



Urban Design
Landscape Architecture
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Planning

Oneida County Mohawk River Greenway Corridor Environmental & Ecology Focus Group Notes

Meeting: Wednesday, January 30th, 1:00 p.m.
Issue Date: Friday, February 08, 2008
Location: 3rd Floor Planning Dept. Conference Room,
Union Station, 321 Main St., Utica

In Attendance:

1. Betty Adler, Greenbelt Chair, Town of Trenton
2. Jim Kuhr, Whitestown Planning Board
3. Holly Wise, Cornell Cooperative Extension
4. Peggy S. Rotton, Region 6 Open Space Committee
5. James Edic, Oneida County Sportsmen Clubs
6. Don Hahn, Oneida County Sportsmen Clubs
7. Barb Freeman, Oneida County Environmental Management Council

Also there from the Work Group:

Jessica Breiton, Oneida County Planning Department
Joe Homburger, citizen, retired NYS DEC
Andy Schrauth, peter j. smith & company, inc.
Eve Holberg, peter j. smith & company, inc.

#1. Describe the character of the Mohawk River Corridor, e.g. "The Mohawk River Corridor is ..."

- Historical; public waterway; wildlife migration; potential for tourism – connector; agriculture; floodplain
- Floodplain; agricultural & open land
- A stretch of land – private/public/commercial – with walking and biking trails in places – some recreation areas at the locks w/ tables and benches; Utica Marsh has been preserved
- A historic, natural artery that bisects the County and is connected to all parts of the County through its watershed
- The canal trails allow folks a place for recreation and interacting with nature; a place of history
- A quiet, sheltered place within its urban shell; at times seems very wild & private; a great path for wildlife to prosper & propagate; a recreational & educational resource within reasonable distance of a bulk of canoeists, bikers, hikers, etc.
- A connection of environmentally important lands and waters which are not being used to their potential

- Flood plain, should be protected, agricultural and open space land should be protected, the flood plain absorbs water, has function that benefits people
- Connection of environmentally important lands/waters, public use areas, room for activities, but need to be careful, original purpose is as natural habitat, it is a good thing that it is a secret environmentally
- Artery bisects county, connection to all creeks and rivers, where all our stuff ends up, resource for whole community
- Historical, public waterway, sides (adjacent lands) of it important, tourism and wildlife connector
- Corridor w/ multiple uses, more people getting out
- Water connections
- Utica Marsh – there is a fear of mugging
- Access to marsh is not good, isolated, access needs to be better i.e. Barnes Ave
- Barnes is state road – should be kept up
- Should make access on other side from town of Marcy, use railroad bed
- In previous cleanups have found interesting things, drug deals occur there, need police there
- Signage is confusing in that area

#2. Barring all constraints, including time and money, what should be the environment and ecology focus of the Mohawk River Corridor?

- Clean-up; erosion; safety; promotion & tourism; boat launches – practical spots
- Environmental / ecological inventory; Oriskany Flat duck nesting pool
- Open space – preserve wetlands – develop where possible (have to cultivate to keep out undesirables) – don't restrict certain uses of portions of it (keep hunting & sportsmen recreation)
- A recreational & environmental area – for boaters & walkers – water birds, marsh vegetation & ecology etc. w/ environmental signs along the way; landing for canoes/kayaks, etc.
- Ensuring a connectivity of all the natural features in the area with appropriate access
- Include native plantings; add educational signage pointing out plants & habitats; educational opportunities
- Preservation of large area; promotion of protected parts for habitat & nesting areas; documentation of different environments/ecologies to provide education
- Utilize & improve fishing opportunities and access to existing sites; trails for biking, hiking, bird watching, & photography; from one end to another; clean-up
- Open space should be preserved, flood plain (from railroad to canal) absorbs ~20 times water before floods, get rid of trees taking over in some areas, hunting-fishing-trapping should be included in the use plan
- Map out ecology, mark invasive species, preserve natural aspect of it, use it for outdoor activities such as fishing and boating, there are areas that are currently inaccessible for sportsman to walk – need to fix this, river needs to be kept clean

of sewage, need more boat launches, if have emergency when on water can be hard to get out, need more access points, people carrying boats across road at Oriskany boat launch – not good design of boat launch, near Whitesboro willing to establish another boat launch but need \$, keep trail system for hikers, bikers, & walkers but do not impede on Oriskany flats, need emergency phone in areas so may call for help when hurt or sick

- Insure have connectivity with existing resources and have appropriate access, need to be able to use it
- Preserve large area with easements, for things such as incubation & nesting, need documentation of different environments/ecologies and use them for educational opportunities, need signage and education of areas, have in one place
- A clean-up needs to be done, there is a lot of discarded people stuff, garbage, there is erosion, need flood control, pollution control, need environmental clean-up as well, need to get rid of purple loosestrife
- Provide recreation as well as preserve natural areas, need for environmental and interpretive signage, provide walking, rollerblading, boating with landings for access
- Focus on educational opportunities and signage, include native plantings, it is confusing where duck hunting is allowed (define this)
- Preservation can mean different things, I suggest it means keeping it in public or private hands

#3. What are the most significant environmental and ecological opportunities or potentials for the Mohawk River Corridor? How can they be encouraged?

- Preservation/maintenance of footpaths & trails; integrate education opportunities; pollution control; clean-up of invasive species
- City of Utica Barnes Avenue environmental remediation; Interpretive birding signs; Dusharm and Barnes Roads; Utica Marsh Society; Cove Road Boat Launch would require removal of two old bridges
- Boat launch at Mohawk Street on the river; bike trail from one end to the other; better access to Utica Marsh; Cove Road Boat Launch to be completed
- I think the Utica Marsh is a huge asset. Much of it can be just left alone, protected, as it is quite large. Those parts that are accessible should be enhanced – the road in and the trails need signing and maintenance
- Access – boats, bike, walkers; education – watershed – county-wide
- Utica Marsh Overlook, not to be blocked by trees, make sure well maintained structure; Oriskany Central School could incorporate ecological science opportunities since greenway area is across from high school (school on Rt 69)
- Canoe launch & access places every x number of miles; bathroom/compost toilet every so often; better access in Marsh; encouragement – presentation to clubs, transportation & trail brochure(s); maintenance
- Boat launch on Mohawk Street in Whitestown; better access to Utica Marsh and on the trails near it

- Is there a proposed bike trail? – Yes – it is the Canalway Trail – need boat launch at sylvan beach at Cove Road, not enough money available, NYS DOT has two bridges to replace first
- Map out ecospheres, need identification signage for educational purposes, giving information on plants, animals – have signage, would encourage trail use, consider birding signs, need trail system in area and trail signage, need to maintain existing trails, may have seen flock of white egrets along barge canal in tree, there are blue herons all around at mouths of creeks
- Access is needed, think beyond canal and look at whole watershed, needs to be a county wide effort, all connected, need to educate surrounding communities and how they affect greenway (with pollution runoff, etc.)
- Need better access to marsh, need canoe access strategically placed along water ways, mixed feelings about public restrooms – may be an attractive nuisance and need maintenance, consider brochure delineating ecological areas- one brochure for each area, consider presentations to clubs or program on Utica TV channel to inform people, offer free tourism promotions, area is underused
- Preserve footpaths/trails, they need maintenance, need to integrate opportunities, make walkable path between marsh and kids museum, need to do pollution control, link resources, and clean up invasive species
- Utica Marsh access should be improved, trails should be better maintained and signed, there is a canoe launch there but it needs help, consider bigger observation tower with educational signage on it
- Utica Marsh overlook area needs maintenance, opportunity at Oriskany for kids to have outdoor classroom, consider educational programs for teachers by Cornell Cooperative Extension, we could expand our existing programs
- Utica Marsh is haven for criminal element, this area needs to be addressed
- Utica Harbor being remediated, but not completed for 20 years, it is a NYS electric and gas remedial site
- Oriskany Flats is deer wintering area
- Need to save our history of the area, at one time it was one of the major westward migration points

#4. What specific obstacles and deficiencies are preventing the Mohawk River Corridor Greenway from achieving its environmental and ecological potential?

- Money; commitment; pollution; multiple agencies/communities; conflicts; zoning/planning etc.
- Zoning & land use & entrenched policies; R.O.W. of canal/river needs to be consistent
- Pollution; takes too long to get to accomplish anything; money
- Vandalism, pollution, development – money to improve
- Money – commitment – competing jurisdictions
- Pollution issues; money; cooperation of villages & towns – seeing this greenway project as value

- Police (protection); roads; money; clean-up; publication
- Pollution; money; coordination of agencies
- Pollution, money, too many fingers involved – takes too long, have to jump thru too many hoops and regulations before you can do anything
- Money, no access at many places, need boat launches more frequently along water rather than only at Oriskany and Utica, there is a great need for more boat launches
- Money, commitment from people, potential obstacles from competing jurisdictions
- Money, commitment, pollution, agency conflicts, zoning, bureaucracy, things move too slowly
- Money, have seen that people have taken over the NYS Canal Corporation ROW (in other areas) and make their own, this may pertain to this greenway
- Pollution, money, cooperation of municipalities

#5. What special issues should we be aware of as we complete the Greenway Plan for the Mohawk River Corridor?

- Money; using volunteer workers (scouts, adults, etc.)

Final Comments

- Canal paths and greenway – what is linkage between the two?
- Canal Corporation is working on completing the trail system; our focus is on more than this, the trails are only one piece of the puzzle