

20/20 VISION
VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE COMMUNITY PLAN
COMMUNITY PLAN COMMITTEE

APPROVED MEETING NOTES - MAY 23, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Community Plan Committee Attendees: Steven Appler, David Brody, Mary Carr, Thomas Claxton, Brian Kulpa, Pastor Timothy Madsen, Todd Nelson, Walter Pacer, Carolyn Schlifke, Wesley Stone, David Vitka, Kate Waterman-Kulpa, Edward Zabel

Absent: Douglas Adema, Kim Giannelli-Calos, Paul Iskalo, Vic Paquet, David Sutton

Consultant/Town/Village Staff: Jocelyn Gordon, Joelle Guy, Dan Howard, Lynda Juul, Sally Kuzon

Guests: Hal Morse and Steve Szopinski of the GBNRTC

Village Board Members: Mayor Mary Lowther, Trustee Basil Piazza, Trustee Richard Sweeney

Residents: Chris Church (NYSDOT)

ACCEPTANCE OF MEETING NOTES

On motion made by Steven Appler, seconded by David Vitka, the April meeting notes were accepted.

Unanimously carried.

PRESENTATION BY GBNRTC

Hal Morse and Steve Szopinski from the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) presented the results of the modeling that was done on the Main Street streetscape alternatives

Mr. Szopinski reviewed an analysis of existing traffic counts and projections of traffic volumes on Main Street, as well as a number of other roads in the Village and Town. A hand out of his presentation was distributed, along with a chart identifying the Level of Service (LOS) Threshold Values for roads with various lane configurations. Steve and

Chris Church of the NYSDOT noted that the DOT considers a LOS of D as the minimum acceptable operating condition or when they consider highway improvements and upgrades. Steve noted that Main Street is already functioning at a LOS of D to E.

Jocelyn Gordon reminded the committee that it may not be possible to pick exactly how many lanes they want in the future. They could embrace the concept of a lane reduction in the future, and in the interim, there are things that can be done to make changes to Main Street to calm traffic. The decision of how many lanes will be made under another analytic and design process administered by the GBNRTC and NYSDOT, when that improvement becomes a possibility.

Chris Church of the NYSDOT commented that Main Street is a principal arterial, meaning that its main function is to move traffic. It also serves adjacent businesses, but the main function is movement of traffic. The NYSDOT has to service not only the immediate community, but also other communities that don't necessarily live adjacent to the roadway. There are other considerations such as funding. It may be possible for a road to be reconfigured by changing the striping, but not the width (i.e. from four lanes to three lanes, etc.). He noted that the DOT does consider other issues besides capacity, such as funding, safety factors, etc.

Brian Kulpa questioned whether the traffic issue cited by residents has more to do with congestion, volume, or speed. Sometimes people aren't sure.

Dan Howard stated that the comments from the public input activities indicate a desire to make Main Street more pedestrian friendly. The GBNRTC modeling is indicating what happens when significant changes are made to Main Street. Based on the analysis, two lanes may not be a responsible recommendation. The Committee should consider if we can make changes to Main Street to meet the criteria we want to meet? Or should we make some design changes to try and enhance the corridor? Maybe the long-term goal is to make changes to Main Street when other changes have been completed (such as the toll barrier removal, Transit Road and Wehrle Drive construction, Youngs Road exit scenario, etc

David Brody wondered if the Wehrle Drive project would affect traffic on Main Street, and if this should be included in the model. This widening would go from Transit Road to Cayuga. Chris Church thought this was a change mostly on the east side of the Village, whereas the Village would also need a diversion on the west side of the Village to affect traffic. Therefore, this most likely would not affect traffic on Main Street.

Jocelyn thought that one thing the committee could decide would be to promote the least radical change (to four lanes), and recommend incremental improvements. In addition, the Village could sit down with the GBNRTC and DOT on an annual basis to see what changes to the road system are being made and their possible effects on Main Street. Ed Zabel wondered if the committee could request that the GBNRTC bring back a recommendation to them for how many lanes would be most beneficial. Chris Church said that the DOT would certainly look at something if the committee were interested.

The more the committee can do on their own, the more quickly it would be done. There is competition for the funding to do things like this. There are also some grants that are available for planning once there is a direction.

David Brody asked if the DOT would ever take the Route 5 designation off of Main Street and move it to the Thruway. Chris Church thought it was possible, but not probable. It would likely have little impact on traffic.

It was noted that capacity could be reduced, but Main Street may not become uncongested. Jocelyn asked if the four-lane scenario could be completed, and improve aesthetics without destroying capacity. Chris Church responded that capacity is not an issue. The safety impacts would have to be addressed due to the loss of a turning lane. One of the reasons the City of Buffalo went from 4 lanes to 3 lanes is because a road with a turn lane is generally safer. Chris Church felt that getting rid of a turn lane would not be the best idea. They would probably consider doing 3 lanes before they would consider doing 4 lanes.

Carolyn Schlifke felt that no matter how many lanes there are, you would always be at capacity. She would like to see the committee change the configuration of Main Street to make it a safer, more walk-able area, such as by focusing on the crossing areas. Sometimes the signal phases are not long enough. There are a lot of people making illegal turns after the signal changes. She would like to see more effort put into some research on how to make our corners safer than they are now. The committee agreed.

Jocelyn noted that the urban design plan will incorporate pedestrian links and safety along the corridor.

DRAFT FUTURE LAND USE CONCEPT

The committee then adjourned to the Activity Room to continue their review of the draft future land use concept map and the changes made since last month's meeting.

The changes that the committee requested were as follows:

Change the parking lot in Glen Park to open space (it is currently mixed use)

Change the area on N. Cayuga labeled as community service to high density residential

Change the open space (green) area on the north side of Main Street since it has businesses in that area; Jocelyn suggested having a historic overlay as an option

Change the mixed use area on Farber to residential.

Suggestions were made to remove the streets or the aerial photo so that individual parcels weren't identified or over-reacted to. Other committee members felt it was beneficial to leave this information on the map. A decision will have to be made on this.

There was much discussion on both the Village Glen parcel and the Evans Street area (Drexel Hill Apartments) that is labeled mixed use. Carolyn Schlifke felt that a developer could encroach on the adjacent residential area if any commercial uses were permitted in this area; David Brody and Brian Kulpa felt that the area could be better controlled by zoning for mixed use and having stricter guidelines. Steve Appler expressed concern on protecting the residential character of the area and creating a competing commercial center to Main Street. Mary Carr felt nearby homes are deteriorating and any type of commercial zoning would create additional deterioration.

The committee agreed by majority to split mixed-use into two categories on the Plan, with a separate color coding for each – mixed use residential and mixed use commercial. They felt this would clarify to the public what they are trying to do.

ADDITIONAL MEETINGS

Walter Pacer advised the committee that the Village is going to be undertaking an additional economic analysis to supplement the Community Plan. He asked if any of the members had any objection to extending the meetings on the 4th Tuesday of the month through the end of the year, with the possibility of doubling up in September and/or October for public meetings. No one on the committee who was present had expressed objection.

CLOSE OF MEETING

On motion by Ed Zabel, seconded by Wes Stone, the meeting was closed at 9:45 PM.

Unanimously carried.