

Preservation and Beautification

Introduction

During the recent Reality Check Workshops, topical experts and members of the public worked together in small groups to examine a particular topic in-depth. During the two-hour workshops they worked with a trained facilitator to complete the following exercises:

- 1) Review of Ideas. Participants reviewed all of the ideas related to their topic that were collected during the community Idea Gathering Sessions.
- 2) Critical Questions. Participants engaged in a discussion of two Critical Questions, which had been identified by the *Vision for Staten Island* Steering Committee. The facilitator recorded the results of the discussion on flipchart paper, and then helped the group summarize major areas of agreement and disagreement.
- 3) Implementation Recommendations. At the end of the discussion period, each participant wrote down two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps to help Staten Island achieve its vision for their topic.

The results from the Preservation and Beautification group are provided below. Note that responses have been recorded verbatim, and some errors may remain due to handwriting legibility. Responses are numbered for reference purposes only; this does not indicate any sense of priority.

Quick Brainstorm:

Thinking about the borough as a whole, what are the most important preservation and beautification initiatives to pursue on Staten Island?

1. Quicker response from landmarks commission
2. Historic resource studies in more communities
3. Restore town centers whenever possible
4. Preservation education for our youth as well as all
5. Increased awareness of the historical offerings
6. To encourage owners to restore historic properties through tax incentives
7. To beautify the main street of each individual town
8. Create clean up organization and competition for each town
9. Create organizations for city planning
10. More consistency in planning development
11. Clean up train stations
12. Reduce signs

Critical Question 1:

Where would preservation and beautification initiatives have the most impact? Write your ideas below and, if appropriate, use the map to indicate locations for specific suggestions.

1. North Shore – along Richmond Terrace major street improvement and clean up
2. Port Richmond – historic resource study leading to landmarks
3. Grasmere and all built up areas – more parks needed
4. Commercial areas – beautify them
5. Community Board #1 – focus on educational awareness of preserving the structures
6. Stapleton – preserving and beautifying
7. Huguenot Ave – put more lamposts, garbage receptacles, foot traffic, attract people to walk around
8. All over – everywhere the architecture, streets – improve it, make it better
9. Burial of utilities – everywhere
10. Smart car rental – by the hour
11. Build up the waterfront
12. Beautify the train station
13. Develop pride in SI
14. Promote adaptive use of existing buildings

Critical Question 1 SUMMARY:

1. Create a sense of ownership and pride in each neighborhood of the whole Island
2. Create a community based organization – do more outreach, have more communication
3. Beautify waterfront and commercial areas
4. Commercial zone – signage, lighting, parking, landscaping, pedestrain access, trash receptacles, art work
5. Island-wide preservation plan – issues need to be resolved from the bottom up
6. Tax incentives for restoration and improvements
7. More landscaping and vegetation needed

Critical Question 2:

How should preservation and beautification strategies be implemented? (e.g. regulations, incentives, volunteer groups, etc.)

1. Develop and encourage aesthetic zoning from the top down and the bottom up for new development
2. Financial including tax incentives
3. Pinpointing/identifying reasons for opposition or lack of interest
4. Decentralizing decision-making – volunteer organizations should have more impact
5. More mediators for community development – start with civic groups and churches
6. Property ownership should require stewardship
7. Inspired leadership to get the community going
8. Start small
9. Awards program for ugly architecture

Critical Question 2 SUMMARY:

1. Financial/tax incentives
2. Start small
3. Decentralizing decision making
4. Identifying reasons for opposition or lack of interest
5. Achieve a balance of top down and bottom up

Implementation Recommendations:

Consider the draft vision statement, the ideas gathered from the public, and your group's discussion of critical questions. Please recommend two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps that you would recommend to help Staten Island achieve its vision for your topic.

1. Tax incentives for owners of historic properties
2. Make better use of community and neighborhood organizations to decentralize planning process
3. Cleanup - divide SI into communities and have annual competitions for cleanest neighborhood
4. Staten Island should improve and preserve its built environment including commercial, residential, public space to create a sense of pride of place, leading to a more liveable community. New vision statement
5. Implement tax and financial incentives to encourage new development and construction that embodies sound, quality and aesthetic design of community. More stringent enforcement of housing and building codes
6. Conduct internet surveys to identify ways to increase interest in and promote ownership of the community and its appearance. Focus in particular on youth so that the sense of responsibility will be ingrained for future generations
7. Create neighborhood work groups who will collect their issues and find their solutions with the help of facilitators and professionals such as architects, designers, etc. (maybe use Mayor's volunteer corps for professionals if necessary)
8. Support these work groups with print and online newsletters, bulletin boards (physical and online), blogs, and other systems for sharing and collecting information, decisions, and history (ultimately – today's discussions become history in 10 years)
9. Financial and tax incentives to foster preservation for businesses and homeowners
10. Have city planning develop aesthetic zoning guidelines for new development
11. Beautifying the town centers by having volunteers from each town get together. Have tax incentives for store owners to encourage them to keep their property beautiful
12. Start small. Do not overwhelm the town residents. Let them know that what they do counts and in turn you will instill pride in each neighborhood
13. Change zoning regulations to promote better design and protect neighborhoods
14. Local streetscape improvement plans and public art

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