

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eric Gillert, Town of Amherst Planning Director

FROM: Lee D. Einsweiler

DATE: August 17, 2016

RE: Selected Pilot Centers for Analysis

The Town of Amherst engaged Code Studio to prepare an update to the Comprehensive Plan with regard to the commercial and mixed use activity centers in the Town, following up with proposed new zoning for application in these areas. As part of that project, we must select a set of sites in the Town that allow us to analyze existing conditions and design site concepts for appropriate infill and redevelopment in order to ensure community consensus on key zoning issues.

The Town selected a Working Committee to assist in providing input for this project, and that Committee met on Wednesday, August 10th to recommend specific pilot sites for additional detailed work. Those sites were intended to be representative of a land use/site planning concept that might be found elsewhere in the Town, specifically:

- Deep/large parcels
- Shallow parcels
- Williamsville edge
- Traditional node
- Suburban node

A set of three to four candidate sites for each category were presented by the consultant and Town staff (see separate memo outlining the consultant-recommended options.) The sites were discussed by the Working Committee, and one location for each concept was selected. The Committee-recommended sites were:

- Deep/large parcels: Sheridan Drive and Niagara Falls Boulevard (Northtown Plaza)
- Shallow parcels: Transit Road south of Main Street
- Williamsville edge: Main Street east of Williamsville line to Youngs Road
- Traditional node: Harlem/Kensington
- Suburban node: Millersport at Stahl Road (Getzville)

After consideration of the Working Committee recommendations by the consultant, it is our professional assessment that they do not reflect the most productive sample of issues intended to be resolved during this project. In question are two of the sites, as discussed further below:

Williamsville Edge: One of the key reasons for proposing a site at the edge of Williamsville was that the development activity currently seems to be drawn to that area. Main Street extending from I-290 to the Village line represents a unique opportunity for additional development, and new sensitive transitions to surrounding neighborhoods must be designed and embedded in the new zoning. The eastern edge of the Village does not present as much opportunity for this level of activity at this time. In retrospect, the opportunities to explore concepts such as density and height, adjacency to a variety of surrounding types of uses at an established Village area are better at the west edge; this may not have been fully explained and presented to the Working Committee. The western edge also offers potential to consider the effects of NYSDOT plans to realign the entrance and exit ramps at the interchange. The consultant recommends replacing the selected area East of the Village with the area around the I-290 to the edge of the Village.

Traditional Node: At the time of selection of the Harlem-Kensington site, we, as consultants, were unaware of the municipal boundary with Cheektowaga that cuts through the intersection, and accepted this candidate site. Upon more detailed review following the Working Committee meeting, this issue of two jurisdictions became clear (Cheektowaga has jurisdiction at the southern end of the intersection). The land within the Town's jurisdiction at the Harlem-Kensington intersection is limited, and does not offer the opportunity to fully explore the full area around the node including the parcels at the key intersection itself; this limits the utility of this specific location. We recommend replacing the selected area with Eggertsville or Snyder or some combination of the two.

We appreciate your consideration of these two recommendations, and acknowledge the Working Committee's efforts in providing the initial recommendations for Town Board consideration.