

Niagara Opportunity

Report on the June 2015 Public Workshop

Overview

More than fifty people attended a public workshop on June 9, 2015 to discuss the preliminary vision, goals, and development concepts for the Niagara Opportunity area.

Overall, citizens seemed receptive to ideas for heritage development around the historic Adams Plant, mixed use development at the water intakes, a new parkway as an extension of the LaSalle Expressway, creation of a new gateway community near the Grand Island Bridge, and new development around the intersection of Packard Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard.



Some of the “headlines” from comments by participants included:

- Strong support for commemorating the Adams Plant and lots of ideas expanding on the concept including reconstruction of the Stedman House, creation of a Tesla museum, and connections to other historic sites.
- A clear warning that odors from the sewage treatment facility adjacent to the Adams Plant presents a barrier to successful redevelopment of the area.
- Lots of questions about how an extension of the LaSalle Expressway would connect to city streets and the Robert Moses Parkway, as well as how adjacent neighborhoods would be buffered from the impacts of traffic and what its impact would be on business activity.
- Continued support for connecting the city to its waterfront, remaking the Robert Moses Parkway, and for redevelopment of old industrial lands in general.

The workshop was held at the Niagara Falls Community Education Center Cafeteria as a way to get feedback from area property owners, neighbors, community groups, businesses, and other stakeholders.

After a brief presentation, participants were invited to look at boards representing the concepts, write their comments on flipcharts or fill out a comment sheets in response to two questions: “Which of the concepts shown should be developed further? Why?” and “Which of the concepts shown should be significantly altered or abandoned? Why?” Two more comments were registered on the project website.

The following is a summary of all the comments, with similar statements grouped together to suggest some of the more important issues raised.

Node 1: Adams Plant

Which of the concepts shown should be developed further? Why?

- Adjacent wastewater treatment plant is malodorous. (4)
- Opportunity to interpret the history and national importance of the “Upper Landing of the Portage” as a gateway to the western US, as well as its pivotal role in the two world wars. (4)
- The Transformer House should be developed into the “Tesla at Niagara Museum” to tell the story of power. (2)
- The State Park should be extended into the Niagara Business Center and the Adams Power Plant District. (1)
- The “Stedman House” should be included and moved back to its original location along with the Old Stone Chimney. (1)
- The park will be a good amenity for workers. (1)
- Use nature trails to connect the Tesla Museum and the Stone Chimney. (1)
- Hotels and restaurants should line the river and riverboats should transport people along the river. (1)
- Opening up Acheson drive could affect truck traffic coming in and out of industrial buildings and conflict with other vehicles. (1)
- Rename the Robert Moses Parkway as “Upper Landing Parkway”. (1)



Which of the concepts shown should be significantly altered or abandoned? Why?

- Adjacent wastewater treatment plant is malodorous. It should be removed. (2)
- The city, not the state, should acquire this site so that revenues benefit the city. (2)
- Add a few hundred feet of lawn to the western edge of the parkland. (1)
- Include a reproduction of the Stedman House to the Adams Power Plant area. Stedman was the portage master from 1760-1785. (1)
- The trails behind the Transformer House should connect to other historic sites like the Stone Chimney, the Porter House, and the River Walk. (1)
- The historic area should have shops. (1)
- Connect Buffalo Avenue to the Robert Moses via Acheson Drive and Hyde Park Boulevard with roundabouts. (1)

- Public investments in this area should be available to local developers and create opportunities for local people, rather than for outsiders. (1)

Node 2: Water Intakes

Which of the concepts shown should be developed further? Why?

- Redevelop for residential, commercial, and light industrial use. (1)
- Remove the Robert Moses Parkway. (1)
- Rename the Robert Moses Parkway as “Upper Landing Parkway” and interpret the history of the Upper Landing. (1)
- Hotels and restaurants should line the river and riverboats should transport people along the river. (1)
- A roundabout at the end of Hyde Park Boulevard and Buffalo Avenue is unnecessary because there is already a traffic signal there. (1)
- Add a roundabout at the end of Hyde Park Boulevard and crosswalks for cyclists and pedestrians. (1)
- Connect the intakes to Buffalo Avenue with a bike path. (1)
- It’s possible to build on top of the water intake tunnels. (1)
- Correct the sign that incorrectly identifies the location of Fort Schlosser as at the intakes. (1)



Which of the concepts shown should be significantly altered or abandoned? Why?

(No comments)

Node 3: LaSalle Parkway Extension

Which of the concepts shown should be developed further? Why?

- Use 47th Street instead of extending the LaSalle Expressway to avoid going through residential neighborhoods. Repurpose it so that trucks can access the factories from the I-190 via Packard. (2)
- Address problem of trucks driving through neighborhood streets, damaging roads and greenspaces. (1)



- Extending the LaSalle Expressway to Hyde Park and Buffalo Avenue with a round-about will funnel traffic to our business districts and encourage economic development. (1)
- Extending the LaSalle Expressway could present health and safety risks. (1)
- Connect the LaSalle Expressway to the Robert Moses. (1)
- Clarify what structures would go where DuPont, Olin, and Washington Mills are located and when that would happen. (1)
- Should you connect the Expressway to the existing street network? (1)
- City should help maintain vacant residential lots. (1)

Which of the concepts shown should be significantly altered or abandoned? Why?

- How would you buffer the noise? (3)
- If designed as a thruway to downtown, the Expressway will not benefit businesses. (2)
- How will you remove 4 sets of railroad tracks? What about the tunnels? (2)
- Should it be connected to Stephenson or Frontier? (1)
- Should commercial vehicles be allowed here? (1)
- Will residents have driveway access or will it be like the Robert Moses? (1)

Node 4: Gateway Park

Which of the concepts shown should be developed further? Why?

- Hotels and restaurants should line the river and riverboats should transport people along the river. (1)
- Rename the Robert Moses Parkway as “Upper Landing Parkway” and interpret the history of the Upper Landing. (2)
- Make the Robert Moses a true parkway by taking out two lanes and replacing it with greenspace close to the river. (1)
- Fully remediate the former Carbide Works site. (1)



Which of the concepts shown should be significantly altered or abandoned? Why?

- It's unclear whether putting new residential buildings next to the I-190 is practical and feasible. (1)
- Hotels. (1)

Node 5: Packard Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard

(No comments)



General comments

In addition to feedback about these nodes, some people made comments about the general project area. These included:

- Reduce the Robert Moses to two lanes so that it is a true parkway;
- Turn the history of this community into economic opportunity;
- Will remediation be incorporated into the redevelopment plan? If so, when?
- Account for all chemical and radiological buried wastes on all parcels and plan for their remediation.

Finally, when asked to complete the sentence “If we achieve nothing else with this project, we must...”, people responded with:

- Revitalize the city (3); Clean up the area for development (1)
- Take back the waterfront (3); Connect city to the waterfront (1); Build hotels along the river. (1)
- Start one or two and work toward the center (1)
- Create excitement for this city and region and engage citizens towards growth and action (1); Draw attention to the vast potential of this district. (1)
- Tell the history of the Upper Landing (1)
- Declare eminent domain and seize the tracts owned by Millstein! (1)
- Reduce the Robert Moses to a single road and connect it to other roads. (1)
- Rename Buffalo Avenue to “Tesla Way” from the I-190 to the Falls. (1)