EDGENWATER

A Case Study in linking local needs and objectives to the design of a transportation project

New York State Department of Transportation
Foreword

The original Edgewater case training was developed well over a decade ago by NYSDOT staff involved with the Department’s Context Sensitive Solutions initiative, including Patricia Millington (now with FHWA), Kara Phillips, Mark Grainer, Phil Bell, Paul Krekeler, Tom Kligerman, Tom Behan, Mike Mariotti, Steve Munson, and Wayne Gannet. It was used in training planners and municipal officials at a number of State and Regional conferences and was highly praised by participants.

Because of its success, and its relatively unique interactive nature, it was decided to update it to address more contemporary issues, needs and objectives. And also to make it available to others who provide education and training in transportation project planning and design.

This update of the Edgewater training was prepared by Steve Munson, Mark Grainer, Colleen Smith-Lemmon and Korie McAllister. Support was provided by Nancy Alexander, Sue O’Connor and Melissa Fraley. Please contact NYSDOT’s Statewide Planning Bureau at smartplanning@dot.ny.gov if you need additional information or have questions about Edgewater.

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Introduction

In today’s financially constrained environment agencies with significant infrastructure responsibilities, such as the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), must focus on innovation, efficiency and cost control. At the same time, legislative and executive initiatives direct them to contribute to more diverse economic and social objectives. These objectives are manifest in federal and state legislation and programs focusing on the importance of “place”; including efforts embodied in New York’s Smart Growth, Complete Streets, Context Sensitive Solutions, and Sustainability & Resiliency initiatives.

Sense of place is a unique collection of qualities and characteristics – visual, cultural, social, and environmental – that provide meaning to a location. A sense of place is what makes one town different from another, but sense of place is also what makes our physical surroundings worth caring about. (1)

The Edgewater Case Study is one step in building the insight and experience required to attain these more diverse goals; and is intended to demonstrate and reinforce the proposition that stakeholders’ conditions, needs and objectives can materially affect both the objectives and the final design of a project.

This training is appropriate for local planners and officials, consultants, members of special interest groups, transportation planners and engineers new to the project development/design process, and graduate students in land-use and transportation planning.

Edgewater is based on a real setting which has been modified in respect to its demographic, economic, business and operational characteristics. The local information, needs and objectives provided in the project area description and developed through the role playing are not unique to Edgewater but have been encountered in other projects. Similarly, the linkages between the project and local goals, in some cases even individual goals, have been demonstrated in other projects.

1 Edward T. McMahon, Senior Resident Fellow, Urban Land Institute, in the Planning Commissioners Journal, Spring, 2012
Roll-Out

The training is provided in two parts. Module 1 is a break out and role playing exercise focusing on development and initial evaluation of relevant local information. It is approximately 2 hours in length. There should be at least 24 and no more than 40 participants. The steps in Module 1 are as follow.

- **Introduction** – The Training Leader explains the exercise including the role playing. He/she introduces the Case, outlines the transportation conditions and proposed improvements, then breaks the group into their assigned tables.

  Participants are provided with the Project Area Description and the Physical and Operational Conditions sections for their review prior to starting the session; preferably in advance of attendance.

- **Break Out & Role Playing** – In this step participants are asked to bring out local conditions, needs, changes, objectives from the perspective of their role. Participants with assigned roles are asked to bring out the underlined elements, though they may bring out other issues, opportunities or conditions as well. Participants who are not assigned roles are asked to assume a role that is different from their occupation (environmentalist, business-person, gadfly, board member, educator, are all possibilities). Notes should be taken and the Edgewater base map should be marked up with information provided by the participants.

  The Participant Roles and Background provides the material for each assigned role. Individuals will receive their assignment and the material for that specific role once each break out group is seated at its table. Each table is provided with the Edgewater base map and markers. One individual in each group should be chosen as recorder and to report out for his/her group.

  It is anticipated that questions will be asked that are of interest to all participants. These should be directed to the Training Leader so that all may hear his/her response. The Background Information for the Training Leader section anticipates some of the questions that might be asked and provides a response. Others will be added as the training progresses.

- **Report Out** – A representative from each break-out group reviews their findings. These are summarized and used to lead the closing discussion.

  The Summary of Local Information, Issues & Needs section provides an outline of the elements brought out in the break-out (public outreach) discussion by roadway section. This should be provided to the participants as hand-outs immediately following the report-out.

- **Closing Discussion** – The Closing Discussion takes participants through, generally, the first and perhaps most important stage in applying local information. It does so by asking participants to address two higher order questions, as follow.

2 Module 2 of this training is in development Journal, Spring, 2012
Given what we know about the Village, the information obtained in the public outreach process and our experience on similar projects elsewhere,

i) are there critical factors which, if not addressed or are misaddressed, would threaten the viability of the project, substantially reduce its benefits, or have an undesirable impact on the Village?

ii) are there opportunities which, if addressed appropriately, would significantly increase local benefits and/or generate substantial goodwill? (And a related question, can these logically and reasonably be incorporated to the project?)

To guide the Training Leader in the Closing Discussion the Critical Issues & Opportunities section provides an assessment of factors which respond to these questions. This Section will be expanded and refined as the training progresses.
Edgewater: Project Area Description

The Village of Edgewater is a bedroom community nestled against the east bank of the Hudson River twenty minutes south of Albany. Its population is 4,821, an increase of 21 percent over the last two decades, largely due to white collar workers relocating to the area. (The pace of residential development slowed following the recession starting in 2008, but rebounded within two years.) Family incomes and housing values are 24 percent higher than the Capital District average. The majority of housing in the Village is located on a plateau above School Yard Road, 800-plus feet from the business district and school. Multi-family housing is quite limited.

The business district is located on State Route 9J. Six of the eighteen commercial properties in the district were sold and redeveloped between 1998 and 2008; but only one since then. Three of the redevelopments installed rental apartments and/or office space on the upper floors. All rental units are occupied. There is infill potential at two properties. Two buildings are vacant, one of which the Village has acquired through tax default. The remaining properties are built out and there are no opportunities for expansion. On-site parking is limited to occupants.

Most residents commute to work and shop in the Capital District using Route 9J. Outside of the Village 9J is configured as two 12-foot lanes with 8-foot paved shoulders. The posted speed is 55 MPH. In the Village 9J has 12-foot lanes, and 9-foot wide parallel parking and 10-foot wide sidewalks on both sides. The posted speed is 35 MPH. The last significant roadwork in the Village was done 38 years ago.

In a major coup, the County Economic Development Agency and the State of New York has enticed Hudson Valley Superconductors (HVSJ) to consider a site on 3rd Street, ½ mile east of the Village for construction of a gas-fired electric generation plant.

The core business area sees a significant number of tourists from late-spring right through leaf peeping season. The Village wants to strengthen its visual and physical ties to the river, as it is the primary source of recreation and accounts for 30 percent of sales in the Village.

The Village is also rich in historical significance. George Washington slept in one of the row houses just outside the business district. In addition, Edgar Allen Poe lived in the house located on the corner of 1st Street and Route 9J for 18 months after he was kicked out of West Point. It was there that he outlined some his most famous works. The Poe house is a registered historic landmark run by the County.

Congestion is common on weekends and holidays from late spring through fall when traffic volumes are greatest. Delays occur when vehicles seeking to enter the marina are blocked at the railroad barriers as well as when delivery trucks double-park. When delays occur through traffic often uses School Yard Road as a bypass.

The Marina is private and has the only vehicular access from Rt. 9J to the waterfront. As the Marina charges a fee for boat launching and parking the Village would like to add a public launch site and parking at its park but is unwilling to spend their own funds to do so. The crossing to the park was closed to vehicles in 1923 and may be used only by bicyclists and pedestrians.

The middle school obtains access from a driveway to Route 9J. There is no traffic signal at this driveway, although there are warning beacon lights on the approaches to the School. The School district is very concerned about the railroad crossing as some students visit the park after school. One of the traffic fatalities was a bicyclist going from the School to the park.

The only State-designated Great Blue Heron sanctuary in New York lies just outside the southern edge of the Village. During breeding season there may be as many as 60 nests in the colony, each occupied by a breeding
pair and chicks. Kayakers and canoeists flock to the area to view the colony and off-load and park along Rt. 9J. The tidal flats forming the delta of the Vlockie Kill are prime locations for striper fishing from shore. During fishing season fisher-people also park along Rt. 9J.
Physical and Operational Conditions Giving Rise to the Proposed Project

The following conditions have been identified on Rt. 9J in the Project Area.

- There has been an average of 11 accidents per year over the last 3 years, including 2 fatalities. The accident rate is roughly 30% higher than on similar State roads. The majority of accidents are turn and parking related; although there are accident clusters at both ends of the business district suggesting that speeding is also a problem.

- Route 9J received one of the lowest pavement scores in the Region.

- Sidewalks do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and are in very poor repair.

- There are no pavement markings for pedestrians or bicyclists.

- Traffic volumes are estimated at 11,500 vehicles per day (VPD), although traffic volumes may approach 17,000 VPD on weekends and holidays from late spring through fall. The 20-year forecast predicts a 50% increase. VPD declines sharply south of 3rd Street.

- Flooding is not uncommon in the business district during heavy rains. Although the business district lies just above the 100-year flood plain, flooding was extensive during Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and 9J was closed for four days just north of the Village line.

Preliminary Project Options

- Full depth reconstruction
- Installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Rt. 9J and 1st Street
- Sidewalk and curb replacement, ADA compliant
- Drainage improvements including a 2nd outlet just south of the Village line
- Restriping including pedestrian crossings
Edgewater
Proposed Transportation Improvements
Participant Roles and Background

Notes: i) Individuals with assigned roles do not need to take the name of their character.  ii) Each role is assigned to only one participant.  iii) They are asked to bring out the underlined elements. These elements should be restated in their own words. They may bring in other considerations as they see fit.  iv) The organization of this Module assumes that there will be 4 break-out groups.  v) Characters should be assigned to tables/groups as set out below as there is built-in interaction between several of these roles. vi) Participants who are not assigned roles are asked to assume a role that is different from their occupation (environmentalist, business-person, gadfly, board member, educator, are all possibilities).

Seated at Table 1

Smart Growth – C. Pleinair: A Ph.D. graduate of the Tufts University Environmental Sciences Program, Ms/Mr Pleinair runs a successful consulting company housed on the second floor of the Fresian Bldg. in the Village. He/she purchased and improved the building 7 years ago. The ground floor is rented to a co-op selling local organic farm products. He/she makes the 3rd floor apartment available to clients and friends, mostly artists visiting from New York City. C., together with his/her life partner, is heavily invested in Village cultural affairs and has had several discussions with Art Along the Hudson (AAth) regarding the possibility of an annual Art Day event. To date these have been fruitless as AAth feels the Village lacks the infrastructure to support such an event.

Business Owner – B. Arfl: B. Arfl bought and restored a commercial building 3 years ago, installing apartments on the upper floors and a relatively upscale bistro on the ground floor. He/she owns the bistro, which has become a popular gathering spot for locals and tourists. B. Arfl doesn’t feel that limited parking has affected his/her business as it has operated at close to full capacity since opening. He/she would like to expand the business by opening an outside dining area, seasonally, but lacks room on his/her lot and the sidewalks are not wide enough to accommodate such uses.

Mayor Dudley: The Mayor has lived in Edgewater all his/her life and owns and operates a local real estate firm. Although he/she lacks a college degree, his/her intimate knowledge of local affairs, many friends, gregarious nature, and intuitive ability to develop effective compromises contribute to his/her success in business and politics. Mayor Dudley has been a vocal advocate for greater State investment in infrastructure and economic development improvements in the Village. Mayor Dudley has identified the following issues as critical to the quality of life in Edgewater:

- Enhancing the character and charm of the Village to attract new businesses and residents;
- Increasing parking by an additional 60 spaces in the core business area;
- Reducing traffic speeds and accidents and improving access for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Re-establishing vehicular access at the northern RR crossing and constructing parking and a boat launch.

Friends of the Earth – Wohl King: Wohl King lives in an apartment above a store in the Village center. He/she recently led a team of Boy Scouts in mapping a trail system for the Great Blue Heron sanctuary and is currently seeking funding to build the trails. He/she also runs a bi-monthly Volksmarch, which typically draws several hundred participants, children and adults, from within and outside the community.
PTA - C. Pitay: C has lived in Edgewater for his/her whole life. C’s 12-year-old daughter has a physical
disability and uses an orthotic device to walk. C is very concerned about his/her daughter’s safety as the
intersection at 1st Street is dangerous and the sidewalks are in horrible shape. Further, he/she is also concerned
about the fact that the School’s only vehicular access is from Rt. 9J despite the fact that the School’s property
backs up to School Yard road. He/she has had a number of meetings with the Mayor and other local officials in
an attempt to get them to address these problems.

Local Business Property Owner – F. R. Sale: F. R. Sale has owned a commercial property on 9J in the
southern end of the business district for the last 53 years and is approaching retirement. The building is
structurally sound but relatively poorly maintained. The upper two floors are unused. The ground floor is
subdivided; one unit is leased to a hair stylist and the other to an insurance agency. Mr/Ms Sale would like to
sell the building.

His/her real estate agent has shown the building to a number of potential buyers over the past 2 years, none of
whom made an offer. When asked “Why not?” they generally responded that market conditions were attractive
but the lack of parking and unattractive streetscape restricted their ability to draw the type and number of
customers or leasers necessary to justify their investment.

Seated at Table 2

Edgewater Business Association – B. Y. Downton: As a third generation owner of the hardware store, Ms/Mr
Downton heads the Edgewater Business Association (EBA). Parking has been an increasing problem over the
past 10 years and Ms/Mr Downton has also received numerous complaints about double-parking by deliveries
which create back-ups on 9J. He/she has sought help from the Village to resolve both problems, but the Village
lacks available expertise and has been unable to identify solutions. At the most recent meeting of the EBA,
streetscape improvements – lighting, plantings, pavers and the like – were the focus of discussion.

Hudson Valley Superconductors Representative – R. Abogado, Esq.: R. Abogado, Esq. is a lawyer
and partner at Hough, Bellow & Roare, PLLC and represents Hudson Valley Superconductors. HVSI’s
consultants have determined the construction and operation of the power generation facility will have minimal
transportation impacts.

The same can’t be said for construction and operation of the industrial / manufacturing facility which would
be constructed after the power generation facility is completed. A separate analysis prepared by HVSI’s
consultants shows that improvements would be necessary to mitigate the transportation impacts in the Village.
These include a stop-light at the intersection of Rt. 9J and 3rd Street. The consultants also noted that cut through
traffic on School Yard Road would increase. (R. Abogado should provide support for a signal at 3rd Street if
someone else raises the possibility first.)

Village Resident – O. Wyenot: Mr/Ms Wyenot was born and raised in a single family home on 9J just south
of the business district and now lives in the residential area above School Yard Road. His/her mother was
seriously injured by a speeder 12 years ago as she was turning left onto 9J from 3rd Street. Since then Mr/
Ms Wyenot has been persistent in attempting to get NYSDOT/the Village to install a traffic light at 3rd Street
and extend the 35 MPH limit further south. He/she feels that the proposed traffic signal at 1st Street should be
moved to 3rd Street or that another signal should be provided at 3rd given the demonstrable safety problems at
this intersection.

Climate and Energy – A. Ward: A. Ward is a recent Edgewater transplant having relocated from New York
City to join his/her life partner. He/she telecommutes to his/her job with a coalition of businesses committed
to the development of energy and climate legislation at both the state and national level. A. Ward is a vocal
advocate for renewable energy and environmentally friendly development.

A. Ward was unaware of HVSI’s siting proposal prior to moving to the Village. He/she has looked into their developments elsewhere and found that construction of their gas fired electric plants was always followed by development of co-located industrial or manufacturing facilities with much larger environmental and transportation impacts. (If given a chance he/she should press R. Abogado to identify what kind of follow-on industrial / manufacturing facility will be co-located at the HVSI site.)

**Zoning Appeals Board – F. Rustraet:** F. was born and raised in Edgewater and owns and operates a gas station on Route 9J just north of the business district. He/she knows everyone in town and values his/her position on the Zoning Appeals Board because it provides an opportunity to protect the interests of long-term residents and businesses; particularly when these conflict with those of newcomers to the Village. F. Rustraet owns undeveloped property along the Vlockie Kill.

**Seated at Table 3**

**School Yard Road Association – M. E. Firstly:** Mr/Ms Firstly has lived in the village for 15 years with his/her family. He/she moved to the community because of its proximity to Albany, its high quality school system and its rural setting. Over the years, however, traffic volumes on School Yard Road have grown and he/she feels it is now neither a quiet environment nor a safe one. The noise is a particular problem for Mr/Ms Firstly as he/she works a night shift and must sleep during the day.

**Bike America – R. U. Riding:** R.U. Riding is the president of the local chapter of Bike America, a national advocacy group. R.U. lives just south of Edgewater and bikes through the village on a regular basis for both recreational and commuting purposes. With support from the Capital District Transportation Committee R.U. has produced a bike & pedestrian trail Plan to connect the residential areas above School Yard Road to the business district and school. The Plan calls for construction of a mixed use trail along School Yard Road extending to the School as well as two stairs/ramps connecting School Yard to sidewalks in the business district. There is sufficient room for such improvements and no objections to these elements of the Plan were raised at the public meetings at which it was discussed.

**Local Historical Representative – R. E. Peat:** Ms/Mr Peat works for the county as manager of the Poe House Museum. He/she is related to one of the first settlers of Edgewater and is well versed on the history of the area. He/she is quite proud of his/her hometown and is adamant that the Village needs to do more to attract visitors, including providing more parking and better access to the Museum. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) recently completed a plan for architectural improvements at the Museum. But, in informal discussions with a senior SHPO official regarding funding for these improvements Ms/Mr Peat was told: “Well we’ve pondered broke and dreary, have petitioned D. of B. for more, but from their halcyonic aerie, ‘only what you’ve got, no more!’”

**Village Board – F. Einme:** Ms/Mr Einme is a long time resident of the Village and owns and operates a dairy farm and orchard in the abutting Town. These have been in his/her family for over 160 years. A fiscal conservative, he/she has consistently and effectively fought proposed tax increases and capital spending, including improvements to the storm-water management system, reconstruction of local roads and access improvements at the School.

Ms/Mr Einme would like the Village to sell the park as he/she feels 1) the cost of maintenance aren’t supported by the level of use and 2) the Village’s liability may be significant as it cannot ensure that pedestrians and bicyclists can cross the tracks safely without full closure of the crossing.
Commuter – V. W. Busse: V. W. has commuted to his/her job at the Office of General services for 22 years. Nine years ago he/she started a ride-sharing program which is maintained on the Village’s web-site. Ride-sharers use an informal and illegal dirt parking area just off the paved shoulder of Rt. 9J north of the School. V. W. wants NYSDOT to establish bus service from the Village to downtown Albany.

Seated at Table 4

Environmental Advocate – S. Meagle: S. Meagle is newly married and has just moved to a recently converted multi-family home on 9J close to the Great Blue Heron Sanctuary. Employed by NYSDEC for 12 years, he/she was responsible for the field studies which justified establishment of the sanctuary. S. Meagle was recently approached by the head of DEC’s Park Development unit for his/her views on incorporating the sanctuary to a larger park, including a boat launch. He/she is not in favor of the boat launch as it conflicts with other users. He/she is also quite concerned about the proposed location of the new storm-water drainage outlet as there is substantial scientific documentation showing that petroleum effluents typically found in road-runoff can lead to die-offs in the food species favored by the Great Blue Heron.

Retired (Village) Public Works Director – H. Ardware: H. Ardware was involved in every significant public works project in the Village between 1952 and 1996. If there’s something underground he/she knows what it is, where it is and all about it. That includes a storm-water discharge outlet built by the Army Corps of Engineers in late-1914, which extends from the western edge of the Rt. 9J right-of-way to the River just north of the School. This outlet was closed and covered, but not demolished, when the site was deactivated in 1923. H. is also an advisor to the School Superintendent and regularly attends school board meetings. At the last meeting he/she was told that the School needed to expand and that this might mean relocating its driveways and parking.

Marina Owner – Mo Boating: Mo Boating has owned the village marina for 20 years. It is a private marina and charges for boat launching and parking. Mo thinks only of his/her business and as such has consistently refused to provide public access across his/her property to the Park contending that it would create unacceptable liability and operational problems. (The Village owns the land connecting the Marina and its Park and has provided an easement to Mo on the condition that he/she allows park maintenance equipment to cross his/her property.)

Conrail – F. Astrak: F. Astrak works for Amtrak, which operates and maintains the track separating the Village from the shoreline. Amtrak is well aware of the Village’s desires relating to the northern RR crossing but, as a matter of both company and regulatory policy, will allow only one vehicular crossing in the Village. F. Astrak has been charged with looking for potential solutions as well as with “encouraging” the Village to consider grading and landscaping changes on Village property near the tracks to help reduce the impacts of future flooding.

The marina’s crossing to Rt. 9J does not exist as a permitted right. It can be closed, or closed and relocated at the discretion of Amtrak and the federal railroad regulatory authorities, alone. But, the circumstances under which such action would be taken must be sufficient to outweigh opposition from the marina owner and his/her customers and the cost of restitution for loss of property use.

Friends of the Vlockie Kill – B. G. Bass: Due to the pristine conditions of the fresh water flowing from the Vlockie Kill, its annual elver/glass eel migration, its nutrient rich mixing with tidal waters at the outlet, and the existence of wadeable tidal flats, this area is recognized as perhaps the most productive fly fishing site for striped bass on the Hudson. The “Friends of the Vlockie Kill”, a regional flyfishing organization, was
established to protect the stream. B. G. Bass retired from the NYC police force 12 years ago and is one of its founders and current president. The main objective of the organization is to protect the Vlockie Kill from pollution and development. The properties abutting the Vlockie Kill east of 9J are seen as prime locations for upscale second-home development because of the area’s natural beauty. B. G. has had a number of discussions with NYSDOT Traffic & Safety staff regarding the possibility of widening the shoulders along 9J to provide safer parking.
How do you intend to use the information gathered from the public and elected officials? There are three over-arching uses. The first is to develop information that might materially affect the project. Typical examples might be planned developments at critical locations or which generate a large number of trips, or plans to replace other infrastructure in the right-of-way in the near future. The second is to develop information that might enable us to provide greater and perhaps broader benefits to travelers, businesses and the community generally. The third is to avoid mistakes and unintended harm.

What guides project decisions in respect to meeting local needs and desires? First, in today’s financial environment costs are critical. That means that each element must address or enable resolution of a transportation need or problem. If it doesn’t do so directly, it must have a demonstrable and calculable benefit that outweighs its cost. Second, we have to resolve the transportation problems giving rise to the project. Third, we must follow all legal, regulatory and design requirements and standards. And, fourth, where there are multiple acceptable design options we may defer to local decision makers.

What happens if the community wants something that you wouldn’t otherwise include in the project? If it conflicts with Federal or State regulatory or design requirements it won’t be included. If it’s not included because it’s too expensive we may be able to add it as a Betterment if some other entity provides the necessary funds. (Betterments are elements added to a NYSDOT project that are funded by others.) Betterments are not uncommon where municipalities plan to replace utilities in our ROW, for example, as they offer an opportunity to reduce the municipal costs of such replacements. It is also possible that it can be included if some other source of transportation funding becomes available prior to final design and contracting.

Why is the traffic signal proposed to be located at 1st Street? The intersections at 1st and 3rd streets have similar turning volumes but the through volume at 1st is markedly higher than at 3rd. (The driveway to the marina and the intersection at 2nd Street have much lower turning volumes.) Further, the intersection at 1st serves a more diverse mix of users. Locating the signal at 1st would also extend the “SLOW” zone established for the School and should reduce the speed of downstream traffic in the Village. It is also likely that some of the left-turn traffic at 2nd street will reroute through the signal. Beyond that, there may be an opportunity to provide a dedicated turn lane in the future, should it become necessary.

What’s the situation on School Yard Road? It is a Village road parallel to and roughly 20 feet above Rt. 9J. It has two-lanes and sufficient width to allow parallel parking. It is in only fair shape. There are no sidewalks, which is true of Village roads, generally.

Most of the homes along School Yard are old and a good number are run down. Roughly 40 percent of the frontage and on the west side is undeveloped. Property depths from the edge of pavement range from 30 to 80 feet. Lot widths on the east side exceed 150 feet on average and are much deeper. Homes on the east side are set well back from the road and most of them have an excellent view of the river.
What do you intend to do about lighting, relocation of utilities, landscaping and the like? (Ditto, about accommodating bicyclists?) -- These will all be considered later in the design process. There are other elements to be addressed first, however, including the configuration of sidewalks and parking for example.

**Why was the RR crossing to the park closed?** The U. S. Department of Defense (DoD) leased the lands west of the tracks from the Village and property owner early in WWI for use as a storage and trans-shipment facility. DoD built a pier, constructed a connection between the village land and what is now the marina, and constructed a temporary railroad crossing at 1st Street for use by the military. The agreement with the railroad was that the crossing would be closed once it was no longer necessary for the war effort. In 1923 DoD decommissioned the trans-shipment facility, returned the properties to their former owners and closed the crossing to vehicles.

**Who owns the undeveloped property north of the Poe House and west of 9J?** It’s right-of-way owned by the State and the Railroad.
Summary of Local Information, Issues & Needs by Roadway Section

Notes: i) The information provided below was drawn from points raised in the break-out groups (public outreach). The sort by roadway section is only one way of organizing the information. Other sorts can be quite informative. ii) Items presented in plain text are requests for changes or additions to the project. Items presented in italicized text are information that might be useful to the project. iii) Indented items relate to or are alternatives to the non-indented items above them.

General
Provide commuter bus service to Albany
Village lacks planning staff and expertise
The traffic impacts of follow-on development at other HVSI sites were large
There is a CDTC sponsored bike and pedestrian trail Plan to connect the residential areas to the School and business district.

North of the intersection of 1st Street and Rt. 9J
Provide driveway and bike/ped connections from the School to School Yard Road
Improve bike/ped connections from the School to the Village park
Informal ride sharing parking lot on the shoulder of 9J north of the School
Potential relocation of the School’s driveways and parking when it expands
9J closed for 4 days north of the Village as a result of flooding during Hurricane Sandy

Intersection of 1st St. & Rt. 9J
Proposed signal and bike / ped improvements at 1st Street intersection
Relocate proposed traffic signal to 3rd Street
Relocate proposed signal to the marina driveway
Village wants vehicular access to and a boat launch and parking at its park
DEC considering a new state park around Heron sanctuary, with a boat launch

School Yard Road
Eliminate / reduce cut through traffic on School Yard Road
Congestion due to delays at the marina entrance & double-parked trucks
Provide a driveway from School Yard Road to the School
Build sidewalk / bike improvements on School Yard Road and connect them to the School
Provide two stairs/ramps connecting School Yard Road to the business district
1st Street to 3rd Street
- Provide more parking
- Provide streetscape improvements
- Relocate the proposed signal at 1st St. to the marina driveway
  *Sidewalks are of insufficient width for seasonal or event use in the business district*
  *Congestion occurs due to delays at the marina entrance & double-parked trucks*
  *The RR crossing from Rt. 9J to the marina does not exist as a legal right*

3rd Street & Rt. 9J intersection
- Relocate the proposed traffic signal to 3rd Street
  *Accident problems at the intersection*

South of the intersection of 3rd Street & Rt. 9J
- Provide safer parking on the shoulders of 9J south of the Village
- Relocate or redesign proposed storm water outlet
  *Potentially usable storm-water drainage outlet just north of the School*
- Looking for funding for trail improvements at the Heron sanctuary
- Potential new state park around Heron sanctuary, with a boat launch
Critical Issues & Opportunities

Not to be provided to participants.

The single dominant fact is that the stretch of Rt. 9J from the School to the southern edge of the business district is the commercial, cultural and social heart of the Village.

At the same time, this area and, indeed, the entire Village has changed significantly over the past 10-20 years. It has evolved from a sleepy urban-outlier to a relatively upper-middle income, well educated community. The nature of some of the businesses has changed and they serve a more discriminating and demanding clientele. Newcomers are often quite involved in local affairs and occasionally look for changes that conflict with the expectations of long time residents. Many of the changes they look for are quality of life and place related. These conflicts have created friction between some long-time residents and newcomers.

Addressing the needs of businesses will be critical

Access to almost all businesses is exclusively from Rt. 9J, parking is already limited, and the construction season will overlap with the businesses’ peak season. As a result, business people and property owners will very quickly realize that sales will fall and rental income may fall during construction, perhaps sharply. These problems will generate substantial opposition and perhaps threaten the project.

The construction plan and Maintenance and Protection of Traffic plan (MAPT) will need to be structured to minimize damage to businesses. That may not be enough to overcome potential opposition, however, and the design team will need a strategic approach to this problem. A large part of this strategy will be to find ways to generate good will; and particularly opportunities to add value to the business district.

Parking in the business district will be critical both during construction and for economic development thereafter

While population and income growth continue, commercial redevelopment essentially stopped 5 years ago. It might be assumed that this was simply a result of the recession starting in 2008. But that appears to be incorrect. With one exception all of the information gathered at the public information session leads to the conclusion that the lack of parking has constrained commercial development.

Any design that reduces parking will be opposed and almost any design that increases parking will be supported; at least by the Edgewater Business Association (EBA) and elected officials.

Reconstruction of the sidewalks in the business district provides an opportunity to address a number of issues.

There is sufficient width to provide for a sidewalk design that could accommodate delivery parking slots; thereby reducing congestion due to double parking and consequent cut-through traffic on School Yard Road. The same design could accommodate seasonal uses and special events; thereby enabling the seasonal expansion of some businesses.

If sidewalk changes are accompanied by a significant increase in parking it would likely increase sales above the levels seen before the project was constructed. If large enough, this would lead to further redevelopment and higher property values.
Changing the layout of on-street parking could make up for many of the lost parallel parking slots. (There are also other parking options which would more than make up for the reduction in on-street parking.) At the same time, the most likely on-street parking alternatives would conflict with the safety of bicyclists, at least on one side of Rt. 9J. Again, there are alternatives to address bicycle needs in the district.

Assuming that all design standards can be accommodated, the decision to alter the sidewalk system should reside with the Village (and the EBA). Why? Because the essential determining factor should probably be which businesses can make the most productive use of changes in the design of the sidewalks.

What happens on and along School Yard Road will be critical

School Yard Road already serves as a by-pass to the business district when there is congestion on Rt. 9J and it appears inevitable that it will serve as the primary detour during construction.

Beyond its use as a detour, improvements on School Yard can have benefits during and beyond construction. For example, if linked to the sidewalks along Rt. 9J by stairs or ramps it can provide temporary parking for and access to the business district. If vehicular, bike and pedestrian links are established between School Yard Road and the School safety and Level-of-Service will be enhanced at the 9J and 1st St. intersection. Similarly, School Yard can be posted as an alternative bike route to 9J in the business district.

The downside is that traffic volumes will increase on School Yard and some / many homeowners will be upset.

There may be a way to turn this problem to the Village’s mid- to long-term benefit, however. For example, the Village might acquire key undeveloped parcels and construct spill-over parking for the business district. As importantly, however, given that many of the homes on School Yard are small, old, and some are run down and probably unattractive to families moving to the Village, the Village could rezone for multi-family homes and/or office use. This option might well increase opportunities to sell and improve these properties. If multi-family homes or offices are built this would also measurably increase the size of the “local” market (i.e. residents and local employees accessing the business district on foot) and enhance the potential for further redevelopment in the District.

Simply installing a traffic signal with pedestrian amenities at 1st Street doesn’t cut it when there’s an opportunity for much greater and more diverse benefits.

The Village wants to build a boat launch with parking at its park but is unwilling to foot the bill and Amtrak won’t allow a second, full-service connection to the waterfront, anyway. The State is considering establishing a new park with a boat launch around the Heron Sanctuary. There are probable environmental and user conflicts associated with a boat launch at the State park.

Option: The Village transfers its Park to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) at no cost and DEC builds a boat launch, parking and other improvements at the site. NYSDOT improves the connection between the (formerly) village park and the marina, closes the existing crossing to the marina to vehicles, and reopens and improves the northern crossing for all users. DEC acquires sufficient property near the Heron Sanctuary to build parking and a kayak/canoe launch. NYSDOT builds them.
Implications -- Benefits:

NYSDOT -- Gets the parking necessary to accommodate kayakers, canoeists and fisher-people safely south of the Village without having to acquire property or build in its right-of-way.

NYSDOT and the Village -- Closing the existing railroad crossing eliminates one source of traffic congestion in the center of the Village and, thereby, reduces cut-through traffic on School Yard Road. Locating the signal at 1st St. also enables construction of a turn lane should it be necessary.

The Village, museum and business district -- All of the new parking will be available to business and museum customers in the off-season and after-boating-hours, and some at other times as well. The Village gets “its” boat launch and eliminates maintenance costs and liability concerns.

NYSDEC -- Gets a park and boat launch as well as separate parking accommodations for canoeists, kayakers and fisher-people. DEC’s overall costs may be reduced compared to establishing a separate park with boat launch and parking facilities near the Heron Sanctuary. Relocation of the boat launch also alleviates potential environmental concerns and user conflicts that would occur if the boat launch were located near the Sanctuary.

F. Astrak -- Gets the Village, School District and Amtrak executives off his/her back.

Implications -- Impacts: Mo Boating loses direct access to the Marina and (some, perhaps most) boat launch fees and parking revenues. The number of vehicles crossing the tracks will increase.