrak for creating a "health hazard" by storing new and used creosote coated railroad ties on property bordering Hazelwood Avenue and Broad Street.

The newly renovated gift shop located in the Terrill Tavern will also be open for early holiday shopping convenience.

The historic taverns are located on St. Georges Avenue at the intersection of Westfield Avenue.

their home because of the creosote fumes.

Amtrak, which owns the property adjacent to Hazelwood Avenue and the rear of the former Purolator parking lot, has been working to replace railroad ties on the tracks. D'Addario and Riker have charged Amtrak with using the site to store equipment and up to 3,000 railroad ties at one time. The sidewalk has also been damaged from debris falling from the raised elevation.

Last Wednesday, the Middlesex Health Department closed down Amtrak's operations because of a runoff of polluted water into the storm drains, said D'Addario. Rain water soaking through the creosote caused elevated levels of phosphate which violated water pollution laws. However, work continued two days later.

The Rahway Fire Department has also declared the area a fire hazard, according to D'Addario.

"This is definitely a health hazard," said Riker. "It's a big problem."

Council President Walter McLeod said the council would investigate the matter and issue a report on its findings.

Open House at historic taverns

The Rahway Historical Society will hold an open house Sunday, November 19 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Highlights will include house tours, a "working" bar, open hearth cooking and a rug-weaving demonstration.

The historic taverns are located on St. Georges Avenue at the intersection of Westfield Avenue.

Railroads promise cooperation in station improvements

New staircase to be built; North station to get facelift
Pigeon mess poses stickiest problem

by Pat DiMaggio

Residents can look forward to improved conditions at the City's railroad stations after promises of cooperation from N.J. Transit and Amtrak.

Councilman Alex Shipley, chairman of a committee working toward improving the City's railroad stations and property, announced at Monday night's council meeting that railroad representatives have approved plans for upgrading stairways, ticket offices and platforms.

At a November 8 meeting attended by three representatives from N.J. Transit, two representatives from Amtrak, Community Development Director Thomas Connell and Shipley, plans were announced to construct a new staircase at the main station by early spring. A staircase on the Irving/Cherry Street entrance of the station will be repaired

and re-opened sometime during the summer, according to Shipley.

Rahway's North Station will also receive a facelift through the cooperation of Merck and Company, said Shipley. "Plans still need to be finalized with Merck's engineers, but we see a bright future for the North Station," he noted.

Early-morning commuters may have witnessed crews washing down the station. The platform has been painted and windows removed. "N.J. Transit has really been pumping a lot of money into Rahway during the past few months," said Shipley. Future plans also include redesigning the main ticket office.

Amtrak engineers have also examined the City's underpasses and determined that they are structurally sound. "They understand our position on aesthetics and they are part of our continuing discussions," noted Shipley.

Underpasses are currently being cleaned and debris being removed.

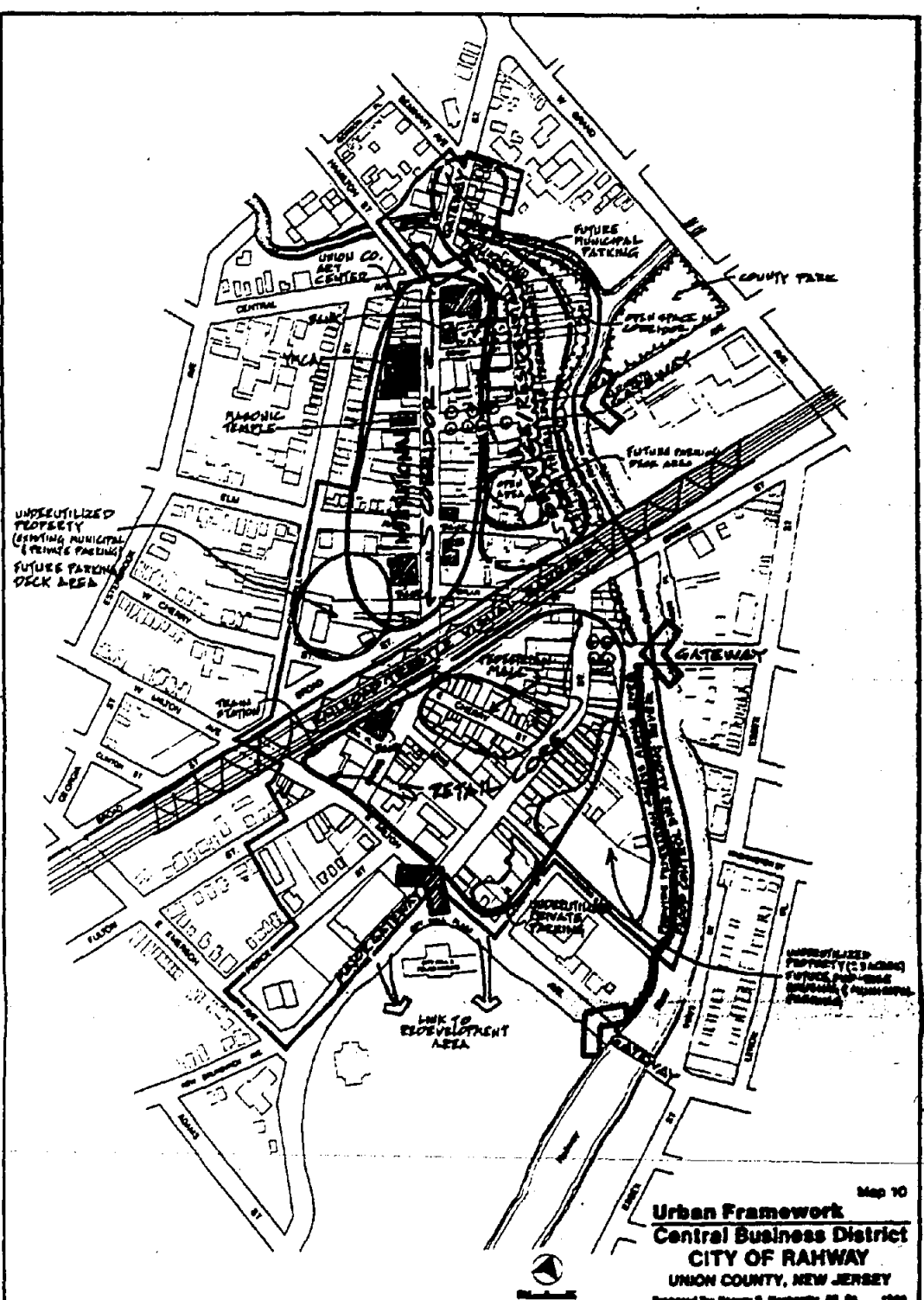
Clean-up and repair work will continue but the problem of pigeons roosting in underpasses remains. "Nobody really knows what to do about them," said Shipley. "They pose a serious problem and I don't know how it will be resolved."

Rahway youth makes W-H Honor Roll

Jeffrey A. Frimpter of Rahway, a 6th grade student at the Wardlaw-Hartridge Lower School in Plainfield, has been named to the school's Honor Roll for the 1st marking period of the current school year.



HONORED... Residents honored with Community Service Awards at the recent NAACP Awards Dinner are (left to right): Mildred Holmes Denson, Donald Parks, Louvenia Hill, Rev. James Ealey, Nathan Givens.



URBAN FRAMEWORK... Illustrated are the distinctive areas constituting downtown Rahway. Institutional uses predominate on Irving Street, residential on West Main and higher density business uses on Main Street and around the train station. The revitalization plan calls for concentration of future retail activity in the retail core (south of the railroad) with residential development. The "institutional corridor" north of the railroad should allow mixed uses.

NAACP honors members for community service

by Pat DiMaggio

The Rahway Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) honored members for their contributions to community service at a dinner held on November 10 at the Landmark Inn.

Community Service Awards were presented to Mrs. Mildred Holmes Denson, Reverend James Ealey, Nathan Givens, Mrs. Louvenia Hill and Donald Parks.

Mrs. Denson has served her community as an active member of the Rahway Branch of the NAACP in the

following capacities: advisor/director; 3rd vice-president; coordinator of affairs/activities; recording secretary; corresponding secretary; member of the executive board, labor committee and housing committee; founder of the Hall of Fame Award; and as one of the founders of the NAACP's Scholarship Awards Committee.

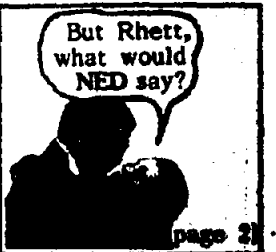
As Pastor of the 2nd Baptist Church for the past 22 years, Rev. James Ealey has worked for civic, social and political organizations for the purpose of progress through better human relations. He served as a member of the first Board of Directors for the JFK Community Center and was one of the organizers of the Concerned Citizens for a Constructive Community. He is a member of the Rahway Planning Board and has served as its chairman for the past eight years.

Nate Givens is a member of the Rahway Chamber of Commerce, the Rahway Tavern Owners Association and the N.J. Football Officials Association. He has supported many groups in the City, including the Boy Scouts, the JFK Community Center, the Rahway High School Football Boosters, the NAACP Youth Council, the Rahway FBA and the United Fund.

Rahway Section of the National Council of Negro Women, Mrs. Louvenia Baker Hill is an active participant in many state and local projects and outreach programs. Hill successfully launched the Teenage Awareness and Pregnancy Prevention Program which continues to serve as a positive influence on the lives of teenagers in Rahway.

A native of Rahway, Donald Parks continues to serve the community as a member of the Male Chorus of the Progressive Baptist Church, as a member of the Prayer Band and Senior Choir and as a member of the A.L. Fuller Spiritual Voices. He is a former committeeman of the 4th Ward and a former financial secretary of the Rahway Democratic Club.

Also receiving Paid Life Membership Plaques were Robert P. Arrington; Lillian Stalman Hannibal; Chester Holmes; Callie Pannell; Johnnie E. Pannell; Shirley J. Palmer; Alberta Arnold; Barney J., Frankie C., Leanne M., Michael A., and Roosevelt Robinson; Myrtle D. Thomas; the Rev. Richard H. Woods; and Louis Crawley (posthumously).



13th Annual Great American Smoker

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