



City of Orange Township

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News Release

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Orange Announces Recommendations for Downtown Revitalization

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. announced today that the full report of the Orange Downtown Consumer Preferences Study has been completed and is now available to the public. Copies of the full report, the executive summary, and a related Power Point presentation may be downloaded from the City's website at <http://www.ci.orange.nj.us/revitalization.html>.

The report recommends strategies to stimulate local economic growth and revitalize Orange's major shopping districts. The "Community Insights™" study was conducted for Orange by the JGSC Group, of Merchantville, NJ.

Information from a public survey was combined with other economic data to identify stores and restaurants to recruit to the area, and to specify changes, events, and activities people utilizing the district would like to see. It has helped Orange planners to understand who does and does not visit the area, what stores and activities they patronize, and why.

The result is a comprehensive revitalization plan employing strategies such as business recruitment, business retention and a cooperative destination marketing approach to energize growth for Orange.

Major Findings:

- Orange has enough demand within its own borders to support substantial growth in sales on Main Street. This unmet demand is broad. Of 87 retail categories only 7 categories have surplus retail supply.
- Orange and its neighboring communities have higher incomes and spending than is assumed by Orange's merchants. Merchants do not capture all potential shoppers, or the potential of those that *do* shop in Orange because they perceive Main Street shoppers as people with low-income, unable to afford better quality.
- Planned redevelopment could increase consumer demand by up to \$2 billion.
- Many who work or live within Orange don't shop downtown. This group has high income and discretionary spending. They have concerns about safety and security, limited variety and low quality merchandise.
- Main Street has heavy foot-traffic, many retail storefronts, low vacancy, angled parking, wide sidewalks, pedestrian amenities, destination businesses, and easy access for those within a one- and two-mile radius. It has great potential as a browse-shopping destination.

- There is a lack of easily accessible, available parking. There are several private lots behind Main Street buildings, which the city might acquire for metered parking.
- Better signage is needed to direct to parking available now and any future parking. Pedestrian wayfinding signage would greatly contribute to the browse-shopping atmosphere of Main Street.
- Safety and security concerns need to be addressed to attract shoppers to the retail corridors. The area is safe but it is not always perceived as safe by potential shoppers. The study recommends a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design plan.
- Visual merchandising is chaotic and poor, discouraging visitors from browse-shopping and failing to entice those who do not currently shop downtown. Merchants should be instructed in better visual merchandising standards, and high standards should be enforced.
- The wonderful original architecture of Main Street buildings is buried under newer facades and signs. The chaotic appearance detracts from the shopping experience. Design standards should be implemented to improve the overall aesthetic appeal of Main Street.
- It is important to recruit more upscale dining and activate the area with café-style sidewalk dining, which will attract shoppers and improve the atmosphere of Main Street.
- The study recommends a strategy to get existing merchants to improve merchandise selection and presentation.
- It also recommends a long-term strategy to improve the retail mix through working with property owners, and through targeted retail recruitment.
- Many feel that merchants are not respectful or trusting of shoppers. This divide must be addressed immediately in order to capture the full spending potential of shoppers.
- A shuttle service through the northern and southern sections of the city to deliver people to Main Street would help overcome the physical barriers caused by Interstate 180 and the railroad.
- Orange needs a sizable public space for public celebrations, outdoor events, and to facilitate downtown socializing, a public square. It also needs to connect the train station with commerce on Main Street. Creating a public square in the area that is now public and post office parking, and deliberately connecting this area to retail and outdoor dining that flows into Main Street would solve both needs.
- Future plans for Central Avenue should extend—block by block—the active retail corridor of Central Avenue in East Orange westward into Orange.
- Design standards for Scotland Road should reflect the goal of developing the Valley Arts District. to create a destination attracting arts shoppers and create a neighborhood appealing to those who wish to live in an arts neighborhood with easy rail access to New York City.

Statement by Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr.

“Attracting new development, bringing in new businesses, helping existing businesses to thrive, and revitalizing our business districts are the highest priorities of my administration. In the long run, this is the most important way to hold down property taxes and make it possible for people to continue to live in Orange. With completion of the revitalization study, we can now begin implementing the comprehensive economic development plan that will map the road to a prosperous future for Orange.”

Statement by Valerie Jackson, Director of Planning and Development

“I am excited that we have completed the first step in creating our overall strategy for the economic revitalization of Orange. In the next phase, we will be implementing plans to launch the revitalization, make our business areas safer, make business structures more attractive to retailers, retain businesses, recruit new businesses, make zoning more business-friendly, and attract more shoppers and visitors to Orange.”

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