



The Town of Westfield Master Plan Reexamination Report Community & Public Participation Summary for the March 21st Westfield Community Workshop



The Town of Westfield Master Plan Reexamination Report Public Participation Summary for the March 21st Community Workshop

Prepared By:



architects + engineers
practical approach. creative results.

Workshop Date:
March 21, 2019

Prepared Date:
April 1, 2019



Community & Public Participation

Purpose

This Master Plan Reexamination Report cannot be written, nor recommendations made without input from the people who live, work, and visit Westfield. Without valuable public input, this document will not accurately represent the wants and needs of Westfield residents. The Master Plan Reexam Team (H2M (*lead*) and TimHaahs) is working hard to obtain ideas, opinions, feedback, and concerns from the public throughout the year long Master Plan Reexamination process using “high touch” to “high tech” approaches, ranging from traditional workshops to online engagement. This collaborative approach provides community insight on the future of Westfield.

Community Workshops

A Master Plan Reexamination Steering Committee comprised of Westfield community leaders is helping to guide the Master Plan Reexam process. The Steering Committee, upon their first meeting in December 2018, believed input from several active Town organizations separate from public workshops would benefit the Master Plan Reexamination process. The Town of Westfield and the Master Plan Reexam Team planned six community workshops, four to occur in the beginning of the process to gather information and two additional meetings at the end to provide a “feedback loop” for residents.

The first public Community Workshop was held on Thursday March 21, 2019 from 7pm to 9pm in the evening at the Edison Intermediate School in the Cafeteria. Approximately 59 people attended the event.

The Master Plan Team and Town of Westfield is hosting several public Community Workshops in the month ahead to continue outreach efforts. These events include:

- Wednesday, April 3, 7-9pm: Town Hall Community Room
- Wednesday, April 24, 7-9pm: Edison School cafeteria
- Monday, April 29, 7-9pm: Town Hall Community Room
- Sunday, May 5: Spring Fling

In the fall, the Master Plan Team will hold Town-wide public meetings to discuss the draft of the plan and gain feedback on the Master Plan Reexamination Report’s draft goals, objectives and recommendations.

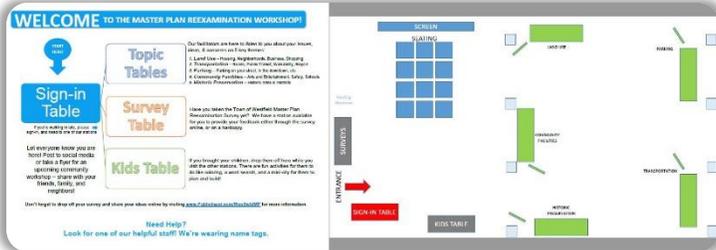


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The workshop began with an introduction from Jeff Janota of H2M Associates, the consultant preparing the Master Plan Reexamination Report and head organizer of the event. Erik DeLine and Nicole Venezia, planners from H2M, were also in attendance. Also in attendance were Jim Zullo, Nan Chen and Emily Maciejak, the parking consultant.

Upon sign-in, participants were given a Master Plan Reexamination Report flyer and an orientation/room layout handout for the night's activities. While waiting to sign-in participants were asked to indicate where they lived in Westfield. Participants were then directed by team members to gather near the projector for a short introductory presentation.



Above: orientation/room layout handout;
Right: Master Plan Reexam Flyer

Town of Westfield presents: Master Plan Reexamination

The Town of Westfield is launching its Master Plan Reexamination to shape the physical, social, environmental, and economic future of the town. The Master Plan Reexam will provide a framework for preserving the Town's character, ensuring its diversity, supporting investment, and providing desired changes, and we need your help.

What is a Master Plan Reexam?
A Reexamination Report is a reassessment of a municipality's current Master Plan, which is required by law to be conducted at least every 10 years. The report documents what changes and problems have taken place since the last Master Plan, and identifies new recommended objectives and policies for consideration by the town.

The last time the Town of Westfield drafted a full Master Plan was in 2002, and the Town last reexamined the Master Plan in 2009. The Master Plan Reexam is expected to be complete at the end of 2019.

Get Involved!
As part of the planning process, we are holding public meetings in Westfield, and spreading the word on the new project website. We are talking to residents, businesses, and other stakeholders about the issues you face. We want to provide an opportunity for you to share your ideas for the Town you want Westfield to become!

– that means YOU!
We're asking you to get involved so we can ask you the right questions, listen to what you say, build a deeper understanding of your community, and help you find ways to make it better.

Join Us at an Upcoming Community Workshop

- Thursday, March 22, 7-9pm at Edison Intermediate School Cafeteria
- Wednesday, April 3, 7-9pm at Town Hall Community Room
- Wednesday April 24, 7-9pm at Edison Intermediate School Cafeteria
- Monday, April 28, 7-9pm at Town Hall Community Room
- **at the Spring Fling** - May 5

The Reexam will result in revised Goals & Objectives & a new Town-wide Vision Statement

The Reexam covers the Elements of the Master Plan:

- Land Use
- Transportation & Parking
- Housing
- Downtown Economic Development
- Community Facilities
- Historic Preservation

Visit the project website & take the survey!
www.PublicInput.com/WestfieldMP



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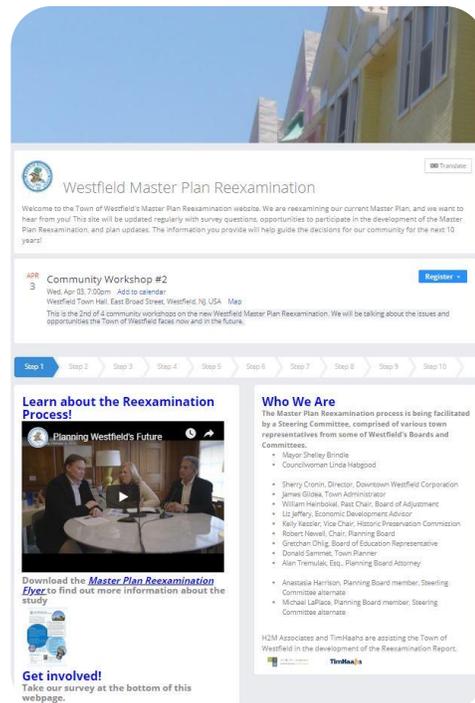
During the introduction, Jeff Janota (H2M) explained the Master Plan Reexamination Report and the purposes of the night's workshop:

1. To gain an understanding of Westfield community issues through the eyes of residents.
2. To promote the Master Plan Reexamination Report public participation process by encouraging participants to be ambassadors to the Plan.

Erik DeLine (H2M) then explained the project's website, <http://www.PublicInput.com/WestfieldMP> and encouraged participants to take the online survey in their free time. Erik also pointed out that the workshop included a survey table with laptops for online survey taking.

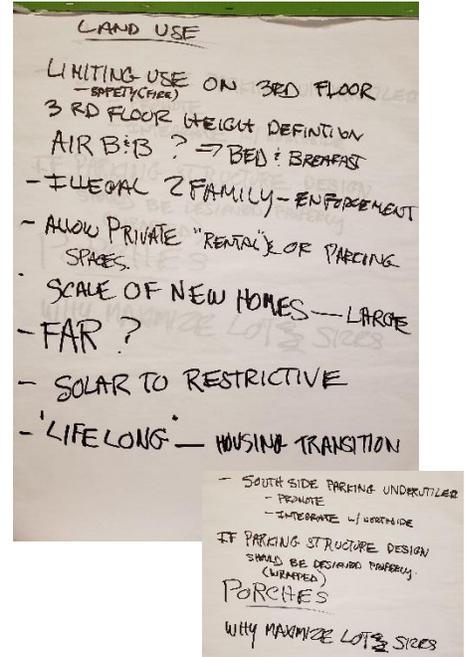
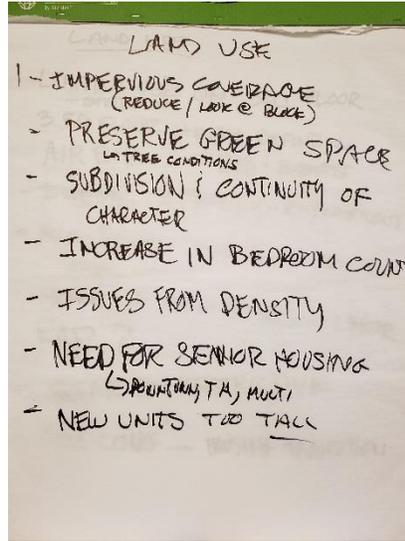
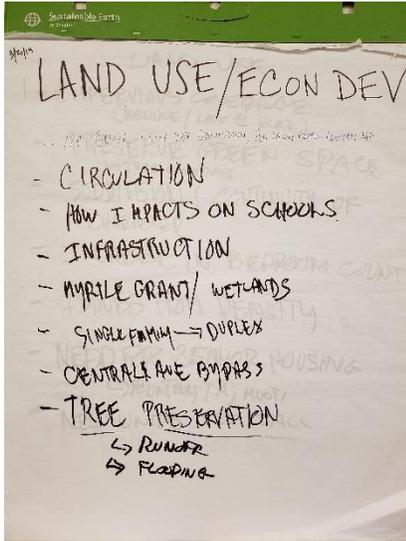
Interactive Portion

This interactive part of the workshop required workshop participants to join in conversation with the "topic table" facilitators broken out into (1) **Land Use and Economic Development**, (2) **Transportation**, (3) **Parking** (4) **Community Facilities**, and (5) **Historic Preservation** to express their opinions, ideas, ask questions, and state their concerns. Each Topic Table was equipped with a handout for participants containing a 3-4 bulleted list of topics that could be discussed and a handful of guidance questions to help kickstart the brainstorming/interactive participation process. Each "topic table" was facilitated by a Master Plan Reexam Team member. A summary of issues resulting from the March 21st workshop is listed on the following pages. **Bolded** items indicate popular or repeated sentiments.





1. Land Use and Economic Development



Land Use and Economic Development concerns include:

Land Use decisions have impacts on:

- Circulation
- Schools
- Infrastructure

Residential Concerns

- Single family conversion to Duplex
- Subdivision take away from continuity and character of neighborhood
- Increase in bedroom count by replacing older 3BR homes with larger 4-5 BR homes
- Negative affects of density
- Need for Senior Housing – Downtown, Townhouse, Multi-family
- New units on south side too tall
- Limiting use on 3rd floor of new res units – safety (fire) – 3rd floor height definition
- Air B&B & Bed & Breakfast should be permitted
- Illegal 2 family – enforcement
- Floor Area Ration (FAR) ?

- Scale of new homes too large
- Usuable Porches not “fake” porches
- Why maximize buildings on lot sizes, what can be done?
- “Life-Long” – housing transition

“Green” Concerns

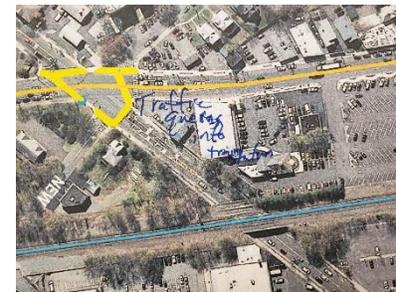
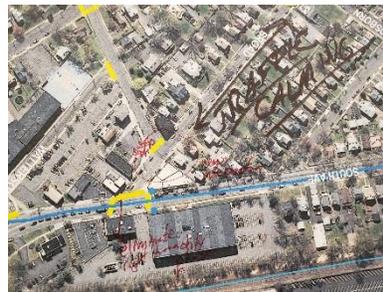
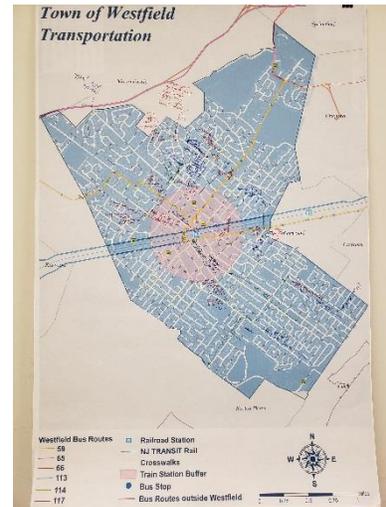
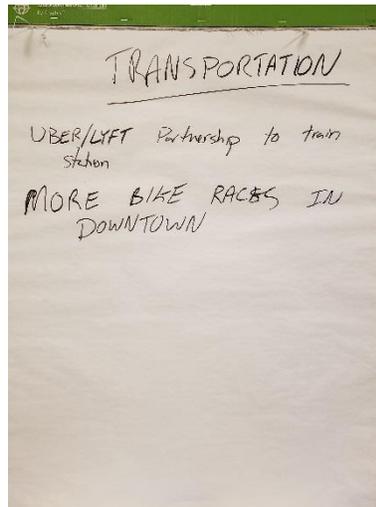
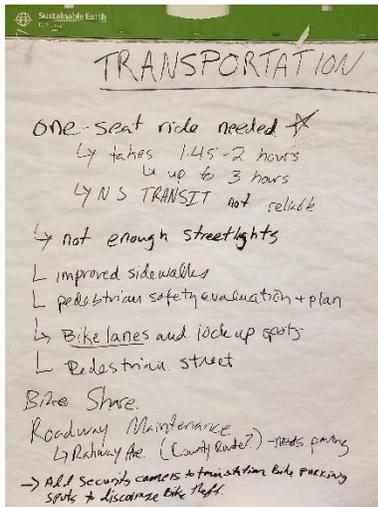
- Myrtle Grant/Wetlands
- Tree preservation – runoff – flooding
- Impervious coverage (reduce/look at block not just individual lots)
- Preserve Green Space – tree conditions
- Solar too restrictive, should be allowed on front of structures

Circulation Concerns

- Central Ave. acts as bypass to Rte. 22
- Allow Private “rental” of parking spaces
- South side parking underutilized – promote – integrate with northside
- If parking structure design should be designed properly (wrapped around residential mixed use)



2. Transportation & Circulation



Transportation concerns include:

Vehicle Needs

- Roadway maintenance needed – Rahway Ave (County route?) needs paving
- N. Chestnut – poor road condition
- Yield on Park at Mindowaskin Park confusing; needs better direction.
- Difficult turn, school traffic creates backup conditions (Mountain and Dudley)
- Need light, left turn light (E. Broad & N. Chestnut)
- Dangerous intersection - 4-way stop? (E. Broad & Prospect)
- Make one way (Prospect)
- Bad Intersection (Central & Ross)
- W. Grove at Edison School – difficult entering roadway when cars parked on road. Cars idling during pickup
- E. Grove & Central – Local Professional office and schools – high speeds; want speed bumps
- On-street parking issues – Grandview
- Traffic queuing into train station
- Traffic calming on Broad, add stop sign at intersection
- South Ave. - eliminate right turn only phase
- New intersection at Broad and South Ave.
- All 4 red phase at Plaza and unsafe pedestrian crossing
- Connecticut needs paving (17 years since last paved)



Transit Needs

- One-seat ride needed* - takes 1:45 -2 hours, up to 3 hours – NJ Transit not reliable
- Uber/Lyft partnership to train station
- Add security cameras to train station bike parking spots to discourage bike theft
- Train station lights

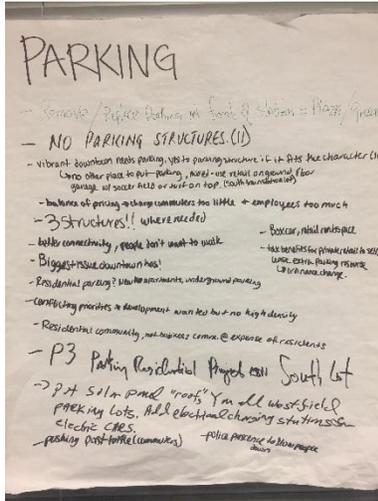
Bike & Pedestrian Needs

- Not enough streetlights
- Improved sidewalks
- Pedestrian safety evaluation & plan
- Bike lanes and lock up spots
- Pedestrian street
- Bike share
- More bike racks in downtown
- People coming out of train station making left, dangerous to pedestrians
- Chestnut & Mountain backs up because of traffic light in Mountainside – poor sight lines

- No sidewalks (Mountain)
- Utility pole in wrong location at N. Euclid
- Bump in for ice cream truck at Mindowaskin Park
- Pedestrian scramble during school hours for Dudley and Elm
- Make Bike Lanes – Summit and Clifton, Willow Grove
- Broken sidewalk system to downtown
- Bike path connection to station
- Low light area; more street lights needed along Westfield Ave
- Bike Paths along: Central, Rahway
- School-related traffic along Rahway; should have bike lanes
- Unsafe pedestrian corridor along North Ave.
- Fatal pedestrian crash at Prospect and Cowperthwaite



3. Parking



Parking concerns include:

Downtown Parking Concerns

- Biggest issue downtown has!
- **No parking structures** – does not want Westfield to be like Cranford, some think it ruins the character of Town, and some bought homes in Westfield *because* there was no parking structure
- **Yes to parking structure if it fits the character** - Vibrant downtown needs parking, no other place to put parking, mixed-use retail on ground floor, garage structure with soccer field or turf on top, possible location for garage is South train station lot
- Need better parking connectivity, people don't want to walk

Commuter Parking Concerns

- Remove/replace parking in front of train station = make a Plaza/Green
- Waiting list for commuter parking still too long
- Balance of pricing – charge commuters too little and employees too much
- P3 parking residential project S. lot
- Boxcar rents from the Church lot

- Tax benefits for private retail to sell/lease extra parking resource – ordinance charge
- Residential streets are being over-parked by commuters (on N. Ave past Tuttle and as far west as West Dudley Ave.) – enforcement!

Employee Parking Concerns

- Employees are taking up the parking in the downtown
- Central lot has open space → educate employees on this resource for parking

Residential Parking Concerns

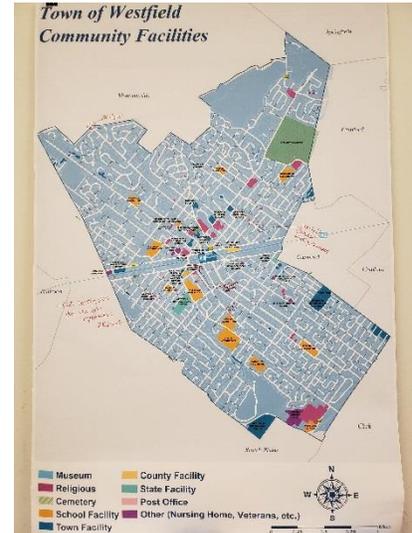
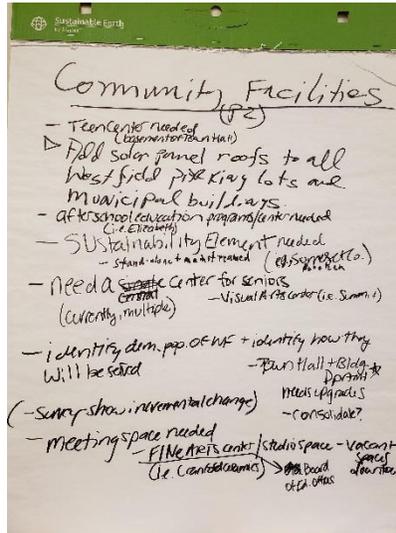
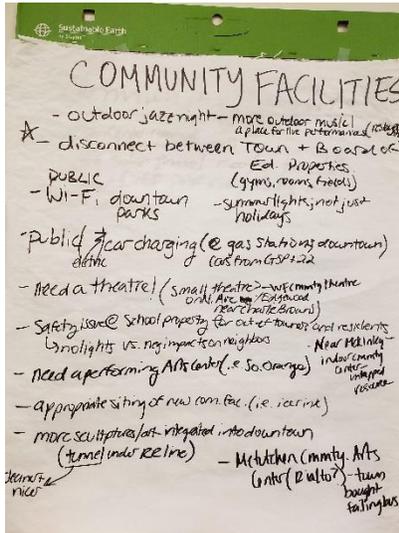
- Nowhere for downtown residents to park overnight
- New apartments should have underground parking
- Conflicting priorities – development wanted but no high density
- Westfield is a residential community, not a business community (i.e., residents needs/wants should come first before the idea of a vibrant, economic, business centered downtown)

Other Parking Concerns

- Put solar panel “roofs” on all Town lots. Add electric charging stations



4. Community Facilities



Community Facility concerns include:

Need a cultural / community center

- Need a theatre! Although there is a Westfield Community theatre, on N. Ave/Edgewood near Charlie Browns)
- Need a Performing Arts Center (i.e. So. Orange) – There is an indoor community center near McKinley Elementary – untapped resource
- Need a visual arts center (i.e. Summit)
- Metutchen Community Arts Center as a case study – Metutchen bought a failing bussiness to turn into arts center (i.e. Rialto?)
- Teen center needed (current teen center is in basement of Town Hall)
- Need a consolidated Arts center for Seniors (currently multiple locations)
- Appropriate siting of new community facility (i.e. ice rink)

Need Public Amenities

- Need public Wi-Fi downtown & in parks
- Need not just holiday lights, but fun street lights for summer too!
- Need more outdoor music in addition to outdoor jazz night, a

place for live performances (i.e. restaurants)

- Need more sculptures/art integrated into downtown
- Provide for public (free) electric car charging (at gas stations, downtown) capitalize on cars from GSP & Rte. 22)

Schools

- There is a disconnect between Town & Board of Ed. properties (gyms, rooms, fields)
- Need afterschool education programs/center (i.e. Elizabeth has good programs)

Safety Concerns

- Safety issue at school property for out-of-towners and residents – no lights means safety concerns at dusk vs. negitive impact on neighbors
- Tunnel under RR line – needs to be cleaner and nicer
- Poorly lit at Lawrence, end of town by Mountainside
- The downtown lighting plan has been done, not yet implemented;
- Poorly lit corners for walking commuters: Along Stanley at



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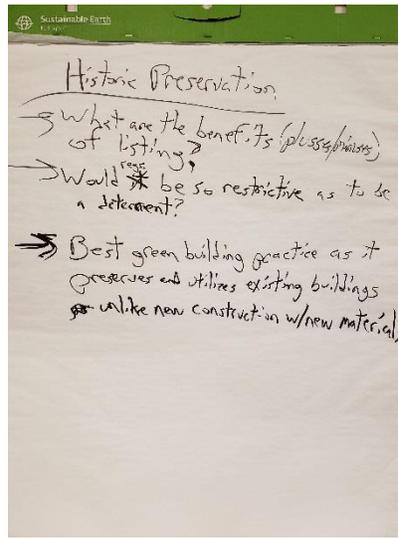
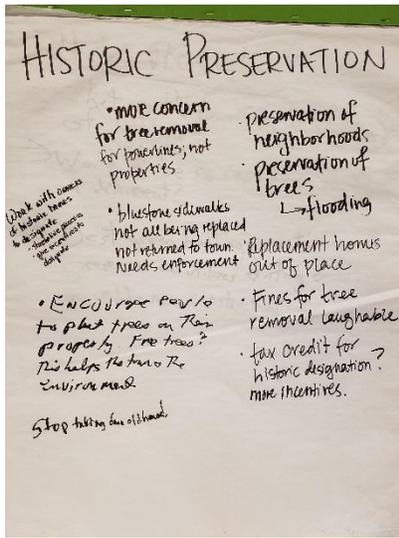
- Lenox, St. Marks, Tremont, Fairmount, Hillcrest
- Poorly lit on Westfield, by the Westfield Rescue Squad – South Ave. to Dorian/Park
- New evergreen needed! at Park & Summit
- Poorly lit on Westfield by Lincoln Elementary
- Sustainability Element needed – (i.e. Somerset, Hoboken)
- Identify demographic population of Westfield & identify how they will be served
- Town Hall & Bldg. department – needs upgrades, consolidate?
- Need a Fine Arts Center/Studio Space (like Cranford ceramics) – vacant spaces downtown are options or Elm St. Board of Ed. Offices

Other Concerns

- Add solar panel roofs to all Westfield parking lots and municipal buildings



5. Historic Preservation



Historic Preservation concerns include:

Historic Concerns

- Preservation of neighborhoods from new development
- Work with owners of historic homes to designate - streamline process, give incentives to designate
- Bluestone sidewalks not all being replaced, not returned to town - needs enforcement
- Stop taking down old homes!
- Replacement homes out of place
- Tax credit for historic designation? More incentives needed to preserve the history and character of town.
- New homes lack character, similar designs

- What are the benefits (plusses/minus) of historic listing?
- Would regulations be so restrictive as to be a detriment?
- Best green building practice is to preserve and utilize existing buildings unlike new construction with new materials

Community Character Concerns

- More concern for tree removal for powerlines; not properties
- Encourage people to plant trees on their property. Free trees? This helps town and the environment.
- Preservation of trees – flooding