



Township of East Brunswick

BRAD J. COHEN
MAYOR

April 17, 2019

I would like to take this opportunity to address and dispel many of the rumors and misconceptions regarding the status of the redevelopment plans for Route 18. Much of this misinformation has been spread by social media and is inaccurate.

From the start, my objective has always been to be open, honest, transparent and communicative. There have been numerous Town Hall meetings, Face Book Live sessions, and subgroup meetings where this topic has been discussed. Township Council meetings and meetings of the Redevelopment Agency are open to the public. Redevelopment discussions have been going on ever since areas on Route 18 were designated as *Areas in need of Redevelopment* back in 2015. We have met with countless professionals in the areas of development, planning, engineering, demography, construction, municipal land use, and finance. In late 2018, the Redevelopment Agency put out an RFP (Requests for Proposals) for the Redevelopment of the Route 18 properties in the areas of the old Gap, the Wiz, Office Depot, and Loehmann's Plaza. The plan called on the potential developer to provide a mixed-use community, hotel, new parking deck, bus depot, and area for a *community* facility. The *community* facility was not defined, but was an important requirement of any proposal. There needed to be a community benefit for the redevelopment plan to be considered. Developers under the RFP would propose a vision that would be the starting point for negotiations and further discussions.

The purpose and use of the *community* facility could be all, part or none of the municipal offices. It could be a community center. It could be a sports, theatre, or arts complex. It could be a recreation center, meeting center, youth center or business center. It could be an educational facility.

The proposal that was returned and the plan that the Redevelopment Agency chose to start the dialogue included a new municipal complex along with many other uses and features that were requested by the Redevelopment Agency in the plan requirements. The submitted plan is exciting, dynamic, innovative and unique in its design. However, it is subject to change with input from the community. At this point, **nothing has been decided, let alone signed**. Preliminary reviews and discussions are just beginning. Unfortunately, exact details cannot be released as the developer has the legal right to protect his plan until there is a signed agreement.

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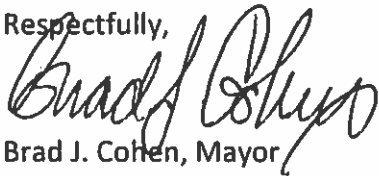
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I have only been authorized to release small pieces of the plan so that we may begin the public process of determining, among other things, the public uses that the township would want in this plan. My dialogue with the community has started and will continue with Town Halls (dates, locations and times on the Township Web Page), Face Book Live (additional dates/times TBD) and meetings with special interest groups. Residents are welcome to meet with me at my office.

To be clear, I desire that every community group will be afforded the opportunity to consider a location in the revitalized and redeveloped Route 18 complex. While this includes the Township's Library and its Board, if the community and Library Board prefer to remain at the current location, the library will remain there. I simply believe that the volunteers and groups in town should be given the opportunity to consider the redevelopment location as part of their future. If the community does not agree with moving any or all parts of the municipal complex OR if it is economically not viable – it will not be moved.

This is a great project and one that will likely bring long awaited changes to the Route 18 Corridor. This deserves proper advanced planning, consideration, dialogue, and an interchange of ideas. None of this is properly accomplished through Face Book, crowdsourcing or online surveys. I welcome all constructive dialogue and sincerely want the ultimate plan to be something of which the entire Township can be proud. Let's do this together.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad J. Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over the printed name below it.

Brad J. Cohen, Mayor