

Date: July 12, 2005

Focus Group: Quality of Life

Attendees: Charles K. Akers, Chairperson, Village Tree Board
Ramona D. Popowich VP, Williamsville Central School District
Walter R. Pacer Jr.
Carol Deseutner, Resident, Environmental Advisory Council
Rich Sweeney, Village Trustee

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

Assuming no constraints exist – physically, financially or otherwise – describe your ideal “vision” for Williamsville specifically as it relates to “Quality of Life” issues such as education, culture, history, recreation and the environment.

- Maintain the character of Williamsville South High School
- Maintain schools
- Historic place
- More emphasis on Williamsville’s role in the War of 1812
- Highlight the historic significance of the Eagle House and the Underground Railroad caves under the Eagle House
- More historic references than just the markers that are up now
- Innovation of residential and commercial space – commercial being those things that are useful to Williamsville residence
- Walkable place
- Build on historical nature of Village
- Significance of 19th Century homes
- More children involved in environmental education
- Build on historic nature and traditions like the brewery, the Underground Railroad, the War of 1812 and the Mill
- Like Munford, we could be the Munford of Western NY
- Maintain Williamsville and emphasize history
- Environment to raise family, walkable, library, stores, parks...
- Need to get back to a walkable community
- Don’t want to commercialize historic and environmental features to the extent of making them a regional destination for large scale recreational events – festivals and amusements
- Need to maintain local shops
- Viable type of community, need to bring in people to keep it alive
- Similar to Lewisburg, PA with two lane road with parking at times angular to the curb, the ideal old time, integrating strip mall and old main street with lots of little shops, similar to by the turn of the century
- Resident oriented and a destination - combination of both
- Possibly enhancing history to be both resident oriented and a destination
- Constrain Main Street

Assuming no constraints exist – physically, financially or otherwise – describe your ideal “vision” for Williamsville specifically as it relates to “Quality of Life” issues such as education, culture, history, recreation and the environment (continued).

- Love to have a bookstore
- Williamsville can't be supported without outside people
- Have wine tasting and concerts in the Meeting Hall
- Inform residents of the opportunities in the Village
- Safe place for children to walk
- Find some way to connect all the parks
- Map to follow the places in Williamsville
- Village events threaten to over use the parks and becoming too much of a destination with people staying all night leaving behind beer cans nonetheless, the Village has important regional environmental parks that are part of a regional park system
- Parking area in the Amherst state park as a possible issue
- Maintain quality of life and an affordable community, while not hiding the historic and natural area that should be shared
- Hesitant to make it a large scale tourist type area, maintain a balance between residential needs and tourist attractions
- Highlighting unique features
- People are comfortable stopping here still, welcoming even though we don't advertise
- In Hamburg, can't get near the beach if not a resident...don't want that for Williamsville
- Don't want to drive our seniors out
- Used to be a community of Snyder, no voice for Snyder, no voice for Eggertsville, don't want that for Williamsville
- Newsletter announcing Village matters
- Atmosphere to have people to come into the Village, not for fast food

Identify Williamsville's existing "quality of life" strengths as they relate to achieving an "ideal vision".

- Immediacy of government response
- School system
- Diversity of community, all kinds and types of people
- Children able to play street hockey, for example, in the community
- Like the sense of neighborhood, not the same in Clarence and East Amherst
- The conversation of a plan for Williamsville is good
- Very pleased with schools, there is no comparison
- Safety
- "Voice" in the village
- Convenience – doctors are all here
- Cultural within
- Residents and history of involvement is an overwhelming force of encouragement
- Quality of life
- Walkable
- Friendly environment here
- Do have a place within government for us to say something
- Fight to maintain quality of life
- With the widening of Main Street, it still has a lot of charm
- Easy access to Main Street
- Easy access to thruway and going from the airport to the Village
- Spas and day spas
- Recreational parks and ability to walk the community asset
- We are not a transit homeowner community, but a viable living community, what we are
- Not just a bedroom community
- Support for quality of Glen Park
- Second largest school district in the county, second largest employer in Amherst
- Residents new and old volunteer, put efforts in, maybe not long-term community effort, but short-term beautification definitely has volunteers
- Local talent
- Sense of neighborhood
- Neighborly streets
- Responsiveness of local government

Identify Williamsville's "quality of life" weaknesses as they relate to achieving an "ideal vision".

- Continue to afford government
- Williamsville as a term has been diluted, weakness in not being able to tell where the Village is
- No plan to do anything
- Putting ourselves on record with the plan is difficult
- Traffic issues
- State highway
- Limited money
- Village vs. Town
- Older population with limited income
- 40-60% residents owned by senior citizens
- Aging infrastructure
- Loss of boutique viability
- Be sure the needs of older and less affluent don't get overlooked
- Afford to stay
- Civic cry is regionalism, helping to diminish the value of Village
- No longer any schools in the Village
- No identity of Village geographic community
- Village post office – regional, not seen as allied with the Village
- Convince that there are some things that you need to pay for if you want to keep quality up
- Parking that is ugly but necessary, realize economic conundrum, affordable government limits things we can do
- Changing of Main Street, divided the Village right down the middle, destroyed our trees and the boutique viability
- Main Street is a state highway so it is out of our hands
- Need long term planning aspect
- No purpose driven goal need to take a plan, drive it and do it
- Never can have consensus, but some sort of common purpose
- Main Street is hurting us, need to rally around it
- Regionalism – talk of regionalizing the school district, against this
- Issue of taxes, keeping things affordable, unfunded mandates, maintain resources at an affordable price
- No connection between school board and Village board
- Main street, starting to be in decline
- Perception the Village has of the other the outside residents, need a balance...be more welcoming to the rest of the town
- More offices than Village residents can support, on going battle/struggle
- The older community is on fixed income and limited ability to fix additional needs of home maintenance and repairs, difficult to keep raising taxes or make individual residents pay for refurbishment of infrastructure
- Culture here and culture is dying

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?

- Moving the Williamsville toll to reduce Main Street traffic
- Village is going to be trisected it once Wehrle Drive is increased
- Entrance to the thruway is being moved to Youngs Road
- State has ignored suggestions about Wehrle Drive, don't see that anything is going to change
- Toll road issue has been studied and every ten years it has been brought up
- There is bond money, for the first time to move the toll going to be moved down towards Pembroke
- Replanting Main Street with trees with funding via grants and donations
- NYS killed off trees on Main Street, how do you replace 300 trees on Main Street
- This year, Williamsville became a Tree City USA
- Street tree master plan
- 25 year Tree replacement plan
- Street tree survey by Cornell students