



PUBLIC OUTREACH PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Amherst Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code revisions will be prepared using participatory techniques that seek to elicit and respond to the community's values and provide a sound basis for developing the concepts, strategies, and actions needed to revise the Plan and Code. Open, effective public participation is essential to the success of this process. A variety of activities and techniques, ranging from traditional community meetings to use of Internet technology and media "partnerships," will be combined as part of an overall strategy to involve and engage the public. These activities should provide for representative input to the project process and reflect community attitudes and aspirations. They should also enable the output of information to the community concerning the status and contents of the various stages of plan development, as well as stimulating communication and interaction among citizens.

PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND ROLES

The development of proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment and Zoning Code revisions for Town Board consideration will require the assistance of a variety of entities including elected officials and appointed boards and committees, some of which currently play a role in planning and development within Amherst. The diagram below illustrates the hierarchical relationship among these entities. In addition to illustrating the organizational structure for Plan related activities, this chart also implies a desirable flow of communication and materials for review during the project process.

TOWN BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Amherst Town Board

The Amherst Town Board is the lead Town agency in the adoption of proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code. The Town Board Liaison to the Planning Board will serve as a member of the Project Working Committee.

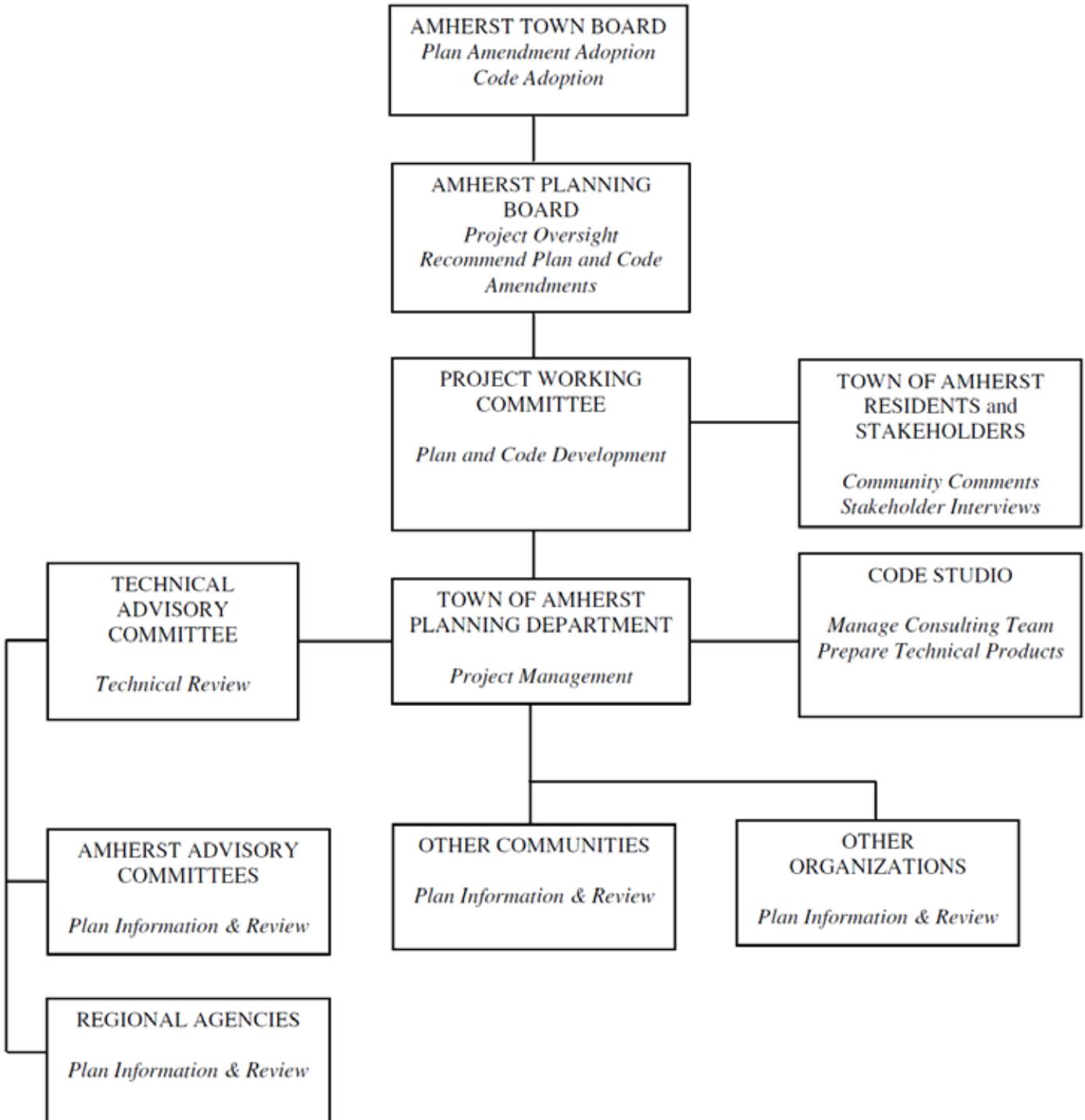
Town Planning Board

In accordance with the Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan, the Town Planning Board is responsible for preparing proposed amendments to the Plan. 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.

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) has appellate jurisdiction to hear and decide appeals from decisions of Town officials charged with the administration and enforcement of the zoning code. The Chairman of the ZBA and one other member of the ZBA will serve as members of the Project Working Committee.

Project Organization and Roles



PROJECT COMMITTEES

In addition to the existing review and decision-making bodies of the Town, the following committees have been established specifically for this project.

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 and 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, council'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. It is anticipated that monthly meetings will be held (see draft schedule attached to this memo).

- 2 – Planning Department - Director (Chair) and Assistant Planning Director
- 2 – Building Department - Commissioner and Building Department Appointee
- 1 – Appointee from the Amherst Industrial Development Agency
- 1 - Appointee from the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC)
- 1 – Appointee from the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
- 1 – Appointee from the University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI)

Working Committee

The role of the Working Committee is to provide the overall policy direction for the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan amendments and new Zoning Code. As such, its membership has been selected to be broadly representative of the various constituencies of the Town, including neighborhood, business, environmental, and other civic interests. The Committee will act as a surrogate for the larger community, working with the consultants and Town staff to shape the planning and zoning concepts and approaches to addressing the issues identified through public outreach efforts. Although Committee members will be expected to reflect the points of view of their respective constituencies, they will also be challenged to set aside “narrow” interests, instead thinking in “global” terms about the Town as a whole. The Committee will meet monthly or more often as needed to review the technical products, provide community perspectives, discuss project issues, and evaluate plan and code recommendations before they are finalized for public review and comment.

The Working Committee membership is comprised of representatives from the following Town boards and other stakeholders as indicated below.

- 3 – Planning Board (one member will serve as the Committee Chairman)
- 1 – Town Board (liaison to the Planning Board)
- 1 – Amherst Conservation Advisory Council (ACAC)
- 2 – Zoning Board of Appeals
- 1 – Village or Williamsville Planning or Zoning Boards
- 3 – Representatives from Recognized Homeowners Organizations
- 1 – Small Business Owner
- 2 – Representatives of Development Companies

Consultant Team

Code Studio is the project consultant and will be responsible for working with the Project Working Committee and Town Planning Staff to prepare all technical products and conduct meetings as specified in the Contract Scope of Work. The Code Studio team includes Urban Design Associates for their urban design expertise and Home Run Creative for assistance with public outreach.

OUTREACH TO STAKEHOLDERS

Recommendations from this project will form the community's vision for the future of the Town's commercial and mixed use centers and their zoning. In order to accomplish this, opportunities will be provided for public input and feedback on products throughout the process.

Public Input Opportunities

Public input will be taken throughout the project in a variety of ways, as further detailed in the following sections. Anticipated public input opportunities include:

- » Project Kick-Off
 - ◆ Stakeholder interviews
 - ◆ Public briefing to describe project, introduce team
- » Working Committee Meetings
 - ◆ Public attendance allowed, comment allowed if time is available (as determined by Committee chair)
- » Comprehensive Plan memo
 - ◆ Posted to Project Website after release by Working Committee
- » Commercial Center Zoning Analysis
 - ◆ Posted to Project Website after release by Working Committee
- » Assessment of Existing Regulations
 - » Posted to Project Website after release by Working Committee
 - ◆ Final Assessment (incorporating comments)
 - ◆ Posted to Project Website after release by Working Committee
- » Confirmation of Direction
 - ◆ Town Board meeting with consultant presentation of assessment of plan, centers and current zoning
 - ◆ Public comment
- » Activity Center Precedent Report
 - ◆ Posted to Project Website before Public Workshop/Charrette
- » Public Workshop/Charrette, focused on concepts for plan amendment and new zoning
 - ◆ Hands-on design session
 - ◆ Open house
 - ◆ Work-in-progress presentation
 - ◆ Stakeholder interviews
 - ◆ Open design studio
- » Workshop Summary
 - ◆ Posted to Project Website following workshop/charrette
- » Draft Comprehensive Plan Amendment
 - ◆ Posted to web after Working Committee meeting
- » Draft Mixed Use Activity Center Zoning
 - ◆ Posted to project Website after release by Working Committee
- » Draft Zoning Code
 - ◆ Posted to project Website after release by Working Committee

- » Planning Board Hearing
 - ◆ Review, recommend Plan amendment and Zoning Code
 - ◆ Public comment
- » Town Board Hearing
 - ◆ Public comment
 - ◆ Adopt Plan amendment and Zoning Code

Notice of Meetings

The following typical communication steps would apply to all of the key consultant team public meetings, including the eventual formal adoption hearings for the Plan amendment and any zoning revisions.

- » Post to project website <http://imagineamherst.com/>
 - ◆ Website allows stakeholder comments, archives all comments submitted
- » Post on social media (Facebook and Twitter)
 - ◆ Facebook: www.facebook.com/ImagineAmherst
 - ◆ Twitter: @ImagineAmherst
 - ◆ Social media tracked and archived using Hubspot program
- » Email news blast
 - ◆ A list of all interested parties, added to regularly through meeting attendance records (includes homeowners associations)
- » Press release before each meeting
 - ◆ Television: WGRZ, WIVB, WNLO, WKBW, WUTV, WNYO, TWCB-Buffalo
 - ◆ Newspaper: Buffalo News, The Bee, Metro Community News
 - ◆ Radio: WBEN, WBFO, WUFO
- » Meeting dates posted on storyboards around Town
- » Share meeting dates by word-of-mouth at other meetings

All Working Committee Meetings will be announced on the Town and Project Website.

Presentation Methods/Materials

A variety of public meetings will be held throughout the project. The majority of these meetings will have an educational component, followed by an opportunity to provide input. Below are examples of the presentation methods and materials likely to be used in these sessions:

- » Public, Planning Board or Town Board Briefing
 - ◆ Formal presentation with slides projected onto screen for the audience
- » Public Design Charrette
 - ◆ Hands-On Session: presentation of “food for thought,” followed by facilitated break-out tables, summarized through report back by each table
 - ◆ Open House: a drop-in session with drawings and other materials posted for review
 - ◆ Work-in-Progress Presentation: A formal presentation of the charrette week outcomes
- » Plan Amendment and Zoning Code Adoption
 - ◆ Initial workshops with Boards to discuss draft
 - ◆ Formal presentation to Planning Board and Town Board
 - ◆ Public comment opportunity
 - ◆ Hard copies available at Town Hall

Project Website

A Project Website will be developed that allows residents to view information on the project and provide comments. The Project Website will be at <http://imagineamherst.com>, this site will also be linked and accessible from the Town’s Website at: www.amherst.ny.us This web site accommodates a variety of functions, including:

- » Description of the project
- » Project organization
- » Past events, including meeting notes, presentations, and video, where available
- » Calendar of upcoming events
- » Presentations, reports and other work products
- » Online commenting through Facebook and Twitter
- » Email address and phone number for citizens to send ideas and comments

Additional Digital Tools

A variety of digital tools will be evaluated throughout the course of the project in support of increased outreach. These may include options for texting surveys, virtual (digital) presentations, post-meeting availability of streaming audio or video, online forums, and posters with digital links to the project website or a comment form, where appropriate.

Community Outreach at Local Events

Appearances at existing local events can be a very effective and cost-efficient mechanism for public outreach. Piggy-backing on existing events allows access to a variety of constituents that may not necessarily attend a public meeting. Possible events are listed below.

- » Old Home Days: July 2016 2017
- » Taste of Williamsville: August 2016 and 2017
- » Williamsville Farmers Market: Saturdays – set up information booth at least once per season

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews with community stakeholders will help to define issues and opportunities with the Plan, the Code, and geographic areas chosen for detailed study. Throughout the project, the team will schedule small group stakeholder meetings with local businesses, property owners, real estate brokers, representatives from neighborhood associations and other stakeholders. Stakeholder sessions are open to the public, but sessions focus on the invited attendees. Typically, interviews are conducted without staff involvement, in order to ensure stakeholders share the best insights about problems with the current system. The consultant will prepare a summary of the interviews.

Communication Documentation

All communication regarding the Comprehensive Plan Amendments and Zoning Code revisions will be archived.

- » Information compiled from meetings will be archived by the Town Planning Department.
- » Documentation from the project website, social media, and news media will be archived by Home Run Creative.

TRAINING

Once the project is nearly complete, the consultant will be responsible for training and educating the staff, the public, and other communities.

Staff and Local Professionals

The team will conduct sessions to train Town staff, the general public, and local professionals (landscape architects, architects, sign companies or other affected parties) about the new Code. Training presentations will include an overview of the regulations, a detailed discussion with examples from specific sites, and code maintenance procedures for Town staff.

Planners and Community Education

Amherst's experiences and the outcomes of this project represent a good opportunity for other communities to learn about new approaches to planning and zoning code development. The team will conduct a half-day community forum directed at helping planners and related professionals in surrounding communities understand the project and its outcomes. The forum will cover the comprehensive plan amendment process and the development of the new zoning. The focus of the forum will be on processes and outcomes that could be transferred to other communities. The team will prepare an educational presentation and supporting documents and share it with participants.

ATTACHMENTS:

Technical Advisory Committee Members

- » Planning Director (Chair): Rick Gillert
- » Assistant Planning Director: Gary Black
- » Building Commissioner: Brian Andrzejewski
- » Building Department: Bill Pidgeon
- » Amherst Industrial Development Agency: TBD
- » GBNRTC: Kelly Dixon
- » Erie County Department of Environment and Planning: Mark Rountree
- » University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI): Bart Roberts

Project Working Committee Members

- » Planning Board (Committee Chair): Dal Guiliani
- » Planning Board: Dan Ulatowski
- » Planning Board: Steve Herberger
- » Town Board Liaison: Ramona Popowich
- » Amherst Conservation Advisory Council (ACAC): Ellen Banks
- » Zoning Board of Appeals: Duncan Black
- » Zoning Board of Appeals: Gary Palumbo
- » Village of Williamsville: Brian Kulpa
- » Homeowners Organization: Jane Woodward
- » Homeowners Organization: Frank Pasztor
- » Homeowners Organization: Jim Cwierley
- » Small Business Owner: Bob White
- » Developer: Carl Montante, Jr.
- » Developer: David Chiazza

Tentative Working Committee Meeting Schedule

(dates are subject to change)

- » **April 2016** – Review draft Comp Plan Analysis memo and Public Outreach Plan
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 13 April
 - ◆ Working Committee – 26 April (Tuesday)

- » **May 2016** – Review Commercial Center Analysis
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 11 May
 - ◆ Working Committee – 25 May

- » **June 2016** – Review Code assessment and outline
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 8 June
 - ◆ Working Committee – 29 June

- » **July/August 2016** – Review Activity Center Report
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 3 August,
 - ◆ Working Committee –10 August
 - ◆ Proposed project direction information to Planning Board – 18 August

- » **September 2016** – Studio Visit for Task 4, confirmation of direction by Town Board
 - ◆ Town Board Meeting 6 September – Code Studio Briefs the Town Board (Committees attend)
 - ◆ Joint Working and Technical Advisory Committee Meeting– 7 September
 - ◆ Code Studio Visit for Public Workshop 22-28 Sept

- » **October 2016** – Review Public Workshop
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 5 October
 - ◆ Working Committee – 26 October

- » **November 2016** – Review Draft Plan Amendment
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 9 Nov November
 - ◆ Working Committee – 30 November

- » **December 2016** – Technical Advisory Committee receives DRAFT Reformatted Code for Review

- » **January 2017** – Reformatted Code Review
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 11 January
 - ◆ Working Committee – 25 January

- » **February 2017** – Continue review of Reformatted Code and MU Center/Corridor Map
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 8 February
 - ◆ Working Committee – 22 February

- » **March 2017** – Continue review of Reformatted Code
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 8 March
 - ◆ Working Committee – 29 March

- » **April 2017** - Code Studio Visit for Public Review Draft
 - ◆ Week of 24 April
 - ◆ Legal Review – April/May 2017

- » **May 2017** – Code Studio Visit for Joint Workshop/Hearing
 - ◆ Week of 29 May

- » **June 2017** – Finalize Code – recommendation to Town Board
 - ◆ Technical Advisory Committee – 7 June
 - ◆ Working Committee – 28 June