

Date: July 13, 2005

Focus Group: Business Development and Economic Issues

Attendees: Keith Parwulski, President, Williamsville Business Association
Ron George, Zaepfel Development
J. Michael Hayes, Village Attorney
Kathy Behan, First Amherst Development Corporation
David Kerchoff, Erie County Industrial Development Agency
Charles J. Grotta, "Charlie the Barber"

Jocelyn Gordon, AICP – peter j. smith & company, inc.
Allison Dubie, MUP - peter j. smith & company, inc.

Assuming no constraints exist – physically, financially or otherwise – what is the ideal vision for Williamsville's Main Street Corridor? What role should it play in the larger context of Western New York?

- Satellite or alternative to downtown
- Proper mix of commercial
- Easily accessible to the Village
- Need a model for Williamsville's Main Street
- Slow down traffic along Main Street to pass thru the unique community
- Create brackets on the Village
- Add more flowers
- Make the Mill a destination
- Make Cayuga to Mill a historic district/the "Nucleus of the Village"
- Unify the parking lots instead of just the Mill parking lots allow for multi-use
- More traffic, more spill over
- Make the Village more people friendly
- Make some center malls, like a median
- Reluctant to have a raised mall
- Create a portable median for the summertime
- Negotiate with DOT for a permanent median
- Save spaces for customer parking
- Make the Village more like Niagara-on-the-Lake
- Could have parking meters
- Williamsville is the Main Street of the Western NY area
- Main Street is wide enough but in needs a closer feel with the buildings, trees and other side walk areas, therefore some buildings are tool close, others too far away.
- Buildings set back too far from the street are bad
- Want less traffic – problem, Main Street is the best route
- Need to improve other streets besides Main Street
- Want more pedestrian funneling
- Don't see public parking lots, no signage telling where to go
- Pedestrian friendly

Assuming no constraints exist – physically, financially or otherwise – what is the ideal vision for Williamsville’s Main Street Corridor? What role should it play in the larger context of Western New York? (Part Two)

- Corridor bustling with activity
- Safe to walk/cross Main Street
- Adequate parking
- More uniform hours for businesses
- Uniform look – facades, signage
- Move from the City to the suburbs
- Assemblage
- Coordinate more with festivals and concerts
- Make things more colorful
- Need to spruce up the community even if there are parameters
- Mini blues festival in the Village
- People in pedestrian crossings with big signs
- Radar dummy show people you’re enforcing these laws, whatever it takes to slow the traffic down
- Gem in Western New York
- Destination for residents and tourists, the residence as not just Village people, but Amherst and Clarence people too, for example
- Park on Main, walk down to Glen Avenue
- Big pavers – stone things, reset them and put in some trees isn’t enough
- Need to articulate to the board
- Add a planter area
- Preserving the historical/charm of the Village
- Diverse – offering a mix of commercial, retail, etc.
- Satellite/Alternative for downtown
- Type of building defined is alright, but not the specific specs
- Slow down or reduce traffic
- Bring back the electric trolley to assist in people movement
- Niagara hydro project – put some electricity towards the electric trolley – very unique asset
- Pedestrian friendly will foster a critical mass, which in turn will generate the need for more commercial businesses

Identify Williamsville's existing "economic" **strengths** as they relate to achieving and "ideal vision".

- Headquarters located here
- Strong retail here, even though mostly salon and hairdressers, still strong
- Closeness to the airport
- Retail uniqueness
- National companies
- Unique Village
- Heritage
- Not a lot of vacancies
- Most developers try to develop according to the area
- Strong residential area
- Central location in Western New York
- Our history – come to the falls, mills, cemetery (historical destination points)
- Parks – large festivals
- People come to shop or dine
- Promote Strawberry Festival – Old Home Days
- Large business
- Strong retail and professional services
- Strong business district
- Historical charm
- Desirable area to live
- Proximity to the NYS Thruway and I-290
- Critical mass of boutique style businesses
- Upscale socio-economic level and middle class clients
- Safe
- People like the Village, they can walk to everything
- Village/Small town feel
- Ellicott Creek
- Food is a big draw – Creekview, Eagle House, Jenny's
- Friendly people
- Mom and popish
- Main Street appeal
- Diversity of business mix
- Alternative to downtown

Identify Williamsville's existing "economic" weaknesses as they relate to achieving and "ideal vision".

- Traffic is congestive
- Traffic can be an advantage, but it is a weakness here
- Parking, but it is overrated, if people want to come, they will
- Parking is not coordinated well
- Lack of parking or perceived lack of parking
- Lack of public parking
- Building stock is becoming older
- Reuses of buildings is going to be a problem
- Bisected by a highway
- Village is fractured by a 'super highway" interrupting safe people crossing between businesses
- Employees are over parking, right now they're putting employees in front of the cemetery
- Government doesn't promote the Village as a destination site
- People movement
- No master plan
- Too many people pass through the community and do not stop to partake in our history
- Not enough pedestrian crosswalks
- Right now the Village is just a cut through
- No uniformity of hours
- Traffic flow car/pedestrian
- Lack of identity i.e. East Aurora
- Don't hear about Village as a destination, the Mill is something you hear of, but only for foreclosure
- Kids have to be able to cross the street, difficult now
- No street vendor or food
- Location issue because of parking issues
- Fractured ability for multitasking
- In the codes, no banners are allowed

Describe any efforts you, or your business or organization, could provide that could help the Village's vision become a reality? What initiatives are currently underway that we may not be aware of?

- Various lending programs to assist businesses upgrade/expand
- Companies always looking at potential assembly sites for redevelopment
- The WBA wants to be very involved in the master plans. Our members represent about 155 businesses on Main Street in Williamsville