**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Meeting Date:** Thursday, June 30, 2016  
**Location:** I-81 Viaduct Project Outreach Center, 335 Montgomery Street, Syracuse  
**Event:** Community and Economic Development Stakeholders’ Advisory Working Group (SAWG) Meeting

**Attendees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Team Members</th>
<th>SAWG Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Frechette, NYSDOT</td>
<td>Owen Kerney</td>
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<td>Rita Campon, Parsons</td>
<td>Dave Aitken</td>
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<td>Matthew Smith, AKRF</td>
<td>Dean Biancavilla</td>
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<td>Aileen Meyer, C&amp;S</td>
<td>Barry Lentz</td>
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<td>Joni Steigerwald, C&amp;S</td>
<td>Kristen Mucitelli Heath</td>
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<td>Kathryn Wolf, TWMLA</td>
<td>Peter Sarver</td>
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<td>Meghan Vitale</td>
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**Discussion**

NYSDOT’s I-81 Viaduct Project Director, Mark Frechette, introduced Owen Kerney, Assistant Director of Syracuse – Onondaga County Planning Agency, City Planning Division (and SAWG member), who then delivered an overview presentation highlighting the city’s ongoing zoning update initiative, “ReZone Syracuse.”

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

**Q:** Do streets and roads have a land use?  
**A:** Yes, but zoning does not regulate the uses within the roadway right-of-way (ROW).

**Q:** Does zoning include regulations that relate to roadway maintenance?  
**A:** City Zoning doesn’t currently provide guidance within the ROW. Maintenance is coordinated through the city or state, or both. What zoning should do is reflect the ROW through use and dimensional controls. For example, a narrow 35-foot-wide street and a wider 60-foot-wide street should have different zoning that reflects the width and capacity of each roadway and how the buildings interact with the street. This is accomplished through design standards.

**Q:** How would zoning apply to a street that was converted into a plaza or pedestrian only area?  
**A:** It would depend on the situation or project. There is a legal distinction between a parcel and a ROW and where the ROW meets the parcel. If the former street remains a public ROW, zoning wouldn’t regulate the area. If the ROW became a developable parcel, the parcel would be regulated by the underlying zoning.

**Q:** What will the new zoning code accomplish?
A: First, it’s important to mention that the current ordinance is over 80 years old. Many amendments have been adopted over the years, creating a disorganized and challenging document to maneuver through and interpret. Additionally, numerous land uses and definitions are out of date and do not relate to today’s world. This zoning update will accomplish many goals. It will update, organize, modernize, streamline, and standardize the ordinance to make it user-friendly and predictable. It will have updated zoning districts, which may include new, consolidated, or renamed districts, and will likely eliminate some existing districts. It will also streamline review procedures and incorporate new development/design standards. For example, the existing ordinance has eight CBD (Central Business District) zoning districts that allow for different uses depending on their placement, with some areas allowing for office/commercial only, others allowing for high density residential only, and others allowing for a combination of uses. The new ordinance will likely have one CBD district that not only allows for a mix of uses but also includes development and design standards to guide appropriate development depending on the location. Essentially, the zoning will focus more on how the building forms interact with their surroundings, for example, how the building forms relate to the street, sidewalk, adjacent buildings, and open space.

(Many of the following questions and answers relate to and address how the new zoning ordinance will interpret and relate to the future land use plan/map, which was displayed during the meeting. The future land use plan adopted by the City of Syracuse in 2014 is part of “Comprehensive Plan 2040,” which is posted on the project website at http://www.syrgov.net/ReZoneSyracuse.aspx.)

Q: What does the light yellow land use area on East Genesee Street east of I-81 and south of I-690 indicate?
A: It’s an area with many large houses and former mansions, some of which have been repurposed as multi-family dwellings or offices, but the form and character of the development remains. The Land Use Plan categorizes the future land use as an “Adapted Mansion Corridor.” The purpose of the land use character area is to preserve and acknowledge the historic, residential forms of the area – to maintain the scale, setbacks, and building forms – but allow for a greater variety of uses including residential, retail, services, and professional offices.

Q: What is the gray/purple area north of I-690 and along West Street/Franklin Square?
A: That is an area where former industrial uses employed many people in the past. This and other “Industrial Legacy” character areas have unique industrial building forms that should continue to be maintained. The intent of the future land use is to celebrate the area’s industrial history while facilitating redevelopment and a mix of uses through adaptive reuse.

Q: In the areas (west of I-81) where the state proposes new flyover ramp connections between I-81 and I-690, does the State have the right to alter/impact the City’s adopted future land use plan, given that the transportation use is inconsistent with the Industrial Legacy future use?
A: The City of Syracuse adopted a Plan and map for future land use in the City’s Comprehensive Plan 2040. We are implementing that plan – for example, the Urban Core and Industrial Legacy character areas – through the ReZone Syracuse project. The state and federal government are not required to obey local zoning, but must acknowledge these local conditions (planning and zoning, etc.) in their environmental review process.

Q: Isn’t compliance with local planning a consideration in the EIS analysis of the project?
A: Yes.

C: Regarding the Section 106 process, given that the proposed flyover ramp connections directly impact the visual quality of Franklin Square, the viewshed discussions are likely to be heated. Section 106 is very sensitive to these issues, so this is likely where the city’s land use vision will come into play.
C: Noise impacts will also be a factor.

Q: We hear a lot about “dead space” (land areas under the viaduct infrastructure) with the existing I-81 roadway. Will these flyovers create more dead space and negatively affect the current land values?
A: NYSDOT responded that the project will study these spaces and explore opportunities for them. There may be opportunities to activate the spaces, and NYSDOT has brought on a new team member, the Design Trust for Public Space, to help with that effort.

Q: Visuals would help people to “see” and understand what’s coming. Are they coming?
A: Yes.

C: The combination of the I-81 project and the new zoning occurring at the same time allows the city to better affect its future development and create opportunities for development and investment.

Q: How will existing uses/formats that don’t align with the new zoning (e.g., height, setback, uses) continue to operate? How do you deal with these inconsistencies?
A: These will be considered nonconforming uses. They can continue to operate as they are grandfathered in. However, all new development must conform to the new zoning.

Q: Will the Syracuse Housing Authority (SHA) master plan be impacted by the new zoning?
A: The city has had discussions with the SHA about their plans and the future zoning for their property and there is a good deal of agreement between the two. Many of the additional uses they are planning reflect a more urban design and mix of uses that would not be allowed today, but will be allowed in the new zoning.

Q: What about the public housing that is already there? How will the zoning impact those structures?
A: From my understanding, maintaining the existing units and building types as currently built/designed is not the primary goal of the SHA planning efforts. Rather, it appears the plan proposes new development in formats appropriate to an urban environment and will introduce a greater mix of uses to the area (e.g., retail, services).

Q: How is transit considered in the zoning? For example, how will it relate to the proposed BRT as discussed at a previous meeting?
A: The zoning code addresses this by encouraging higher density corridors that could better support transit, but it doesn’t specifically consider the BRT plans given the conceptual nature of current proposals.