

Town of Amherst Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code Project

Project Overview

The Town of Amherst is preparing to embark on an important project to review and revise its Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance in order to more effectively guide and regulate development and redevelopment. A primary objective of this project is to incorporate context-sensitivity into the Plan and Code by formulating zoning provisions that focus on the physical character of development and its relationship to the surrounding area.

During its review of the Town's Comprehensive Plan in 2012 and 2014, the Town concluded that the existing Plan and Zoning Code may not encourage or even allow forms of development that are consistent with surrounding neighborhoods. For example, the Plan does not offer adequate policy guidance regarding the character, scale, and locational characteristics for commercial mixed-use or higher density forms of new development or redevelopment. In addition, the Town's Zoning Code is primarily based on single land use districts; their yard/bulk characteristics do not address building design and scale. New zoning provisions would consider land use and would also address regulation of site design, building form, circulation, and the surrounding public realm. Consideration of these characteristics improves development and its consistency with the surrounding neighborhood – important factors for a developed community like Amherst.

The Town has selected the Code Studio of Austin, Texas as a consultant to lead this project. The Project is scheduled to be completed within 18-20 months.

Committee Formation

The development of proposed Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code revisions for Town Board consideration will require the assistance of appointed citizen boards, stakeholders, and other agencies that currently play a role in planning and development within Amherst.

In accordance with the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan, the Town Planning Board is responsible for preparing proposed amendments to the Plan. The Planning Board is also responsible for making recommendations to the Town Board on proposed revisions to the Town Zoning Code and other development regulations. For this project the Planning Board will oversee the Project Working Committee and lead the development of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. The Planning Board Chair, as head of this project, appoints committee members.

Committee Membership

- **Project Working Committee** – The Project Working Committee will be responsible to the Planning Board in guiding project development to include; review, comment and endorsement of technical products; provide recommendations to the Planning Board; and assist the Consultant and Staff with public participation efforts. The Committee will meet regularly to review the technical products, provide community perspectives, discuss project proposals and issues, and evaluate plan and code recommendations before they are finalized for public review and comment. Committee membership consists of the following:

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Planning Board (Committee Chair) | Dal Guiliani |
| 2. Planning Board: | Daniel Ulatowski |
| 3. Planning Board: | Steven Herberger |
| 4. Town Board Liaison: | Ramona Popowich |
| 5. Amherst Conservation Advisory Council: | Ellen Banks |
| 6. Zoning Board of Appeals: | Duncan Black |
| 7. Zoning Board of Appeals: | Gary Palumbo |
| 8. Village of Williamsville: | Brian Kulpa |
| 9. Homeowners Organization: | Jane Woodward |
| 10. Homeowners Organization: | Frank Pasztor |
| 11. Homeowners Organization: | Jim Cwierley |
| 12. Small Business Owner: | Bob White |
| 13. Developer: | Carl Montante, Jr. |
| 14. Developer: | David Chiazza |

- **Technical Advisory Committee** – As the Plan amendments and Code revisions are developed it is anticipated that technical issues will emerge and be referred to Town departments, boards and committees that often advise the Town Board, e.g. the Planning and Building Departments, the Amherst Industrial Development Agency (AIDA) or the ACAC. Members of the Technical Advisory Committee will represent departments that typically oversee or interact with these boards and will function as liaisons to present and convey plan information about the project to them. Likewise, these liaisons will convey the department’s or board’s comments to the Technical Advisory Committee. The Technical Advisory Committee will meet as needed and will make recommendations to the Project Working Committee. Committee membership consists of the following:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Planning Director (Chair): | Rick Gillert |
| 2. Assistant Planning Director: | Gary Black |
| 3. Building Commissioner: | Brian Andrzejewski |
| 4. Building Department: | Bill Pidgeon |
| 5. Amherst Industrial Development Agency: | James Allen |
| 6. GBNRTC: | Kelly Dixon |
| 7. Erie County Department of Environment and Planning: | Mark Rountree |
| 8. University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI): | Bart Roberts |

Committee Information Location

To access information regarding this Project and Committee formation and membership in the future, please refer to the project website located at www.imagineamherst.com which will be launched after the Public Briefing on March 9, 2016.