

# North Tonawanda BOA & LWRP Projects

## PUBLIC VISIONING WORKSHOP MINUTES • September 17, 2009

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**Meeting Location:** North Tonawanda Public Library, 505 Meadow Drive

**Meeting Time:** 7pm – 9pm

**Meeting Attendees:**

- Chuck Bell, LCDC
- Joe Fonzi, NT Environmental Commission, Steering Committee
- Greg Sutton, Project Representative, DEC
- Andy Raus, Bergmann Associates
- Kimberly Baptiste, Bergmann Associates
- Matt Chatfield, Bergmann Associates
- Twenty-three (23) additional members of the public signed in

### 1. Meeting Overview

The meeting began with Andy Raus and Kimberly Baptiste providing the public with a quick overview of the LWRP and BOA programs and what these projects hope to accomplish. The presentation included examples of outcomes from previous projects, and discussed the prior planning and implementation initiatives accomplished by the city to date. The meeting attendees were then broken into two groups. Group 1 discussed the BOA project, and Group 2 discussed the LWRP project. Each group spent approximately 30 minutes providing their input and vision for the study area, and switched to the other project for an additional 30 minutes of discussion. The meeting ended at 9 pm upon the closure of the Library.

### 2. Summary of LWRP group discussions

- Residents liked the idea of mixed use development on Tonawanda Island
  - Restaurants, condos, boutique-type retail, hotels and other uses
  - Public access is a must, the River is a great asset
  - The examples of Cleveland Flats, Toledo OH, and Cobourg, Ontario
- Tonawanda Island should be a destination
- River Road, both the roadway and the land use/zoning, need to be cleaned up
- Canal amenities, facilities and services are needed
  - Upgrade existing infrastructure first before expanding
  - Restrooms, improved launch facilities, access, seating, parking
- The Botanical Gardens and Robinson St should be a gateway into the City
  - Help get visitors from nearby Niagara Falls Blvd
  - Consider increasing the utilization of the canal trail on the Tonawanda side, and develop a pedestrian cross-over at an appropriate location.
- Consider the development of a small convention center in the Goundry/River Rd area
- Weatherbest Slip should retain public access
- Portions of Weatherbest Slip should be redeveloped as a family-friendly destination
- Consider the reuse of the old pivoting bridges for attractions or iconic elements

- Consider a pedestrian bridge from Tonawanda Island that connects to the Manhattan Street parking lot
- Need for improved connectivity along the waterfront and with downtown
- The wayfinding for boaters to/from the Canal is poor at the River inlet
- Consider development up at Gratwick Park vicinity to draw people to the water
- The City must continue to be proactive in attracting and retaining businesses
- The River Road, Main St intersection should be a primary gateway into the City
- Consider improvements to River Rd to narrow the cross-section, add medians, trees, lights, and pedestrian safe access

### 3. Summary of BOA group discussions

- It was asked if we knew contamination levels on properties within the BOA, and if redevelopment of any parcels was infeasible due to contamination
- It was questioned why the BOA did not include the Oliver St corridor between Buffalo Bolt and downtown; there are many current and former gas stations along this stretch
- Residents inquired about ownership concerns and requirements by current and former owners for cleanup, and where funding for cleanup would come from
- For comparison purposes, it was asked what limitations were created by the cleanup of Gratwick Park for the planting of trees
- Residents wanted to know the status of the Booth Oil site...claiming it was remediated but “still nasty.”
- How much of the blight along River Road can be considered brownfields?
- What sensitivity must be taken regarding zoning?
- Is the capacity of the existing infrastructure sufficient on Tonawanda Island to support redevelopment?
  - There is concern that the Island is nearing capacity for electric service
  - How does this effect businesses, and what are the rights of businesses to access reliable electricity service?
- There were concerns regarding public access to the waterfront, and the many fences that prohibit a shoreline trail
  - The development of a full-length bike path from downtown to Gratwick was mentioned
- The type of development on Tonawanda Island was discussed
  - Upscale residential, condos and supporting commercial
  - Greenspace and public access to existing viewsheds
  - Mixed-use development with residential, hotel
  - Restrictions on height of buildings, likely 2-3 stories max
  - Address the conditions of the Durkee Bridge
- The role of River Rd within the BOA redevelopment plan was discussed
  - Roadway should become a boulevard or divided highway
  - Traffic calming techniques should slow traffic to reasonable speeds (35mph)
  - Improve the safety and appeal of crossings
  - Need crossing at Gratwick for adjacent neighborhoods
  - Reintegrate the roadway back into the community fabric
  - Corporate office park-type redevelopment at Buffalo Bolt
- The future of blighted residential areas was discussed
  - Potential redevelopment as light industrial on the east side of River Road

- Potential redevelopment
  - The various bulk goods storage facilities: mulch, wood, concrete
  - Potential staging area for the transport of boats between the Niagara River and Lake Ontario → need to raise utility lines along the corridor to make this feasible
- Can the City capitalize upon wind and wave power harnessing?
- It was mentioned that waterfront redevelopment should attempt to keep boaters in the city for entertainment

#### **4. Next Steps**

Next steps in the process were discussed as summarized below:

- Bergmann to begin the Community Overview and Project Overview portions of the Nomination Study.
- Bergmann to coordinate with City regarding the upcoming stakeholder meetings in October.
- Residents were asked to sign up if they would like to participate in the stakeholder meetings.