

Plan unveiled

By Tyler Murphy

NEW SCOTLAND — After years of controversy over the town's main commercial district — now mostly farmland — a plan for its future was unveiled last night.

In contrast to the packed sessions that filled the high school auditorium in Voorheesville when a large Target-anchored mall was proposed for the intersection of routes 85 and 85A, about 30 people quietly attended last night's workshop.

Positive comments outweighed the negative as citizens responded to a presentation by Michael Welti, a planner with Behan Planning Associates. The company was hired by the town and the Capital District Transportation Committee to work alongside local citizens, landowners, and New York Department of Transportation representatives, to create the plan.

The citizens liked the green space along the road, the clustering of homes to save green space and having a long-term plan to avoid uncontrolled development sprawl.

"I like that the plan will encourage more socialization among people," said Edie Abrams, long-time advocate of developing a zoning code.

"Predictability helps save time and money for everyone," agreed Welti, explaining that the public, elected officials and developers all benefited when a consistent policy was adopted.

Most of the concerns raised were about the rights of property

(Continued on Page 18)

... Plan unveiled for New Scotland's future garners support

(Continued from page 1)
owners, which Welti responded to by saying "They always have rights, of course, but there are zoning laws too."

Another concern was that so many people would have to be involved to make the plan a reality.

Welti conceded it wouldn't be easy and only elected officials could take action. The last time New Scotland developed a master plan, much of it was not codified into law. Welti said a worse case scenario would be the town ignoring the plan completely.

The new 58-page plan referred to the intersection of routes 85 and 85A as the core of the town's commercial zoning district and ideal for development. Though the study is not legally binding, it may serve as a blueprint for

elected officials to develop new zoning laws and building codes in the near future.

"New Scotland, like surrounding suburban and rural towns, is faced with development pressures. Change is inevitable, but the pattern, rate, timing, and location of that change can be managed, in part, by community. The question is not whether New Scotland will grow, but how it will grow and look," states the draft plan.

Welti explained the group defined the area of the intersection and the surrounding commercial and residential buildings as the New Scotland Hamlet for the purposes of the study.

The plan envisions the creation of a town square in the immediate area around the Route 85 and 85A intersection, defining the

area as the hamlet center.

"This could be the real focal point of the New Scotland hamlet," said Welti.

The plan calls for a center park area or public space surrounded by formal clusters of residential, commercial, and government buildings not more than three stories tall. The plan recommends the town consider relocating civic buildings in the area when appropriate and emphasized the intersection might offer the community's first impression. Other suggestions for the area included shared or hidden parking lots located behind buildings.

The hamlet center is bordered by two other zones, which are located along the Route 85 corridor. Referred to as existing hamlets, they would be governed

by similar regulations leaning toward small commercial development and residential homes, explained Welti.

Since there are already a number of businesses and homes fronting along the two routes, commercial developers may have to convert existing buildings in these areas.

"For this reason, the majority of future change in the existing hamlet will likely come from conversions, renovations and expansions to properties which are expected to take place slowly over time," the plan says.

The proposal offers the example of a single-family home being converted into an office, which would in time be replaced by a new commercial building. However the plan says the goal in the existing hamlets is to keep

them relatively the same and it recommends officials review the different developments as they occur.

Two other areas, referred to as hamlet expansions, border the hamlet center. These areas are currently undeveloped farmland and the plan proposes they eventually be developed into space for the existing and center hamlet to grow into, said Welti.

The areas would feature commercial businesses and shops near the main roads but behind them single family, multi-family and town houses would be arranged in a network of local streets. The plan suggests businesses in the expansion, and in the hamlet in general, be required to have green spaces, pedestrian-friendly access, shared parking

(Continued on next page)

...Blueprint terms 85 and 85A intersection ideal

(Continued from previous page) lots, similar styled architecture, and other quality-of-life codes.

Development areas

"You might drive here from another part of the town but once you're there you park and get out and walk," said Welti.

Four other areas listed in the plan are deemed development areas and cover forest or farmland. These areas fall further away from the hamlet and allow a variety of development such as single-family homes, senior housing, education or research facilities, along with light industrial and office developments.

Developments in these areas should be in campus-like arrangements, advised Welti. "The market can really dictate what's most appropriate here," he said, adding that committee members expressed a desire to attract "green" businesses.

Noticeably large swaths of land on the right and left side of Route 85A were categorized as agricultural and conservation areas. Though these areas might seem good for development, Welti said the public had expressed a popular view of maintaining the woods along the road, seen as important to keeping a rural identity.

"The easiest thing to develop is the frontage along the roadway," he said. Welti said by limiting development along 85A the town would also be encouraging growth in the hamlet.

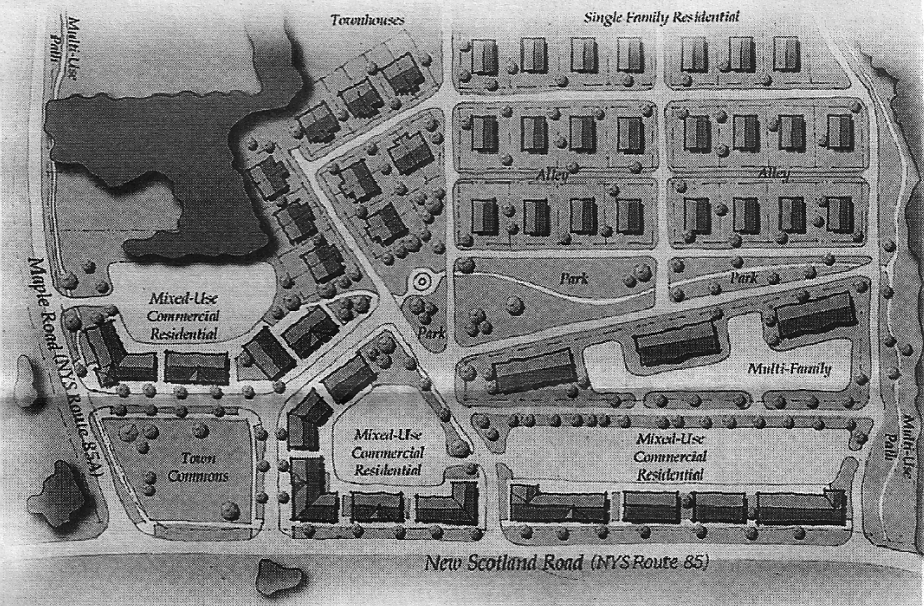
Other areas of land designated agricultural or conservation areas are in close proximity to proposed residential development and probably would not be appropriate for large farming operations, said Welti.

"There may be some way to farm those properties, not large-scale farming. The key here is we are trying to achieved some balance," he said. The plan also suggests the option of having the town or other community-based organization purchase some of the land to ensure it remains undeveloped.



- Images from New Scotland Master P

A familiar site: The study advisory committee tasked with creating a future plan to deal with zoning concerns raised by larger scale development recently released their first draft plan. They looked at the area at the intersection of routes 85 and 85A in the heart of New Scotland.



- Images from New Scotland Master P

Rural and recreational uses

To the north of the study area and near the new development sites is the proposed Albany County Rail Trails project, which when complete could bring bicyclists and pedestrians to the town center. The committee recommended building town parks near the trails, which could serve as stop-off points for visitors to enter the pedestrian friendly hamlet and development areas. The park would also help add more green space, pointed out Welti.

The largest area labeled in the plan is designated rural residential. It includes a golf course and light residential development. Welti said the area has long been deemed as commercial but over the years homes were built in the zone and the committee felt it should be relabeled as rural residential instead.

Apart from offering advice on how to zone for future developments, the plan offers a number of suggestions on how the town might improve its zoning laws. Welti recommended creating different types of classifications for agricultural and commercial projects, putting them in categories based on the scope of the business. Large-scale farming operations and big-box retail developers were not specifically designated under the current zoning laws, he said.

Welti also recommended the town tailor its own laws to fit the community and develop around New Scotland's natural resources and conservation areas.

- Images from New Scotland Master Pl

Lines drawn from the sky: This colored illustration shows areas of possible zoning laws created on a conceptual basis, without respect to actual property lines. The study advisory committee that released the map and its draft plan hopes elected officials will use the document as a writing future laws.



Our Newest Propane Facility - RT 20
We're here to Serve

A Local Family Business Since 19

Residential Commercial
PROPANE FUEL OIL DIESEL



LONG ENERGY
a division of Long Oil Heating

Albany 518.465.6647
Altamont 518.872.0092
longenergy.com