

## TOWN OF CHEEKTOWAGA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MEETING SUMMARY

---

**Date of Meeting:** April 23, 2009

**Attendees:**

**STEERING COMMITTEE**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Daniel Ulatowski | <input type="checkbox"/> Linda Hammer, Depew                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mary Holtz       | <input type="checkbox"/> Stanley Keysa, Lancaster             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anthony Sisti    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Leimbach, Amherst |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Andrew Kulyk                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rachel Chrostowski, ECDEP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arthur Beaman               | <input type="checkbox"/> Richard Olday                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> William Pugh                | <input type="checkbox"/> Patrick Allaire                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Boy        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert Stalker            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Adamczak     | <input type="checkbox"/> Allita Steward, City of Buffalo      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kevin Schenk                | <input type="checkbox"/> Bill Parke, City of Buffalo          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Markel              | <input type="checkbox"/> Jane Wiercioch                       |

**CONSULTING TEAM**

- |  |
|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drew Reilly                            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Salvati                          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ellen Parker                           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Leydecker                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suzette Goldstein, HOK                            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colin Greene, HOK ( <i>via Webex</i> ) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Versal, ESI ( <i>via Webex</i> ) |
| <b>Others</b>  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John **, TOC Planning Board            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Staniaszek (Supervisor's Ofc.)     |

Location: Wendel Duchscherer Board Room

Time: 3:00PM

Minutes Issued: April 29, 2009

### I. Welcome and Introductions

Welcomes and introductions were made. The meeting was conducted in a Webex web-conference format, with Colin Greene from HOK and David Versal included via telephone and an internet connection. This format enables those outside the meeting to view maps and documents and participate in discussions. It also allows the outside consultants to present information.

Wendy Salvati provided a brief overview of the agenda for the meeting. The following handouts were provided: Meeting minutes and a copy of the PowerPoint presentation from the 3/25/09 meeting, Outline of Transportation Issues, Overview of the Visual Preference Survey.

Wendy noted that there were concerns regarding access to documents on the project ftp site. Wendy confirmed that committee members could get into the site, but they could not open any documents. She explained that she learned from her IT technician that in order to open documents from outside the Wendel office, you have to save the document to your hard drive and then open it. This should clear up the problems and she asked anyone who still had any issues to let her know.

Wendy reminded the Committee that the Community Assessment section of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on four primary components: Transportation, Economic Development, Neighborhood Revitalization and Land Use and Zoning. At the last meeting we covered the Economic Development and Neighborhood Revitalization components. The meeting today will primarily focus on the Transportation component. We have chosen to have Colin Greene and David Versal participate in this meeting today to ensure that they are kept abreast of the work that Wendel is doing and to also make sure that we keep the four components integrated and consistent. You will see that certain elements of the Transportation component overlay with the Neighborhood Revitalization efforts. Therefore, it is important to have input from Colin and David, as well.

## Cheektowaga Comprehensive Plan Meeting Summary

Page 2 of 5

### II. Discussion of Transportation Component

Wendy turned control of the meeting over to Michael Leydecker from Wendel, who introduced the strategy and ideas for the transportation component of the project. Michael recently met with Dan Ulatowski and a summary of their meeting was provided to the Committee.

Michael stated that the goal of the Town is to be “transit ready”. The Town currently has easy access to many main lines and modes of transportation in the Town, including the airport, Amtrak station, NYS Thruway and a number of major arterial roadways that are owned by the State (Broadway, Walden, Union, etc.). He discussed the proposed enhanced transit corridor that would follow the abandoned railway right-of-way (ROW) that extended from the eastern part of the Town to the City line and beyond. Parts of this ROW are owned by various entities, including the Town, NFTA and others. This enhanced transit corridor represents the “spine” of the transit system and it is important to develop secondary linkages from other activity centers in the Town to this main line.

The transit corridor would most likely be used for bus rapid transit, which would utilize the existing ROW and probably surface transportation facilities, as well. Therefore, it is important for the Town to secure the ROW to make sure it is not lost to other ventures. This corridor would be dedicated for public transportation to provide a connection to downtown. Although it would be used for a primary means of public transportation it could possibly be shared, in part, with other modes, such as multi-use pathways, if there is sufficient ROW. It would not be utilized by motorized vehicles (car, trucks, etc.). One major task of the Comprehensive Plan will be to verify parcel ownership along the proposed transit corridor ROW.

The question of how you take this idea and capitalize on it was raised. Michael said that the Niagara Regional Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) is currently undertaking a Route Study to examine where and how public transportation should occur. The NFTA is looking at where routes are needed, what (if any) routes should be eliminated, and they will be utilizing a Ridership Survey. They are also looking at existing and potential Park and Ride facilities that would support the system (some of which exist in the Town). It was noted that the potential exists to utilize the Pfohl property, near the Thruway (Exit 49), the K-Mart property on Transit Road, and the Appletree Business Center on Union Road for park and ride purposes. It was noted by others that there are two additional abandoned rights-of-way that run in a north-south direction near the airport. These may also provide opportunity. Mike also mentioned that the Amtrak station may eventually be relocated downtown as part of a transportation hub that is proposed in the area.

Michael spoke about the highway network and noted that most major arterials are not under the Town's jurisdiction. The focus needs to be around placing traffic on the roadways that can handle it – based on a “complete streets” approach and provided an overview of the Context Sensitive Design study that was just completed by the Town of Amherst. This study was funded through a Quality Communities grant and will be incorporated into the Town's Comprehensive Plan. The study looked at ways to improve the design and operation of nine highway corridors and Mike provided an overview for two of them (see attached graphics). The roadway corridors are examined to determine how to make better use of the ROW, reduce lanes, incorporate other modes of travel (bicycle/pedestrian), add amenities, bury utilities, etc. The Supervisor noted a concern regarding potential costs for maintenance. Dan Ulatowski stated that the overall benefits to the community should be considered and that there are ways to manage such issues.

Michael stated that roadway capacity problems usually occur at intersections rather than on the connecting roads. Therefore, there is logic in utilizing roundabouts, wherein traffic signals are replaced and traffic is managed by way of the roadway design. Dan Ulatowski said that currently almost all of the traffic signals in the Town are owned by the Town (with the exception of those on NYS roadways), so roundabouts would save money. Furthermore, the Town pays for the lighting, so why not go the extra mile and improved the roads with buried utilities, etc. John Marriott said that this would also reduce maintenance costs. The Supervisor asked and Mike confirmed that if the Town had such a study that was made part of the Comprehensive Plan, it would have to be considered by the State and County as part of

## Cheektowaga Comprehensive Plan Meeting Summary

Page 3 of 5

the project development process for future highway projects. They would have to take the Town's plans into consideration.

Michael said that the project team is also looking at the paper streets as a way of improving connections, but that not a lot of opportunities exist. Therefore, bicycle and pedestrian enhancements would be incorporated in the street design – another part of the complete streets approach. Dan stated that there are opportunities along some of the creek corridors, such as along South Creek Drive (Scajaquada Creek). Cayuga Creek could also have designated points for ingress and egress; it is very popular for fishing. We need to ensure that future designs include multi-modal facilities and connections. It was asked if and how so many things can be contained within the roadway ROW and if the Town roads were wide enough. It was stated that many of the roads, such as French Road, are too wide as they exist and that a streetscaping plan would improve the aesthetics and operation of such roads. Michael used the reconstruction of Hertel Avenue as a good example of how this concept can be achieved where the number of travel lanes were reduced to allow for wider pedestrian sidewalks without affecting roadway operations. He said that we need to focus on improving the capacity of the intersections and use the ROW for other public purposes.

Colin Greene noted that there definitely will be some overlap between his work and the work that Michael is doing. He said that the Transit Ready area at Harlem and Walden will focus on transit-oriented development and the physical impact of the corridor (intensity of development and redevelopment) and economic development impacts and opportunities (i.e., where to locate the transit station). He also stated that the French Road planning area and the context sensitive design concepts also overlap. French Road is an excellent example of a road that could benefit from the CSD streetscaping measures. Also, the use of paper streets carries over the pedestrian and bicycle experience and connectivity. In many areas, bikeways are being implemented with “sharrows”, which are arrows that are painted in streets to emphasize that the roadway is a shared space with bicycles. This is a concept that could be employed in Cheektowaga. It can help to reduce conflicts between cars and bicyclists and it is supported by transportation representatives. Dan said that this idea is being considered for Como Park Blvd. Finally, Colin said that for Union and Genesee is a good place to study “character corridors”, which is another area of overlap. Here again, we will talk about streetscaping and possibly roundabouts.

David Versel from ESI added that with regard to economic development and transportation on a neighborhood scale, he will look at how transportation decisions affect the marketability of commercial and residential space. Neighborhoods are used differently as roadways are expanded and that we have to learn to adjust to new realities. Decisions about transportation will affect growth and we will look at how alternative transportation can affect housing markets, schools, etc.

### III. Public Participation

Wendy discussed the Visual Preference Survey (VPS) and stated that the intent is to have this survey up and running as soon as possible. She handed out an overview of the survey, explaining that it is another means of gathering public input, but in a more focused way that would be centered on the public vision for how they would like to see the Town developed or redeveloped in the future. Wendy noted that the public information meeting that was held at the beginning of the project was wide open and gathered an array of comments and concerns. The public focus meeting was centered around the goals and objectives to confirm what we heard to date through the public information meeting and the stakeholders' meetings. The VPS will look at how development should be designed and how it should be integrated with the public realm.

The VPS will be accessed through the Town's website by going to the link for the Comprehensive Plan and then clicking on the link to the survey. The survey will be designed to be very simple to use so that those who do not have a lot of computer experience can participate easily. The survey could also be done on computers in local libraries or at the Senior Center. The survey will gather opinions from the public about basic residential development, commercial development, streetscaping and design elements, such

## Cheektowaga Comprehensive Plan Meeting Summary

Page 4 of 5

as landscaping, parking, lighting, signage and architectural aesthetics. The information that is gathered will help the Town determine how existing regulations could be improved to help achieve better development (based on the desires of the Town and the public). The idea is to improve the overall character of the community through development and redevelopment.

Wendy has been gathering images to use for the survey and will work with Colin to finalize her efforts. The next step is to load the images into the survey and get it going. She stated that they had set up a framework for the survey on the Wendel network, but have decided to use Survey Monkey because their technology has been improved since we developed the framework. Using the Survey Monkey technology will enable us to download survey results and export them into a pdf format.

Wendy reviewed two different styles that could be used for the survey to get the Committee's input. One would preview two photographs to solicit the public preference for one over the other. The other format would present one photograph at a time and ask the public to rate it. The Committee preferred the second option; it was felt that offering two photographs at one time could be leading. The type of images that will be presented in the survey was also discussed. It is important to choose images that provide a realistic impression and can be easily rated by the public. Not too much effort will be placed on residential development because the actual look and design of these types of structures is not readily controlled by the Town. Instead, emphasis will be placed more on the public realm and the relationship of buildings with the ROW and site. We will also provide images to ascertain public opinion on parking lot design, landscaping and buffering, site access and other aspects of commercial development.

Wendy said that images would be related to design aesthetics to reveal the public's vision for the look of future development and redevelopment. She explained that the character of the built environment has an impact on the attractiveness of an area and on the amount of investment that may occur there. Some places make you feel better than others; you like going to them and the way they look. It's also about the functional aspects of development and making development "work" better for those who use it. David also suggested eliciting preferences for commercial uses (e.g., attractive but vacant vs. shabby but occupied).

Prior to initiating the survey, a publicity campaign will be undertaken to inform the public that the survey exists and encourage them to participate. Ways to reach those without computers was discussed and it was agreed that paper copies of the survey would be provided to the member of the AdHoc Committee to be provided to the members of their local organizations. Wendy will also get the survey publicized in the school to encourage participation by younger members of the community. Articles in school newsletters and other such efforts will be undertaken. Articles will also be placed in the Buffalo News and other local papers.

Wendy will put a draft of the survey together and place it on the ftp site for the Committee to review.

### IV. Other Critical Themes

Wendy asked if the Committee had taken the time to review the handout that was provided at the last meeting, which included a listing of initial recommendations and implementation items. Wendy wanted to know if anyone had any particular questions or comments. Wendy noted that this listing was a compilation of major themes that came from the public input gathered at the various meetings that have been held to date. She emphasized the fact that the intent is not to accomplish everything that is on this list as part of the development of the Comprehensive Plan. There are certain items that are outside the scope of the current work efforts. Such items would be included in the recommendations and implementation sections for future action. For example, the development of a sidewalk study is not something that we can do under the Plan. However, it is important to highlight areas where sidewalks may be warranted and part of this will be looked at under the neighborhood plans. There are also areas where sidewalks should not go; they should be located along primary transportation corridors and made part of the "complete streets" planning under the transportation component. Tom Adamczak noted that

## Cheektowaga Comprehensive Plan Meeting Summary

Page 5 of 5

the Town has a 1998 Sidewalk Plan; Dan said he thinks he may have given it to the project team (Wendy will look into this).

Areas that were noted by the Committee included looking at how the I-90 bisects the community and the fact that there are no visual breaks (need walls in some places). The need to improve the connections to the airport and the train station was also mentioned.

Dan Ulatowski indicated that something should be included in the discussed opportunities for fiscal efficiency. How can we bring the school and fire districts to the forefront for mergers? This applies to the Villages too (particularly Sloan because the Town already provides a number of essential services for this Village). Can we at least offer compelling dialogue for consideration? We know that the Town government has no authority in this matter, but taxpayers do. We need to provide grounds for public support and have recommendations in the plan that speaks to this issue. Dan would like to see something in the Plan, even if it's just a one-page summary of the issues.

### V. Other Business / Next Steps

The next Advisory Committee meeting was set for May 28, 2009 at 2:30PM. This meeting will again be held at Wendel Duchscherer to allow for web conferencing with the subconsultants again (Committee members were asked if this was an acceptable location for meetings and all agreed). At the next meeting, updates will be provided on the four primary planning components, as well as the Visual Preference Survey (which will be up and running). Prior to the next meeting, the project team will continue to hold weekly teleconferences. The next such meeting will be focused on the visual preference survey so that it can be initiated as soon as possible. Wendy invited Dan and others to participate via Webex.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Wendy E. Weber Salvati, AICP