

REINVENTING ONEONTA - QUESTIONS ANSWERS FROM 2/27/2024

Topic	Question	Answer
MEETING		
	Can you have food at these meetings? We are hungry.	
	What happened to having an open "respectful dialogue" among community members and select staff from the City?	
	Whose idea was it to change the event from a dialog with the community regarding the possible sale of 27 Market Street to RSS to this format? Mark, why don't you keep your word as you originally asserted at the Common Council meeting 2/6/2024 that this would be a Town Hall type dialog to discuss the proposed sale of the prime commercial lot at 27 Market Street to RSS?	Please refer to Mayor Drnek's comments that were distributed after the meeting, addressing this concern
	Are the Job Corp students getting paid? How were the students selected to participate?	Mayor Drnek contacted Job Corps to ask for volunteer assistance at the meeting
	You realize most of the writing in your slides is unreadable, yet you continue to put them up. Why?	Given time limitations, City staff who prepared the slideshow were unable to preview the show on the screen at Foothills before the event. We apologize for the inconvenience, and encourage anyone interested in reviewing them to see the link on the City website
27 MARKET STREET - RSS		
	Where is the parking on the RSS lot? Are the (not shown in pic) businesses on the 1st floor also RSS businesses?	The 30 parking spots would both be on part of the ground floor closer to the Water Street side as well as along the side of the parcel that runs paralel to Main Street. If RSS proceeds with this project we would engage architects and civil engineers to provide full and complete renderings of all other details of the project including parking.
	Scale. The building proposed by RSS is taller than the room we are in by 2 stories. A new structure that is so large relative to its surroundings is out of scale. Why are City leaders endorsing such an out of scale structure? Is RSS willing to propose a smaller project?	While there is only a conceptual rendering at this early stage, the proposed 5-story building would theoretically be able to satisfy the City's zoning code (this property is located in the MU-1 zone).
	Why does RSS not see that it is detrimental to the successful rehabilitation of their clients to house them at 27 Market which is within a stone's throw (literally) of 3 bars and within 1 block of several more...and at the epicenter of the student party zone??	Individuals who choose to engage in supportive services are offered the supports necessary to meet their individualized goals, including maintaining their health and well-being. Supports will assist individuals navigate any of the common nuances of living in an urban and densifying environment. RSS empowers individuals to choose the environment most desirable and productive for them.
	What information has been provided that this RSS building/living situation will <u>improve</u> recovery for RSS clients?	Individuals who choose to engage in supportive services are offered the supports necessary to meet their individualized goals, which often include maintaining their health, well-being, and personal/community safety.
	What is the opinion of a local mental health professional of the location and scope of the RSS project?	RSS operates as part of the larger mental health professional network in both Otsego County and New York State. This network continues to provide feedback and inform decisions for the location and scope of new projects including 27 Market Street. RSS would not pursue a project that was inconsistent with the local mental health professional standards of care.
	What selling price are you asking for 27 Market Street?	
	I would like to know exactly how much in City funds have been used so far on 27 Market and how much is RSS planning to purchase for?	
	How much did it cost the City to get 27 Market Street to its present state?	The City spent \$425,000 to purchase 27 Market Street and \$414,000 to demolish the building for a total of \$839,000 in City investment. In addition, the City obtained a \$478,000 grant to demolish the building. The City is seeking the post-demolition appraised value of \$477,500 for the sale of the property (see 27 Market Street slide #83). RSS is willing to pay this amount.
	Can the public know how much the City paid for 27 Market Street? Along with how much the City has into 27 Market street with the demolition and parking lot. Lastly, how much is 27 Market Street on the market for sale?	
	How much will RSS pay for 27 Market Street?	
	Has the City and RSS signed any MOU, agreement or letter of interest yet.	No

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	Was there any competitive bidding? If not, why not?	--Since 2016, the City has extensively marketed the 27 Market Street site, including a \$100,000 public/private development marketing effort (paid entirely with DRI grant funds) conducted by Delaware Engineering and Mathes Public Affairs in 2021. On behalf of the City, the consultants issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to more than 100 large property developers across the state for developing a number of potential development sites in the downtown, including 27 Market Street. This marketing effort resulted in 1 response by a large developer who ultimately decided not to invest in Oneonta at that time. See City Development Efforts (slides 79-82) for a description of the many marketing efforts implemented by the City for the property since 2016.
	Why is the City rushing the sale of 27 Market Street to RSS?	
	Is this site (27 Market) open to other developers? (To build a multi-purpose building that is a taxable property?)	
	Why isn't more effort being made to market the vacant lot on Market Street so it goes back on the tax rolls? Oneonta is about 50% tax exempt. We need this lot to pay taxes.	--Typically non-profits do not pay taxes; however, RSS intends to negotiate a fair and equitable Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) in an amount to be determined. The PILOT will be split between the school, City, and County. Most developers, whether a taxable or non-taxable entity, proposing a project of this size (~\$25M investment) would negotiate a PILOT.
	Why was the land not listed to the public for sale? I would buy it if given the same terms. I live locally and already own property in downtown.	--The project was marketed to developers for at least 8 years. If the City listed the property with realtors, it would be listed and sold with a development plan for a project comparable to the scope and value of the RSS project (~\$25M) and with a timeline that must be met. These and other conditions agreed up on as part of the sale must be met or ownership of the property could revert to the City. The City is not interested in selling the parcel to someone who has no immediate plan to develop the site for mixed-use (residential and commercial).
	Upon making their decision, if the Council has 40% question or reservation on going forward with RSS than why vote yes? RSS will still have interest in 1 year.	In order to sell City-owned property, the City code requires an affirmative vote from at least 3/4 of the Council (i.e. at least six votes out of eight), after a duly advertised public hearing. The City has no ability to predict any developer's future plans.
	Is it true that RSS will bring in people to live in this proposed facility from afar (NYC, Binghamton) or is it more based for Otsego/Delaware County residents?	The City and Town of Oneonta are expected to provide 75% of the eventual tenant base (see 2023 Market Study Prepared by Newmark slide #75)
	From where are these low income families coming?	
	What are the qualifications to live in RSS housing?	RSS has different types of housing. If we proceed with the development of 27 Market Street tenants who earn 30-70% of the Area Median Income may qualify for the units not set aside for RSS clients already receiving supports for their physical and mental health person centered goals.
	Who is eligible to live in the proposed RSS supportive apartments? And will these people be required to be from Otsego County?	Individuals living in the supportive housing component will meet eligibility through the specific qualifying characteristics RSS identifies through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative. The units designated for supportive services will be marketed within Otsego County.
	What is the expected property tax revenue from this RSS project over the next 10 years? Over the next 20 years?	A Payment in Lieu of Taxes or PILOT will be negotiated if the project moves forward. The negotiations will determine the expected property tax revenue of 27 Market Street.
	Will RSS build off River Street if not on Market Street? What grants are you seeking to complete this project?	The funding for this project if approved would come from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewals 9% tax credits. (this means a tax credit syndicator would provide \$'s generated from investors who receive a tax credit for participating in the project) •We would also likely apply for New York State Energy Research and Development Authority funds. •The support money to the 15 households engaging in support services with RSS would come from the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative. This is what we have access to as a nonprofit developer with experience in developing housing that is affordable to households making 30-70% of the Area Median Income.
	Was the old Otsego Iron Works building on Wells Avenue ever considered for the RSS project? It's close enough to still be considered walkable distance to downtown and has fewer nearby bars, unlike the currently proposed location. Isn't this problematic for individuals in post-recovery from alcohol/substance abuse?	The Otsego Iron Works property is privately owned and was not considered. RSS has over 50 years of working with individuals in active recovery living in close proximity to sources of substances they may be in recovery from. Clients receiving supports from RSS are fully involved in the decision of where they live and what environments work best for their unique physical and mental health recovery plans. Our reality in today's world is drugs and alcohol surround almost all living situations resulting in the supportive model RSS has developed and implemented for 50 years.

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	Why doesn't RSS work with Otsego County Representatives to purchase land in the County rather than the 27 Market Street which is a prime retail location?	RSS is responding to the City of Oneontas comprehensive plan to increase density in the downtown area.
	What jobs will these new neighbors have?	The income limits accommodate workforce housing for many of the industries in the City and Town of Oneonta. For instance, some City employees and retirees may qualify to live there. Certainly, the same could be said of many workers who are employed at various retail and service establishments in Oneonta
	Who are the residents RSS would have living at 27 Market St?	Residents of 27 Market Street would have household incomes of 30-70% of the Area Median Income by household size. Fifteen of these residents would also be choosing to engage in supportive services with RSS on their person centered physical and mental health goals.
	What will RSS residents contribute to our City?	RSS residents are already and would continue to contribute to the workforce, engaging in downtown activities/businesses, and serving as good neighbors.
	How does RSS project for 27 Market St contribute to providing housing to people who want to move here for the few jobs that are available, or for the 1,000 new residents that could work from home online that you spoke of bringing here when you were campaigning?	RSS will definitely provide safe and affordable housing which will give current residents a place to choose instead of moving away. Attracting new residents is important but losing residents to cities that have housing with right size rents works in direct contrast to this goal.
	What do people have against RSS housing to support low income or homeless people and if they are against it, are they against residential that are involved RSS (for children)?	
	RSS (Rehabilitation Support Services) is a great organization. They started in 1979. Their mission; to enrich & empower the lives of people they serve. They improve the quality of people's lives through recovery-oriented housing, work, treatment, socialization, and health & wellness services. What's not to like?	
	How is it okay for organizations to force out small business? If we decide to develop 27 Market Street to allow more entry of small businesses, how will you prevent another Pale Horse force-out from occurring?	The City cannot control what tenants landlords choose to have.
	You still have not addressed how the RSS mixed-use building would enhance the revitalization of downtown Oneonta. How is this housing "reimagining" downtown?	The focus of the presentation by City staff at the meeting was to provide an overview of the City's vision for a revitalized downtown and connected Oneonta. Infill housing with right-sized rents for all income levels will increase population density and add vital energy and activity to downtown. By mixing uses, we create vibrant neighborhoods where residents, workers and visitors all have access to retail, services, entertainment, etc. There are many benefits to such walkable cities, many of which were outlined in the presentation.
POVERTY		
	What household income classifies as poverty in Oneonta?	The 20% poverty rate referenced in the presentation is from the US Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html
	What can we do to address our 20% poverty rate?	
	How are you going to reduce poverty (20% is alarming) without pushing them out?	This a complex issue not only in Oneonta but across the state, country, and world. The City has recognized a need for housing for all income levels. When funding is available, the City also provides grants to local small businesses which support the creation of low and moderate income jobs. The City will continue to support initiatives that create full-time jobs as well as affordable housing and transportation.
	20% poverty is 1 in 5! Where are they in this plan? How are you going to fix this?	
HOUSING		
	What is being done with the Town House Motel? Can it be used for housing?	This building is privately-owned. Yes, it could be used for housing.
	We have several empty houses here. Why not fix them?	The properties are privately owned.
	How many vacant single/multi-family residential properties are currently within City limits? Are we focusing on revitalizing existing infrastructure or building new?	The number fluctuates between 70 and 100 vacant properties. The City supports revitalizing existing housing stock in addition to infill development on vacant/underutilized parcels within developed areas of the City.

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	Why are we not looking to provide "middle" income housing? Our businesses-colleges staff & faculty can't find housing.	The City envisions being a community with adequate housing for all income levels. The answer to this question depends on your definition of "middle" income housing. Various governmental funding/housing agencies use different definitions of income levels related to the housing programs they offer. For example, in 2023 the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defined moderate income for a family of four as being up to \$65,300. The City can apply for certain housing assistance programs, most of which benefit low income homeowners. In addition, the City is willing and eager to work with any qualified developer of market-rate housing or any other other income level.
	What about the middle class? There is limited housing. 70% of people where I work can't afford to live in Oneonta despite making a decent living.	HUD defines low-moderate income as 30% to 80% of median income for various household sizes (refer to CDBG 2023 Income Limits - https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5334/cdbg-income-limits/) by County. The City does not have income data on individual housing units. The US Census Quick Facts website has median household income data by municipality.
	Out of all the low-income housing in Otsego County, what percent of it is located in the City of Oneonta?	The 2023 Market Study included a list of similar housing in the area, one of which was a family housing building with 20 units. This did not mean that is the only family housing available in the area.
	So the 2023 Market Study for available housing provides 20 units for families. 20 units...but you're trying to appeal to families to stay here?	The City employs code enforcement staff who enforce local and state building and safety codes and ordinances. Enforcement mechanisms include administrative fees, court fines, and orders to remedy (e.g. Oneonta Hotel). In addition, the City has also used the public nuisance ordinance to address certain properties (e.g. Town House Inn).
	What can the City do about enforcing building codes and addressing nuisance houses/businesses? [Some student & family rentals are absolutely awful.]	The City code includes a short-term rental ordinance (see Chapter 300-32) that has been in effect since 2011 and was updated in 2020. This ordinance restricts short-term rentals within zones R-1, R-2, and R-3 to owner-occupied dwellings. There is no legal definition of student housing and therefore it is difficult if not impossible to craft legislation to regulate such housing that would withstand legal challenge. An alternative approach may be to enact an inclusionary zoning ordinance, which could require all new construction and major alterations to multi-unit housing to incorporate a minimum percentage/number of affordable housing units. Another approach would be to enact a zoning ordinance to permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
	Several communities have implemented a zoning or lottery system for allowing Airbnb, limiting the number of residences allowed to provide short-term housing. Has the City looked into implementing a similar system to make family housing more accessible and affordable? Could this be indicated for student housing as well?	
HISTORIC BUILDINGS		
	How can we preserve our empty historic buildings (Stella Luna, Oneonta Hotel)? And why are they vacant for years?	The City enacted a local historic preservation ordinance which requires property owners to adhere to specific rehabilitation, repair and alteration standards to preserve historic structures. Historic structures are eligible for historic tax credits, and the City has retained an expert consulting firm to assist property owners with applications for these tax credits. The buildings referenced are privately owned and both are currently listed for sale.
DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE		
	Is foot traffic a problem or symptom?	Lack of downtown foot traffic is a symptom of an urban area that is not meeting its potential. A successful downtown requires people to shop, dine, work, play, etc. All people in downtown are pedestrians regardless of how they got there... they could walk, bike, drive, or use public transportation to get downtown, but eventually they all walk* to their destination. *For the purposes of this answer, "walk" should be considered to include all persons whether they are in fact walking, using a wheelchair or other method to access their destinations.
	How are performers/artists going to fill Main Street during the cold?	It's safe to assume the outdoor art displays and performances are more likely to occur during warmer weather, but the City would like to encourage active public spaces in all seasons.
	Baseball brings \$ into the community. Why not include that in the Downtown Renaissance?	The Downtown Renaissance Program (DRP) includes creating destination appeal as one of its objectives, with specific reference to attracting families and players from the Cooperstown All Star Village (see presentation slides).
	What are you doing to promote the farmers market?	The City initiated a discussion with the Oneonta Farmers' Market and they agreed to relocate to lower Dietz St (between Main St and Wall St) this summer. The City has proposed hiring a coordinator of the Downtown Renaissance program whose duties would include coordination with and promotion of downtown events and activities, including the Farmers' Market.
	You defunded a group that hosts Main Street events and Neahwa Park events. Why are you even talking about Neahwa when the focus is on Downtown?	Repurposing the funds previously spent on events to fund the Downtown Renaissance Program, with its particular focus on downtown, is a prioritization of the City's limited resources. Still, Neahwa Park is integral to the City's downtown planning and development efforts. It is located within both the City's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) DRI boundary area and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) area boundary. The LWRP will help the City strengthen its identity as a Susquehanna River Basin community and make better connections to the river through our bike and pedestrian trails, many of which will be connected by Neahwa Park, including the Susquehanna Greenway, the New Island trails, and the new bike/pedestrian path on Lettis Highway.

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	"Creative types" spend their time working to afford living here and do not have time to enjoy artistic pastimes. Do you really expect people to volunteer time they don't have to a City that doesn't actively support their interests? Creative people cannot afford to spend their time being creative!	The City hopes to be able to encourage the development of adequate quantities of housing for people of all income levels and backgrounds, including artists. The recently constructed Dietz Street Lofts is an example of such housing. In addition to housing opportunities, the City hopes to be a walkable community that provides residents with various convenient and affordable transportation options, one benefit of which may be reducing one's transportation expenses. Regarding the Downtown Renaissance Proposal, the City hopes to contribute to the development of a vibrant arts community that will generate opportunities and additional income for artists.
GOVERNMENT		
	Will Oneonta have better chance for development if City and Town unite?	The City and Town of Oneonta have a good relationship and are actively working together on many projects and initiatives. Working together, development in either the City or Town can benefit both municipalities.
	Can we invite Sen. Oberacker to the Common Council meetings to hear from HIM and question him?	Mayor Drnek is the City's liaison to other governmental agencies, including Senator Oberacker. Any member of the public is welcome to contact Senator Oberacker's office as well.
	If the City is making "progress," why doesn't he listen to the people's view nor respond to a question instead of ignoring it?	The City wants to hear the views of its constituents and answer any questions they may have, including this one.
	Will you change the seal? #not your mascot	The Common Council can have a discussion about changing the City seal at any time.
CITY FINANCES		
	Last week, the Mayor announced that the City is making "progress." If that is the case then why did he also announce the City is in the red in terms of financial red?	Progress can be sought after and made without solving every problem. To be clear, there is a difference between the "City being in the red" and the General Fund budget utilizing fund balance to fully fund the budget. The difference – the City's fund balance is strong, however, utilizing fund balance as a revenue source for operating expenses is not sustainable. Therefore, to maintain the current strength of the City's fund balances, future budgets will require greater revenue sources or reduced expenses while recognizing the challenge that the City is providing the expected essential services with minimum staffing. Progress – economic development, such as, private investors within the City, increased population which those investors will bring which in turn will increase activity and revenues within the City. It should be noted that the City has realized a year-end surplus in some recent years, due to various factors such as conservative budgeting (e.g. realizing more sales tax revenue than anticipated) and having some personnel vacancies resulting in savings.
RECREATION		
	In all the revitalization efforts, what can be created for children in the winter months? Kids, especially pre-school age, lack spaces for movement and socialization when the parks are snowed over.	Mayor Drnek is advocating for the development of Market Street as an entertainment and engagement area, with the goal to create year-round recreation activities for children and young adults. The City recently provided Microenterprise grant funds to assist 2 local businesses that focus on indoor recreation, Noah's World indoor playground, and Roundhouse Indoor Golf, both located on Roundhouse Road in the City. The City supports the Oneonta Teen Center, located in the Armory, where the gymnasium is also used for some youth sports. The City is willing to support other initiatives that may be proposed.
	Isn't Wilber Pool owned by the YMCA? What kind of delays should we expect in the 2024 swimming season due to this splash pad/wading pool development?	The City owns Wilber Pool and contracts the YMCA to operate the pool. The proposed splash pad is not fully funded at this time and therefore construction has no timeline. This idea was proposed by interested community partners who are seeking to raise the necessary funds for this project.
	What interesting things for the children and young adults in Oneonta to do?	There are various things for children and young adults to do in Oneonta (see link to Google search below). https://www.google.com/search?q=What+interesting+things+for+the+children+and+young+adults+in+Oneonta+to+do%3F&rlz=1C1SQJL_enUS961US961&oq=What+interesting+things+for+the+children+and+young+adults+in+Oneonta+to+do%3F&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBCDIwMThqMGo3qAIAA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/JOB CREATION/GROWTH		
	What plans do you have for bringing in higher wage jobs? Restaurants and retail won't build the City with their low wages.	The Otsego County's Industrial Development Agency, Otsego Now, completed a final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for the Oneonta Railyards in 2019. They are actively marketing the Railyards and the industrial parks located in the City (and elsewhere in the County) to potential industries and developers. In addition, the City has obtained and administered millions of dollars in grant funding for City businesses for property acquisition, working capital, equipment and other costs. The City has created a regulatory environment downtown that makes it easier for people to open businesses by expediting the review processes and expanding the types of businesses that can be created. All of our planning efforts, from the Comprehensive Plan to the DRI to the business grants to the proposed development, are with the goal to increase the number of people that work and live downtown who will support local businesses and ultimately result in a vibrant economy with a better cross section of employment opportunities.
	If you want 1000 new people, why is job creation <u>NEVER</u> discussed? Even if only for those of us already here? Better paying jobs <u>ARE</u> needed.	
	Are there 1000 jobs in the region that will provide the people to move to Oneonta?	
	What is Oneonta doing to invite new business/jobs (i/e. big tech, industry, entrepreneurship)?	
	What is being done to promote business development in Oneonta, and where would these businesses be? Ex. A business park for manufacturing. Ex. Technology-based/focused businesses	
	Part of the 15 Minute City plan depends on capitalizing on tourist/visitor dollars, but can a 15 Minute City be truly sustainable without a solid base of good paying jobs that provide discretionary income?	
	How many jobs @ or above median income level (\$62K) are currently within the "15 Minute City" limits?	The 15 Minute City concept is not tied to a boundary or a specific part of the City. The concept of a 15 Minute City is that wherever you live, you are within a 15 minute walk of your daily needs. This would include employment, housing, food, and recreational activities. The concept of the 15 Minute City is not tied to income because no matter where you live, you still need those things. Relative to local salaries, one salary of about \$29/hour would meet the \$62,188 median household income for the City of Oneonta. A household of two people working full time at a local business making \$14.50 an hour could also meet the median household income. Based on Census data, half of the residents in Oneonta are making above the median household income. In addition, many College students may make below the MHI as they show little to no income.
	What are the weaknesses or threats to implementing growth	Stagnation. If we don't welcome new ideas, increase housing, embrace planning best practices like affordable housing, walkability, mixed use zoning, etc., we are not going to attract new residents or businesses.
	Who are the private investors for the improvements?	The owners of the buildings/projects that were or will be completed.
SUSTAINABILITY		
	Can you talk more about the local compost project?	The City obtained a \$410,000 grant to support the creation of an Otsego County food waste compost facility at 532 County Rd 58 in the Town of Oneonta, operated by Seward Sand and Gravel. The City purchased equipment for Seward to use at this facility, as well as some equipment and contractual services to assist the City Department of Public Works with the processing of green waste (i.e. brush & yard waste) stockpiled at the DPW yard on Silas Lane; this green waste is required to be collected by Seward for use in their composting operation. The goal is for Seward to accept food waste from the local community (fees apply) to be composted. The end product may be used to produce topsoil for sale by Seward. There is a household food waste collection site at Otsego County's at Oneonta Transfer Station, operated by Casella. Residents may drop off food waste at this location for \$1 which Casella will then transfer to the Seward compost facility. Follow this link to learn more about composting in Otsego County - https://www.otsegocounty.com/departments/s-y/solid_waste/food_waste.php
PUBLIC ART		
	Will you pay artists to paint murals?	The City will spend \$16,000 of the DRI grant for a mural on Foothills Performing Arts Center. Artists and organizations can apply for OCI grants of up to \$1,000 to hold events that are related to public art and the supplies can be purchased with the grant funds, although the artist's time cannot be reimbursed. Interested artists can contact the City at commdev@oneonta.ny.us for more information about the OCI program. Unfortunately, public art is not included in the City general fund budget at this time.
	I have previously proposed City <u>crosswalks</u> be painted creatively which is <u>statistically proven to reduce</u> auto/pedestrian accidents. One idea is rainbow crosswalks, another is "3D" appearing white bars. How can this be funded and implemented & what is needed to make it happen. Because it fits your concept well, but hasn't been done.	The City has drafted a Sidewalk & Crosswalk Art policy which would establish a simple process for the reviewing and approving applications from members of the public to paint City sidewalks and crosswalks. The Public Arts Commission would have final approval of such applications, after the Code Enforcement Office and Department of Public Works have reviewed. Stay tuned for an announcement about this program.

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BIKE NETWORK		
	Are you aware that it is unpleasant to hike/bike near a highway?	Absolutely, which is why it is important that we develop a comprehensive bicycle network that utilizes best-practices in Complete Streets and urban bicycle infrastructure design to ensure a safe and comfortable experience for all users. The City's goal for the Lettis Highway complete streets project is to reduce the number of vehicular lanes to allow for separate sidewalk and bicycle lanes, ideally with a wide grass tree lawn creating a buffer between vehicles and peds/bikes. These and other improvements are intended to create a safer and more enjoyable experience for bikers and pedestrians traveling between the City and the Town, including easy access to Neahwa Park, Catella Park, and the New Island / Susquehanna Greenway trail system.
	So are we doing a bike share program? Again people can't just afford things like bikes designed to handle the "City of the Hills" terrain.	The City is interested in improving our bicycle infrastructure / network and will be exploring the possibility of developing a bike share program, which is a transportation goal in the Comprehensive Plan.
	What is the timeline for proposed bicycle and walking infrastructure? Ex. Lettis Highway pedestrian-way, expanding Greenway, walkway connecting Market Street and Neahwa Park.	The Lettis Highway complete streets project is currently in the design phase with discussions being held with NYSDOT to determine the final scope of the project. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2025. The trail network from the existing Susquehanna Greenway on Silas Lane to Fortin Park will be included as a priority project in the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan (LWRP) that is currently underway and slated to be completed in 2025. The LWRP will open opportunities for funding for implementation of the projects identified in the plan. Sections of the trails are in the conceptual planning phase and fundraising is underway to design and complete them as soon as possible. Discussions between the City and the railway need to take place relative to the new pedestrian connection between Market Street and Neahwa Park, and the City needs to work with private property owners along Market St to gain their support of the concept, reach an agreement for site access and determine the exact location of the path; funding will also need to be identified.
	How many bicycles are there in Oneonta?	The City does not have this data. As we work to plan a citywide bicycle network, we will seek to learn about this and other biking trends in the city.
	How are we promoting the Greenway trail?	The City supports the Greenway through capital improvement projects and maintenance. The Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Committee has designed signage, produced and installed by the City, to demarcate the trails, and also maintains a website with information about the Greenway such as trail maps. https://www.oneontagreenway.org/
DIVERSITY		
	Are you aware that people of color have been removed/left out of this entire presentation? (What about Black business?)	The presentation was aimed at every resident and business in the City. The purpose of the presentation was to stress the importance of economic and housing accessibility which has historically negatively impacted people of color. The City's focus on creating an environment where everyone can engage equally in these markets is part of making an equitable community. The City is an equal opportunity employer.
	What are some ways the City has aided or can better aid minority students/minorities in the City to make them feel a part of the City? Ex. Minority college students, Muslim population.	The City has implemented a Fair Housing Program. Most of our grant programs have requirements to meet women and minority business goals. The City's Commission on Community Relations and Human Rights meets monthly to ensure that all members of the community feel welcome and have a voice. The City welcomes ideas and any opportunities to improve relations with all members of our community.
PASSENGER RAIL		
	How could we work with NY State to have high-speed or passenger trains connect Oneonta with larger cities (Binghamton, Albany, NYC, Boston, Philly)?	This is an idea the City would certainly be interested in supporting. There would need to be strong support on the local, State, and Federal levels to move such an initiative forward.
COLLEGE RETENTION/INTEGRATION		
	How can we attract more graduating college students to stay here?	For folks 18-30 yrs old: more amenities, like a small grocery store in the City, more retail, entertainment, coffee shops, more events.
	How do you intend to integrate students and locals? There are so many sub-communities within Oneonta and it feels like the rifts between them is almost encouraged. Attempts at integration in all honesty present as farces.	The City is in constant contact with the colleges, working on integrating students and locals. The City has encouraged the Colleges to create a presence in the downtown, including the Hartwick College Grain Innovation Center which will open soon in the Dietz Street Lofts, and SUNY Oneonta's community learning center on Dietz Street.
	How many employees at SUNY? 5,000	The City financial statements show that SUNY Oneonta has 1,140 employees.
	Why are we not planning for the elimination of our colleges (at least one) and the vacancies they will create?	The City is actively pursuing the implementation of our Comprehensive Plan which includes various goals for improving our community. Working with our institutes of higher education to ensure our community's long-term success is a key strategy.

REINVENTING ONEONTA - QUESTIONS ANSWERS FROM 2/27/2024

Topic	Question	Answer
BUSINESS ASSISTANCE		
	What would the established businesses like the Autumn Café, Latte Lounge, and the Bagel Place have to do to get the same benefit of money as the newer businesses like Bombers do?	Business owners can contact the City's Planning and Development office (commdev@oneonta.ny.us or 607 432-0114). We will discuss their needs and work with the business owner to determine if there is an available grant program. We can also help them develop a project team and direct them to other agencies in the City that provide business assistance. See 'What Are Our Strategies' slide #78). Since 2016, the City has provided Microenterprise grant assistance to 43 very small businesses, including 21 new businesses and 22 existing businesses with some of the new businesses owned by existing City business owners. The Microenterprise program requires that at least 50% of the grant is awarded to new businesses. The owners of Autumn Cafe were awarded a Microenterprise grant for equipment and, along with B'Side, DRI grants for facade improvements and signage. The former owner of the Latte Lounge was awarded a Microenterprise grant in 2018 for Licking Lizard (now Big Al's). The current owners of Latte Lounge can contact the City about their plans and we can discuss what business grant programs may be applicable. The Bagel Company is run by RSS, a non-profit, making them ineligible for business grants that the City can access. If they have a project in mind, they can contact the City to discuss possible options. Local business owners were able to obtain larger economic development grants with assistance from the City, including Social Eats Project 607, and Nick's Diner. We are currently working on 2 economic development grants for City businesses.
	Grant for small business: how to apply? Necessary requirements? (specific business info provided; City is answering their email query)	
	Why do we feel the need to compete with Southside? Do we not share a zip code? Southside is not the issue--ignoring businesses beyond a concentrated block of downtown is.	The City is not seeking to compete with Southside. Many of the City businesses and restaurants are privately owned and provide different products than are available in the Southside. The City's small business grants are available to businesses throughout the City. Recent awards to businesses located outside of the downtown include grants to Social Eats, Nick's Diner, Noah's World, Roundhouse Indoor Golf, and Yak's child care.
DOWNTOWN		
	Does the DRI include the revitalization of the Oneonta Theatre?	The Oneonta Theatre did not receive DRI funding. The Oneonta Theatre received a \$500K grant from the NY Main Street Stabilization Program to replace the roof on the entire building. The building owners will provide a \$393K match.
		Due to the DRI projects not being completed at this time, and how the investments will affect taxable assessments, new revenues created cannot be reported at this moment in time. Data and time are required for that answer. However, what can be reported is how much the DRI grant, and many other grants, are saving the tax payer:
	How much <u>new</u> City tax revenue has the DRI funds brought to the City's annual budget? What is the estimate of revenue increases over the next 10 years?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The parking garage was deemed unsafe. To repair the garage it was estimated to cost \$17 million. This would not have been a fiscally responsible financial investment into an almost 50-year old structure, and the tax payer would have had to pay for the entire repair project. The DRI grant is paying for the demolition, not the local taxpayer. 2. New Parking Lot and Stair & Elevator Tower connecting Market Street to Water Street and a new elevator connecting to Main Street – again the majority of these projects are being funded by grants. 3. Market Street – this street requires reconstruction and redesign – again the DRI grant is funding a major portion of the project 4. Water Street is being redesigned for more attractive and inviting settings to provide for more opportunity for outside activities for the public. 5. Transit Hub – the City received a \$10 million NYSDOT/FTA grant to build a new transit hub for the City which will provide a central hub for OPT and Trailways. 6. Over \$2 million of the DRI grants has been awarded to downtown vendors and/or building owners to fund major investments in signage, facade improvements, and upper floor housing. 7. The entire Market Street Transportation Improvements Project, including Water Street and the Transit Hub, is estimated to be just over \$23 million, with the City's investment being estimated at \$7.5 million or 32% of the total project costs, which means over \$15 million is not being paid for by local taxpayers, or said another way, the taxpayer is receiving 211% return on the \$7.5m investment.

REINVENTING ONEONTA - QUESTIONS ANSWERS FROM 2/27/2024

Topic	Question	Answer
	How many permanent jobs have been created since DRI award?	<p>"The DRI transforms downtown neighborhoods into vibrant centers that offer a high quality of life and are magnets for redevelopment, business, job creation, and economic and housing diversity. These compact, walkable downtowns are a key ingredient to helping New York State rebuild its economy from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to achieving the State's bold climate goals by promoting the use of public transit and reducing dependence on private vehicles." NYS Department of State (DOS).</p> <p>Although direct job creation was not the highest priority of the DRI, the original job creation estimates included in the application submitted for the DRI changed after the individual priority projects were funded and the program was implemented. The City of Oneonta's Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Strategic Investment Plan included establishing the Mohawk Valley Food and Beverage Innovation Center at 27 Market Street which would have potentially resulted in the creation of 43 jobs and 3 floors of mixed-type housing (see http://otsegonow.com/uploads/Mohawk%20Valley%20FBIC%20Feasibility%20Study.pdf, pg 3). For a few reasons, including objections by a small group of people, this project ultimately was not funded by the state. The Westcott Lot project was slated to indirectly create jobs from retail/restaurant uses on the 1st floor; however, the site was deemed by potential developers to be too small for this purpose. The Dietz Street Lofts did not include retail so as to not compete with existing Main Street businesses, and provided an opportunity for Hartwick College to have a presence in the Downtown. The Dietz Street Lofts has created at least 3 FTE positions for building management, and the Hartwick College Grain Innovation Center will create an estimated 4 to 5 FTE jobs plus student employment. The Ford on Main project is expected to create jobs for building management. The City's remaining DRI projects strengthened and redeveloped the downtown by improving walkability, updating business facades and signage, updating downtown wayfinding signage throughout the City, providing housing diversity and increased upper floor housing units (approximately 100 new housing units have been developed), improving public transit (new transit hub), and supporting local businesses (more than 40 businesses assisted with new facades, signage, and upper floor housing).</p>
	<p>Why was funding pulled from Westcott Lot? Which would benefit everyone who visits downtown and given to a private, low-income housing developer for Dietz Street who pay reduced taxes in the form of a PILOT?</p> <p>What happened to 'Life Enjoyed'?</p> <p>Who came up with the new Oneonta signage? Looks childish. Were residents consulted?</p> <p>Making downtown attractive. Cracked sidewalks with weeds growing through is one obvious visual sign of a neglected community. What is Oneonta doing to improve in this area, because it is depressing to see on a daily basis, and it sends a message of indifference and neglect?</p>	<p>The Westcott Lot was marketed to developers during the DRI planning process. There were at least two potentially interested developers that determined that the lot was too small to be financially feasible for a mixed-use building. The Dietz Street lot was determined to be feasible for such a project and the funding agency agreed to allow the funds to be used for the Dietz Street Lofts project. If the Westcott Lot had been developed as planned, it would also have utilized a PILOT agreement and mixed-income housing.</p> <p>The City was long known as 'City of the Hills'. In 2010, a group of civic, business and arts leaders sought a new identify and hired a consultant who developed 'Life Enjoyed'. The goal of the DRI-funded branding effort that started in late 2018 was to create a sense of identity to appeal to both the current and next generations. Input gathered from stakeholder groups and at public meetings indicated that while folks agreed that the City's branding need a fresh take, there was still nostalgia for the City of the Hills tag line. As a result, the 'City of the Hills' was incorporated within the new brand, both with the tag line and by including green to represent the foothills. Other colors selected to represent important aspects of the City include red for SUNY Oneonta, teal for the waterways and the importance of being a Susquehanna River community , and blue for Hartwick College.</p> <p>The City utilizes its limited resources based on the priorities established by the community. Budget increases would be necessary to improve maintenance in areas such as sidewalk and weed maintenance, which would require corresponding revenue increases and/or reductions of budgets in other areas. Given budget constraints, the City has done the best it can with limited resources and have sought to collaborate with volunteer organizations such as the Garden Club and student groups to beautify and maintain the community's public spaces.</p>
	For 45 years downtown has been a ghost town. Why the hurry now to spruce up things?	If not now, then when?
	So I have to leave and would love a follow-up email. I love the initiative to pedestrianize downtown, but what are we going to do about all of the through traffic? Are we going to re-route around downtown or get rid of side street parking? Many of our teens won't cross main with 2 parked cars and 2 lanes of through traffic to get to the other businesses. Also the many outdoor seatings are ruined by all of the traffic noise.	The City is open to all ideas regarding how best to improve the walkability of downtown while meeting the expectations of businesses, residents and visitors regarding vehicular access as well.

REINVENTING ONEONTA - QUESTIONS ANSWERS FROM 2/27/2024

Topic	Question	Answer
MARKET STREET TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS (PARKING GARAGE DEMOLITION, TRANSIT HUB, WATER ST AND MARKET STREET IMPROVEMENTS)		
	Does the \$ for transit include the bus system (OPT)?	Yes. The new transit hub on Market St will serve OPT as well as Trailways.
	Will new signage include Spanish?	
	How will we pay a \$7.5M bond for transit hub? What is our current deficit?	The \$7.5M bond is to pay for portions of the parking garage demolition / parking lot construction, NYSEG electric relocation, Water St improvements, and Market St improvements. The transit hub is paid for largely with NYSDOT/FTA funds with some local match from the City (little to none of the bond proceeds will go toward the transit hub). The bond payments will be covered by the City's General Fund revenues. The final amount to be bonded and terms of repayment will be determined once actual costs are incurred and the bond is issued.
	What is the cost annually for tax payers and for how many years?	
	\$250K to unlock the gate from Main to Water Street? Why do we need a half million dollar boardwalk to visit the SIP?	The City will put the \$750K awarded in the DRI for the Muller Plaza Passageway and the Water Street Boardwalk toward pedestrian, Water Street, and other improvements in the Market Street Transportation Improvement Project. These improvements will include walkways from the new Transit Hub on Market Street to Water Street, with an elevator at the northeast corner of the new surface parking lot which will replace the parking garage. Water Street improvements transform Water Street into a two-way cul-de-sac with parallel parking on the north side. This will be a flexible outdoor space that can be closed to vehicular traffic and used for pop-up pedestrian-only events. The City is also using the DRI funds for an accessible indoor public walkway and elevator in the Ford on Main building to provide pedestrian access from Water Street to Main Street. The Muller Plaza passageway improvements, including opening the gate, are being completed within the Ford on Main Project with private funds and at no cost to the City, and the City has obtained an easement for public access for the passageway.
INFRASTRUCTURE		
	Any effort on lead water pipeline study (exposure of residents) and replacement? Any grants?	The City has identified approximately 130 homes that have lead water lines. The City has obtained a \$205,800 grant from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to assist those homeowners that are income eligible with replacing the lead water service. Those homeowners have been contacted by the City and are encouraged to apply. There are approximately 700 lead service lines in the City that need to be tested to determine if they are lead and the City obtained a \$1,200,000 grant to conduct a lead service line inventory for those lines. When the inventory is complete, the City intends to apply for grant funds to assist those homeowners replace their lead lines. The City is also applying for grant funds to assist the City with replacing lead lines within the City's system.
HOMELESSNESS		
	How can we do something with new homeless and people on drugs? Thank you.	The City can support the creation of affordable housing, including supportive housing. The City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance permit and support the creation of transitional housing and affordable housing units. The City also supports other local agencies/organizations whose mission is to provide direct assistance to unhoused people and those who may be struggling with addiction and/or mental health issues. For example, City officials and others are involved in the Community Solutions Panel and Safe Homes and Neighborhoods Committee.
	As a transplant from NYC, I grew up walking. I decided that I should walk in town here, but found it depressing because of closed storefronts and apparently homeless people in doorways and sleeping on benches. What plans does the City have to provide housing and social service support for those of us who need the help of the wider community?	
	How does the homeless & fentanyl crisis affect the future vitality of Oneonta?	Besides the obvious effect on the lives of those who are personally engaged in substance abuse and unsheltered living, there is a palpable impact on the community and its perception of the safety and security of its streets and neighborhoods. Addressing this is the mission of the "Safe Homes and Neighborhoods Taskforce" which is composed of over 4-dozen members of the Oneonta community and partners from the infrastructure of support and government in Otsego County.
	When will we get mental help, people need mental, homeless vets, need something for the kids to do, game room needed and a place for the people on drugs. Need housing for them, need more.	Assistance in providing mental health support for those in need is one of the significant assets of the RSS (Rehabilitation Support Services). The proposed building at 27 Market Street would feature a "maker space" which would provide creative engagement opportunities for children and adults.

REINVENTING ONEONTA - QUESTIONS ANSWERS FROM 2/27/2024

Topic	Question	Answer
	How do you intend to address and act upon the houseless and addiction crisis in Oneonta? Public perception is either "give them everything" or "ignore them to appease college & baseball." Why is Market St any different?	The Safe Homes and Neighborhoods Taskforce is comprised of 5 workgroups - each addressing a unique and important component of the homeless crisis. It is our hope that by addressing a more focused and narrowed charge, that the workgroups will combine to create an impementatiopn strategy that will address the concerns and determine a congregate space with attendant services outside of the City of Oneonta. 27 Market Street as developed by RSS would provide a place for those who have achieved a state of mental health and sobriety that will allow successful integration into our community.
ROUNDBOUT AT MAIN AND LETTIS HIGHWAY		
	There has been talk of a roundabout on Lettis & Main St. I was hit in the crosswalk there. I do NOT want a roundabout. What about flashing lights on the stop sign and security camera to keep drivers accountable (I drive now)?	NYSDOT is working to finalize their plan for a roundabout at the Lettis & Main & Maple intersection. The City has asked NYSDOT to come present their final plans to Council.
	Is the roundabout a done deal? Has it been finalized?	
DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM		
	What is being done regarding the deer population in City center? Over-running the yards.	The City Council adopted a Deer Management Plan and has appointed a Deer Management Coordinator to lead its implementation.
DIETZ STREET LOFTS		
	How will the owners of the Dietz St Lofts get to the 40 artist units? How do they plan to make the space attractive to artists?	Dietz St Lofts management will continue to market apartments to artists as they become available. The Dietz Street Lofts application materials are available here: https://dietzstreetlofts.com/ .
	What constitutes an "artist?"	
ARITHMETIC		
	What is 2 + 2?	4
MISCELLANEOUS		
	Will you encourage restaurants to cater more to folks with allergies and dietary restrictions?	The City cannot influence the menu at local restaurants. This may be something for a community grassroots effort, and could be a business opportunity.
	How will you make public spaces safer from respiratory viruses?	The City will continue to follow the guidance of healthcare professionals, including the City Health Officer, when considering improvements to public spaces.
	The numbers for viewership and column readers are low. How do you intend to remedy this?	The City is open to all ideas regarding how best to communicate with the public. There are many ways to do this and not all people use any one source for information, making it important to utilize a variety of outlets.
ONEONTA THEATRE		
	Why did you not mention the Oneonta Theatre Project - \$500,000 of NYS Tax \$?	The Oneonta Theatre received a \$500K grant from the NY Main Street Stabilization Program to replace the roof on the entire building. The building owners are providing a \$393K match. The project was included in the downtown grant totals in the presentation. The owners of the Theatre placed the project on hold last summer while they sought historic tax credits. They have recently contacted the City to reactivate the project. The City issued a Request for Proposals on 2/29/2024 to hire a consultant to provide grant administration services for the project. The project is anticipated to be completed in 2024.
	What is happening with the Oneonta Theatre at this point?!	
PARKING		
	216 parking spots question. If the outdoor theater is 350 people, where will the extra spots be for Main Street access or all people at theater or taking advantage of other items?	If an outdoor performance venue is established in Neahwa Park, the closet parking for the venue would be in Neahwa Park.
	What is the total reduction in available parking spots going from multi-level garage to proposed plan?	The former parking garage at 47 Market St had 433 spaces and the proposed parking lot to take its place will have approximately 110 spaces.

REINVENTING ONEONTA - QUESTIONS ANSWERS FROM 2/27/2024

Topic	Question	Answer
	If your plan is to increase traffic to Main Street, as well as people living directly on Main Street above small businesses, why are you planning to heavily reduce parking that is so closely and directly attached to Main Street, like the parking garage was?	Empirical observations of downtown parking over the past several years proved there was excess public (and private) parking in downtown Oneonta. The reduction of parking spaces through the demolition of the garage has not reduced available parking spaces below demand. The addition of more pedestrians in downtown does not necessarily require more vehicles to be parked downtown. That said, the supply of parking could always be adjusted to meet demand. The City's current MU-1 (downtown) zoning code enables private property owners to provide parking as they may determine is necessary. The City determined it was not in its best interests to maintain or rebuild a parking garage to provide excess parking spaces.
	Parking meters - Main Street?	The implementation of paid parking will be considered by the City. Demand-based pricing would help manage downtown parking to ensure there is adequate turnover of the most highly-coveted spaces while allowing for affordable long-term parking for residents and commuters.
INCLUSIVITY		
	How can we help our neighbors to be more open minded about the positive potential of change and the validity of the needs and perspectives of other people?	This is a good question for all to ponder and discuss.
	I'm sick and tired of hate! Did all you intolerant people listen to plan to include new people? [rhetorical question to audience]	
OPD		
	Under the Federal Government, the Feds have declared that heroin, meth, and the like are illegal and charges are brought if someone is in possession or is currently doing it. The State of New York's law echo the SAME thing. Why can't the Mayor do the same thing and ban ALL DEALERS from doing so?	Distribution of controlled substances as well as the possession of them are against state law. OPD has never stopped or slowed our efforts in curbing illegal sale and possession of controlled substances despite the changes in law that have handicapped investigative measures. An example of this is people with syringes loaded with controlled substances can no longer be charged for the contents of the syringe. The Oneonta Police has seen arrest numbers rise, but are the evidence gathering arm of the courts. OPD has little control over the speed at which the cases are adjudicated. OPD will be partnering with the District Attorney's office to enhance efficiency and are confident that this will make an enormous difference at the street level over the next year.
	I was homeless at 22 years old, here, in Oneonta. I have risen from that situation. I read previously about a council that was supposed to be formed to help the gap between homeless/mental disordered people and the Oneonta Police Department. What happened to this council? Are we going to bring it back to fruition? I would be glad to bring my experience to said council.	Chief Witzenburg created a panel of executive and provider level staff from FORDO, Rehabilitation Support Services, Mental Health, Mobile Crisis Assessment Team, Single Point of Access, Opportunities for Otsego, Bassett Network, Hartwick College, SUNY Oneonta, Oneonta Fire, Oneonta Police, Family Services Network, Crossroads, Otsego County Probation and the Unified Court System in an attempt to tear down silos between agencies. This group has addressed dozens of individual cases and continue this work in earnest as not every issue is a police issue.
	This is for the Oneonta Police Department. Since I moved here 7 years ago, the Oneonta Police Department has been great to me and my family but in the past years there's been a rise in cops in Oneonta not being professional, like antagonizing situations, insulting, _____ with arrests, destroying evidence or falsifying report and I know who they are. What will be done?	The Oneonta Police Department has operational guidelines that dictate how the Officers are to respond and interact with the public. Staff are held accountable and see that complete investigations are conducted. There is a portal on the City website where complaints may be submitted. Such complaints are investigated by the City Administrator and Human Resources Director, with reports provided to the Community Police Board.
	This can help with OPD or other law enforcement: what if we as a community collect votes to send to the Governor to get rid of the Bail Reform and possibly the raise the age program? Cops need their power back and to be able to do their jobs, but they also need to be more professional about it. Can we start to make that happen?	This is a discussion that would have to take place at the State Legislative level. These concerns are not new and have been voiced since the laws were proposed. OPD has adapted to changes in discovery timelines by shifting staff into new roles to address better exchange of information. The City has entered an intermunicipal agreement with the District Attorney's office for an Assistant District Attorney to be assigned to the City court. This will provide better connectivity to the superior court and the district attorney, creating more efficiency within the existing system. Hopefully, this will lead to seeing results from the courts more quickly. Since COVID and the implementation of reforms, OPD has seen significant delays in the handling of cases. OPD has not waived in the arrest and prosecution of offenders, but has no control over the adjudication of cases.

REINVENTING ONEONTA - QUESTIONS ANSWERS FROM 2/27/2024

Topic	Question	Answer
ZONING		
	<p>It seems Steve Yerly our Code Enforcement Officer is continuing to promote commercial enterprises next door to private homes. Why? We need these businesses <u>downtown</u>! Please explain why you want to put in our residential zones? Restaurants and markets are no longer needed in residential neighborhoods. Center City spoke loud and clear when Stagecoach Coffee wanted to open a cafe/restaurant in the backyard of 31 Walnut St, impacting numerous homeowners.</p>	<p>The Code Enforcement Officer is a certified professional planner (American Institute of Certified Planners, AICP). As a professional planner I would not provide the Common Council with direction that is directly in opposition to current best practices in the field of urban planning. Studies have shown that single use zoning districts have resulted in communities that lack walkability, are less desirable many younger residents and lack economic vitality. This is supported through data, academic study and general observation. As a result zoning codes that have been identified nationally as best practices in the field all include mixed use zoning districts with a strong focus on fostering small businesses, specifically things like neighborhood stores, within their residential neighborhoods. As a professional planner I would not recommend to the Common Council that the City of Oneonta draft an ordinance that is regressive (neighborhood markets are currently permitted) to the existing zoning code and does not align with what is considered best practice within the field that I work. A better solution is to craft an ordinance that simply addresses the impacts that these types of uses may create. This is typically how zoning is utilized to address impacts, not the prohibition of use types. Further, the City's Comprehensive Plan includes goals related to placemaking, improved economic activity, a business friendly regulatory environment, walkability and creating a more equitable community. Mixed use zoning has been identified as a key component of meeting all of these goals. It should also be noted that many of the structures, parcels and land uses in Center City are currently non-conforming, which makes the argument that the neighborhood should be zoned as an R-2 district problematic. The City has been actively engaging in a review of the City's zoning code to better reflect the actual conditions found in the various districts and to better regulate how development occurs within them. Finally, the idea that policy should only be created, or altered, to favor homeowners versus the larger community is problematic as over half of the City's population are renters (many of them students) or are occupied as non-owner occupied housing.</p>
	<p>Light pollution - how to keep it in check?</p>	<p>The City has adopted several ordinances related to light pollution, specifically in the City's downtown. Several projects have been undertaken that do not meet the requirement of the zoning district and the Zoning Board of Appeals (a citizen board) has granted relief to these applicants. Generally, the light ordinance throughout the City does not permit light to be directed (specific language) on to adjoining property.</p>
	<p>How to balance increased population density with maintaining healthy neighborhoods -- pollution, noise, etc. , crime?</p>	<p>Some of the most dense neighborhoods in America are also some of the healthiest. There is minimal correlation between low density and healthy neighborhoods. Low density development encourages a dependency on private automobile use which is not healthy for the physical environment, the urban economy or the individual residents living within them. Low density development has resulted in communities that lack access to basic needs (grocery stores, retail and entertainment) and has encouraged the rises of box/chain stores. Many of these corporate operations undercut small businesses and actively undermine the redevelopment of historic business districts. Extending infrastructure and City services further away from centralized locations and population centers results in increased maintenance and infrastructure costs that are not easily recouped through City revenue sources. Additionally, low density zoning and development undermines efforts to develop and maintain a robust public transit system by preventing density levels that would create feasible ridership numbers. Finally, low density development is largely structured around Euclidean zoning which was initially created to prevent community access to disadvantaged residents. By enacting a legal planning system that protects single family homes in single use districts as the most important type of development it has artificially driven housing pricing and availability to a crisis point across much of the nation. Instead of using zoning to prevent the creation of housing, small businesses and neighborhood amenities (use based) it should instead be used to specifically address concerns like noise and light pollution through form based zoning (not concerned with use instead specifically address to address building form). The City has been actively updating its zoning ordinance to incorporate form based zoning, which was a finding in the 2019 City of Oneonta Comprehensive Plan update.</p>