



# Bull's Head Brownfield Opportunity Area

## PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY

July 27, 2017 | St. Mary's Hospital

This meeting summary is available on the project website and at the document repository:



[www.CityOfRochester.gov/BullsHeadRevitalization](http://www.CityOfRochester.gov/BullsHeadRevitalization)



**Arnett Branch Public Library**

310 Arnett Boulevard, Rochester, NY 14169

### Welcome

Mayor Lovely Warren welcomed over 90 people from local and surrounding neighborhoods and communities to the meeting and thanked everyone for joining the conversation to plan the revitalization of the Bull's Head neighborhood. The Mayor recognized the importance of the neighborhood, its residents, and the desire for their continued activism. She indicated that the City continues to support residents through neighborhood planning and development, and highlighted the recent acquisition of the Bull's Head Plaza by the Rochester Economic Development Corporation (REDCO). The Mayor concluded her remarks by noting the City's desire to bring action forward and make a significant investment in the area.

Rick Rynski, Senior Economic Development Specialist with the City of Rochester, welcomed participants to the meeting and provided a brief overview of the Bull's Head Revitalization planning process as part of the NYS Department of State Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program. Additionally, Mr. Rynski introduced members of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and members of the consultant team.



Mayor Lovely Warren welcoming meeting participants

### Presentation/Overview

Frank Armento of Fisher Associates and Jordan Hare of HR&A Advisors presented an overview of the Bull's Head Revitalization planning process

and the initial findings from the inventory of the study area. The presentation included a detailed overview of the BOA Program including a definition of a brownfield, program steps, overview of Step 1, components of Step 2, how the program will benefit the community, the boundaries of the study area, and the timeframe for completing the Bull's Head Revitalization Plan. The initial findings from the inventory to-date has provided insights to the challenges facing the neighborhood and the opportunities for revitalization. This information included demographics, employment, housing market, commercial real estate market, potential brownfields, land use, zoning, land ownership, traffic volumes, intersection safety concerns, parks and recreation, historic resources, transit services, bicycle facilities, and infrastructure.

Mr. Armento provided an overview of the Bull's Head Subarea (officially known as the "Bull's Head Urban Renewal Area"). The Subarea represents a separate but concurrent planning process with the goal of drafting a Bull's Head Urban Renewal Plan similar to other Urban Renewal Plans recently adopted by the City Council. Mr. Armento described the boundary of the subarea, prior studies that have been completed, land use patterns, areas of city-owned land, the plan's anticipated components, and preliminary considerations for a future land use concept.



Presentation of the initial findings of the inventory for the Bull's Head Revitalization Plan

## Breakout Stations

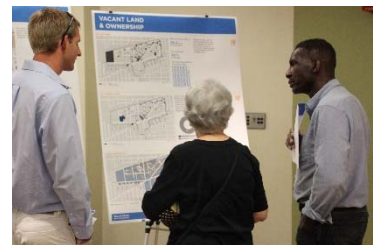
Tanya Zwahlen of High Planning transitioned from the presentation of the initial inventory findings to the breakout stations. These stations provided the opportunity for meeting participants to enhance and go beyond the data that statistics and maps provided the project team. The breakout stations were grouped into the following categories, each with statistics, maps, and key questions. Meeting participants were asked to consider the key questions and provide feedback.



### Economics and Demographics

This station included information on the local housing market, commercial market, educational attainment, employment, and demographics. Meeting participants were engaged in a facilitated discussion focusing on the following key questions:

1. What is the hardest part about living and working in the project area?
2. What should we make sure to preserve?





### Transportation and Infrastructure

This station included information and maps regarding traffic volumes, transit services, bicycle routes, pedestrian amenities, potential intersection safety and operation issues, location and type of sewer infrastructure, and the age and capacity of water infrastructure. Meeting participants were engaged in a facilitated discussion focusing on the following key questions:

1. In what ways is it difficult to get around the neighborhood?
2. What mode of transportation do you use most frequently and why?



### Parks and Recreation

This station included location of parks and recreational resources within and near the study area. Additional information included the amenities available within each park or recreational area and the estimated number of acres of park or recreation land per 1,000 residents. Meeting participants were engaged in a facilitated discussion focusing on the following key questions:

1. How do you use parks and recreational spaces in the project area today?
2. How could we improve parks and recreational spaces?



### Land Use and Zoning

This station included information and maps for the land uses and zoning designations within the study area, and potential land use and zoning conflict areas. This station also included information and maps on vacant land, city-owned land, and large properties, or several contiguous properties, with one single owner. Meeting participants were engaged in a facilitated discussion focused on the following key questions:

1. What land uses pose challenges for the project area?
2. What are the greatest opportunities to strengthen existing land uses or introduce new land uses to the project area?



## Feedback Summary

Meeting participants were actively engaged in the facilitated discussions at each station and provided thoughtful feedback for each key question presented. In addition, meeting participants provided written comments on the presentation boards and in general comment forms. A total of 280 comments were received during the public meeting.

While many of these comments were specific and directly addressed one of the presented key questions or perhaps a specific site within the BOA, most comments addressed multiple topics (i.e. housing and employment, crime and park amenities, historic character and infill development). Therefore, common themes, views, and relationships between the comments were summarized. A sampling of comments is shown below.



*"Unsafe to walk,  
unsafe to bike"*

*"Intersection of Brown, Main,  
and Chili is stupid, crazy,  
dangerous and confusing"*

*"We need Green "Connections"  
between the residential &  
commercial. "*

*"Preserve the urbanist feel  
of the commercial district."*

*"Have the new building  
designs reflect the history of  
Bulls Head"*

*"We need a whole lot of help  
in this area. We need our  
streets cleaned. There is a lot  
of killings and drugs. It's not  
safe to be out at night"*

*"Pressure on  
irresponsible  
investors and  
owners"*

*"Greater diversity of  
commercial  
establishments –  
retail/restaurants"*

*"Senior housing or  
"co-housing"  
development "*

*"Provide housing for all  
incomes in a livable, walkable  
neighborhood (green spaces,  
traffic calming)"*

*"Not enough people live and  
work here"*

### Summary of Common Themes

Nine common themes have surfaced from the comments received at the public meeting. These themes generally align with the comments referenced in the BOA Step 1 Pre-nomination findings, based on the 2009 community planning process. The nine common themes are summarized as follows:

- Blighted / Vacant or Underutilized Properties
- Crime / Drugs / Gangs
- Lack of Economic Development / Jobs
- Transportation / Traffic Issues
- Historic Character within the BOA
- Lack of Housing for the Elderly / Aging in Place Opportunities
- Lack of Owner Occupancy
- Lack of Green / Open Space
- Brownfields / Environmental Impacts

## Breakout Stations - Questions and Responses

The public meeting ended with participants visiting topic stations to consider specific questions and respond with their input (listed below):

### Economic and Demographics:

**Q1:** What is the hardest part about living and working in the project area?

### Responses:

- It's not hard, but we need jobs and manufacturing in our community
- Lack of Jobs
- No schools
- Need more educational opportunity for youths programs
- Lots of deteriorated houses and commercial buildings.
- Less mom-&-pop stores
- Our existing commercial consists of dollar stores and mini-marts
- A true grocery store! Perhaps subsidized
- Slumlords
- Absent landlords
- Presence of vacant houses / drug houses
- Living in this area there is high crime due to many rentals
- Homeowners
- Houses should be rezoned R1 or R2 only
- City services that don't help new / struggling homeowners
- Vacant lots
- Very little code enforcement.
- Housing violation enforcement
- Zoning enforcement
- Traffic
- We need a whole lot of help in this area. We need our streets cleaned. There is a lot of killings and drugs. It's not safe to be out at night.
- Speeding along the roads
- Signal or stop lights; York, Silver, Danforth Streets
- It's not difficult but Bulls Head Plaza can be a very dangerous entrance & exit during early morning & evening
- Improve Main St. corridor for pedestrians, bike riding
- Living = noise pollution due to music from cars
- Driving past the litter
- Living - lack of concern of people and their trash disposal - out of car windows
- No community outdoor space
- Seeing the blight
- Physical decay
- Not enough incentives to renovate
- Very little investment.
- Crime
- Drug activity
- Seeing drug dealers standing outside stores
- Gang activity
- Driving past the hangouts
- Proactive police presence. Stop small stuff - double parking, loitering, etc. May stop some of the big stuff.
- Parking
- Living with people's perceptions (negative)
- Litter, garbage overflowing
- Trash
- Parking
- A giant hole where there used to be vitality
- Unleashed dogs and a lot of stray cats
- Remove some trees; roots causes sewer problems

## Economics and Demographics:

**Q2:** What should we make sure to preserve?

### Responses:

- Keep and expand St. Mary's
- Have the new building designs reflect the history of Bulls Head
- Healthcare emergency center
- Diversity of housing types
- Historic buildings
- Improve home ownership
- Historic architecture on new buildings
- Preserve businesses so people can have pride
- Commercial infill should be sensitive to the look of the Main St corridor
- Preserve West Avenue Methodist at all costs
- Westminster Church
- Preserve this building
- Yes! ["Preserve this building"]
- Find a use for United Methodist Church. Provide parking for the building.
- St. Peter & Paul Bulls Head historic building
- Cohesive Zoning. No C-2
- 707 W. Main St. is the old Genesee Branch Library
- St. Mary's healthcare facilities
- Preserve historic fabric in the BOA
- Make sure current residents benefit in better living / work conditions and don't get displaced in the process to revitalize the BOA
- 640 W. Main. Historic housing along W Main St. \* North side of Main St.
- Save 707 Main St West, the former Genesee Branch Library
- Green space / parks
- Mr. Doug's & Andy's
- Preserve historic churches, commercial building, homes. Renovate first, and only demolish when absolutely necessary. Get away from the obsolete urban renewal mentality. You can't revitalize a neighborhood by demolishing it. Do not listen to anyone who says you need to demolish a whole block to attract a developer. Successful city neighborhoods use infill development.
- St. Mary's WICC 24/7
- Do not destroy the current standing historic building
- Preserve the urbanist feel of the commercial district. Infill development fronting on the street. Keep the remaining buildings.
- Do something with zoning so vacant land can be developed by existing owners
- Let residents who own property develop touching vacant property
- Existing buildings
- Home ownership to attract residents
- Strong human community

## Transportation and Infrastructure:

**Q1:** In what ways is it difficult to get around the neighborhood?

### Responses:

- Walking is not safe
- Intersection of Brown, Main, and Chili is stupid, crazy, dangerous and confusing
- Biking feels unsafe. Want West Main and Genesee bike lanes. A lot of cars.
- Unsafe to walk, unsafe to bike
- St. Peter's Kitchen: we have many guests. Very poor. Cannot afford bus fares. To give passes opens up the possibility of passes being sold for other things. Possibly have free rides originating at certain sites a few days a week to get those to important sites (Dept. of Soc Svcs, hospital, downtown...)
- Many are not only poor but have many health issues too.
- Bike lanes

- Lighting isn't pedestrian friendly
- Traffic patterns
- Increase police officer walking beats and biking beats
- Speeding cars on York St
- Drug activity
- Parking issues on side streets
- Fall & spring sun glare on W Main St. creates blind spots when driving at sunset
- W Main St. road zig-zag near Jefferson should be straightened out
- Seriously study a modern street car on W Main & Genesee between downtown and UR/Strong
- Create a bus transit center at Bulls Head to improve the waiting conditions and facilitate transfers
- The intersection of West Main, West, Chili, Brown and Genesee is very pedestrian unfriendly. Do NOT put in a traffic circle which would make it much worse for the peds
- Difficult left turn [for bikes westbound on W Main to Genesee]
- Road too narrow and traffic too fast. [for bikes]
- Dangerous turn to bike and to turn on Chili Ave from [Genesee] St.
- [Difficulty biking over] sewer grates
- Calm traffic / Currently W. Main, Chili, Genesee St. is used as a quick way for cars to get in & out of the downtown.
- Re-align intersection to improve the Safety of the intersection of Brown, and to increase the distance on W. Main between West and Brown (less likely for cars to back up.) [meeting participant drew a re-aligned street through the existing bull's head plaza]
- On streets recently paved Sharrows (shared road markings) are in the correct spot (in the driving lane) indicating the lane to be shared with cyclists. So congrats to City on that. But most of the older sharrows are in the door zone, so that motorists mistakenly think that is where the cyclists should be.
- It isn't difficult to get around in the BOA because it is underutilized. Not enough people live and work here
- Transit service is very infrequent. We need greatly improved transit service.
- Sidewalks
- Potholes are lethal for cyclists
- Gas station

## Transportation and Infrastructure:

**Q2:** What mode of transportation do you use most frequently and why?

### Responses:

- Car / Speed / Timing of activities.
- Car / Personal & business affairs out of the area
- Automobile, but I like the bike sharing station
- Car – Convenience & safety
- Use a car because there is no restaurants or shopping
- Car - I'm a baby boomer
- Own vehicle
- I mainly drive but I would use transit more if the service was much more frequent
- Foot & cab service. Services using not on bus line. \$\$.
- Bike, walk
- [install] bike boxes
- I love walking & biking but I can't
- Foot. Location of work, exercise
- By foot with groups of friends

## Parks and Recreation:

**Q1:** How do you use parks and recreational spaces in the project area today?

### Responses:

- Not enough spaces to use
- Don't. Not safe.
- Aren't many to use

- Only Danforth. Occasional baseball practice, dog exercise
- We need playground for kids & adults
- Playground
- Walking; however, there is a lack of respect & lots of dogs with poop
- I take my grandchildren to the parks to play & enjoy the water. Parks need more activities for kids as well as better supervision
- Relaxing water park
- School playgrounds are locked
- Too many drug dealers, no enforcement
- Don't. Unleashed dogs.
- Not much anymore; children are grown

## **Parks and Recreation:**

**Q2:** How could we improve parks and recreational spaces?

### Responses:

- Toddler park for family use
- Dedicated space for community gatherings, inside & out
- Parking needed
- Connecting / walking trail through the BOA
- Regular maintenance of green space and vacant lands mowing and trash collection
- Enforce dog leash laws
- I am skeptic of parks because of the deviant behavior that exists
- From what I understand a lot of the rec centers are overrun by gangs. This probably scares young parents.
- Need more supervision. Drugs and drinking are not a place for children to share with adults. The park is for kids.
- Supervised areas for control issues
- Enforcement by City Parks & Rec, Schools
- More available spaces
- Taylor instruments (95 Ames) should be a park
- Rezone 660 West Main to green space
- Stage, pavilion, graduation parties
- Develop area along Silver St. at railroad for walking or cycling
- Develop a trail to take you from the Erie Canal to downtown
- Need lots of natural beauty
- Need more green space, calming spaces, beauty
- dog park
- Develop a play space near Brown & Saxton Streets
- Teen-friendly areas: basketball, tennis, baseball
- Many kid-friendly spaces
- Danforth Community center – more programming, meetings
- Areas for garden plots, particularly near parks = more activity, perception of safety

## **Land Use and Zoning:**

**Q1:** What land uses pose challenges for the project area?

### Responses:

- Conflicts between rail corridor and residential - safety issue. Create buffer or barrier
- Lynchford Park - no amenities. Not really a park
- City should be partner w/private investors - not inhibit
- Building owners should also be business owners and live in neighborhood. Park Ave, University Ave, South Ave model would also work here
- No Public art in BOA
- New paving on West Ave. makes traffic go too fast
- Pressure on Irresponsible Investors and Owners



- Less C2 Zoning along W. Main (Jefferson -> Henion St - R1 or C1 only to preserve the remaining historic properties)
- Reduce boarding homes uses along corridor
- Where's the full line grocery @ 660 W. Main St. (approved 3 years ago)
- Bullshead needs its identity back. Where's the old buildings? Churches? Homes?
- The number of rental properties is problematic. Fostering home ownership/creating opportunities to do so would revitalize the area
- Remove M-1 zoning where it abuts R-1. New uses of these large buildings are proving to be noise problems for residents
- Who decides what is a brownfield?
- Industrial land use & zoning is problematic for neighborhood development
- Why doesn't the city tear down the abandoned and blighted structures?
- Ensure that the large property owners maintain their properties
- A big part of our poverty problem is the loss of employment sites in the city. We need to put our industrial sites back to job-producing use (office) but have a buffer along West Ave. such as an attractive office building. Put parking lots in the back
- Rent control
- We have no drive-through restaurants in the SW
- Too many rentals

## Land Use and Zoning:

**Q2:** What are the greatest opportunities to strengthen existing land uses or introduce new land uses to the project area?

### Responses:

- New land use to include enhanced green spaces & urban farming
- Land banking - people focused
- Housing incentives / low interest loans for housing rehab
- Better mix of housing for all incomes
- Greater diversity of commercial establishments - retail/restaurants
- Taylor Industries - dog park
- Preserve historical structure
- Revitalize existing landscaping. Introduce new opportunities
- Find reuses for the beautiful old churches
- Provide housing for all incomes in a livable, walkable neighborhoods (green spaces, traffic calming)
- Preserve / rehab housing stock
- Need more sensitive building design
- We need Green "Connections" between the residential & commercial
- Want city to value historic properties. Rehabilitation as a catalyst to new res. Development
- New VA Clinic at St. Mary's
- Commitment to from Roch Req Health to Maintain Services of St. Mary's
- Police Precinct in St. Mary's Office
- Demo Bullshead Plaza - New Development on the street Main & Genesee parking lots in rear
- Military Museum in St. Mary's
- Improve Service at Tops Mkt
- Need F.I.S. [Area bounded by Colvin, Danforth, Childe, and Wright]
- Make R1. [triangle formed by Taylor and Love Streets]
- This should be R1. [north side of parcels fronting Brown Street between Kensington and Hertel]
- Grocery Store. [located on W Main near Jefferson]
- Incentives to convert houses back to one & two family / R-1 R-2
- Add small police sub-station
- Postal Service in BOA
- Algonquin Terrace, cleanest safest street downtown Bull's Head
- Develop like Cornhill (business and homes)
- More upscale shopping/restaurants as destination points
- Develop "tinyhomes" community using odd-sized parcels of land (e.g. near railroad)
- Develop greentrail around MI/railroads that loops to commercial corridors

- Develop bike boulevard on Brown St.
- Unused parking need to be replaced with Educational Development Programs or Job opportunities
- Roch Police Department
- Redevelop the former Taylor plant for an employment use (industrial, office) but have a buffer along West Ave. such as an attractive office building. Put parking lots in the back.
- Build new grade school
- Restore our existing bldgs
- More single-family owner-occupied homes to stabilize the neighborhood
- Update housing stock
- Houses R-1 R-2 Zoning
- Redesign Bulls Head Plaza as more urban architecture, mixed-rate housing with retail on 1st floor
- Senior housing or co-housing development
- Solar panels for community energy
- My comment is about the boundaries of the 'subarea'. My church is in that area. So will they invest in the church? They give clothing, food, free lunch. We have a festival all for the community.
- Community farm at Taylor site
- Need traffic circle
- No traffic circles. Traffic circles are horrible for pedestrians
- Leverage vacant spaces for community garden spaces
- Restaurant, entertainment, gathering spaces
- More Habitat homes
- Don't develop this Parcel! (Traffic) [95 Ames St]
- Much more frequent transit services can help to make commercial property more desirable
- Design ne commercial so that it is pedestrian friendly and fronts on the sidewalk. Do not put in drive-throughs, and no parking lots in the front
- Large scale entertainment, movies
- Stop tearing down the historic buildings
- Open air theater, like Highland Bowl
- If we can spend NYS funding to build industrial parks on agricultural land (e.g., STAMP) then we can spend state funds to clean up Taylor to put it back to use.
- Tiny parks
- Community farms
- No more one story commercial buildings
- Indoor mall at Taylor
- Build townhouses, condo's, owner occupied

### **Post-presentation Inquiry to Participants:**

**Q:** Did any of the existing conditions data presented tonight surprise you? If so, what?

### **Responses:**

- Poverty rate is concentrated in this area
- Small percentage of people works in the neighborhood (BOA)
- Elderly and 15-year-olds
- Demographics are surprising. Need to draw young professionals & families to the area.
- Wasn't clear how this area, and in particular its boundaries, got identified or set. Does there have to be at least one identified brownfield in an area to trigger the process? I assume 'yes' and yet it seemed like the actual brownfields were not yet positively identified.
- At one point there was a proposal to put a junkyard at the Taylor site. That didn't happen. But if it had happened would that be considered a "reclaimed" property & not currently be classified as a brownfield?
- No not at all. Is there going to be a home owner promotion in the development or apartments mixed use can mean the neighborhood will lose its identity
- At the age of the properties
- Lack of homeowners in the area, number of rentals
- Incentives to own
- % of elderly and under 15 population. Where is the middle generation? Need to address this issue so that efforts to revitalize does not displace current residents; i.e., gentrification.
- Too few owners of large spaces (make land use for neighbors, not speculators)

- 80% renters! Need more owners
- Didn't tell us if the PowerPoint is available electronically/ I think it's available at the Arnett Library
- We need to study it more
- Identify historic structures to remain
- Surprised that no health data was included in the presentation
- Tonight's crowd was impressive

**Brownfield Questions:**

The following written questions provided by participants, were placed on the brownfield informational presentation board:

- What is the current impact of the brownfields on area residents?
- How will cleaning up the contaminated spots impact development?
- How will cleanup be publicized?