

TOWNSHIP LEADERS SHOULD LOOK AT LONG-TERM PLANNING

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If only our elected officials and other civic leaders would begin to consider the longer term in planning for the future of Cherry Hill.

We live in a community that is essentially automobile dependent. There still is no town center where people can live, work and play without the need for an automobile. There was a chance to create such a town center during the planning process for redevelopment of Garden State Park, but the result was simply more sprawling retail and surrounding parking lots.

Since land use planning is not a priority, market forces could be stimulated to achieve a far higher, best use of the land in Cherry Hill. All that is necessary is to obtain from the state a local option to gradually move to a land-only property tax base. The value of locations is essentially community-created by the aggregate investment in public goods and services. Fully taxing this value (which we already do to a limited extent) would provide a significant financial incentive to owners to bring the land they hold to its highest, best use or sell to someone who will. Exempting property improvements from the tax base encourages owners of buildings to modernize and upgrade them without fear of having to pay a higher property tax.

Land now set aside for automobile parking would begin to be developed. Parking garages would be constructed beneath new buildings and adjacent to existing ones. We would begin to see mixed-use development occur. PATCO might finally decide to invest in transit-oriented mixed-use development at Woodcrest. Other great things would begin to happen all across the community. <<

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