

GENESEE TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

Resolution 16-7 Accepting the *Rochester East Main Arts & Market District Plan* as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 6809

WHEREAS,

1. The *FY 2015-2016 Unified Planning Work Program* includes Task 6809, Rochester East Main Arts & Market District Plan, for the purpose of identifying multi-modal circulation, access, and parking improvements along with land use, streetscape enhancement, and branding strategies in the areas immediately east of Rochester's Center City, which is home to the Arts District and Public Market;
2. Said Task included an inventory of existing and planned conditions; the analysis of needs and evaluation of opportunities; conducting public informational meetings; and the selection of preferred alternatives;
3. Said Task has been completed and has resulted in the *Rochester East Main Arts & Market District Plan*, which recommends specific improvements to enhance circulation, accessibility, safety, and aesthetics for all users in the study area along with a branding strategy; and
4. Said Study has been reviewed by GTC staff and member agencies through the GTC committee process and has been found to be consistent with the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the Genesee Transportation Council hereby accepts the *Rochester East Main Arts & Market District Plan* as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 6809; and
2. That this resolution takes effect immediately.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned duly qualified Secretary of the Genesee Transportation Council certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Genesee Transportation Council held on March 10, 2016.

Date _____

KEVIN C. BUSH, Secretary
Genesee Transportation Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the East Main Arts & Market Initiative and the resulting plan, as specified by the City of Rochester, is to “identify multi-modal circulation, access, and parking improvements along with recommendations for land use development, streetscape enhancements, and community branding, as well as strategies to promote housing opportunities in the areas immediately east of Rochester’s Center City, which adjoin both the Neighborhood of the Arts and the Public Market/Marketview Heights.” In this sense it is a truly multi-disciplinary effort, comprehensive in scope but not a formal comprehensive plan or master plan.

The project’s Study Area spans several diverse neighborhoods that all have strong proximity to Downtown Rochester, transit connections, and a multitude of local and regional cultural destinations, from the Rochester Public Market to theaters, art galleries, and creative production spaces. However, those neighborhoods and destinations are poorly connected to each other due to the physical and psychological barriers presented by East Main Street and the railroad tracks, and much of the Study Area has not harnessed the value of all of these assets, whether for existing residents or in terms of attracting new economic development. The fundamental goal of this project, then, is to improve connectivity in the area in tandem with thoughtful development so as to realize the neighborhood’s potential as a vibrant live/work/create community and destination within the Rochester region and beyond.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The spine of the Study Area is East Main Street, an arterial roadway that begins approximately 1.5 miles east of the Study Area and continues west to downtown Rochester and beyond. It typically features two to three travel lanes in each direction along with a center turn lane. The speed limit on East Main Street is 30mph, however motorists routinely exceed the posted speed limit due in part to the street’s geometry. East Main Street includes little to no traffic calming, streetscape enhancements, or dedicated bicycling facilities.

The intersection of East Main Street and North Goodman Street was identified as one of the most problematic within the Study Area. It is heavily traveled by motorists and features double right-turn lanes from North Goodman Street southbound (to East Main Street westbound) and double left turn lanes from East Main Street eastbound (to North Goodman Street northbound). The intersection sits at the base of a bridge over railroad tracks that cut through the Study



Project Elements
Source: Interface Studio

Area. Further north, North Goodman Street’s intersection with Webster Avenue and Garson Avenue is a complex, five-legged layout operating with three signal phases. It possesses a good deal of excess roadbed and an existing triangular traffic island, as well as a small park on its northern edge.

Today, vehicular traffic is generally well accommodated given the urban context, with all key intersections currently operating at a vehicular level of service (VLOS) of C or better. However, while the Study Area possesses a number of generally walkable side streets, most of the main streets – i.e. the key streets that people want to walk along or across – are less friendly to pedestrians. The Study Area also faces a shortage of bicycle facilities and bicycle connections within and outside of it are limited. East Main Street and parts of North Goodman Street are multi-lane arterials that lack any markings or physical protection for bicyclists, rendering them off-limits to a majority of users. The Study Area faces a relative lack of quality open space and there are limited opportunities to use sidewalks and streets for anything but through movement. Streets do not have much, if any, public seating or plazas to offer passive social and recreational opportunities, and the road network is geared almost exclusively toward the automobile. While there is generally a large amount of off-street surface parking in the Study Area, regional attractions like the Public Market and Main Street Armory still cause parking shortages on local streets while nearby private lots sit underused.

Many arts and cultural destinations, creative production spaces, and public art amenities are located within the Study Area. The Rochester Public Market has operated at its current location since 1905, and is surrounded by the larger Market District, which is home to an exciting array of local businesses. Other neighborhoods such as the Neighborhood of the Arts, EMMA, GP4H, PACK, Marketview Heights, and Beechwood feature various small- and large-scale arts and cultural destinations.

Approximately 60% of the properties in the East Main Arts & Market Initiative Study Area are residential. The second most common land use in the Study Area is vacant land, comprising 15% of all parcels (180 properties). Outside of the Public Market, commercial, auto, and mixed use properties are located predominantly along the Study Area's main corridors,

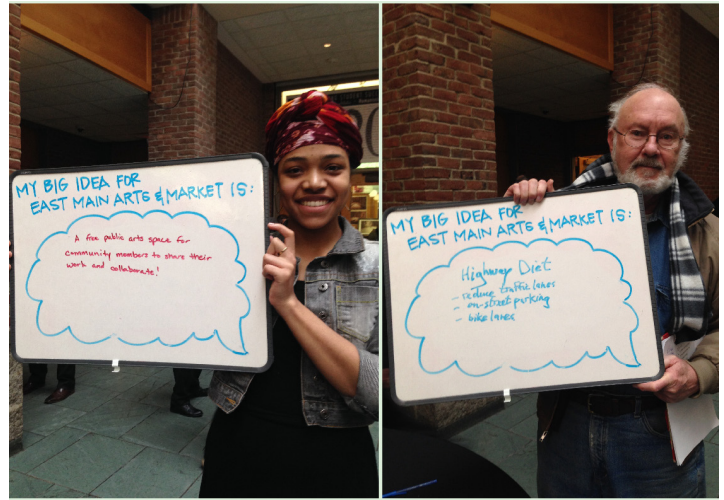
East Main Street and North Goodman Street. Together, the commercial, auto, and mixed use properties account for 11% of all properties (133) and 22% of total parcel area. Most large industrial properties abut the railroad tracks, contributing to the barrier that they create between neighborhoods and amenities in the Study Area. The six neighborhoods that meet in the vicinity of East Main Street and North Goodman Street each have their own sense of identity, and some, like NOTA and Beechwood, have established graphic identities or brands as well. In addition to the many neighborhoods that call the Study Area home, the area's regional destinations such as the Rochester Public Market and host of arts and cultural venues also contribute to the local vibe, but at present, there is no unifying thread to connect the unique mix of neighborhoods and destinations within the East Main Arts & Market Initiative area.



Figure 1. Study Area Boundaries
Source: Interface Studio

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The East Main Arts & Market Plan was developed over the course of a yearlong process, beginning in November 2014. The effort took place in three overall phases: Current & Future Conditions Analysis; Formation of Alternatives; and Draft and Final Plans. A robust, multifaceted public and stakeholder involvement strategy was woven throughout the process. A critical objective of the planning process was to create an open and transparent platform for the public and other stakeholders – from residents to businesses, artists and visitors – to provide meaningful input into the direction of the project and the ultimate recommendations. This was accomplished through a three-stage process: 1) Early guidance from the Project Advisory Committee and Focus Groups on the key issues, challenges and opportunities that the project should explore; 2) A first round of public input leading directly to the Alternative Concepts that were developed and the criteria by which they were evaluated; and 3) A second round of public input to rank the alternatives, prioritize the evaluation criteria, and provide more detailed feedback on the specific features of the alternatives. Through this process, public input very directly and transparently shaped the final plan.



Public meeting input process. Source: Interface Studio

PROJECT GOALS AND ALTERNATIVES SCORING

Through a combination of input from the Project Advisory Committee, focus groups, and the general public, ten project goals were formulated to guide the analysis of potential alternatives (see list below). Then, a series of alternative concepts for transportation, development, and branding

were developed based on the first phase of research and public input, which included: a review of existing plans and projects; the first two Project Advisory Committee meetings; the first Public Open House meeting, several Focus Group meetings, and a review of existing best practices in live/work/create neighborhoods.

See Chapters 4, 5, and 6 for a comprehensive look at all of the alternatives considered for transportation, development, and community branding, respectively.

- I. TAME EAST MAIN STREET BY REDUCING ITS WIDTH AND ENCOURAGING VEHICLES TO SLOW DOWN
- II. FOSTER MULTI -MODAL TRANSPORTATION (WALKING, BIKING, AND TRANSIT) ALONG THIS GATEWAY TO THE CITY
- III. COMPLEMENT EXISTING ICONIC ARCHITECTURE WITH PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS THAT CREATE A MORE BEAUTIFUL, URBANIZED BUILT ENVIRONMENT ON EAST MAIN AND ON GOODMAN
- IV. IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY THROUGH INVESTMENTS IN PLACEMAKING AT KEY INTERSECTIONS THAT TRANSFORM THE EAST MAIN ARTS & MARKET AREA INTO A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO GATHER AND SPEND TIME
- V. MANAGE EVENT -RELATED PARKING
- VI. DEVELOP A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES (INCLUDING FLEXIBLE LIVE -WORK SPACES) FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP AND FOR RENT AND MAINTAIN A MIXED INCOME COMMUNITY
- VII. SUPPORT CREATIVE PRODUCTION THROUGH THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, PROGRAMS, AND BRANDING
- VIII. BALANCE NEW DEVELOPMENT AND THE DESIRE TO ATTRACT NEW RESIDENTS WHO WILL ADD VITALITY AND HELP SUPPORT NEW RETAIL AND SERVICES WITH THE NEEDS OF EXISTING RESIDENTS
- IX. INVEST IN PUBLIC SPACE ON EAST MAIN AT THE INTERSECTION OF MULTIPLE NEIGHBORHOODS
- X. CREATE A PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTION OVER THE RAIL BETWEEN EAST MAIN AND THE PUBLIC MARKET

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Overarching themes of the final recommendations are to build off of the neighborhood's existing strengths; to focus limited resources on key corridors, intersections, and subdistricts; to bridge the most critical gaps dividing neighborhoods and cultural destinations; and to equitably support existing residents while creating the potential for additional economic investment. Recommendations across transportation, development and community branding are designed to be complementary, mutually reinforcing each other in supporting a cohesive neighborhood design and identity that meets project goals.

Transportation Recommendations

The vision for transportation in the Study Area is to leverage streets and other infrastructure to not only provide higher quality transportation options to residents, businesses and visitors, but through those connections support creative production and economic investment in the neighborhood and Rochester as a whole. For walking, bicycling and transit, a primary goal is to provide a user experience that goes beyond the bare minimum to be safe, accessible, and comfortable – ultimately making them the easy, convenient and fun choices.

Recommendations for the East Main Street corridor include: reductions in the number of vehicle travel lanes; a 2-way separated bike lane on the south side of the street; wider sidewalks and corner curb extensions; upgraded bus stops with boarding islands on the south side of the street; and construction of center medians (initially painted, and built out with landscaping in the future).

Recommendations for the East Main Street and North Goodman Street intersection include: lane reductions and establishment of a yield-controlled right-turn lane for southbound North Goodman Street; median islands to shorten pedestrian crossing distances and facilitate bicycle connections; and construction of pedestrian plazas on the northwest and northeast corners.

On North Goodman Street between East Main Street and Webster Avenue/Garson Avenue, a reduction in vehicle lanes is recommended, along with on-street bike lanes and the preservation of curbside parking. The intersection with Webster Avenue / Garson Avenue is recommended for a redesign to create a large pedestrian plaza on the southeast corner of the intersection, with different configurations in the short- and long-term in order to accommodate traffic in the context of an existing triangle island.

Other components of transportation recommendations include: a pedestrian and bicycle bridge over the railroad tracks to connect the Public Market area with the Main Street Armory; another potential bridge to reconnect North Goodman Street on either side of the tracks (in the long-term); a shared-use parking scheme to better handle event traffic, with the potential use of shuttle buses during periods of peak demand; the installation of green infrastructure in long-term buildouts of transportation elements; traffic calming treatments on Scio Street similar to Union Street; and a kickoff event in the form of an “open street” festival on East Main Street to build further support for the Initiative.

The project team analyzed how these transportation recommendations would likely affect vehicular flow and congestion. In the proposed design, all intersections studied are projected to operate at a vehicular level-of-service (LOS) of D or better, an acceptable level for peak periods in urban areas. The trade-off for modestly reduced vehicular traffic capacity during peak periods (keeping in mind that capacity is generally more than adequate at all other times of day and on weekends) is a dramatic series of improvements for those walking, biking, and in many cases using transit, as well as in terms of safety.

Development Recommendations

Recommendations for development include creating new hubs for commercial and mixed-use development and to create and support local initiatives on neighborhood housing. North Goodman Street is envisioned as a revitalized walkable, mixed-use retail corridor with concurrent investments in the streetscape and public realm. Meanwhile, East Main Street's development is envisioned through a catalytic project at the existing Otis Lumber site, along with a revitalization of lawns and parking lots of existing cultural sites fronting the corridor. In the long-term, a recommendation is made to consider downzoning sections of East Main Street to encourage walkable development. In the interim, the City should utilize the development review process to further this project's goals and adopt design guidelines that inform future development.

Housing recommendations include working with the Collective Action Project to further redevelopment along Lewis Street; creating a mixed-use, mixed-income development along East Main Street east of the railroad tracks; launching a creative district concept around GP4H to promote selective infill and artist-in-residency programming; and complimenting any investments in new housing with programs and resources to benefit existing residents.

Branding Recommendations

Numerous branding alternatives were discussed in preparation of this Plan through public and stakeholder outreach, and a recommendation is to use these concepts to hold a local design competition to finalize a brand for the Study Area. The brand should feature prominently in all streetscape, design, and infrastructure improvements recommended for the Study Area. It should also play a role in one or more “signature” art projects. In conjunction with moving the branding along with transportation and development recommendations, a web presence should be maintained to continue the momentum of this planning effort.

IMPLEMENTATION

Recommendations are divided into short, medium, and long-term, and can be phased over time as funding becomes available. Conceptual cost estimates indicate total costs of approximately \$47 million for all recommendations, split almost evenly between transportation and development/branding. Additional study is required on these costs as project development occurs. A wide range of funding sources could be considered due to the varying nature of the recommendations. These include numerous federal and NY State programs traditionally used for transportation and economic development, along with others that leverage the private sector and local non-profits. See Chapter VIII for additional details on potential funding sources.

East Main Street corridor rendering. Recommendations feature a 2-way separated bike lane, a reduction in vehicle travel lanes, a new center median, wider sidewalks and landscaping, and targeted redevelopment including the Otis Lumber site.



East Main Street at North Goodman Street rendering. Recommendations feature traffic calming through a reconfigured intersection and median island, and pedestrian plazas to serve as a gateway to North Goodman Street's mixed-use and walkable retail corridor.



Source: EDR