

**IMAGINE AMHERST
MEETING NOTES**

**PROJECT WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 26, 2016**

This meeting is being recorded.

Working Committee Attendees: Dal Giuliani, Chair, Ellen Banks, Duncan Black, David Chiazza, Jim Cwierley, Carl Montante, Jr., Gary Palumbo, Frank Pasztor, Ramona Popowich, Dan Ulatowski, Bob White.

Absent: Steve Herberger, Brian Kulpa, Jane Woodward

Staff Present: Rick Gillert, Gary Black, Dan Howard and Kim Schueler

Dal Giuliani, Chair asked if everyone on the Committee was able to print all of the information sent to them in the future. All responded affirmatively. Dal noted that a glossary of zoning terms for reference in reviewing documents was distributed. The draft Code Studio memorandum and Public Outreach Plan which are being reviewed at this meeting were reviewed by the Technical Committee who made suggestions to Code Studio so that revisions can be made. After tonight's meeting any recommendations or changes will be made and the revised documents will be posted to the project website for public review. The Committee encourages the public to review the documents and make comments/questions in writing so they can be answered.

Dan Howard, Associate Planner reviewed the Comprehensive Plan Analysis Memorandum from Code Studio dated April 11, 2016.

He also reviewed the Public Outreach Plan. At the conclusion of Dan's presentation, Dal asked the Committee whether the report was detailed enough, did they want to modify? He asked if anyone had any comments or suggestions.

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R. Popowich stated that the more detail the better for analyses.

D. Ulatowski stated that nothing alarming stood out when he read the report which focused mainly on community centers. He is more interested in the scope of the new zoning ordinance.

F. Pazstor asked a question regarding parcel depth on page 9 in regards to Hartford Road. In response, Dan Howard said he thinks that the consultant was using the line for an east west marker, but he will get clarification.

Rick Gillert asked if everyone was familiar with the transit study going on at this time. He asked Dan Howard to explain the Transit Alternatives Analysis study.

Dan Howard stated that there is an ongoing study being conducted by the NFTA with the support of consultants. It is a study supported by the Federal Transit Administration. Its intent is to look at ways to enhance transit service along the Buffalo (downtown) Amherst corridor to the UB North campus. The study has been ongoing for about 2 years. It is expected that it will result in a recommendation and provide guidance in terms of an alignment for future transit enhancement, and a preferred mode.

The modes of transit under consideration light rail (train as it is now, below, at grade or combination); bus rapid transit (enhanced bus vehicle that generally operates in its own right-of-way) along the side of road, in the middle, could have a station area dedicated to it in either location that would probably include some kind of signal actuation that would allow buses to pass through intersections without waiting.

NFTA is still studying and has not released its comments on the Alternative Analysis which they think will be out this fall. He noted that more information about the study can be found from a link on the Town's website.

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C. Montante – Is the presumption that if this does go ahead i.e., with light rail, will the Town reassess the zoning along the new transportation corridor to allow for transit-oriented and mixed use development?

D. Howard – Land use planning and zoning along those corridors would have to be looked at. The NFTA was fortunate to get a grant through the FTA to conduct what is called a Transit-Oriented Development Study which is supposed to begin shortly and consider the corridor from downtown Buffalo into Amherst.

D. Ulatowski – The chosen routes or alternatives, how many of our activity centers are along any of the potential alignment alternatives?

Dan Howard explained the different alternatives and where some of the activity centers are located. Each of these alternatives could possibly extend into the CrossPointe Business Park. We are not sure how far the NFTA wants to carry the study.

C. Montante – Can a mixed use include horizontal mixed use and vertical where you may have a 3-story apartment building next to an office?

D. Howard – Yes

D. Ulatowski – Mixed use activity centers are going to be an alternative to going downtown. They're going to be a concentration/destination within our Town so that we can have the same sense of density and proximity to services all within a compact geographical area rather than going downtown. That is my take on mixed use activity center.

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D. Howard – Yes, that’s why the Village of Williamsville is as successful as it is. When we talked to people in the Eggertsville area they were excited to have some of those mixed-use uses in a location nearby that they can walk to instead of drive.

G. Palumbo – There are 4 types of mixed used centers, if we follow Code Studio’s definition what happens to the higher use centers and highway intersection centers, they don’t seem to have the same broad definition?

D. Howard –This study is intended to look at the commercial centers not just mixed use centers. These areas have opportunities to transform and/or be accentuated through planning and zoning as well.

D. Giuliani – Do we have enough material to go back to Code Studio to make some adjustments?

D. Howard – The Technical Committee has looked at the memorandum from Code Studio and their primary input related to the opportunity for transit to be introduced more strongly in the Plan and Zoning Code.

D. Giuliani – My concern is that if we develop our plan too much further before we hear from the NFTA we may have to go back and redo.

R. Popowich – During the stakeholder interviews some stakeholders did not get an opportunity to speak because someone dominated the interview.

D. Howard – We can conduct another interview if necessary.

E. Gillert – I am aware of this concern and will speak with the person to work something out.

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PUBLIC OUTREACH PLAN

D. Howard reviewed the Draft Public Outreach Plan with the Committee.

D. Ulatowski – The Committee must come to a consensus as to how quickly things can be posted to the project website so that other stakeholders can also comment.

R. Popowich – Other Homeowner’s Associations should be notified of information on the Website.

C. Montante – UB certainly has a vested interest in the success of the Town. Have you reached out to Bob Shibley and the Regional Institute to try marshal some of their resources to help us in this project?

D. Howard – Bart Roberts is from the University at Buffalo Regional Institute and he can bring some of that expertise and knowledge to the Technical Committee. He and Kelly Dixon from the GBNRTC led the One Region Forward project which was one of the largest planning initiatives that has taken place in our area and won a national award for public participation. We are fortunate to have them participate on the technical side and they have brought some significant insights into this process already.

D. Howard we realize that we need to get information out to the public for comment as quickly as possible and are working toward that goal.

Annette Herman, Home Run Creative Services stated that they are monitoring the website, however there has not been a lot of information yet. We are on Facebook and Twitter also. When we start getting more participation I will provide you with more information regarding who is saying what, etc.

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D. Ulatowski – As we get further into the project will there be a visual preference survey where what the community values in the terms of design can help us in our recommendations?

D. Howard – The project will end up being very specific regarding certain areas that we choose to focus on in great detail. The scope of work affords the opportunity for a nationally known urban design firm to come and actually develop a vision for those places. That is part of the Charette that will be going on in September.

C. Montante – Is there the ability to upload pictures to the web if in our travels we see a good example of a mixed-use area?

D. Giuliani – Absolutely, it is our desire to put as much as possible on the website.

PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Mary Shapiro

What I am hearing is that we are moving away from regional commercial centers and incorporating it more into mixed use centers in neighborhoods with context sensitive scaling, etc. Should we define the public space first in terms of sidewalks, open space and make that the framework according to scale and then add in what forms would translate into different uses that would make sense in the neighborhoods? Also environmental concerns should be included.

I have heard concerns that comments are being made on the web site are disappearing and with no response. Perhaps put an area stating that their response was received and how they can communicate; i.e., Facebook, Twitter, contact in Planning Department and the incorporate these comments similar to how it is done for the Comprehensive Plan.

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Don Smith

Move meetings to Town Hall where more people can attend. Website is weak and so is Facebook page.

Jim Tricoli

Committee was unfairly chosen.

Notes from the Committee Meeting of 3/8/16 meeting were accepted.