

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

MEETING NOTES – SEPTEMBER 22, 2009

Attendees: Walter Pacer (Chair), David Brody, Paul Iskalo, Vic Paquet, Charles Rizzone, Carolyn Schlifke, David Vitka, Kate Waterman-Kulpa, Ed Zabel

Absent: Charles Akers, Thomas Claxton, Wesley Stone

Village Staff: Lynda Juul, Brian Kulpa

Behan Planning Staff: Susan McLaughlin

Other: Rachel Brown, UB Law School

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

Wally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

On motion by Carolyn Schlifke, seconded by David Brody, the August 25, 2009 Meeting Notes were approved with changes as noted in the meeting.

Motion Carried; David Vitka abstained from the vote.

Susan McLaughlin gave a PowerPoint presentation of the various alternative identified.

David Brody stated he feels a bus system that runs in 30 minute increments won't be used; it needs to run in 10 or 15 increments.

Paul Iskalo asked if there was any data dealing with walkability and the vibrancy of the business district. Susan responded that walking rates tend to rise at 7 (plus) units per acre. The rule of thumb as to the distance that people are generally willing to walk is 400 feet. Paul stated the theory is that the higher the density, the better for businesses.

Wally questioned why the link is being made to bus service. David Brody indicated that this is the context in which these studies have been done. A measure of vibrancy is how many people come through, and bus service is an indicator. Paul Iskalo felt this shows people leaving the area. Susan noted that the NMU language refers to transit-oriented development. If this doesn't match what the community is looking for, it can be re-

phrased. David Brody pointed out that transportation is one example of infrastructure, and that can apply to other types of infrastructure as well. Carolyn commented that there is a bus route on Evans in addition to Main Street. If Drexel were changed into NMU, there is a bus route to support that.

Paul Iskalo felt that the Committee has been through this, with thorough public input and debate, and is now being asked to revisit things without fully understanding why. He does not feel the process we are going through now can yield good results. There are items in the Plan that every member of the Committee is not happy with.

David Brody generally agreed. He stated that he agrees on the question of 4 or 6 stories on the east side of the Village. He surmised that the Village Board has been receiving feedback from Village residents who did not like higher density in the middle of medium-density. The areas in the outskirts probably would not have as much opposition.

Paul Iskalo stated that he does not feel that this is what the Committee is trying to achieve. He feels there is already higher density development next to single family homes. As long as it is context sensitive, he doesn't see anything offensive about this. You have to provide residents with a choice. There are people in single-family homes who want to give that up, but stay in the Village. They should be given that opportunity. The market can decide what can be sustained. He is a proponent for density because he feels it is appropriate in the Village. That is what he is trying to advocate for.

Chuck Rizzone felt that the residents who live near S. Long were probably the most vocal with the Village Board. David Brody felt this was not expressed at the public meeting. The same letter was circulated and signed by various people.

David Brody felt the areas selected for higher density were chosen because their present use would most likely go away in the near future. The only change that made sense to him was the change in the Reist Street area, which is surrounded mainly by single-family homes.

Paul Iskalo stated that areas will only be redeveloped if it is economically viable. If there is an industrial area, there can be environmental issues. The cost to convert these areas to residential can be substantial. He would prefer to see higher density residential than the intense industrial use that they are now. It's costly to redevelop industrial land.

Kate commented that we don't have farm land in the Village. If this is an opportunity for new MDR, then people may be willing to pay a higher price to live in those areas of the Village.

Most of the Committee members expressed their unhappiness with having to discuss these issues again. These items have been thoroughly reviewed, public input was obtained, and a recommendation was made to the Village Board. They questioned why they were discussing them again. It took a long time to look at these items and fully

analyze them in the past. There was much discussion and debate. The Committee has worked hard on this project for close to three years.

Paul Iskalo stated that the Village Board has come back with the two things that he perceives as political hot potatoes. The purpose is to get these off the table and make some hard decisions easier. That is why there was a Committee that met for three years to begin with. The people who have issues with the items show up to discuss, but the others who don't have issues don't come to the meetings.

Ed Zabel asked about the time frame as it relates to the Village Board election. He felt the Board may have been more influenced by how the election was going to turn out than by the issues themselves.

David Brody stated that HDR is 4-16 units. It does not mean there will be 16 units. This is an issue for the zoning code. The Committee should point this out to the Village Board and send it back to them.

Brian Kulpa stated that the NMU discussion took place prior to the election. It was not a politically based decision as much as it was the Village Board looking at the issue of mixed use. Union Rd. and Wehrle Dr. were the impetus for this; the Board was not trying to de-densify certain areas.

David Brody discussed mixed use. He is in favor of this in most areas. He feels that the real issue is density. And this is a zoning determination. Again, HDR is 4-16 units, not 16 units. He reiterated that he feels a response should be written to the Village Board indicating that what is included in the Plan was worked on by 30 people over 3 years, and reached by consensus; not agreement, but consensus. He suggested that densities be left as they are, with mixed use being allowed. He also suggested changing the term HDR to something else, again, because it really is not high density.

Paul Iskalo asked Susan to classify HDR. She referred everyone to page 8 of the Behan memo, Option #6, which outlines density classifications as described by the Lincoln Land Institute of Land Policy. There, low density is defined as 1-6 units per acre (our LDR is 2-3 units per acre), medium density is defined as 8-13 units per acre (our MDR is 3-4 units per acre), and high density is defined as 14+ units per acre (our HDR is 4-16 units per acre). The classification titles could be modified. Paul asked what density the apartments on Evans are. He wants to make sure that people are visualizing density properly. High density in other areas can be 40 to 60 units on an acre. That is high density. Our definition of HDR as having up to 16 units per acre can be very in-character with neighborhoods that are adjacent, if they are developed properly. It can be seamlessly integrated. When you talk density without talking character, you run into issues.

Kate is not willing to say yes to one, or to everything. She is going to stick with her original opinion. David Brody is perfectly okay with giving the Village Board back what they were given to begin with. Other than adding NMU, he feels the densities should be

left the way they were. The names can be changed (but not the density), so it is not so offensive to people. He suggested going back to the Village Board with a statement that they are in favor of the Plan as submitted, and are okay with some minor changes to add NMU. He feels we should stick with the original density, with a recommendation of 4-16 units. The zoning code is the appropriate place to deal with this. Carolyn Schlifke felt that 16 units may be scary for some people. Chuck Rizzone felt the bottom line is how many units a developer can get on an acre.

David Brody felt that the things we are talking about should be discussed with architectural standards and zoning. The point to be made to the Village Board is that they are asking the wrong question. The question is, what are we doing with our architectural standards and zoning? The Committee was concerned that the code won't be changed until the Community Plan is approved. Paul Iskalo felt this would be a way for the Village Board members to address their own concerns.

David Brody felt most wanted to send the Draft Plan back, but that it should be sent back with a statement of things to consider, and a statement on why they are sending it back in the same form. Wally feels that the Village Board knows they can do this through zoning, based on reading their meeting notes.

Chuck Rizzone stated that he is not in favor of 16 units per acre. David Brody stated that it doesn't scare him at all. Chuck likes what the Village Board has done with the Plan more than what was originally submitted to them. He feels the Board looked at this document very carefully.

Wally asked if Chuck was accepting of the fact that the Village Board would vote down two to three year's worth of work for only one or two issues. Chuck felt that this is an attempt to address the issues and to enhance, change, or send the Draft Plan back with some comments.

David Brody felt it was appropriate that the Village Board sent this back to the Committee for these two issues. Wally agreed with Paul on sending the Draft Plan back to the Village Board the way it is. Paul stated that he feels mixed use is appropriate for the Village; the committee in general did not have an issue with this. Paul did have an issue with rehashing density, after this was already discussed.

Susan restated the options. They are:

- Send the Draft Plan back to the Village Board as is
- Add the NMU option, but put the densities back to where they originally were
- Reclassify the titles to be consistent with national standards

Vic Paquet asked if we are simply renaming these areas, do we want to conform to the national standards.

Kate stated that it seems that two people are speaking for density and two are speaking against. If we are not simply going to send the Draft Plan back, why are we addressing one issue?

Paul Iskalo stated that some things the Committee is addressing are clarifications. Changing of the titles would be a clarification. The next thing is the NMU. That is introducing a different variable. We have to understand if we are all in agreement, and why we are willing to change this.

Kate wondered if the Village Board is looking at this with a whole new set of eyes, is the Committee giving it a fair enough evaluation. The S. Long concept was discussed month to month. She understands what Paul was saying about land being economically feasible. A recommendation could be made with commentary about a concern that architectural standards need to be developed.

Carolyn Schlifke stated that nobody seems to be objecting to NMU; everyone was in agreement with this. An option is for the Committee to tell the Village Board they are willing to add NMU, but that the rest of the Plan should stay the way it is.

Paul reiterated that he feels mixed use is consistent with a Village setting. The other areas were negotiated hard, and should be left as is for that reason. David Brody would like to see a statement relating to zoning and architectural standards. He has seen well done, higher density projects.

Carolyn felt that this needs to be moved forward. It isn't the Committee's position to tell the Village Board what their next step should be. Paul stated that there is a lot of wording in the plan that deals with the tools. You can point to the plan and say "if you want to do this, this is how you have to do it".

The Committee discussed making a motion and what the various motions could be.

Paul feels this is a structural change on something that has been discussed for years.

Carolyn added that a good elected official will weigh the comments of a committee that has been put in place by that Village Board, and has members who represent the community.

Kate commented that the Committee was a lot bigger in the past. Paul felt this was all the more reason not to make structural changes at this point.

Susan stated there are basically two motions on the table. She suggested taking a straw vote on each.

David Brody commented that the Village Board is interested in the committee's opinion. The committee should not simply say yes or no, but explain the process of compromise. They should explain the way the decision was arrived at, and the reasons behind the

decision should be discussed. There is an obligation to explain why the Committee does or does not agree.

Paul Iskalo commented that he feels there needs to be opportunity for choice in the Village.

Height was then discussed. The original height of 2-6 stories was discussed. Susan suggested that height could be redefined as feet instead of stories. Three to four stories with incentive stories is an option.

Paul again stated this was a hard fought battle with a lot of compromise involved. David Brody felt that all of this could be done at a later stage. Design language could be added; incentives for height could be added, etc. Susan commented that in a Community Plan, it is really important to form the intent. If it says 2-6 stories, the intent can be lost. The zoning code will define this, but it is appropriate to put in the community plan as well.

David Brody felt we are talking about a very limited area of the Village where there are already tall buildings. It's 2-6 stories; it's not 6 stories. Wally agreed. David Brody felt this can be accomplished and done well when "used as a carrot and not a stick".

Susan clarified business district FAR (floor area ratio). This would occur during zoning. The FAR of the business district could be analyzed. This will give you the actual average range of FARs in the area. This helps to frame what is a reasonable FAR and what is reasonable height.

Paul reiterated that this was arrived at under a certain set of parameters. This is the same discussion we had about density. There are areas with density, and areas without. This one area has precedent already in it. It was discussed for 3 years.

Kate added that the options for housing were discussed. More dense housing opportunities could be implemented here. This would provide an opportunity for different types of housing. Paul stated that on Main Street you would get more of a condominium/apartment style of urban living. 4-16 units would be more like a townhome on Essjay. Kate felt there are already choices in the Village. Paul discussed providing choices for new builds. He feels this is what the plan contemplates, and what was negotiated.

Paul stated that this was sent back to review density. Height is density. He felt that it's a Village, and it is supposed to be dense. The Plan went through the process of public comment; the process should be respected. He feels that the Committee knows the process it went through, and that it needs to stick to that process.

Brian Kulpa stated that there was a long review process from when they received the Draft Plan to when they rejected the draft plan. There was internal consensus on NMU. They would have moved forward with that change, had the board not rejected the plan

outright. Upon rejection, Brian Kulpa made a motion to send the Plan back to committee. The Village Board then felt that the NMU should be sent back for review as well.

On motion by David Brody, seconded by Ed Zabel, the following resolution was proposed:

RESOLVED, that the Community Plan Committee return the February 2008 Draft Community Plan to the Village Board with the following recommendations:

- 1) That mixed use be allowed in those areas proposed by the Village Board as Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) classification as per Lynda Juul's letter to the Community Plan Committee of August 7, 2009
- 2) That the balance that was struck in the Draft Plan through the three-year planning process as to height and density should be sustained. This balance was achieved after extensive negotiation among the members of the Community Plan Committee and after opportunity for public comment
- 3) That following terms be modified as indicated below:
 - Low Density Residential to Residential 1
 - Medium Density Residential to Residential 2
 - High Density Residential to Residential 3

A roll-call vote was taken as follows:

Wally Pacer	Yes
David Brody	Yes
Paul Iskalo.....	Yes
Charles Rizzone	No
Carolyn Schlifke	Yes
David Vitka.....	Yes
Kate Waterman-Kulpa	No
Ed Zabel	Yes

(Note: Vic Paquet had to leave the meeting prior to the motion being made.)

Motion Carried, 6-2.

On motion by Walter Pacer, seconded by Kate Waterman-Kulpa, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.