

TOWN OF CHEEKTOWAGA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MEETING SUMMARY

Date of Meeting: March 25, 2009

Attendees:

STEERING COMMITTEE

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Daniel Ulatowski | <input type="checkbox"/> Linda Hammer, Depew |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mary Holtz | <input type="checkbox"/> Stanley Keysa, Lancaster |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anthony Sisti | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Pugh | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patrick Allaire |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Boy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Stalker |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Adamczak | <input type="checkbox"/> Allita Steward, City of Buffalo |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kevin Schenk | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Parke, City of Buffalo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Markel | <input type="checkbox"/> Jane Wiercioch |

CONSULTING TEAM

- | |
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drew Reilly |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Salvati |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ellen Parker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jacob Needle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Suzette Goldstein, HOK |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colin Greene, HOK (<i>via Webex</i>) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Versel, ESI (<i>via Webex</i>) |
| Others |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kelly Ganczarz, City of Bflo. Intern |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Staniaszek (for Supervisor) |

Location: Wendel Duchscherer Board Room

Time: 2:00PM

Minutes Issued: March 26, 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 Versel 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: map of draft planning area strategy and community design matrix for the comprehensive plan.

Wendy provided an update of the project, noting that, to date, the community inventory/profile is at 95 percent or better completion (have received comments from Town), the goals and objectives are considered complete (they have been reviewed with the Committee and the public), meetings have been held with the public and stakeholders' groups and the project website was established. The website contains an interactive map that is updated regularly with public comments. At present, the project team has been working on the community assessment/analysis portion of the comprehensive plan. This section of the scope of services has four primary components - - Transportation, Economic Development, Neighborhood Revitalization and Zoning/Land Use Regulations. The four sections are not equally weighted at 25 percent each; certain sections are receiving greater emphasis than others, in particular, the neighborhood revitalization element. Therefore, the meeting today focuses on the efforts that have been undertaken for the neighborhood revitalization piece, with some emphasis on economic development and land use and zoning. Wendy also mentioned that the ideas that are being set forth for the neighborhood planning areas differ somewhat from the scope in that the scope of services noted that the project team would look at four areas, three residential and one commercial that would consist of three to four block areas of study. The approach we are proposing looks at three areas that are larger in size and more

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mixed use in nature. Also, the goal of this approach is to develop ideas and solutions for the three areas that could be applied to other areas in the Town.

II. Discussion of Neighborhood Plans

Wendy turned control of the meeting over to Colin Greene from HOK, who introduced the strategy and ideas for the areas that are being proposed for the neighborhood plans. Colin walked the Committee through a presentation (see attached PowerPoint presentation slides and design matrix) that outlined the thinking for this component of the project. He highlighted the connection between neighborhood planning and the goals and objectives, particularly identity, revitalization, creativity, quality and mobility. He noted that the community design activity for the project starts with the establishment of broad study areas and the definition of boundaries for these areas. In working with the project team, he presented the ideas and thinking that was developed for the following three neighborhood areas in an effort to get feedback and support from the Advisory Committee on their selection:

- Area 1 – “Transit Ready” – ½ mile area around the intersection of Harlem Road and Walden Avenue (alternative transportation, power center transformation and new development opportunities). Ideas for this area include clarifying walkability – how to improve convenience, movement and access within the area. We are look at ways to improve the ease of mobility in every direction within the ½ mile area (which is not a long walk). The abandoned rail line provides the opportunity for alternative transportation, preferably as a means of public transport to connect with downtown. There is currently some bus service in the area, as well as a rails-to-trails connection; however, we must plan for the future. The NFTA (Gordon Thompson) plan for rapid transit service from the airport to downtown was mentioned. Colin also described this area as a “power center” in terms of the existence of the uses in the thruway plaza area. We need to consider how it can be transformed in the future. If transit arrives the form of the overall area and the power center will change. Mixed use and transit oriented design will be the direction but we will need economic incentives to help transform private property.

The Advisory Committee agreed with the choice of this area.

- Area 2 – “Corridor” – French Road corridor (residential quality, gateway identity and green linkages) This area is a gateway - - a first impression for people entering the community from the south. We will study the area to determine what kinds of changes are necessary and what can be done to improve existing conditions. French Road must be considered for a “road diet” to reduce the wide expanse of paved surface (boulevard approach). Other traffic issues were discussed. The area has good housing stock and an aging population. The goal for this area is to maintain stability.

The Advisory Committee agreed with the choice of this area.

- Area 3 – “Neighborhood” – approximate ½ mile radius around Union Road and Genesee Street (residential quality, commercial blight and transportation, access and mobility). This area is centrally located and the idea is to make it a better part of the public realm. We need to improve the streetscape and walkability of the area. How can this area become a “memorable Main Street” for the community? The southern end touches on the transit-ready corridor. The housing stock is aging and traffic is an issue. The age and quality of the housing stock is an issue, not so much the lot sizes. Need to address the issues of decline in this area.

The Advisory Committee suggested that this area be elongated to take more of a north-south shape to extend down to George Urban and Galleria Drive. The NFTA noise study was mentioned – how much of this area is included in the noise overlay for the airport?

It was generally agreed that the three areas were good representative areas of the Town. The Harlem Walden area is pre-World War II housing, Union-Genesee is post World War II housing and the French Road corridor has more modern housing. The model for the Union Genesee area could likely be used for

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Eggert and Cleveland, Union and Cleveland, Beach and Cleveland or George Urban and Dick, it was thought that these areas were all comparable in terms of housing stock.

HOK moved on to discuss their approach for the end product for the community design component of the project and offered examples of the types of things that will be included. All three areas will have a "guiding" or regulating plan and principles that involves using simple key elements that will allow clear hierarchical decision making for roadways, open space and land use. This broad strategy will enable creative organization of parking and access and more efficient land use for individual blocks. There will be a public realm strategy that offers an understanding of how streets can perform and function - - a cataloguing of streets and better use of the public right-of-way (a streetscaping strategy). A visualization exercise will also be performed for each area to take a closer look at potential design elements, such as building typology, density, height, etc. that is appropriate for each study area. Finally, there will be implementation strategies that will identify short and long term strategies for the right places to get the best use of available funding. This is centered around finding things that work and what should be included in the short and long term, with a discussion of the probability for potential land uses in particular areas.

III. Economic Development Component

Colin Greene's presentation was followed by a discussion by David Versel from Economic Stewardship, Inc. on the economic development component of the Comprehensive Plan. David offered an analogy of improving the Town in terms of "pruning the Crabapple tree" - - the tree is still healthy but some branches need pruning. He noted that the Town has been actively acquiring properties cheaply in the western section of the community from the foreclosure list for either rehabilitation or demolition. Since 2008, the Town has pushed the City of Buffalo to auction properties to get them back on the market and usable again.

David reviewed demographic data for neighborhoods in the Town, indicating areas with aging population and housing stock (see attached). He noted that aging residential and commercial structures are not necessarily meeting the changing needs of the market in some areas. The airport and Galleria Mall are key economic growth engines for the region. The identity of these areas must be improved to shore up the surrounding residential neighborhoods and promoting economic development. He emphasized the need to promote the "value of affordable housing opportunities in the Town - - the availability of housing that is in good shape and good starter home stock. Housing that has great access to the City, the airport, schools, etc. He noted that Money magazine identified Cheektowaga as one of the top 25 most affordable places to live in the U.S. Most successful communities control their image and that is what we need to do for Cheektowaga. Therefore, we need to think about what else can be developed around the airport in addition to hotels; what other opportunities exist for redevelopment. David also spoke about the importance of considering what visitors arriving at the airport see. What is their image upon arrival to the Town? All of these issues come home in the three target areas that we are looking at with HOK. We have to couple a marketing strategy to these areas to help improve the Town's identity.

IV. Other Critical Themes

Drew Reilly followed David's discussion highlighting the project team's approach of identifying areas where things need to be done and identifying what areas to apply specific principle to. Drew spoke about the development of a vision map for the Town that will provide a broader picture of the vision for future land use (however, this map would not be a proposed zoning map). He reminded the committee about the list of ideas that was provided and asked for comments. He would like feedback at the next meeting. Drew also asked the Committee to provide any additional comments on the neighborhood map.

Drew said that the other critical theme that was not discussed today is transportation. This element will be covered in greater detail at the next committee meeting. It is the other "leg on the stool" that is directly tied

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in with land use and the work that David and Colin are doing. Also, to further support the HOK's efforts, we will get the visual preference survey going and implement it through the website.

Dan Ulatowski stated that he supports targeting the three broad areas that were presented and asked for a motion from the Committee to accept the change in scope to allow for the project team to continue their direction (the scope originally outlined doing three residential areas and one commercial area that involved the analysis of three to four block areas). Dan wanted support from the Committee with concurrence from the Supervisor and Town Council as soon as possible. The Committee concurred by straw vote.

V. Public Participation

The next step in the public participation process will be Public Charrettes. It is anticipated that these meetings will be held in late May or early June at the latest. The purpose of these meetings is to present solidified ideas and concepts for the planning areas, as supported by the economic, transportation and land use strategies. Once the Committee is comfortable with the approach and direction of the plan, the strategies will be vetted with the public.

VI. Other Business / Next Steps

The next Advisory Committee meeting was set for April 23, 2009. This meeting will be held at Wendel Duchscherer to allow for web conferencing with the subconsultants again. At this meeting, the transportation element of the community assessment will be discussed in greater detail and planning will be continued for the other elements that are being coordinated by HOK and ESI. WD and HOK will also work on the visual preference survey as a complimentary piece to HOK's implementation strategy for the neighborhood plans.

The project team is hoping to have a preliminary draft of the comprehensive plan assembled for the committee's review by the end of June or early July. The goal is to have the report completed by September, when the Town's grant expires.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Wendy E. Weber Salvati, AICP