

## **OCL Community Image Steering Committee meeting**

**Dec. 14, 2010**

Attending: *Gene Cilento, George Curry, Bob Doucette, Therese Driscoll, Bart Feinberg, Karen Hanford, David Heymann, Joe Hucko, Jessi Lyons, Sarah McIlvain, Maude Morse, Don McLaughlin, Aaron McKeon, Clyde Ohl, Sharon Owens, Donna Rohde, Sheena Solomon, Merike Treier (co-chair) Rachel Pollack, Sandra Barrett*

Agenda: Discuss subcommittees' initial research

**Case Studies Committee Report:** *One of committee goals is to show that "beautification" has an impact beyond just making things pretty: links to increased economic activity and real estate values. Subcommittee member Lenore Fetyko is working on informational links between real estate values and beautification.*

*Subcommittee member Karen Hanford advocates study of the Keep America Beautiful website, (organization takes a cookbook approach to doing what we want to do), there is a chapter in Rome. She will make contact with the Rome office of this organization with the goal of seeing how Keep America Beautiful is working for Rome. The City of Cleveland is sending us a report that is being done there on the subject of gateways, (it was asked that we send back our finished report.) Even beautiful places can have unattractive gateways. Consider Skaneateles. A divided tree-lined boulevard, the Auburn approach, is closer to a vision for I-81. Hanford is going to contact Auburn residents/officials for information.*

*A resource: The book Pattern Language is a good background source. It is used as a text by architecture schools.*

*Subcommittee member Aaron McKeon reported on his research of Parks and Recreation spending over time in city budgets. McKeon would like to get input from those who work for the city of Syracuse, so we can better understand line items appropriate for study/comparison with past budgets. As a proportion of the total budget, Parks and Recreation spending went down, from 3-4 percent (? year) to 2.9 in 2010. It is down in percentage but up in actual dollars. There might be a larger trend if we looked back to earlier periods.*

*(Comment: They added "Youth" to Parks and Recreation department several years ago, so other types of money may have been allocated.) The budget numbers would be more interesting if could identify another city where we could compare per capita spending. We spend more money per capita than Philadelphia but it is a larger city. Could we get a breakdown of how money spent by Parks and Recreation? (Sharon Owens is going to look into this once we establish what we want to know.) Public works would be the other relevant agency to consider in terms of spending reductions. It is very hard to tease out the particular line items. There is sewer spending, street cleaning, etc. But we could look at a few particular items.*

### **Commentary:**

It might be instructive if someone from Public Works could come and talk to the committee. Is there an activity sheet, a spread sheet that shows what they are doing in beautification efforts

this year? Do they match up part of that budget with what we are talking about? They do a capital improvement plan typically for a road, but also for parks and ball fields. (Sharon Owens will look into this once we decide whether we would like them at a public session or a committee meeting, or both.)

One of interesting issues of Tomorrows Neighborhoods Today (TNT) during Mayor Roy Bernardi's time in office, was an attempt by many of the small TNT groups to get trash cans. The city objects to public trash cans. The cans get stolen and the cans become public dumping grounds for suburban people who don't want to pay for trash removal. This was a community versus city issue that was not resolved. Litter, where does that fall into our research? Litter is something we can't ignore because people complain about it so much.

If we reach out to city officials to speak to us on these types of topics (budgets, parks and recreation, litter,) do we have them to present to small group (subcommittee) or to larger groups (whole committee or public session.) Officials might be more forthcoming in subcommittee. (Karen Hanford suggested a contact she has who might be able to present alongside city officials.)

Coyne Park is a privately built and maintained triangular planted space that looks like a public space (at Salina and Cortland Street intersection.) There is litter pick up two times a week. It might be worth having someone from Coyne Textiles speak to us about why they built it; what it has cost them to maintain it; the level of vandalism.

We could contact Western NY and Albany chapters of Keep America Beautiful to see how well it is working for them. It is part of what they are doing in Cleveland as well.

The budget numbers would be more interesting if could identify cities to compare per capita spending. In the Parks Department in Rochester, they have nine employees working on trees (Syracuse has one plus a few part-time technicians) and they just got five million from the city to deal with the Emerald Ash Borer. We have a similar quantity of trees to care for. If you just want to look at tree care, they have full blown staff, we don't. The community and city have decided that is something they value and they are going to put money into it. In a study contrasting Albany, Buffalo, and Rochester in terms of street trees, it is Rochester that stands out for being well maintained. (Jessi Lyons will reach out to former City of Syracuse employee Brian Liberti who now works for the city of Rochester.)

Are there any benchmarks with the landscape architecture societies? Could check with NYS Nursery and Landscape association and see what they have. Rochester has a strong association.

***Public Participation Subcommittee Report:*** *The initial meeting focused on defining the subcommittee's purpose. Committee member Sheena Solomon reported on the discussion. Questions posed included "What are the best ways to reach people? How can we find examples of what motivates them? The question was posed as to how get broad community engagement and how to get people to want to stay in the area. The group talked out about a photo survey. If a survey was done should the images be generic or should they be actual places in the city? It*

*might be necessary to have an incentive to get people to fill out the survey. What should the scale of engagement be? Should there be a discussion at the Thursday Morning roundtable? A panel discussion?*

*Committee member Sharon Owens added that an additional point of discussion related to perspective: From whose perspective was community image being appraised?*

Commentary:

We've talked about engaging Sean Kirst. If we do a public panel discussion or some kind of survey, he might be a logical link for us. Nell Donaldson was in that subcommittee meeting and she and Sandra were going to look into ways to put survey together. Local Govt. Commission that had survey out had never done a web-based survey.

Public Policy subcommittee is hoping to meeting early next week, hoping to identify towns and villages and those representatives that should be involved. (Also way to distribute survey.)

The consortium of agencies led by Gifford just did the Ideas Collaborative Survey and they had a phenomenal response. The large response was due in part to networking, gift certificates from Wegman's. The survey took some time to do; if it takes a gift certificate it might be useful.

Are online surveys skewed because the people who respond tend to be interested in the topic? Does it matter? Surveys could appear on library computers with photos displayed.

We all brought up litter. Questions on litter might be useful to draw people into a survey, but litter is not the big story; we have to get people to think big.

***Physical Environment Subcommittee report:*** *George Curry reported that the subcommittee members talked about good design; what are the elements and definition of good design; why it is important (economic and social aspects). It is not that we have to survey this. There are many studies out there that do this already. The other topic discussed: Citizens and policy makers must know that this is important. We know from other studies that good design attracts tourists. We review design standards so people know what we are looking toward. Subcommittee member Bob Doucette suggested the small group view video William White: The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces and consider whether to use it as part of outreach or bring to the committee. Will meet Dec. 20, 3:30 pm, 405 UC.*

***Economic Development Subcommittee (reported last time):*** What is the public meeting component? How does it work?

Ideally, we will set up a series of talks once every subcommittee decides what would be worth having a structured conversation about. The meetings are held in large spaces (room for 40-50 people). Perhaps a dozen or two dozen of them will show up. Forty is maybe our average size group. We won't get the same people coming to each session, interests are varied. It is a chance to get other people involved in the discussion.

It may be a 30-40 minute presentation and then time for Q&A. It may or may not be power point. There may or may not be a reporter there. The sessions are typically not newsmaking but informational.

For each study we typically have done 4-6 presentations; did 10 with Green Study. For the I-81 study, we did much of it in committee and if someone is more comfortable having a conversation in committee that's fine too.

For instance we could have presentation with Coyne Park people and Auburn representatives each for half a meeting. Once all of subcommittees have contributed we start to see how it makes sense to structure this.

One of issues it is still important to address is examining both sides of the budgeting piece; examining public policy issues that help or hinder. That piece is valuable in terms of helping to address policy. Are there other things we should be looking at besides budget and identifying village and town representatives?

Are design guidelines something on the table, within the area of public policy? The topic of "Design guidelines" is not an easy topic in the community. It would be more effective to establish why design guidelines are important, but not actually try to create them.

The historical aspects of the greater community: What are the assets that we may not even know are there?

The new city government is taking a more aggressive stance on historic preservation issues and planning because they all realize that the income tax credits at the state and federal level are incredibly helpful to developers and homeowners.

Will follow-up with Dennis Connors, Curator of History, Onondaga Historical Association.

People come from California to see the Matilda Joslyn Gage house, but people in the community haven't bought into it. Are we recognizing/promoting our historical resources? The same question might be asked about natural resources.

Image Resources is a term that covers both topics; would we want to promote them as part of image? We would want to create an environment/forum where there is recognition of those things. (Drumlins, plume (correct terminology?) lakes from the glaciers.)

**Downtown Syracuse Ambassador Program:** Funding is in place for the Downtown Committee to start program for two years. It is something popular in other cities. Downtown ambassadors will be in uniform, (khakis and red top), will wear satchel that says "How can I help you?". They are on foot, answer questions. Their job is to make it as visitor friendly as possible. The first ambassador has been hired and is helping set up the program. The space is in The Galleries, will be in a storefront, desk with visitor information. First hire worked for national parks for about 12 years in the West but has also worked down in Philadelphia doing the liberty bell tours. she'll have umbrella and first aid kit, etc.

Manlius Pebble Hill once designed a downtown tour for 9<sup>th</sup> graders, with a scavenger hunt, culminated in skating in Clinton Square.

**Subcommittees meeting:**

*Case Study Subcommittee will have a virtual meeting on Monday Dec. 20 at 10 am.*

*Physical Environment Subcommittee is meeting at UC in room 405 on Monday Dec. 20 at 3:30.*

*Public Participation is meeting on Jan. 10 Monday at noon at Gifford.*

*Public Policy Subcommittee is meeting at 2 pm Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>, 572 South Salina.*

Submit materials to Sandra to post on Resources page on OCL site  
[http://onondagacitizensleague.org/ocl\\_studies/2010-11/study\\_resources.htm](http://onondagacitizensleague.org/ocl_studies/2010-11/study_resources.htm).

**Next Study Committee meeting: Tuesday, January 11<sup>th</sup> 12 noon, 307 UC.**