MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Date: Wednesday, June 29, 2016
Location: I-81 Viaduct Project Outreach Center, 335 Montgomery Street, Syracuse
Event: Sustainability Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Group (SAWG) Meeting

Attendees

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project Team Members</th>
<th>SAWG Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Frechette, NYSDOT</td>
<td>David Ashley</td>
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<td>Joseph Flint, NYSDOT</td>
<td>David Bottar</td>
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<td>John Sexton, NYSDOT</td>
<td>James D’Agostino</td>
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<td>Mark Honis, NYSDOT</td>
<td>Owen Kerney</td>
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<td>Kathleen Joy, NYSDOT</td>
<td>Rebecca Livengood</td>
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<td>Rita Campon, Parsons</td>
<td>David Mankiewicz</td>
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<td>Chris Calvert, AKRF</td>
<td>Andrew Maxwell</td>
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<td>Matthew Smith, AKRF</td>
<td>Andrew Schuster</td>
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<td>Kathryn Wolf, TWMLA</td>
<td>Mike Stanton</td>
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<td>Jonathan Peet, TWMLA</td>
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<td>Andy Obernesser, EDR</td>
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<td>Erica Tauzer, EDR</td>
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Discussion

Mark Frechette, NYSDOT’s I-81 Viaduct Project Director, introduced Owen Kerney, the City of Syracuse’s Assistant Director for City Planning and SAWG member, and the speaker for this afternoon’s presentation on the City’s ongoing effort to update the zoning ordinance called “ReZone Syracuse.”

Questions (Q), Answers (A), and Comments (C) included:

Q: Do you anticipate the zoning ordinance passage and changes to the zoning districts will be done together?

A: Yes, those two actions will be concurrent through the Syracuse Common Council vote. We anticipate the vote will occur at the conclusion of the project in fall 2017.

Q: I agree that our zoning code needs updating. Doesn’t our code still reference blacksmithing and horse shoeing?

A: Yes, some of the current language is obsolete and out of step with current needs. We have still references to slaughterhouses also.

Q: One of the challenges is related to parking. Many places provide on-street parking and other drivers use surface lots downtown. Does the city plan to impose any restrictions to parking in the Central Business District (CBD)?
A: The new zoning will discourage expansive surface parking lots downtown. The Downtown Committee Annual Meeting recently highlighted the growth of residential and office space downtown in a very positive way, and on- and off-street parking plays into that growth. Ultimately we will accommodate parking but will rely on development to do so via structured parking, on street parking, and determining the minimum that they need, not what the City requires. Also, bike infrastructure and further increasing residential density downtown will help to reduce parking demand. We want to protect what’s there, and more sensitively integrate parking with the urban fabric moving forward.

Q: Will there be a trigger for new development size and whether or not the building must provide structured parking?

A: We will rely on the design professionals and development community to help determine the balance between parking quantity and the size of the development. We will be addressing this issue in the standards eventually, but we don’t know the specifics at this time.

C: When our family came to Syracuse, there weren’t any off-street parking lots downtown. The land was too valuable in the urban core. Now we have a smaller population downtown and the dynamics have changed.

Q: Is the drawing on the easel the Future Land Use / Character Areas Plan previously adopted by the Common Council? Where does the Central Business District go?

A: The maps on the right are the adopted Future Land Use map. One map displays the entire city, and the other is a close up of the Urban Core. The map on the left is a Current Land Use map. The Future Land Use map is guiding our re-zoning effort. The Plan uses the Urban Core Character Area designation instead of the CBD used in the current zoning code. Our new zoning ordinance will build from the Plan’s character areas and get into much greater detail across the whole city. The Plan will direct growth in deliberate ways throughout the City including the Near East Side, the Southside, as well as the two economic engines of Central New York: Downtown and University Hill.

Q: Currently the industrial zoning of Erie Boulevard just east of downtown doesn’t allow residential. Will that change?

A: The Plan identifies this area as an Industrial Legacy Character Area. We want to protect the form and legacy of those areas. It is intended to accommodate light manufacturing, retail, and residential akin to the current Franklin Square mix of uses.

Q: If zoning allowed it, and welcoming streetscapes with broad sidewalks were installed on Erie Boulevard, I imagine that in 10 years there could be residential blocks on both sides of the corridor. How might Erie Boulevard change over time?

A: Portions of Erie Boulevard East could be improved; it has great potential. We’re continuing to designate the portion east of Teall Avenue a commercial corridor. We want to encourage dense urban corridors
where it makes sense to do so, for example, South Salina Street downtown, but we don’t expect Erie Boulevard East to look like that in every area. Big box retail also needs a place.

Q: Within the Urban Core Character Area, do you expect there to be a single corresponding zoning district or will there be a number of districts within that?

A: It is still uncertain. We don’t anticipate a large number of zoning districts within each character area. The Urban Core Character Area is geographically expanded from the current CBD but won’t likely translate to the same number of districts as the current zoning, which includes eight different business district zones: CBD A, CBD B, CBD C, and so on. These districts will be consolidated into one or two districts.

Q: What concerns me about the prospect of many sub-districts with differing zoning requirements is that you wouldn’t want to send a signal to developers that they should scout block by block for sites for huge projects. How are places like Armory Square protected if there are a variety of zoning districts in and around it?

A: We need to find a balance to encourage development as well as to protect the character of places. Urban juxtapositions, like Hanover Square’s location next to the State Tower, can be wonderful things and contribute to the character of downtown. Our adoption of design standards should allow for these juxtapositions to create interesting places.

C: Zoning could allow for the context to adapt over time and allow for increases in building height, perhaps benchmarked to some percentage increase over buildings directly adjacent to a particular site.

C: Good things happen in small buildings in places like Syracuse. Big buildings try to capture the character of small buildings, but it’s difficult. Lately, everybody wants to build large student housing complexes on University Hill. At the same time I’m approached by smaller developers who would fit very well in the neighborhood but are forced out due to economics. It’s difficult to articulate, but I see it in other cities, too.

C: But good things can happen in places with larger buildings too. In many cities, neighborhoods with larger eight- to 10-story buildings (or more) can feel smaller and welcoming. It depends on site design and layout of the blocks. Sometimes the layout works with integrated building facades and encourages walkability. There must be a way for us to build more flexibility into our zoning to allow places to expand and grow over time.

A: That’s where the rubber hits the road with the transition from the Land Use & Development Plan to the new Zoning Ordinance. The City does not want to stifle new development.

Q: What is the schedule for Re-Zone Syracuse?

A: From mid-July 2016 to spring 2017 we will be developing the Ordinance content, with the first draft in spring of 2017 and the final in the fall of 2017.

Q: Will there be a comment period?

A: There will be a formal comment period for the final drafts, and we are encouraging comments and participation throughout the process (ReZoneSyracuse@syrgov.net).

Q: Is SEQR required, and when will that process start?
A: Yes. SEQR starts formally when you have an actionable item, but there’s a lot of front end work to do. This time next summer will be the likely start of our formal SEQR process.

Q: Will the re-zoning process be done and adopted under this Mayor?

A: That is our goal.

Q: Are you looking nationally for zoning code precedent?

A: That’s one of the reasons the City hired Clarion Associates, as they’re a national leader in zoning codes. We’re looking to them for guidance and expertise.

Q: Are you looking at the Onondaga County Settlement Plan authored by Duany Plater-Zyberk?

A: Yes, that and other documents were a part of our original document review and analysis.

Q: Will Syracuse be more developer-friendly?

A: The new code will be more clear, more predictable, and more transparent. That is a positive change for developers because it will save them time and money and cause less confusion. At the same time, we are raising expectations for new development and redevelopment in the city through the design standards. It’s a balanced approach we believe will benefit all.

Q: How does Syracuse University’s Master Plan factor into the new zoning code?

A: SU has a master plan, and we communicate regularly with them. They aren’t the only institution with plans. We’re coordinating with many entities. However, we’re not waiting for the conclusion of any of these plans while we undertake the Rezone Syracuse project. We are on an aggressive schedule.

Q: When will we see re-zoning maps?

A: We’ll be ready to share drafts later this year. As we do that, we must also develop a lot of content like defining districts and uses, creating design standards, and structuring administrative and regulatory aspects of the future zoning code.

Q: Will there be different zoning depending on which I-81 alternative is selected?

A: No. Our objective is to implement the City’s Land Use & Development Plan 2040. No one is yet certain what will happen with I-81, so the ReZone project won’t wait for the completion of the I-81 project. We are coordinating with NYSDOT.

Mr. Kerney concluded the presentation. Mr. Frechette opened the meeting to general discussion about the I-81 project.

Q: Can we talk about the common features at some point? I question the need for four lanes in each direction on the northern section of I-81. It seems contrary to the concept of the Community Grid, more like a conventional highway project.
A: Each project alternative keeps the northern section as an interstate. It needs to be improved due to capacity problems there, so we would be adding one lane in each direction.

Q: I didn’t mean reclassifying the interstate to something else. What about instead of adding a lane to the highway there, we make greater use of Salina Street and or other local streets?

A: There are always opportunities to look for other improvements. Mr. Frechette concluded the meeting.