

**CITY OF ROCHESTER
NORTH CLINTON AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD
COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION PROJECT
VISIONING WORKSHOP
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Prepared for: Rachel Adonis
City of Rochester's Economic Development Department

Prepared by: Jocelyn Goldberg-Schaible
Rochester Research Group

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I BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

The City of Rochester has identified the North Clinton Avenue area, including sectors 9 and 10, as a neighborhood worthy of – and needful of – attention. Compared with several other city neighborhoods, North Clinton has not achieved much economically as yet. But the city believes that there is untapped potential in this neighborhood, and therefore sponsored a series of visioning workshops as the first steps in a revitalization process built upon public-private partnership.

II PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The first three of the sessions in this four-session series gathered a cross-section of neighborhood business owners, residents and community leaders to explore their respective visions for their neighborhood. Perspectives and priorities were probed around the table, with participants openly airing their frustrations and articulating their needs and hopes for their neighborhood's future.

The fourth session invited back all who had participated in any of the first three sessions, to help establish a sense of directional consensus and to start focusing on implementation's first steps.

A full roster of respondents is found in this report's appendix, along with copies of both discussion guides designed for this workshop series. A total of 47 individuals participated in one of the first three sessions, and 19 in the fourth session.

The four visioning workshops were conducted on May 9,10,11 and 17. Both afternoon and evening sessions were offered for the convenience of those attending. Participants in each of the first three workshops were given \$50 at the close of their session, as a symbol of the City's respect and appreciation for their time, their ideas and their opinions. The NET office on Norton Street off North Clinton Avenue was the site of the sessions. Although representatives of the City were by intent not present during any of the sessions, all four workshops were video-taped.

Next steps in this process, as we understand it, are to include an analysis by the City's Economic Development Department of the area's market potential. That analysis will help to determine what neighborhood services are most needed and most supportable. The economic analysis is to be followed by an architectural design concept, a development program and an implementation plan. By establishing a highly developed and coordinated strategy, the City hopes to see this plan brought to fruition over the next 5-10 years.

III ASSEMBLED FINDINGS

Each session opened, after introducing the visioning workshop process and the City's intent regarding North Clinton area revitalization, by asking participants about themselves. We discovered that around our table were a broad-based cross-section of local residents, business owners and community leaders spanning a range in ages and ethnicity. Almost immediately it became clear that this effort had attracted a diverse group with a tremendous amount of energy and commitment regarding their neighborhood and its future.

The moderator began by asking about the best and worst aspects of this community today. Focusing first on the positives, we heard a great deal about the area's **cultural diversity** and how that diversity seems to work relatively well here. People from several ethnic backgrounds – including Hispanics, African Americans and Asians – mentioned feeling more ethnically comfortable in the North Clinton area than they do elsewhere, particularly in the surrounding suburban communities. "We've got every color and every flavor here", as one respondent put it, with warmth and enthusiasm underscoring her comment.

We also heard a strong sense of **personal loyalty and commitment** to this area. Many of our participants have lived here for a very long time. Some even moved away, and then came back. Several have moved into the community by choice, others stay by choice. They are here because they want to be here. They are clearly loyal and committed to being here for the longer term, to see their community develop its untapped potential. They are impatient to see the community improve, and feel that have long been awaiting that improvement.

We heard about some **beautiful old buildings and facades** with great character and history – which they want to see kept up and well-maintained. And when new buildings are built here, they want them to visually fit in and belong alongside these older structures.

We also heard about several of the neighborhood's **churches** – not only in terms of their impressive edifices but also with respect to the wonderful outreach work that many of them do in this community. Although several religious leaders were present around our table, it was not only they who spoke enthusiastically of the churches and their work. Many of our participants were obviously involved in those churches, either as parishioners or as recipients of the services they offer.

Evidently many of the area's churches not only provide spiritual life, gathering places and activities, but also provide charitable assistance and a range of counseling services to those in need. Some have even begun programs to start structurally re-vitalizing this part of the city, *"one house and one street at a time"*.

And we heard about several **existing agencies** – Baden Street, PRYD, Jordan Health Center, and many others – already perceived as doing a great deal of fine work within this community.

We also heard about a great deal of **grass-roots involvement** and many already committed **organizations** – various block groups, sectors 9 and 10, 14620, 14621, 14605, NENA, etc. etc. This web of involved organizations has evidently already been mobilizing committed citizens and business owners, with their own visions and plans for this area's future.

Our participants stressed that it will be important for the City to harness the energy and commitment of these various agencies and organizations as the partners are assembled in support of the revitalization process.

Focusing next on the community's worst aspects, we heard first and foremost about **drugs**, and the problem they represent in terms of undesirable people – many of them from outside the area – hanging out on street corners, making our participants and their children feel unsafe.

We heard about known **drug houses** that go on operating while *"no one seems to do anything to get rid of them"*. We heard about **storefronts** that pretend to be grocery stores but obviously sell drugs and guns, while the police seem to do little to try and stop them.

We heard about the **needle exchange**, which nearly all of our participants seemed to wish were located elsewhere – *"maybe in a hospital" "or next door to a police station somewhere"*. What these local residents and business owners seem to resent most about the exchange is the number of drug users it brings into the area, who come to get their new needles, throw their old needles on the ground where the neighborhood children find them, buy their drugs, and leave.

One respondent told of her 79-year-old father who goes out at dawn to pick up used needles and other drug debris so that the little children won't find them on their way to school in the morning. She used her story to illustrate both the

caring efforts of one committed community resident to do what little he can, and her own personal desire to see the needle exchange gone.

The market of drug buyers using the needle exchange as its nucleus, we're told, is in part what keeps this neighborhood's drug market so active and thriving, and if the needle exchange were gone, many believe that their neighborhood's drug trafficking would be significantly lower. Clearly, those around our table strongly believe that this needle exchange belongs out of their revitalized neighborhood.

Given the sense of strong emotional unanimity surrounding this issue, moving the needle exchange might well provide a unique opportunity for the City to symbolically prove its commitment to the North Clinton area this time around. Removing the needle exchange, in other words, would show this community's citizens that the City truly has heard this loud and clear message, establishing the City's credibility of commitment and providing a critical and visible jump-start to the revitalization process.

We heard about **loud angry music**, as well as disrespectful and sometimes **destructive behavior** on the part of young people who lack direction, positive role modeling, and the hope for a better future that would come with education, training, skills and job prospects. We also heard about frustration with the police, who several of our participants perceive as too busy to respond to their calls for help when local youths are noisy, disruptive and/or personally menacing on their neighborhood streets.

We heard about **absentee landlords and transient renters** – both of whom contribute to the neglect and decline of certain property, while their frustrated neighbors are struggling to proudly keep their own houses and yards clean and tidy. And we heard concern that the City does not seem to enforce its code requirements strictly enough, reputedly allowing neighborhood property to become further run-down and neglected without penalty.

~~We also heard about a lack of central focus, communication and widespread awareness regarding all the good things that are happening around the community.~~ There seem, in other words, to be more good things here than people get to hear about or read about. In part that seems to be a reflection of another negative here – which is the **negative portrayal of this area in the media** over the past several years. The good things here rarely if ever get covered, we're told, but the bad things [like crimes and such] always seem to find the spotlight. So the impression of those outside the area is that this area is

terribly unsafe and undesirable – when those who live here tell us that that's not entirely true.

When the moderator asked where the session's participants tend to go to buy their food, clothing, shoes, and the other things they need – where they go for dining out, and for entertainment – in all three sessions most admitted that they **reluctantly go outside the area for nearly everything**. They may run into one of the local corner stores for a half gallon of milk in a pinch, and gladly stop by Chimo's for lunch, but all too often find themselves having to head to Ridge Road, to Irondequoit, or to the Mall for the things they need. None of them seem happy about this. There was a strong sense that they would really like to have everything they need right there locally – as they used to be in the old days, when *"you could get anything you wanted along Clinton Avenue"*. Clearly, they would like to be supporting the economic health of their own community, rather than having to spend their money outside the neighborhood.

In the most ideal world, we're told, those local businesses they wish were here would all be owned and staffed by local residents, so that all the profits would *"stay right here within the community"*. Or, when outsiders do develop and own the businesses, they should at least be willing to both employ local residents and put some portion of their profits back into supporting the community.

We also heard in several sessions about how this neighborhood deserves the beauty of **wide, safe, clean sidewalks** as well as **trees and flowers**. But we also heard a sense of sadness and concern that those trees and flowers not be abused by the neighborhood's *"problem people"* as they have in the past. Their solution was to let those potentially destructive people become involved in the planting and the care of the trees and flowers, reasoning that people who feel that those plants and flowers are theirs will not let them become abused. Again, a **sense of ownership**, we're told, is the key to the neighborhood's success, even with respect to its flowers and trees.

Graffiti, we're told, is another ongoing problem in this area, although the point was made that two places you'll rarely if ever see graffiti are the Jordan Health Center and the neighborhood's murals. The reason, they suggested, was that the neighborhood residents feels a sense of ownership over both these places, and therefore are more protective of them and unlikely to allow them to become abused. The implicit message here is once again that the revitalized neighborhood stands the best chance of escaping the abuses of graffiti and such if community locals feel that sense of ownership – if not in the businesses themselves, then at least in the process of bringing those businesses into their community.

North Clinton area shuttle or trolley may help make the area more readily accessible to its residents and visitors. In a related recommendation, some suggested that the revitalized area at least get some of the nicer RTS bus stop structures, equipped with posted bus routes and timetables.

Besides stores, however, many of our participants also stressed the need for **programs and services that will be critically important** if this area is to thrive, and this became the focus for much of the discussion in each of our first three sessions.

First and foremost, we heard, is the ability to break the **poverty cycle with training and job opportunities right here in the community**. Among the ideas which surfaced for further exploration were:

A local satellite of BOCES and/or MCC to provide a range of pragmatic job skills training so that local residents will get the skills they need to equip them for tomorrow's jobs – including high-tech opportunities with potential for long-term growth, as opposed to today's low-paying job training programs that lead towards nurses' aides and other low-skill opportunities *"that have, like, a \$7 an hour future at best."*

A work-study program in the schools which provides on-the-job experience and job skills training via local company apprenticeships for high school students to help both keep them in school and enable them to graduate with realistic expectations for solid employment.

One or more large employers willing to hire local residents and provide good employment opportunities. The great array of smaller, quieter firms throughout the area, who don't seem to be involved in the life of the community as yet besides being located here, might provide some opportunities, but today are still generally uninvolved and need to be approached – potentially by the City -- to encourage their more active neighborhood involvement.

We also heard about the need for **counseling services** of various sorts to help those in the community improve their quality of life.

A substance abuse re-hab program within the neighborhood so that those needing such services don't have to go all the way to Park Ridge

and out into the suburbs for treatment. Also, the availability of more serious and longer-term substance abuse treatment programs than the two-week “band-aid” programs available locally, with their high rates of recidivism.

A teen center providing cultural opportunities for arts-related activities [eg. music, dance, fine arts etc.] to supplement and complement the sports-related activities which now take place in Torres Park, Baden Street and elsewhere.

A parenting center, or parenting workshops conducted in the area, to help those who need help coping with the challenges of raising children today, especially if they themselves are young.

Our participants are clearly willing to see these services provided by **existing organizations and agencies** – and in fact hope that that can be done -- as long as those organizations and agencies have the financial resources and staffing to serve all who need those services within the community, and as long as they are conveniently located.

Without cars, we’re reminded, this is a relatively large neighborhood that is not necessarily easy to get around given the limitations of today’s bus service. In other words, even if there is some job skills training already available on Hart Street, and an MCC satellite already downtown, that does not mean that residents of the North Clinton area feel adequately served as yet.

And loudly and clearly we also heard about the need for **more widespread home ownership** to underscore the sense of community involvement and to make residents into stakeholders committed to the community’s success. In other words, what they envisioned was:

One or more programs to help more local residents purchase and rehab neglected, abandoned and city-owned property – because home ownership will breed pride and give more people a positive and productive stake in the community’s future, and transform the community street by street, back to the way it used to look back in the 70s when nearly *“all the homes on the block were owned and people took great pride in their houses and their yards”*.

Interestingly, several participants observed that envisioning the future for the North Clinton area was in many ways like remembering the past and re-creating some of the wonderful commercially and socially positive things that used to be here.

Others pointed out, however, that perhaps it's more complicated than merely turning back time, since years ago this area didn't have the same cultural diversity and high unemployment and drug problems it has today. So their collective vision became one of re-creating the positive aspects of yesterday with the challenges of today by adding in the needed services like job skills, employment opportunities, teen programs, counseling and so forth.

Some recalled that this neighborhood was to be referred to as "*La Avenida*" but others seemed to think of it more as the "*Upper Falls area*", and although the City is calling it "*the North Clinton area*", those around the table in another session suggested that Clinton is just a street but the area is really "*Rochester's Northeast*". Whatever they collectively decide to call it, the "*many cultures, one community*" description seems to underscore what we heard in all three sessions, and fit well into what many see as the area's future.

In our **fourth session**, we began by reiterating many of the findings outlined above to establish a sense of consensus, and were reassured by watching heads around the room nodding in agreement on point after point.

Turning next to the issue of implementation, we divided a large blank sheet of paper down the middle – the right side pertaining to the community's commercial revitalization, and the left side pertaining to the community's social revitalization. Again, the need to do both was stressed, and the opportunity to pursue both concurrently met with clear buy-in.

In terms of implementing **Commercial Revitalization**, the first key issue dealt with where exactly to locate the community's revitalized commercial hub. In the first three sessions, when asked where people tend gather in this neighborhood, it was clear that although activities take place at various community centers, Baden Street, Torres Park and at various churches, there is no natural geographic hub for community activity and interaction. When the moderator suggested the possibility of using the stretch of Clinton Avenue between Upper Falls and Avenue D for the commercial backbone of redevelopment, most found the concept to be a logical one, "*since Clinton Avenue is where everything used to be anyway*". And given that that area currently has so many City-owned

properties, the opportunity to establish the first phases of redevelopment in this area seemed reasonable.

What are their commercial priorities? As candidates for the upcoming economic feasibility study, our participants would most like to see:

- ◆ a movie theatre – showing several concurrent movies, including ethnic films
 - ◆ restaurants of various types, including a range of ethnic alternatives and some with outdoor seating during warm weather months
 - ◆ a bakery
 - ◆ a dry cleaners
 - ◆ a bookstore – selling new & used books and newspapers in English and Spanish, and having a good technical section
 - ◆ one or more religious bookstores – which may be a potential revenue source for one or more of the local churches
 - ◆ a beauty supply store / beauty salon
 - ◆ a florist and green grocer – with a wide variety of fresh produce, as found throughout NYC
 - ◆ A banquet facility for parties, celebrations and gatherings [possibly located in the Urban League building near the Post Office]
 - ◆ Specialty retail shops and boutiques for clothing & shoes [i.e. not Payless and the like]
 - ◆ a meat market
 - ◆ a pizza place that delivers locally
 - ◆ bowling
 - ◆ a roller rink / ice rink
 - ◆ an optical store
 - ◆ a video rental store
 - ◆ a retail computer store [although some thought there may already be one in back of the Post Office]
 - ◆ a professional building with an outpatient lab for routine testing, and various attorneys and medical specialists who time-share office space on a day-a-week basis
-
- ◆ a veterinarian, which may be part of an animal shelter satellite
 - ◆ a bank or federal credit union [providing the credit needed for business ownership and home ownership]

In addition, participants would like to see, in support of this commercial redevelopment:

- ◆ improved transportation, including
 - ❖ nicer bus stops with posted route maps and schedules,
 - ❖ a neighborhood shuttle or trolley to make it easier for the elderly and those without cars to get around the neighborhood, and
 - ❖ conversion of accessible vacant lots into well-maintained off-street parking places for those with cars.
- ◆ a community newspaper published in Spanish and English that would bridge the social and commercial sides of the neighborhood and let everyone know what's going on in their community day by day or week by week. Local businesses could become involved as advertisers in this newspaper, providing them another opportunity for community involvement. Gannett may be a supportive resource in this venture, but there was a strong sense that this should be a newspaper run by the locals for the locals, giving them the control they don't feel they have with the media today regarding what gets said about their community.
- ◆ a technology-based interactive business association network with the police – utilizing phone, fax, et al – for more effective communication during robberies etc. Some thought of this as a business-based neighborhood watch with the critical element of responsive police support.

Participants stressed again that whatever new businesses are brought into this community during this redevelopment process both

- ◆ employ local people, and
- ◆ be involved in the community

Some even recommended that whatever incentives are offered to these businesses by the City or State be tied to the requirement for employing local residents -- and that these requirements be strictly enforced. Some even suggested the notion of a local enforcement team as the City's eyes and ears, helping to ensure compliance, whether in terms of commercial requirements or neighborhood residential code.

Existing local employers, too, should become part of the revitalization process by providing incentives to

- ◆ become more involved locally,
- ◆ to employ local residents, and
- ◆ to provide work-study apprenticeships for the neighborhood's high school students.

In terms of implementing **Social Revitalization**, participants stressed the importance of the partnership between the City, the private partners and the Churches, and also emphasized the opportunity to **partner** as well with **existing agencies and organizations**. However, they also cautioned that social services need to be available in adequate supply to meet the community's demand, and that many of those agencies today [eg. those serving Latinos and those related to health care, to name just a few] are already stretched in terms of financial resources, facilities, and staffing.

For agencies to adequately serve this area's needs, they must have the **required resources** and also be **located conveniently** throughout the area. This neighborhood is large enough, we're reminded, to potentially warrant several locations at which a given service is provided. With respect to staffing, participants stressed that diversity in the area's population should be reflected in agency staff diversity, as well so that each cultural sub-population – "*Latinos, African Americans, Asians, Arabs, everyone*" -- feels that they are being served.

What are their **social priorities**? Among those which participants perceive as most needed are:

- ◆ The drug problem – eliminating the known drug houses and storefront drug operations, cleaning up the street corner drug traffic via visible video surveillance, license plate tracking and a stronger police presence with stricter enforcement efforts. Getting the needle exchange out of the neighborhood as a critical and visible first step.
- ◆ Neighborhood-based meetings of AA, Alanon, Alateen, and ACOA – "*here – not at Park Ridge*", and long-term transition care rather than "*15-day wonder programs*".

- ◆ A teen drop-in center or teen crisis center, as well as a broader range of teen-focused activities. Venues, leadership staffing and funding are all needed if teens are to be adequately served in this neighborhood. A broad range of activities [athletic, social, cultural, artistic, computer learning, tutoring, etc.] should be offered -- using local schools, churches, parks, libraries and community centers as potential venues. Also needed are a range of legitimate job opportunities for youth age 14+, providing alternatives to the lucrative employment proffered by drug dealers.
- ◆ Better, faster police response to the neighborhood's local resident calls for help.
- ◆ Better code enforcement of property violations among absentee landlords, and stricter enforcement of the City's point system.
- ◆ Job training for youth and adults -- ranging from after-school tutoring to MCC and/or BOCES satellite centers, and potentially utilizing the Family Learning Center on Hart Street -- to provide local residents with skilled trades that have good futures and growth potential.
- ◆ Supported elderly housing within the neighborhood; a small assisted living center and an adult day care center
- ◆ A spiritual "*healing*" among the neighborhood's residents to help this community move forward towards revitalization.

And with that, the fourth session concluded, and participants were left asking about next steps and how they might be kept informed as the redevelopment process unfolds.

Harnessing their energy and creativity will be part of the challenge of moving forward. Despite a history of at times pulling in different directions, there emerged during these visioning workshops many strong common denominators uniting these participants in their **visions for the community's future**.

Several did loudly and clearly share a sense of frustration with the fact that until now more has not been accomplished in this area despite *"lots of promises and lip service"* on the City's part. Many arrived with a sense of wary cynicism, asking how this time anything would be different from the false starts of the past. But most seemed to leave their workshops feeling listened to, heard, and significantly more **hopeful** than they were two hours earlier.

To keep that **momentum** moving forward, we recommend that the City establish ongoing branded update **communications** -- not only with those who attended these workshops but perhaps with all invited to participate -- to help foster that sense of ownership they tell us will be so critical to the long-term success of this revitalized community.

Fax

Name: MARILYN BELLAMY
Company: HOME OPERATOR
Voice Number: 716-454-2961
Fax Number:
125 ST. PAUL STREET
BLDG. B-#1619
ROCHESTER, NY 14604

Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2000

Total Pages: 1

Subject: VISION WORKSHOP

Name: ATT: JOCELYN

Company: THE ROCHESTER RESEARCH GROUP

Voice Number:

Fax Number: 924-3715

Note: JOCELYN,
I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME OUT TO ALLOW ME TO TAKE
PART
IN THE VISION OF THE CLINTON AVENUE AREA. IT IS SO GREAT TO BE
PART OF THE VISION OF MY LIFE LONG HISTORY OF RESIDENCE ON THE
NORTH
SIDE.
I WANTED YOU TO KNOW THAT I WAS NOT OFFENDED BY THE CONSULTATING
FEE
BECAUSE BEING OUT OF WORK IT WAS A BLESSING TWO WAYS FOR ME TO
SHARE
MY VISION AND HISTORY AS WELL AS RECEIVE A FINANCIAL BLESSING TO
HELP ME OUT AT THIS TIME. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO DOING FOLLOW-UP
ON THIS PROJECT. TAKE CARE AND THANKS ONCE AGAIN.
SINCERELY,
MARILYN BELLAMY

5-15-00

Dear sector 9 committee:

My name is Lenard T. Jones; I am a second grade student form #39 school. My mother Anita is the co-chair of sector 9 and she asked me what I think we need in our community. I think we need more festival, stores, restaurants, malls, kind people, more jobs, and schools. She asked me what could I do to help my community. I would help keep our community clean and respect other people propriety. Say yes to yourself and build better community.

Sincerely,

Lenard T. Jones

PS My name is, Anita Jones, and these are my son words. I feel the youth of this community need a voice in what they what to happen in this community thank you.

Lenard

V APPENDIX:

Moderator's Agenda & Discussion Guide, Sessions 1-3

Moderator's Agenda & Discussion Guide, Session 4

Roster of Recruited Participants

Roster of those Attending each Session [i.e. Sign-in Sheets]

You'll notice that we're recording tonight's session. That serves a couple of purposes. First, some of the people at City Hall sponsoring tonight's session will be very interested in what you have to say, but we didn't want them in the room with us here tonight, getting in the way and cluttering things up. So they'll be able to see the tapes afterwards, without interfering in our session. Secondly, at the end of this process, I'll have to write a detailed report about our findings, and the best way for me to make sure that I've accurately captured what you had to say is to go back to the tapes and not just rely on my memory, which is good but not that good. OK?

Now tonight's session is one of three sessions that bring together people like yourselves from the North Clinton area -- some of you residents, some of you business owners, some of you civic or religious leaders. These three sessions will be leading up to a fourth and final session to which you all will be invited. That much bigger meeting will be an opportunity to see what ideas emerged from each of the three sessions, and to see whether as a larger group we might not come up with a vision for the future that we can all buy into and get behind. That fourth session may also offer participants a chance to focus on implementation -- and how to make your visions for tomorrow's North Clinton Avenue happen.

- ◆ Now let's take a minute and briefly introduce those around the table. Though you may already know one another, this will help me get a sense of
 - who you are,
 - how long you've been part of the North Clinton area, and
 - your role in the neighborhood today.

II BACKGROUND

- ◆ Now for background, what do you see as the best and worst aspects of the North Clinton area today? Let's focus on the best aspects first. What's good about the North Clinton area today? [PROBE AREA'S PERCEIVED STRENGTHS.]
-
- ◆ Now let's shift our focus to what's not so good about the North Clinton area today. What's wrong here? What needs to be better? [PROBE AREA'S PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES.]
 - ◆ Where's the major focus of activity on North Clinton Avenue these days -- where do people go to gather? What kinds of activities go on here?

- ♦ Tell me about the “social fabric” of this community... In other words, what kinds of people live here today? [Only if prompting is needed, ask: What are neighborhood residents like in terms of their ages, their ethnic backgrounds, and what seems to matter to them most?]
- ♦ [IF NOT ALREADY RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS, ASK:] What about the shopping opportunities in the neighborhood today? Where do you tend to go for groceries? for clothing and shoes? for the other things you buy? Where do you go for dining out? For entertainment? Are there places to find the things you need, or do you find yourselves going outside the neighborhood for your shopping, your restaurants, your entertainment? How easy is it to get around the neighborhood? How safe do you feel here? What’s it feel like to be part of this neighborhood – to live here, to work here, to own a business here?

III LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Now let’s look ahead 5 or even 10 years into the future. If you could imagine a North Clinton Avenue area you could be really proud of – a neighborhood that was really thriving – a neighborhood that could be a model for other parts of the City – what would that neighborhood be like? [PROBE IN DEPTH, PROMPTING ONLY IF NECESSARY:] What could make the North Clinton area ideal for those who live and work here?

Imagine a transformed neighborhood with enough cultural richness to draw visitors from all over the region... What could make North Clinton a neighborhood that people who live outside the area would even want to come to, to shop and eat and spend their money?

What would the neighborhood look like? What would be here that’s not here today? What wouldn’t be here that is here today?

IV THE CHALLENGE

Now for the rest of today’s session, we around the table are now the folks in charge. The neighborhood is in our hands, we’ve got the money and the resources we need, and our job is to solve the neighborhood’s problem and build a better future. So what should we do? What direction should we take North Clinton so that 5-10 years from now it will be one of the City’s desirable areas?

[SPEND THE REST OF THE SESSION PROBING THEIR IDEAS IN DEPTH, EXPLORING THE DIFFERENCES AND ENCOURAGING THEM TO REACT TO ONE ANOTHER’S VISIONS. AT THIS POINT TOO, INTRODUCE IN SUMMARY FORM ANY KEY THEMES WHICH EMERGED FROM EARLIER SESSIONS]

AND PROBE THEIR REACTIONS IN DEPTH. BY TAKING THE BEST FROM EACH CONCEPT OFFERED, AT THIS AND PRIOR SESSIONS, OUR GOAL WILL BE TO EMERGE WITH ONE OR MORE COLLECTIVE AREAS OF OVERLAP IF NOT CLEAR CONSENSUS AMONG THEIR VISIONS.]

What might be some of the obstacles we'll be likely to face, taking the neighborhood from where it is today, to where we want it to be? How might we most effectively deal with those obstacles, to make sure our vision is achieved and our neighborhood really does become what we envision? [NOTE: IF TIME DOES NOT PERMIT THIS TOPIC TO BE COVERED DURING SESSIONS 1-3, IT MAY BECOME A CORNERSTONE OF SESSION 4, WHEN THE FOCUS SHIFTS TOWARDS THE HOW-TO'S OF IMPLEMENTATION.]

[ONLY IF TIME PERMITS, CONTINUE:] What do you see as the 5 or 6 action steps which have to be taken first – without delay – to help take advantage of the opportunities, tackle the obstacles, and jump-start the process of transforming your neighborhood?

IV WRAP-UP

So let's step back and see where we've come. From what I've heard around the table... [REITERATE EMERGENT THEMES.]

Did I get that right? Have I left out anything really critical?

[IF TIME PERMITS, ASK:] Now before we end tonight's session, what final advice would you like to add? Any last words for the City, who sponsored this visioning process and who will be using these findings?

Well, that ends our time together tonight. Before you leave, I'd like to remind you that there will be a fourth session, which you and the participants from the other two visioning workshops will be welcome to attend. It's there that these ideas will be taken to the next step, and explored even further. That session will take place on May 17th at 6-8 pm in this same location. I've got a handout here you can take with you today, and you'll be receiving a reminder phone call to see whether you'll be planning to take part, which I'd like to encourage you to do. We've heard lots of great ideas tonight around the table, and with the level of commitment I've heard here, you clearly deserve to see your neighborhood prosper. So hope to see you at that next session, and before long to start reading about the turnaround taking place in the North Clinton area.

Good-bye for now, and thanks again.
[TERMINATE SESSION NOW]

CITY OF ROCHESTER
NORTH CLINTON AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD
COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION PROJECT
VISIONING WORKSHOP
SESSION FOUR

MODERATOR'S AGENDA & DISCUSSION GUIDE
5/17/2000 REVISED DRAFT

I WELCOME

Welcome back. It's great to see so many of you returning for this next step in the visioning process for redevelopment of the North Clinton area.

First, I'd like to start by giving you a sense of where tonight's session fits into the overall re-development process.

Last week, as you all know, we held three visioning workshops, with you as participants representing the area's residents, business owners, and community leaders.

Now in tonight's session we'll try and take the several perspectives which emerged from the first three sessions, and combine them into one unified vision for the area's future. We'll also start to focus tonight on implementation – in other words, outlining the first 5 or 6 most critical action steps that must be taken first to get us on track towards achieve that vision in the coming years.

Then, using your vision as the basis, the City's Economic Development Department will analyze the area's market potential [much as it did for the Upper Falls Shopping Center]. That analysis will help to determine what neighborhood services are most needed, and how to draw upon the community's cultural richness in order to create a viable and thriving commercial and cultural area.

As with the development of the Upper Falls Shopping Center, the next phases of this project will include an architectural design concept, a development program and an implementation plan. By establishing a highly developed and coordinate strategy, the City hopes to bring this plan to fruition over the next 5-10 years. But the assumption is that you, as the city's private partners, will have a sense of ownership as this process unfolds and this area is re-vitalized.

II ACHIEVING CONSENSUS: MELDING THE FINDINGS FROM THE THREE VISIONING WORKSHOPS INTO A SINGLE CONSOLIDATED VISION TO PURSUE

I'd now like to review with you what we heard in the various sessions, as a way of achieving a sense of consensus to move ahead with.

I first asked about the best and worst aspects of this area. In terms of best aspects, we heard a great deal about this area's **cultural diversity** and how that diversity seems to work well here.

We also heard a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to this area. Many of you have lived here for a very long time. Some even moved away, and then came back. You're here because you want to be here. You're clearly loyal and committed to being here for the longer term, to see this community develop its untapped potential.

We heard about some beautiful old buildings and facades – which you want to see kept up and well-maintained. And when new buildings are built here, you want them to visually fit in and belong alongside these older structures.

We also heard about the churches and the wonderful outreach work that many of them do in this community. They not only provide spiritual life, gathering places and activities, but also provide charitable assistance and a range of counseling services to those in need. Some have even begun programs to start re-vitalizing this part of the city, *"one house and one street at a time"*.

And of course we heard about several wonderful agencies – Baden Street, PRYD, Jordan Health Center, and many others – already doing lots of fine work within this community.

We also heard about a great deal of grass-roots involvement and committed organizations – various block groups, sectors 9 and 10, 14620, 14621, 14605, NENA, etc. etc. This web of agencies has already been mobilizing committed citizens and business owners, with visions and plans for this area's future.

So those seem to be the very best aspects of this area.

Then, in terms of the worst aspects, we heard about drugs, and the problem they represent in terms of undesirable people – many of them from outside the area – hanging out on street corners, making you and your children feel unsafe.

We heard about known drug houses that go on operating while *"no one seems to do anything to get rid of them"*. We heard about store fronts that pretend to be grocery stores but actually sell drugs and guns, while the police seem to do little to stop them.

We heard about the needle exchange, which nearly all of you seemed to wish were somewhere else. What you seem to resent most about the exchange being in this area is the number of drug users it brings into the area, who come here, get their new needles, throw their old needles on the ground where your children find them, buy their drugs, and leave. Clearly, many of you believe that this needle exchange belongs out of your revitalized neighborhood.

We heard about loud music, as well as disrespectful and sometimes destructive behavior on the part of young people who lack direction, positive role modeling, and the hope for a better future that would come with education, training, skills and job prospects.

We heard about absentee landlords and transient renters – both of whom contribute to the neglect and decline of certain property, while their frustrated neighbors are struggling to proudly keep their own houses and yards clean and tidy.

We heard about a lack of central focus, communication and widespread awareness regarding all the good things that are happening around the community – there seem, in other words, to be more good things here than people get to hear about or read about. And in part that seems to be a reflection of another negative here – which is the negative portrayal of this area in the media over the past several years. The good things here rarely if ever get covered, you tell us, but the bad things [like crimes and such] always seem to find the spotlight. So the impression of those outside the area is that this area is terribly unsafe and undesirable – when you who live here know that that's really not true.

When I asked where you tended to go to buy your food, clothing, shoes, and the other things you need – where you go for dining out, and for entertainment – and in all three sessions most of you admitted that you reluctantly go outside the area for nearly everything. You'll run into one of the local corner stores for a half gallon of milk in a pinch, and gladly stop by Chimo's for lunch, but all too often find yourselves having to head to Ridge Road, to Irondequoit, or to the Mall for the things you need. None of you seem happy about this. There was a strong sense that you'd really like to have everything you need right there locally – as they used to be in the old days, when *"you could get anything you wanted along Clinton Avenue"*.

In the most ideal world, you've said, those local businesses would all be owned and staffed by local residents, so that all the profits would stay right here within the community. Or, when outsiders do develop and own the businesses, they should at least be willing to both employ local residents and put some portion of their profits back into supporting this community.

We heard in several sessions about how this neighborhood deserves the beauty of wide, safe, clean sidewalks as well as trees and flowers, but we also heard a sense of sadness and concern that those trees and flowers not be abused by the neighborhood's "*problem people*" as they have in the past. Your solution was to let those people become involved in the planting and the care of those trees and flowers, reasoning that people who feel that those plants and flowers are theirs will not let them become abused.

We heard about the need for more parking – ideally off-street parking – and the recurring observation that several of the neighborhood's vacant lots might provide perfect parking lots. But, several of you cautioned, they need to be well-lit, well-maintained and hopefully supervised, to keep them from becoming "*places for trouble-makers to hang out.*"

When we asked what kinds of shops and stores and services you wish you had here locally, the list we heard included things like:

- a movie theatre
- a pizza place that was willing to deliver to neighborhood homes
- a coffee shop – or several of them
- restaurants and cafés –
 - some of them ethnic [eg. African/Caribbean/Latin American]
 - some with outdoor seating
 - "where I can stroll with my cane when I'm 90"*
- a bakery
- a butcher shop or meat market
- a dry cleaners
- a hair salon
- clothing stores
- shoe stores
- bowling
- a skating rink
- an ice cream parlor
- physician specialists who might rotate through shared medical office space on a day-a-week basis

Again, you stressed that these stores and services should employ local residents and, if at all possible, be owned by local residents as well. What you don't seem to want are more convenience stores or chain drug stores, charging you more than your suburban counterparts pay for the same merchandise, or offering you merchandise that's lower quality than they sell elsewhere.

What you do seem to want is the "urban village" feeling of being able to easily get to – and ideally walk to – nearly everything you want and need.

Besides stores, however, many of you also stressed the need for programs and services that will be critically important if this area is to thrive.

First and foremost, we heard, is the ability to break the poverty cycle with training and job opportunities right here in the community. Among the ideas which surfaced for further exploration were:

A local satellite of BOCES and/or MCC to provide training [including high-tech training] so that local residents will get the skills they need for tomorrow's jobs.

A work-study program in the schools which provides on-the-job experience and job skills training via local company apprenticeships for high school students to help both keep them in school and let them graduate with realistic expectations for solid employment.

One or more large employers willing to hire local residents and provide good employment opportunities. The great array of smaller, quieter firms throughout the area, who don't seem to be involved in the life of the community as yet besides being located here, might provide some opportunities, but today are still generally uninvolved and need to be approached to encourage their potential involvement.

We also heard about the need for counseling services of various sorts to help those in the community improve their quality of life.

A substance abuse re-hab program within the neighborhood so that those needing such services don't have to go all the way to Park Ridge for treatment.

A teen center providing cultural opportunities for arts-related activities [eg. music, dance, fine arts etc.] to supplement and complement the sports-related activities which now take place in Torres Park, Baden Street and elsewhere.

A parenting center, or parenting workshops conducted in the area, to help those who need help coping with the challenges of raising children today, especially if they themselves are young.

And loudly and clearly we also heard about the need for more widespread home ownership to underscore the sense of community involvement and to make residents into stakeholders committed to the community's success. In other words, what you envisioned was:

One or more programs to help more local residents purchase and rehab neglected, abandoned and city-owned property – because home ownership will breed pride and give more people a positive and productive stake in the community's future, and transform the community street by street, back to the way it used to look back in the 70s when nearly *"all the homes on the block were owned and people took great pride in their houses and their yards"*.

Interestingly, several of you observed that envisioning the future for the North Clinton area was in many ways like remembering the past and re-creating some of the wonderful, commercially and socially positive things that used to be here.

Others of you pointed out, however, that perhaps it's more complicated than merely turning back time, since years ago this area didn't have the same cultural diversity and high unemployment and drug problems it has today. So your vision becomes one of re-creating the positive aspects of yesterday with the challenges of today by adding in the needed services like job skills, employment opportunities, teen programs, counseling and so forth.

Now some of you recall that this neighborhood was to be referred to as "*La Avenida*" but others think of it more as the "*Upper Falls area*", and although the City is calling it "*the North Clinton area*", those around the table in another session suggested that Clinton is just a street but the area is really "*Rochester's Northeast*".

Whatever you decide to call it, the "*many cultures, one community*" description seems to underscore what we heard in all three sessions, and fit well into what many of you see as the area's future.

So I hope that summarizes and pulls together what you told us during nearly eight hours' of workshops last week. Have I gotten that right? Have I left out anything really critical that needs to be included before we move forward tonight?

[PURSUE ONLY THOSE THINGS WHICH MAY STAND IN THE WAY OF THE CONSENSUS NEEDED TO MOVE ON.]

III MOVING FORWARD TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION

Now, what do you all see as the most critical pieces of this puzzle? What would you like to see happening first – and second – and third – as your community redevelopment gets underway? I think that the way we'll approach this is by drawing a line down the center of this page. Here on the left, let's put what I'll refer to as the social services you think the area needs first. Here on the right, let's put what I'll refer to as the commercial services you think the area needs first – the shops and stores and restaurants and such. Let's assume that this area's

revitalization can take place on both sides of the page at the same time – rather than one side of the page having to wait for the other to be fully accomplished in order to begin.

So where do you place your priorities? What's most important to you on the right and left sides of this list? What does the area need first and foremost? [PROBE] And next? [PROBE]

[USE THIS PARAGRAPH ONLY IF NEEDED, WITH PROGRAMS AND SERVICES BECOMING THE SOLE FOCUS:] Now the needed programs and services regarding job training, job opportunities, drugs, counseling, home ownership and such are clearly critical, and you've been stressing that they absolutely must be addressed as a priority. But while these huge issues are in the process of being solved, how can we engage in the commercial side of the redevelopment process – starting to build the new shops and restaurants, the sidewalks and flowers and trees and banners and such? [PROMPT ONLY IF NEEDED:] Could brighter lighting help you feel safer in the meantime? How about security cameras? A greater police presence? What else might make you and others feel safer in the short term while redevelopment starts taking place?

You know, when I asked where people tend to gather in this neighborhood today, you talked about baseball at Torres Park, you talked about the Churches, Chimo's at lunchtime being a "happening place", and about the drug people gathering on the corners to hang out. But I didn't get the sense that there was any natural focal point or nucleus for this community today. So I'm wondering whether you think the stretch of North Clinton Ave between Upper Falls and Avenue D might offer a good starting point or central backbone for the commercial side of the redevelopment process – the things on the right side of our page? From what I understand, there are a pretty good number of City-owned properties available there, which might help jump-start the process, as long as you feel that that might be a good place to start to see the new shops and stores and restaurants and sidewalks and off-street parking located...

So just to summarize before we close, you feel that the first 5 or 6 action steps that can and must happen to take advantage of this neighborhood's "best" aspects and deal with its "worst" aspects are.... [REITERATE GROUP'S INPUT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PAGE] Have I left out anything critical?

IV REVIEWING NEXT STEPS FROM THE CITY'S PERSPECTIVE

Economic analysis → Concept / development plan →
Implementation plan

V TERMINATE SESSION WITH THANKS