



THE PRINCETON PACKET

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, March 28

Public involvement critical to process

To the editor:

The redevelopment of the designated 350-acre site in Princeton Junction will take many years and could likely run well over \$1 billion dollars in cost, some of which is likely to be financed by West Windsor Township taxpayers. A recent Packet editorial (March 7) commented on the efforts of the Princeton Junction Neighborhoods' Coalition, suggesting that the redevelopment process needs citizen oversight. We agree. Oversight and broad-based public participation throughout the process will help to reduce the potential of what The Packet cautioned could be a "shortsighted, slipshod or half-baked plan." We hope for an outcome that will provide community benefits and also meet the demands of our regional responsibilities.

Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh has described the redevelopment project as a way to establish Princeton Junction as a center for our community. He has also publicly announced that this will be an open and transparent process. We share these goals. We believe that we can all work together to ensure an authentic and truly open and public process that will at the same time help build a sense of community. We remain hopeful, but welcome more evidence through the actions of the mayor and Township Council members that this will indeed be the case.

The PJNC did not develop from the fear of government or redevelopment; it sprang from the desire to improve our neighborhoods and to communicate our concerns to our elected officials. Much-needed and long-overdue improvements to County Route 571 in downtown Princeton Junction were our initial focus. The plan that resulted from public input by the PJNC and other concerned citizens defines both aesthetic and safety improvements for the future of this roadway and streetscape. It also serves as a good example that real public involvement can facilitate, not obstruct, the process.

We would hope that our elected officials would genuinely want to engage the community and not simply believe that they, and they alone, are responsible for this billion-dollar initiative. Ensuring that the community is buying into the process and its result, especially those for whom Princeton Junction is quite literally in their back and front yards, is essential.

It is encouraging that the editorial does not question if citizens should be involved, but instead supports involvement and suggests how to best help in a constructive way. Keeping this in focus, the PJNC is organizing open public meetings for the specific purpose of building stakeholder involvement to connect with the planning professionals selected by township officials. Everyone — redevelopment-area property owners, residents of both the immediate area of impact and greater West Windsor Township, as well as representatives of organizations who define themselves as stakeholders — is encouraged and invited to get involved. We look forward to being the platform on which great ideas, controversial questions and everything in between can be genuinely, honestly and openly aired.

Working to bring everyone together could ultimately build both the "hard structure" of a new downtown and also, along the way, help construct a sense of community. The PJNC welcomes participation and we are confident that Mayor Hsueh and our other officials will support this effort. To get involved contact us by telephone (609) 275-5042 or online at our Web site: www.princetononline.org/pjnc.

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