

Appendix B:

Comment Summary and Disposition Recommendations Report

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Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement
Midtown Redevelopment

Prepared by the Rochester Environmental Commission

January 12, 2009

LIST OF COMMENTERS

Written Commenters (letter and email):

Joanne Arany

Executive Director
Landmark Society of Western New York
133 South Fitzhugh Street
Rochester, NY 14608-2204

Theresa Conroy

Phillip Fillion

Jeanette Gefell

11 Neville Terrace
Rochester, NY 14618

Joni Monroe AIA, Executive Director

Rochester Regional Community Design Center
1115 E. Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609

Nancy L. Owens

Erin O'Sullivan

Brent H. Penwarden, III, P.E. – Associate Engineer

Monroe County Department of Transportation
CityPlace, 50 West Main Street, Suite 6100
Rochester, NY 14614-1231

Lisa & Alan Reinbolt

131 Saratoga Avenue
Rochester, NY 14608

Bruce Shipper

201 Elm Drive
Rochester NY 14609

Bob Wilkinson

Mary Anne Williams

1085 Everwild View
Webster, NY 14580

Heidi N. Zimmer-Meyer

Chair for the Design & Urban Plan Advisory Committee

President, Rochester Downtown Development Corporation
Executive Director, Downtown Special Services, Inc.
One HSBC Plaza
100 Chestnut St., Suite 1910
Rochester, NY 14604

Anonymous (lezleg@yahoo.com)

Anonymous (tedyunger@yahoo.com)

Verbal Commenters (received at the public hearing on December 2, 2008):

Katie Comeau

Landmark Society of Western New York
133 South Fitzhugh Street
Rochester, NY 14608-2204

Carlene Woodward

Highland Park Neighborhood Association

Comment Disposition Terminology

1. **No Response Required - not a substantive issue**
 - a) Comment expresses opinion and/or does not raise a substantive issue; acknowledge, but No Response Required - not a substantive issue.
 - b) Comment addresses an issue that is outside the purview of the DEIS.
2. **Correction Required**

The comment points out an omission or inaccuracy in the DEIS that needs to be corrected.
3. **Explanation/Clarification Required**

The comment raises an issue which was addressed in the environmental impact statement. The issue needs a simple explanation and reference to the section in the DEIS where it is discussed.
4. **Additional Analysis Required**

The comment raises an issue which has not been thoroughly addressed. Further analysis is believed necessary to offer a proper response.
5. **Alternative Suggested**

The comment suggests an alternative which merits evaluation.

COMMENT SUMMARY/ DISPOSITION RECOMMENDATIONS

Formal public comments on the proposed action and the DGEIS were received at the public hearing on Tuesday December 2, 2008 and either by email or written letter during the public comment period. These are summarized below in the following table.

<u>COMMENT</u>	<u>COMMENTER</u>	<u>DISPOSITION RECOMMENDATION</u>
<u>COMMENT CATEGORY: Historic Resources</u>		
Is there some way in which the Plaza could be preserved, especially since it was the first American shopping mall and provided a great glimpse back into the '60's? I live about a mile away from Greece Ride Mall and GRM really cannot compare to Midtown in design, quality or scale. Why tear down a plaza that is in excellent condition? It will cost more to tear down and build a new building that is not even close to being built as good as this historic landmark. There is no mall that is close to our Midtown Plaza.	Fillion, O'Sullivan	Explanation/Clarification Required
Due to the exceptional significance of Midtown and of the atrium in particular, it would be our preference to see the atrium retained and adaptively reused as part of a re-envisioned Midtown site. Although the original function it served in linking the major downtown department stores is no longer viable, we believe the space can continue to contribute constructively to downtown's future if it is successfully integrated into a creative reconstruction of the site. Too often in this community, we have seen opportunities for the reuse of unique and historic buildings slip away under similar circumstances, only to be regretted later.	Arany, Comeau	Explanation/Clarification Required
One opportunity to minimize or mitigate the effect of demolition may be to salvage any remaining significant façade details from storefronts	Arany, Comeau	Alternative Suggested

currently disguised by curtain walls. Some pre-demolition analysis could confirm whether such architectural details still remain on buildings that were reclad in the 1960s. If any such details exist, perhaps they could be salvaged and re-used within the new construction on the site.		
If the ultimate decision is to demolish the atrium, we believe that loss can be mitigated only if it is replaced by an equally forward-thinking, high-quality design that functions as a true gathering place for the center city. It is too soon to tell if the open space now envisioned for the center of the Midtown block, the approximate site of the atrium, is an urban amenity of sufficient quality to mitigate the loss of the atrium, but if demolition is the ultimate result, we will strongly urge that this urban landscape not be an afterthought but a bold, innovative example of civic design.	Arany, Comeau	Explanation/Clarification Required
In identifying historic resources in the vicinity of the Midtown property, e.g., on pages 90-91, the DGEIS should not be limited to properties over 50 years old, for example, the building at 1 East Avenue, Xerox Tower, and Manhattan Square Park.	Arany, Comeau	Explanation/Clarification Required
We believe the conversations regarding historic issues and compliance with historic regulations have been productive. However, we believe that these discussions should not be relegated to an appendix but should be woven into the document more thoroughly. On the surface, it looks as if none of the 14.09 discussions have informed the development of any alternatives; the public should have the option to look at those alternatives in the primary document as well.	Arany, Comeau	Explanation/Clarification Required
We are pleased to see that the Midtown Tower, which is also part of the National Register-eligible property,	Arany, Comeau,	No Response Required

may be retained, and the document should identify the Tower as a resource worth saving regardless of whether viable redevelopment options emerge. The first position the DGEIS should take would be to declare the Tower worth saving rather than allowing the success or failure of positive responses to the REP drive the process.		
Use as much of the Midtown Tower shell as possible.	Zimmer-Meyer	No Response Required
<u>COMMENT CATEGORY: Reuse Alternatives</u>		
Would it be possible for the businesses which plan to move to the new site move into the current Plaza instead? Perhaps they could be given a tax break as an incentive.	Fillion	Explanation/Clarification Required
Why can't they use this place for the proposed Renaissance Square or a Casino? A casino would draw money in, enough to convert the rest into a youth center & learning center. A casino would be a great way to "keep" Midtown alive. Also use it as a community center, by offering outreach programs to the less fortunate, who by bus could get there easily, Also a free job service – temporary help job bank would contribute to the development & growth of the city's youth. Skating rink/restaurant, game room, a hockey court or basketball court, gymnastics, or cheer leading for the girls, after school help with homework, or training to get these kids motivated for graduation for a job.	O'Sullivan, Anonymous (tedyunger@yahoo.com), Anonymous (lezleg@yahoo.com),	Explanation/Clarification Required
If the people who are planning this project plan on keeping Midtown Tower and use it for housing for 1 bedroom apartments that would be a plus! Regulate it so it is affordable.	Wilkinson	No Response Required
Turn one long city block, on both sides, into a Little Italy type area. There is a	Conroy	Explanation/Clarification Required

2-3 block area in Cleveland, with shops and restaurants and street seating. It doesn't need to be huge, but it would be a destination.		
We need music, streets that are easy to navigate in the winter, good police presence, lots of flowered walkways, fountains. People here don't have the money to support high end retail. Maybe a few good outlets. Something the suburban malls don't have!	Owens	Explanation/Clarification Required
Add a 200-seat theater here instead of Renaissance Square.	Woodward	No Response Required
<u>COMMENT CATEGORY: Demolition</u>		
We are very concerned about what appears to be a strong possibility that this block could be cleared before firm plans for redevelopment are in place; if some or all of the hoped-for development does not materialize, we would be left with a vast empty space in one of downtown Rochester's most critical locations. We strongly suggest that it would be prudent to have an alternate plan in case the PAETEC project does not come to be or is further altered.	Arany, Comeau, Monroe	Explanation/Clarification Required
Our overarching concern, therefore, is not so much with the vision presented for the site, which has many commendable features in providing a cohesive urban design that can achieve many of the City's goals, but with the lack of a clear path from demolition to redevelopment. The DGEIS does not adequately describe how the City intends to seek, promote, and ensure the redevelopment of the site.	Arany, Comeau	Additional Analysis Required
We strongly urge the City to reconsider its position on phased demolition and, in addition, to forbid surface parking lots within the Midtown site.	Arany, Comeau	Explanation/Clarification Required
On p. 14, the reader is led to believe that the retention and adaptive reuse	Arany, Comeau	No Response Required

of the Tower is contingent upon development proposals and/or commitments. Should no viable responses emerge, we are not convinced that demolition should automatically be the next option considered. Other solutions, such as mothballing the building until a viable reuse emerges may be more cost-effective and more environmentally sound in the long term, and would avoid the negative impacts of a vacant lot.		
<u>COMMENT CATEGORY: Skyway Pedestrian Bridges</u>		
The existing skyway crossovers are placed at midblock locations. If removed, pedestrians will be forced to cross at grade and should not be doing so mid-block. How would the skyway system termination redirect them so that they cross at intersections? Will there need to be any additional crosswalks? How will this impact the operation of the traffic signals?	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
The demolition of the skyways will displace many pedestrians onto surface streets, however there seems to be no mention of the impacts, and data on the existing usage was not provided.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Is the demolition & removal of the skyways necessary? Is there a way to retain them or rehab them?	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
<u>COMMENT CATEGORY: Parking and Traffic</u>		
The city should concentrate on city-wide traffic changes, and on-street parking to affect a dramatic sense of change that enhances the usability of retail and bolsters all of the markets simultaneously. If done coherently, this gets us to critical mass. On-street parking should be liberally built in	Zimmer-Meyer, O'Sullivan	Explanation/Clarification Required

along Main Street and throughout the site wherever possible. There is not enough parking in downtown Rochester. Most residents do not go downtown because there isn't free parking.		
N/S Axis street needs to have a strong connection to Main Street, be designed as a wider route of circulation with a center median, and designed as flexible space allowing an easy transition to programmed events and alternative uses during off-peak time. This should be deliberately designed as a grand connection to Main Street, with major visual terminus points in both north and south directions.	Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
How well would the traffic circulation patterns around the site work if the existing one way operation on Clinton & Broad were to be retained?	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
What traffic control is being considered for the proposed new intersection at Main & Cortland?	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Clinton Ave @ Main St. The report should not assume that NB Right turns are allowed from Clinton Ave onto Main St. This turn will continue to be prohibited for pedestrian safety. However, WB RT turns from Main St onto Clinton will be allowed when Ren. Square is constructed.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Court Street was modeled as 1 Way East of Clinton Ave. What if it were modified as 2 Way here?	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Midtown Parking Garage access – would there be any conflicts if Broad St. or Court St. Became 2 Way? EB on Broad St. is a difficult turn into the underground parking.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Are the widths of the proposed streets too narrow?	Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
The study area should be expanded to include Broad & South, Court & South, Woodbury & S Clinton, Woodbury &	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required

South Ave & any other intersection where more than 100 VPH are added		
The analyses mentioned additional pedestrians, but the pedestrian volumes did not increase as the phases are developed, and were not further increased to account for the skyway system demolition. Also note today's standard for pedestrian walking speed is 3.5 ft/sec.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Pg 44 identifies the "preferred" Midtown Street grid. We believe the area would operate better if "Historic Elm St" were to be extended straight thru to Broad St. in conjunction with eliminating Plaza Dr and Atlas St. South of New Elm St. Also, if Broad St became two-way, the proposed southern terminus of Atlas St would be too close to the Broad St/Chestnut St intersection.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
The report states that, per the Ren Square TIR, no modifications are being recommended at Clinton/Main. In fact, the TIR identifies that the exclusive bus lanes on Main St. will be converted into general travel lanes.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Table 5.4 — Clinton @ Main — the report shows the EB Approach failing in the AM. However, the Ren Square TIR analysis had this working fine with the changes mentioned above. The analysis needs to be modified to mitigate for the failing condition and to be consistent with the Ren Square analysis.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Court St @ Clinton Ave – The report shows the EB Approach failing in the AM peak hour; LOS "F" is never acceptable, and any overflow would block other nearby intersections. Mitigation of this condition is required.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required
Table 5.5- Broad St. & Chestnut St. – for the PM Peak Hour, model the intersection with the NB Left turn	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required

arrow phase operating in the PM peak in all scenarios to remove the LOS "F" condition from the analysis.		
<u>COMMENT CATEGORY: Site Design/Layout</u>		
RRCDC is pleased that the document we produced as the result of the 2007 Downtown Charrette, Community-Based Vision Plan for Downtown Rochester, May 2008, is referenced in the SEQR Draft Scoping Document in two sections, and strongly encourage that content and recommendations in that document be taken into consideration when assembling the ultimate plan for the redevelopment of the Midtown site.	Monroe	No Response Required
From a technical standpoint, placing green space anywhere over the existing parking garage has its limitations. It may prove to be similar to the Civic Center Plaza, also built over an existing underground garage, where the planting of trees has been infeasible. As a result, the wide expanse of asphalt has turned out to be an unpopular and forbidding public space, which has led to extremely low public usage.	Monroe, Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
Is it both possible and practical to build the proposed streets, parks and independent buildings on top of the existing garage? Can the issues of foundations, services, infrastructure, landscaping, etc. be worked out without compromising the garage?	Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
The park on the SW corner of the block is ill-conceived and problematic in this climate. One park is enough on this block and this site should contain a new structure with some massing to provide a more effective northeastern edge and connection to the Washington Square District. Limit the height of the development on the site south of PAETEC to 5 stories if that	Zimmer-Meyer	No Response Required

view is a concern. concern with scale and activation of open space, possible perception that it's "left over space"		
Creating a large, out of scale, landscaped area on the corner of Broad Street and Clinton Avenue South does not effectively anchor or strengthen that important corner, nor does it give the community a needed civic space with the hierarchal integrity that it deserves or serve as a meaningful connection to its nearby neighbor, the Washington Square district. Should also have a larger or more open access to site from Main Street with a more pronounced connection to Main Street and Liberty Pole.	Monroe, Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
Remaining new greenspace should be located in the center of the block, treated like a smaller European piazza, and handled in a very urban way (like Pioneer Square in Seattle). The four sides should be surrounded by streets and sidewalks featuring retail and active street front uses (mostly food, bars, coffee houses, etc.) on both sides of the street. One crowded vest pocket park works better than two large empty ones.	Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
The relationship between the uses, structures, and ultimate layout of blocks needs to be contextual, connecting to the East End, Main Street, Washington Square and Clinton Avenue. New and adaptively reused buildings should enhance the refurbished streets and with them create a viable connective tissue forming strong, vibrant public realm spaces.	Zimmer-Meyer, Monroe	No Response Required
We strongly concur with the flexibility articulated in the DEIS (pg 39) in guiding the targeted density and floor area ratios as future redevelopment opportunities present themselves allow developers to make proposals in response to changing market	Zimmer-Meyer	No Response Required

conditions for the remaining non-PAETEC portions of the site.		
Break the large parcels into very small parcels around the square to accommodate smaller, local developers who engage in residential construction. The city sets design standards and common areas, but should let multiple, different, smaller-footprint buildings go up.	Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
The long block that comprises the PAETEC building's footprint and "corporate plaza" would likely be detrimental to the functionality of the new streets and open spaces that will be provided by the breaking up of the Midtown Plaza complex into 6-9 separate sites.	Monroe	No Response Required
There should be careful thought given before Cadillac hotel and associated buildings are proposed for demolition. These are examples of "fine grain" buildings that can sometimes make an important contribution to the character of an urban area.	Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
Reintroducing streets that accommodate vehicular and pedestrian circulation and penetrate and connect through and to surrounding areas of this important downtown site is an important aspect to pay attention to in this site redevelopment. Newly created streets in the site plan should be located so that they have key axial relationships to existing urban fabric with attention to view sheds, configured as to hierarchy and type, sized and designed to function in different ways depending on location and importance.	Monroe	Explanation/Clarification Required
There should be one key axial connection into the site from Main Street that is prominent and strong in design, a gateway encouraging pedestrian traffic and featuring special design features worthy of its location and function. This street might have a	Monroe	Explanation/Clarification Required

multiplicity of features and uses depending on season and time of day.		
The proposed plans for division of the site into low, medium and high density configuration of blocks, buildings and green spaces, do not effectively feature integrative elements and, in their layout, seem to have little relationship to other blocks within the downtown. Each of the blocks within the site appears independent and the proposed site plan lacks hierarchal relationships and interconnectedness of the parts of the whole, making the blocks appear to function as independent islands rather than integrated urban fabric with meaningful connections and identity within their surroundings.	Monroe	No Response Required
It would be helpful if the location of the atrium could be indicated, perhaps as a dotted line or shadow, in as many figures as possible, as this would more clearly illustrate how the atrium might fit into a reconfigured Midtown block, and/or where there may be an opportunity to deconstruct or interpret the atrium location.	Arany, Comeau	Explanation/Clarification Required
The plan presented in the EIS does not seem to fully take advantage of the wealth of information contained in previously created (and in some cases City sponsored) master plans that have been developed over the past 10 years that directly address the reconfiguration of the Midtown Plaza site and surrounding areas.	Monroe	No Response Required
Importance of appropriate residential development to activate site; need for more moderate and low-rise residential, less high-rise. Suggestion to create a European town square, where 3-4 story, residential and retail form a unique urban village. More people in one space, not fewer people in more spaces.	Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required

There has been a lot of development of downtown condos & apartments. It is only logical those residents will need a grocery store nearby for convenience. A Price Right market or drugstore would be nice in Midtown.	Anonymous (tedyunger@yahoo.com), Wilkinson	Explanation/Clarification Required
Design PAETEC building with maybe 4-5 businesses in the street level of it, Brueggers Bagels, Dunkin Donuts, Newspaper stand, Abbott's ice cream and NY Pizza Place and Restaurant. The elevators to go only 1 st floor of PAETEC unless you are an employee with a pass.	Wilkinson	Explanation/Clarification Required
Has there been any thought of opening a multi-film theatre?	Gefell	Explanation/Clarification Required
Would it be possible to preserve or create another Midtown Tower Restaurant?	Gefell	Explanation/Clarification Required
Concerned about through streets – too much pavement and only thing added is air pollution. Bicycle racks are better than streets	Woodward	No Response Required
PAETEC building appears to be one which would have no "back" or rear and might need to be serviced (deliveries, etc) from multiple sides.	Zimmer-Meyer	Explanation/Clarification Required
<u>COMMENT CATEGORY: Economic Impact / Cost</u>		
Rochester and Monroe County are in deep financial trouble; the state is on the brink of bankruptcy; the nation is in recession, with another wave of bad news about commercial real estate defaults about to break! It's time to take a step back. The state budget shouldn't be wasting 50 million dollars on this city's idea of progress. Our city is wasting the state "Taxpayer" money on something that should not have even been thought of. To borrow money for demolition & hope somebody still wants & can develop the site is a stupid & wasteful use of Rochester taxpayer's money,	Williams, OSullivan, Anonymous (tedyunger@yahoo.com), Schipper	No Response Required

especially if the site sit's vacant. In hard economic times, one does not spend or borrow money unnecessarily. To do so is irresponsible.		
Pg 16 notes that no increased costs would be incurred by Monroe County as a result of this project. However, MCDOT will need to maintain any new signals, signs and pavement markings. Also, MC Pure Waters will need to maintain the combined storm/sanitary sewer system.	Penwarden	Correction Required
<u>COMMENT CATEGORY:</u> <u>Miscellaneous</u>		
Our downtown was beautiful until the City of Rochester forced over 40 businesses in Midtown Plaza to move. It was alive and vibrant until they trashed and took the stores away. We have lost every store that we had in the Midtown Plaza. We have lost having a safe, indoor venue for making our purchases. Last time I was passing through on an RTS Bus I attempted to find a rest room, and it took me 20 minutes to find somewhere that would allow me access	O'Sullivan, Reinbolt	No Response Required
Buildings with boarded up windows or have been abandoned for many years why not start there and get these businesses up and running again?	Anonymous (lezleg@yahoo.com)	No Response Required
Inconsistency between the alternatives analyzed beginning on page 271 and the alternatives as described in Appendix G (the alternatives developed in the Section 14.09 consultation process).	Arany, Comeau	Explanation/Clarification Required
The DEIS does not acknowledge how the transient, disabled, workers and residents of downtown used the limited retail opportunities still available during the resource's decline. These primarily marginalized populations will still need to access the types of retail that fill their needs. The language of this	Arany, Comeau	Explanation/Clarification Required

DGEIS does a disservice to this population and does not provide temporary mitigations to the challenge — how will this cross section of population be served with a totally cleared site? How can the city still provide services to this cohort in an aesthetically pleasing way that contributes to the overall site redevelopment, accepting them into the fabric of the community rather than shunting them aside?		
Under Table 2.2 involved agencies, MCDOT should be listed as the Traffic Engineers for the City as well as Owner/Operator of traffic signals, signs and pavement markings.	Penwarden	Explanation/Clarification Required