



## PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2 MEETING SUMMARY

DATE/TIME: JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2023, 6:00- 8:00 PM

LOCATION: WESTMERE FIRE HOUSE, 1741 WESTERN AVE

The Town of Guilderland, as part of the public engagement component of the Comprehensive Plan Update process, held Public Workshop #2 on Thursday, June 1, 2023, at the Westmere Fire House. Approximately 25 people attended the meeting, including homeowners, business owners, Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) members and other stakeholders. CPUC Chair Cody Betton welcomed meeting participants to the event before introducing Jaclyn Hakes and Jesse McCaughey (M.J. Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C.) from the consultant team assisting the Town through this process. Ms. Hakes and Mr. McCaughey presented information on the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan update, its key elements, and a timeline of key project milestones. Attendees were seated at five tables arranged around the room. At the conclusion of the prepared presentation, participants engaged in topic-based “speed round” discussions, each facilitated by a member of the consultant team. Each facilitated discussion lasted six (6) minutes and the participants rotated to all five (5) tables throughout the evening. This summary is divided by the topics for each table discussion and includes:

- A brief overview of the most prevalent input received
- The question prompts that were used to initiate the table discussions
- Notes from each table facilitator, outlining participant input during the discussions

All participants were also encouraged to participate in the ongoing planning process and help spread the word about the Comprehensive Plan Update in Guilderland.

## Parks, Open Space and Recreation Highlights

- Importance of access: for all ages and abilities, and for those without a car
- Desire for park space in Westmere
- Importance of Pine Bush and historical sites/resources in Town

### 1. What new features or facilities would you like to see added to the Guilderland public park system?

- Overall satisfaction with Tawasentha.
- Tawasentha (good)
  - Outdoor concerts good
  - More availability to access the park was suggested.
- Westmere needs park(s)
- Westmere!
  - Skatepark for small kids & teens
- Small community park in Westmere → deserve one
  - Jungle gyms
  - To Bethlehem Elm Ave Park
  - Cited Rosemont Park off Brevator St. as example.
- East end of Guilderland- seems forgotten to the participants.
  - Bring more outdoor activities & recreation.
  - Continue building for small children.
- McKownville (Fred Abele) park as an example
- More for little kids – “hyperlocal”
- Toddler- 6yo -playground equipment
- Covered areas in parks
  - Pavilions
- More walking -access for adults and kids
  - Suited for ALL ages.
- Very satisfied with the Town’s public park system
- Benches, public restrooms (public) can always use more
- Suggested parks within vacant areas near large developments/housing
- Guilderland neighborhood parks
- Handicapped playgrounds so ALL can play.
- More and accessible parks, for ALL to access
- Better access to recreation fields/ need more.
- Access via walking bike/ not just car

- Planting/conservation of trees
  - Replacement
- More than just trails
  - Install benches and gardens.
- Equipment in dog parks
  - Not just fenced in space
- Small kids & teens → skateparks
- Sports!
  - Disc golf, basketball courts, pickleball courts
- Good trail system
- Drainage at parks
  - General improvements
  - Especially softball fields
- Year round at Pine Bush

**2. Are there historical properties or open spaces in Guilderland that are particularly important to you or your family? If so, what activities do you do at those sites?**

- Preserve Pine Bush
- Pine Bush – conserve natural resources & places
- Space where Costco is going could be used instead.
- Preservation of Cobblestone Schoolhouse
- Protect small neighborhoods.
- List & research on historic buildings/places/land
  - To attract people
- Emphasis on access to historical places/resources
- Promote & access to historic places.
- Maintenance & awareness for Normans Kill.
- Determine why, how, who, what to conserve preserve.
  - Hold town/developers accountable.

**Transportation and Mobility Highlights**

- Support for traffic circles/roundabouts to improve traffic flow.
- Prioritize pedestrian safety: crosswalks and sidewalks.
- Expanded bus and bike route options desired.

**1. What would improve the experience of traveling on Western Avenue/US-20 in Guilderland?**

- Traffic calming



- Pedestrian islands
- Pedestrian Improvements
  - Parallel Route
  - Speeding
  - Boulevards
- Highways ramps are too short.
- Parallel Road
- Suggested traffic circle for Fuller and Western (& 155?)
- Signage on roads
- Stuyvesant Plaza is getting congested.
- Traffic!
- Sync lights
- Sidewalks on both sides of roads
- Consistency of enforcement
- Participants noted that there are no places to cross.
- Snow removal
- Traffic circle at the middle school.
- Traffic circle at 155 and Western
- Johnston Rd./ Rt. 20
  - Turn lane for pedestrian safety.
- Higher density at nodes to help with walkability.
- Pedestrian crossing at major intersections
- Shared bike path
- Scale back development
- Specified traffic control at 146 and 158 intersections.
- 155 and Washington Ave exit intersection.

**2. What changes or improvements to public transportation in Guilderland would motivate you/your family to use it more often?**

- Bus stops in dangerous areas
- Light rail in middle
- Bike amenities shared path.
- Stigma toward buses
- Bus ridership
- Education for younger folks
- Expand the system.
- Senior transport
- 155 bus service
- More stops
- More trips

- Pedestrian safety
- More stops & service areas

## Economic Growth Highlights

- Support for smaller local businesses with possible incentives proposed.
- Desire for reuse of existing vacant commercial properties
- Connection between walkability around commercial nodes and small business development

### 1. How should the Town foster local business growth and entrepreneurship?

- Town doing a fine job
- Less business development in Westmere.
- Like walkable aspect
- Financial Incentives
  - Small businesses; short-term?
- Small business growth is preferred.
- Suggested small business along Western Avenue
- Western Ave focus → buzzing, infrastructure.
  - Vacant storefronts need to be occupied
- Focus on small and or local business.
- Participants discouraged big stores and apartment complexes
- Pushback from development review process
  - Concerned with fairness toward small businesses.
  - Allow for more flexibility for small businesses.
- Small business friendly
- More support by Chamber of Commerce
- Tax cuts to small businesses (“mom-and-pop” shops)
- Remove focus from chain stores
  - Allow more focus on local businesses
- Seed money for local businesses
- Start up support
- Expansion
- Revolving loan fund (IDA?)

### 2. If economic growth occurs in Guilderland, where should that growth be focused?

- Diversify location for growth.
- Westmere; Carmen Rd.
  - Good areas for small businesses



Engineering and  
Land Surveying, P.C.



F.M.  
Pemrick  
& Company  
Economic Planning &  
Development Services



Community  
Planning and  
Environmental  
Associates

- Along Western Ave
  - Reuse existing buildings.
- Walkable areas & near existing activities.
- Library area, specifically across the street
- Brownfields
- Town History
- Growth should occur where there are vacant buildings.
  - Cited Goodwill store as an example.
- Enough growth in Eastern end
- More mixed use, walkable
- Bikeshare
- Park areas for bus (ride and park lots)
  - Integrate into retail centers.

### Neighborhoods and Housing Highlights

- Westmere has proximity to retail and transportation routes, plus pockets with strong connections between neighbors.
- Support for single-story housing options for downsizing seniors and affordable options for younger homebuyers
- Support expressed for lower-density options such as duplexes and townhomes; suggested height restrictions

### 1. Which neighborhood/area do you live in, and what makes that area of Town special?

- Altamont – Peace + Quiet
- Westmere – Established neighborhoods; close to I-87
- Westmere – Neighborhood connections, Diverse/Contained, Know each other.
- Ft. Hunter/Lynwood – Accessible services/Breathing Room
- Westmere – Schools, esp. elementary
- Westmere – Close to retail, Close to Highways, Parks + Sidewalks, Prox. School/Work
- Ft. Hunter – AG/Rural, Vineyard, Thruway, Woods
- Farnsworth Middle School area – “tucked away” and quiet.
- Guilderland Hamlet – Open Space, people, family connections
- McKownville – walkable, sidewalks for walking and skating
- Gipp Rd.
- Church Rd.

## 2. What should new housing in Guilderland look like?

- Eco-friendly/solar
- “Starter Homes” for young buyers
- “Nodal” Development for walkability
- Affordable senior housing options.
- 1-story (multiple occurrences of this comment)
- Options for different groups but not “segregated”
- Houses/duplexes
- Not apartments
- Heigh restrictions on apartments
- Single-family housing
- Not Hiawatha Village model
- Duplexes/town homes
- “Senior friendly”

## Agriculture and Environment Highlights

- Concern expressed about water quality and quantity in Guilderland.
- Desire for connections to locally grown food – farm stands and farmer’s market
- Agricultural land contributes to character of town – i.e., relaxing viewsheds while traveling around Town.

## 1. What role do agricultural land uses such as orchards, tree nurseries and farm fields play in the Town of Guilderland for you and your family and why?

- Employment –
  - Employ’s farmers + others in town
- Makes town unique.
- Have farms here.
- AG - Contribute to family, events/activities
- Healthy food choices/buy local (wants more)
- Family farms need to be supported (Gade?)
- Quality food
- Relaxing for people to see farms
- Employ knowledgeable people
- Need to be supported more
- Food (Alt. orchards)
  - Locally Grown
- Natural beauty

- Makes us unique – a destination in fall
  - Orchards/recreation/winery
- Gade Farm/Winery\*
- Part of culture of town
- Rich history- Keeping history is important.
- Wants a dairy farm.
- More gardens instead of industrial
- Support farmers markets
- Fresh produce
- Economic opportunity -> \$ spending in town
- Farm stands – good to sell.
- More ag businesses needed.
- Wineries
- Grow local food.
- Provide more ag business.
- Farms employ people.
- Kids need to visit farms/work on farms.
- farm schools
- Incentivize farmers
  - Tax break
  - Thank you for being here
  - No charge for stalls at farmers mkt.

**2. Are there elements of the natural environment in Guilderland that you think need special attention, to preserve them for the future?**

- (-) Next generation
  - being priced out of business.
- (-) lack of interest in farming
- Conservation Easements – limited fix
- Needs to be incentives people to continue farming.
- Protecting water quality (it's been a struggle)
  - Changing weather
  - Pine Bush
  - Escarpment – views
- Need more cons. Easements to sustain soil resources.
  - (Raise property taxes) vs. business incentives.



- Chemical application on lawns
- Trees + Trees on parcel
  - Builders shouldn't clear cut.
- Drive out to country.
- Preservation of open spaces
- Maintain open spaces.
- Preserving green space East side of town
  - Wetlands/gorges
- Preserve the western part of town for farms?
- Clean water
- Water supply
- Adequate waste treatment to protect env.
  - Protect water
- Regulate Industry – Don't contaminate
- Air quality (related to traffic)
- Pay attention to viewsheds – protect
- Traffic/vehicles on Rt. 20
- Design w/ nature vs. clear cut
  - Build more in cooperation w/ natural world
  - Conservation design
  - Clustering
- Pine Bush
- Normans Kill (needs more access)
- Trees
- Preserve natural beauty.
- Pocket parks
- Solar – Balance with open space/farms
  - Emphasize vacant spaces instead of green lots.
- Help preserve green space.
- Wetlands
- Trees + underdeveloped forest – Preserve
- Clean up downturned trees along Normans Kill + Black Creek
- Air quality (related to traffic)
- Traffic control
- Pine Bush – preserve all we can (promote more on recreation)
  - Promote trails

This meeting summary conveys our understanding of the items discussed and input received. Please forward any additions, corrections and/or questions to my attention.

Submitted by: Jesse McCaughey, MJ Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C.

cc: Consultant Team, CPUC, Town of Guilderland

DRAFT

