

CODE STUDIO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Daniel Howard, Town of Amherst Planning Director

FROM: Lee D. Einsweiler

DATE: March 31, 2019

RE: Local Community Education Forum - March 28, 2019 (NYSERDA Task 9.2)

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The Consultant held a session for surrounding communities and other regional agencies to describe and explain the project process, lessons learned, the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and the proposed changes to the Zoning Code.

The session was held on Tuesday, March 26, 2019 at 8:30am in the Town Hall Council Chambers. Approximately 10 people were in attendance, including attendees from the Towns of Clarence, Tonawanda, the City of Buffalo, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA).

Supervisor Brian Kulpa, Planning Director Daniel Howard, Planner Kim Amplement, and Lee Einsweiler from Code Studio presented various aspects of the project and lessons learned. The meeting was video recorded and is visible on the Town's website. The following are questions and comments from this forum.

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS:

Were there any issues in forming Committees and choosing the composition of them?

- » Not any issues in forming the Committee. There was some cross over so that many of the people on the Project Working Committee were also members of the Technical Advisory Committee. Once the Plan portion was completed, it was realized that there may be some changes needed in order to work the with technicalities of the zoning code. The new Zoning Review Working Group was formed from many of the same members from the Project Working Committee and adding in more Town Staff – really making the composition of the Working Group to be staff and Board members who would be working and administering the code. The original Technical Committee was meant to review documents to make sure there were not technical issues, not really to judge the content.

Was there any conflict between members of the Committees?

- » There were some differing ideas sometimes, and if a consensus couldn't be reached a vote was always taken to determine the decision. There were never any significant conflicts. The only difference was that the Project Working Committee who dealt mostly with the Plan had labeled the forms as Traditional and Suburban, but when the Zoning Review Working Group started to go through the Zoning Code, they realized that we really want to encourage a more "traditional form" in a lot more places around Town and that the Suburban form should really be called Retrofit

instead. The Working Committee was not far off, the Working Group just took it further with the zoning as it evolved.

How does the new Code language deal with parking?

- » The Working Group agreed that the parking minimums do need to be reduced because even some developers were saying that the Town requires too much parking. This will be done and the Town will use either ULI or ITE standards to determine what parking standards/minimums are correct and work for the Town. The Town realizes that there will be changes in mobility preferences due to new technologies and that parking demand may be less in the future. The Town will still have the Alternative Parking Plan as a tool to deal with unique cases that may require less parking than even those reduced minimums.

The City of Buffalo has no parking minimums anymore and for the most part it works because the market demands a certain amount, but with the public it will always be an issue, either too much or not enough.

Will the new required streets have to be connected not only for vehicles but also for pedestrians? The DOT would like to see this occur.

- » Yes the new streets will obviously be accessible to vehicles but all will be required to have pedestrian elements – sidewalks are required on all sides, and bike lanes and on-street parking may also be elements that are chosen to be applied. There is a concept being explored to also add a street type for Alleys to allow for only pedestrian access. These connections are important within parcels, between adjacent parcels, and also to neighborhoods and communities adjacent to the commercial areas.

What has been the public's reaction to the new Zoning Code thus far?

- » What we have heard from the beginning have been issues with height and with how new development relates to adjacent residential uses. This has continued when we've been discussing the Code changes. The new building heights proposed in this code lowers the permitted height in many districts across the Town. In addition, we now have provisions for transitions that are required when adjacent to a residential zoning district and these depend on the size of the parcel – shallow or deep. The transitions include not only landscaping required in a buffer area, but also step backs of a building depending on their height and its relationship to the surrounding residential. The transitions and height issues are very delicate in the older, more traditional areas of Town – those we are calling Infill – because they are embedded in a neighborhood and likely are much closer to adjacent residential. It is pretty much agreed upon that added height and density is more acceptable and desired in the Retrofit areas.