



The Allentown Neighbor

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City planners' "Preferred Option" for Allen Street is highly controversial. It eliminates parking on the north side in order to widen sidewalks by about 3 feet, widen the two-way traffic lanes each by 1 foot, and make room for left-hand turning lanes at major intersections.

Back to the drawing board for Allen St. redesign

By **RICHARD R. HAYNES**

What will the reimagined Allen Street look like?

Good question.

A public presentation Oct. 15 of the city's preferred concept drew so much contentious debate that a chastened Chief City Engineer Peter J. Merlo said: "I think we have to go back to the drawing table."

What the city and its planning firm had proposed was:

- Widening sidewalks to about 16 feet from the current 12 or 13.
- Having two-way traffic in 11-foot-wide lanes shared with bicycles, up from current 10-foot-wide shared lanes.
- Only one 8-foot wide parking lane, on the south side of the street, eliminating all 72 parking spaces on the north side.
- Adding left-hand turning lanes at major intersections, necessitating the loss of 12 parking spaces on the south side.
- Replacing the street's twin-headed illuminaries with standard city overhanging street lights, and adding yet-to-be-determined fixtures such as bike racks, directional kiosks, ornamental lighting, benches, bollards, art installations, planters, curbless drainage, scored concrete and col-

ored paving materials, and rain gardens. (Specific plans for selection and placing of design elements awaits the controversial decision on the overall streetscape.)

It was the elimination of 84 of the street's current 120 metered parking spots – all 72 on the north side and those 12 on the south, that raised so much ire.

"You did a great job eliminating parking on Main Street," one man yelled. "Now you want to do the same thing on Allen?"

Several residents said they feared that reducing parking on Allen would drive more patrons to park on side streets where parking already is hard for people who don't have driveways.

Robert H. Brunschmid, managing director of Theatre of Youth, said his organization draws 35,000 people a year from all over Western New York to see productions at the Allendale Theater and that the No. 1 complaint from those outside the neighborhood is about parking.

"People have circled blocks for 45 minutes looking for parking spots," he said. "By the time they walk in my door they are angry. They say: 'This is the last time I'm coming to your theater.'"

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and like the Association on Facebook.





New construction, renovations enhancing Franklin St. scene

Franklin Street in Allentown is suddenly seeing an upsurge in construction and property renovation.

At **500 Franklin** just north of Allen Street, architect Matt Moscati demolished a fire-damaged complex and plans a \$1 million three-story building with 15 apartments and 14 indoor parking spaces.

The previous 9,400-square-foot complex included a 150-year-old gabled brick house in the middle, with a 2.5-story brick warehouse behind it and a one-story, 1950s-era cinder block addition in the front that at one time housed Artvoice and was home to Mundo Images when the fire struck last January.

All but one of the apartments will be studio units of 539 to 591 square feet. Each studio will have sleeping, kitchen and living room areas, a walk-in closet and a bathroom.

There also will be a two-level, two-bedroom unit of 1,394 square feet overlooking Franklin.

The first floor will have a lobby, lockable storage units and another studio apartment, but no commercial storefront.

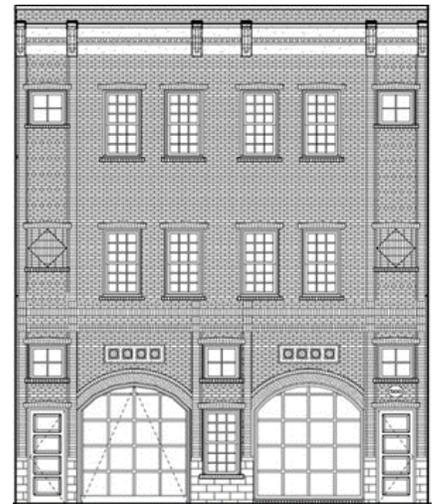
There also will be a rooftop patio for tenants and a green roof area.

The Buffalo Preservation Board suggested a few minor exterior revisions to Moscati's design, requesting "better rhythm" with more harmony between the north, south and east sides. The front design was well received, although some suggested the double doors have straight rather than arched tops, to look less like a fire-house.

481 Franklin, built as the headquarters of Local 210 of the Laborers Union and more recently home to a jewelry manufacturer, has been purchased for \$750,000 by Don A. Gilbert. He plans to spend \$1 million to gut the building and build 12 luxury apartments with air conditioning, washers and dryers, and basement storage units. Five of the units will be studios and seven will be one-bedrooms.

Interior demolition and asbestos removal is currently underway, but Gilbert said he would wait until spring to begin construction, which he thinks will take four or five months.

Workers have cut openings on exterior side walls for what Gilbert said will be windows and French-door patios. Each tenant will get a parking spot in the adjacent 34-space lot.



A new building with 15 apartments is planned at 500 Franklin St.

529 Franklin, an abandoned eyesore, has been purchased by Sinatra & Co., which plans a renovation into luxury apartments.

The Rosalinda Manor, a rooming house at **436 Franklin**, underwent siding repairs and a fresh paint job this summer.

445 Franklin is a 2½-story former brick residence that's recently been completely renovated into offices. It is for sale with an asking price of \$525,000, and includes some off-street parking.

Domestic shootings don't signal rise in street crime

Two shootings in Allentown over the past five months involved domestic disputes, not the kind of incidents that signal a rise in street crime. But they do unnerve residents, and media coverage of them may make some visitors wary of the neighborhood.

"You really can't control domestics," Buffalo Police Commissioner Daniel Derenda said. They're not the kind of crime that increased police patrols or neighborhood watch programs are effective against.

In October, Matthew Mills, 46, shot and killed his wife Natalie, 45, in the street outside the flat they rented at 45 College St., and then fatally turned the gun on himself.

In June, a domestic dispute between a man and woman arguing inside her apartment in the Buckingham on Mariner Street ended with the boyfriend pulling a gun and firing

it twice at an acquaintance who had stopped to console the woman.

The bullets missed the acquaintance, but one struck another man standing outside the Old Pink, critically wounding him. Deverick Petty, 20, of Andover Avenue, was quickly arrested in that incident.

Although crime is generally low in Allentown, the Association's Crime Prevention and Safety Awareness Committee urges residents to be alert at night, keep porch and other outdoor lights on, look out for your neighbors especially those who live alone, don't hesitate to call 911 if you see anything that looks suspicious, don't leave valuables in parked cars, and look out your front windows once in a while to make sure vandals and bar closers aren't committing petty crimes.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

How can we serve you better in the new year?

*We're open to your ideas;
we'd value your involvement*

By **JONATHAN WHITE**
Allentown Association President

THE FIRST LINE of the Association's mission statement makes it clear: *"The only purpose of the Allentown Association is to serve its community."*

Over the past year, we have worked hard to meet this mandate with a renewed focus on our core values of service to the membership and to regaining the Association's position as a leading voice for historic preservation in the community.

The year 2014 comes to a close as a very successful one for the organization. First and foremost, 2014 marked the 51st year of our existence as a member-driven association dedicated to the protection and enhancement of Allentown's *"unique urban ambience."* (That phrase is also from our mission statement.)

We reinstated regular office hours three days per week to ensure a physical presence to serve the needs of our members. The Housing and Historic Preservation Committee was reorganized under the leadership of Pete Carroll and, for the first time in several years, tried to compile a comprehensive list of endangered properties and worked to bring properties up to code to prevent the loss of more irreplaceable buildings.

We raised the profile of Allentown as a premiere place to live, work and play through Allen West, a revived Fall Festival and the monthly First Friday Gallery Walk that has become one of the region's most well-known activities. We collaborated with the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site to offer various walking tours that showcased the neighborhood's history, architecture and urbanity. We sponsored a first-ever Allentown Farmers

Market on Friday afternoons in growing season to make it easy for neighbors to find fresh, organic, healthy foods within walking distance and without the hassle of crowded shopping venues.

We accomplished this and more with the help of countless hours of work from volunteers dedicated to ensuring that our neighborhood retains the special character that drew us to Allentown to live and work.

So, where do we go this year to build on our success? What should we strive to do next?

Let us know where *you* would like to see *your* Allentown Association focus its efforts. We will continue to work with the members of the Greater Allentown Gallery Association to produce First Fridays and we will continue to produce the other festivals. We will plant flowers, and hold the monthly Litter Mobs to keep our streets clean. We will continue to meet regularly with city leaders and representatives of the Buffalo Police to keep crime rates low and make civic improvements. But there is much more to do.

So I'm asking you to let us know your thoughts and ask that you become more involved in the activities of the Association.

Our past success and our future success is entirely dependent on the strength of our members. I ask you to think about the direction you would like the Association to take in the coming year and what specific projects you would like us to undertake – and let us know how you would like to help us to achieve those goals. Your Board of Directors is here to represent you and to provide leadership, but we must lead down the course that our members wish to take.

Email me at allentownassociation@aol.com and tell me your thoughts. I look forward to hearing from many of you and to discussing how we can put your desired goals into action.

Best wishes to you and your family for a safe, happy and healthy Holiday Season.



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Association, TR Site show off Allentown with walking tours

The Allentown Association and the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site showcased the neighborhood with 28 walking tours this year, raising a bit of money for both organizations and educating and entertaining hundreds of attendees.

From June through October, volunteer docents explained the history of Allentown, pointed out significant architectural details on houses and buildings, and told stories about famous or interesting former residents. From the Allentown Association, Christopher Brown and Pete Carroll were the primary docents.

Five walking tours were developed for the season: Allentown East, Central, and West; Kleinhans Music Hall Inside and Out; and Literary Ghost Walks (Central and West). Several tour-goers attended all of them. Tours were conducted on Friday nights, Saturday mornings, Sunday afternoons, and Monday mornings.

In the weekends before Halloween, the tour season was capped off by Literary Ghost Walks, developed and led by former Association president Christopher Brown with his trademark oil lantern and top hat. Brown explained how mid-20th Century movies and television shows such as *Psycho* and *The Addams Family* shaped the public perception of Victorian residences as quintessential haunted houses.

He talked about Allentown's development as a residential neighborhood



Chris Brown leads a Literary Ghost Walk in Halloween season.

coinciding with the rise in popularity of Spiritualism, and how several prominent Allentowners during the Victorian era hosted séances in their home, which was fashionable at the time.

Attendees were treated to a bit of street theater with ghostly poems and stories written by Allentown residents delivered in dramatic style. Longtime Allentown resident and stage actor David F. Granville channeled author Mark Twain when Granville narrated *The Golden Arm*, a ghost story that Mark Twain adapted and told in Allentown in 1884.

Another featured story was *The Curious Dream*, written by Mark Twain in 1870, while he lived in Allentown. It tells the story of indignant ghosts that haunted the old neglected North Street Cemetery at Irving Place. Former Association president Gretchan Grobe played the part of one of the disgruntled ghosts, Anna Matilda Hotchkiss. Gretchan's sister Stephanie

brought to life another ghost, "Eva," from a story on the West tour.

On one tour, owner Gerhardt Yaskow opened Buffalo's oldest house, the Coit House at 414 Virginia St., the perfect backdrop to a story written by prolific author Lewis F. Allen, Allentown's namesake. Brown retold Allen's story about a dark, spooky Buffalo night in 1832 (like a scene from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*).

Mark Lozo, education director for the Theodore Roosevelt Site, conducted a mini-tour of the Wilcox mansion and told how President Roosevelt loved to tell ghost stories to his children.

Tour goers also learned that Col. Ichabod Crane once lived in the house when it was officers' quarters for the U.S. Army Barracks in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Crane was the inspiration for the lanky schoolmaster in Washington Irving's classic tale *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

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Four new directors added to Association's board

Jonathan White is re-elected president, heading new slate of officers

Four new directors and a new slate of officers have been elected at the Allentown Association.

The board of directors at its Nov. 11 meeting re-elected Jonathan White to a second term as president.

Others elected were: Steve Earnhardt, first vice president; Ekua Mends-Aidoo, second VP; Andrew Pace, third VP; Kelly Martin, treasurer, and Jillian Stiefel, secretary.

At the annual membership meeting Oct. 28 in the Karples Manuscript Museum on North Street at Elmwood Avenue, these new board members were elected:

Seth Amman, an architect; Trina Burruss, manager of the First Niagara Medical Campus branch; Christopher Poole, an attorney, and Kevin Rabener, an IT specialist at Buffalo State College.

Rotating off the board due to term limits were Ed Castine, Caitlin Crowell and Adam Sokol.

Sokol, who heads the Association's Allen Street Design Task Force, will remain as a non-voting ex-officio director.

The format for Association elections is that the membership elects the directors, and the directors elect the officers. The Nominating Committee, headed by Crowell, interviews prospective directors and recommends a board slate to the membership, and an officer slate to the board.

Also at the annual meeting, the membership approved a by-law change to increase the Association's service territory to include about 40 properties at the west end that were added two years ago to the national and state Allentown Historic District.

Martin told members that the Association had assets of \$202,510, of which \$66,198 is unrestricted and \$136,312 is held as restricted funds. Of the unrestricted funds, about \$36,000 is immediately available in checking and savings accounts, and the rest is in investment accounts. Of the restricted funds, \$116,875 is held for special projects as defined in the by-laws, and \$19,437 is for the gas meter beautification grant program administered by the Association.

Pete Carroll, chair of the Housing and Historic Preservation Committee, said that during the year eight properties were removed from the Association's problem list; a similar number showed some progress in resolving violations, but eight others are still serious problems.

Crust, gallery storefronts won't be vacant long

Crust Pizza threw its landlord a curve ball when it suddenly went out of business soon after having made plans to add a bar by expanding into the storefront next door at 244 Allen, forcing photographer Mike Mulley's College Street Gallery to close.

Now both storefronts are empty, but probably not for long. Expect announcements soon about new restaurants opening in both storefronts. Mulley, meanwhile, still operates his small Queen City Gallery in the Market Arcade.

In other neighborhood business news:

SportsFocus Physical Therapy, a branch of SportsFocus of Orchard Park, has opened at 531 Virginia St. offering comprehensive evaluation, patient education and tailor-made treatment programs. Rich Muscatello and Dianna Pugiese are co-directors of the location. Go to www.sportsfocusppt.com or call 332-4838.

Rust Belt Books at 202 Allen St. will close on Dec. 31 and will reopen at 415 Grant St. in February. Christy Meal and Erin Verhoef, owners of the long-running Allentown institution, which sells second-hand books and provides performance space for various acts, bought the building that will house its new location. There's a funding campaign on Indiegogo to help pay for the move. La Tee Da will expand into Rust Belt's old space.

The Grooming Room, 531 Virginia St., has been opened in premises of the Powerhouse Studio fitness club by Holly Keller. She has been a licensed barber for 20 years, serving men, women and children. By appointment only, (585) 813-7329, hollyrayek@yahoo.com.

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Calendar of Winter Events

Allendale Theater, 203 Allen St. Theatre of Youth presents "The Night Before Christmas," Dec. 5 to 21, for ages seven and up. "Crash," for fifth through eighth grades, Jan. 30 to Feb. 8. For information and tickets, call 884-4400, see www.theatreofyouth.org.

Allentown Association, Board of Directors meets Dec. 9, Jan. 13, Feb. 10., 7 p.m.; 14 Allen St. Litter Mob clean-up volunteers, weather permitting, Dec. 18, Jan. 15, Feb. 19, Fat Bob's, 41 Virginia Place. Santa Claus's arrival with rides for children in horse-drawn carriage, Dec. 5, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., tree-lighting at 6 p.m. Allen and Park streets. For information call 881-1024, see www.allentown.org.

Art Dialogue Gallery, 5 Linwood Ave., Tuesday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Robert J. Seivert, "Print.ed," exhibition of screen prints, Nov. 21 to Dec. 30. For information call 885-2251 or see wnyag.com.

Artists Group Gallery, 1 Linwood Ave., Annual Artful Gifts, Nov. 21 to Dec. 30. Non-juried members exhibition, Jan. 9 to Feb. 6. Juried members exhibition, traditional works, Feb. 13 to March 13. For information call 885-2251.

Betty's restaurant, 370 Virginia St. at College St., Work created by students of Autism Services Inc., Nov. 17 to Jan. 18.

Buffalo Big Print gallery, 78 Allen St. Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sally Danforth pottery and paintings by several artists, through January. For information call 884-1777.

Casa de Arte, 141 Elmwood Ave., reopens in June.

El Museo, 91 Allen St., Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. "Reciprocity," work of Buffalo public school students and teachers, Dec. 5 to Jan. 30. Work of José Fuentes, Feb. 6 to March 13. For information, call 884-9362.

First Friday Gallery Tours, Allentown galleries will have extended evening hours, some with new exhibits and receptions, Dec. 5, Jan. 2, Feb. 6. See details at firstfridaysallentown.org.

Glow Gallery, 224 Allen St. Tuesday to Saturday, 1 to 5 p.m. "I said yes," wedding invitation designs, Dec. 5 to 10. "Paper Fantasm" works by Steven Danison, Dec. 12 to 17. For information call 983-2112.

Indigo Art gallery, 47 Allen St., Tuesday to Friday, noon to 5, Saturday, noon to 3. "Wellspring," group show, through Dec. 15. Works of Mark Lazapelli, Kathleen Sherin, Beth Pedersen, Feb. 6 to March 4. For information, call 984-9572.

Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, 220 North St., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Early Professional Baseball, through December. For details call 885-1986.

Kleinhans Music Hall, *Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Classics series*: Michael Ludwig plays Sibelius, Dec. 6, 8 p.m., Dec. 7, 2:30 p.m. Classical Christmas, Dec. 12, 10:30 a.m., Dec. 13, 8 p.m. Happy Birthday Mozart, Jan. 24, 8 p.m., Jan. 25, 2:30 p.m. "Russian Diversion" Feb. 7, 8 p.m., Feb. 8, 2:30 p.m. Symphonic Tales, Feb. 21, 8 p.m., Feb. 22, 2:30 p.m. Free concert with the Greater Buffalo Youth Orchestra, Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m. Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition, Feb. 27, 7 p.m. *Pops series*: Celtic Thunder, Dec. 10, 8 p.m. Holiday Pops with Sal Andolina's Big Band and James Torme Dec. 19, 10:30 a.m. and 8 p.m., Dec. 20, 8 p.m., Dec. 21, 2:30 p.m. Randy Newman, Jan. 30, 8 p.m. Ben Vereen, Jan. 31, 8 p.m. Steve Lippia and Sinatra, Feb. 13, 10:30 a.m., Feb. 14, 8 p.m. *Children's*: A Very Beary Valentine, Feb. 15, 2:30 p.m. *Buffalo Chamber Music Society concerts*: Amadeus Trio, Dec. 9, 8 p.m. Ariel Quartet Jan. 20, 8 p.m. Trio Settecento, Feb. 17, 8 p.m., Center, Nov. 11, 8 p.m. For tickets, call 462-4939 or visit www.bflochambermusic.org.

MJ Peterson, 431 Delaware Ave., show featuring the work of 10 artists, through Jan. 1. For details, call 819-4200.

Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Hotel Lenox, 140 North St. Tuesday through Friday 10 to 5, Saturdays by appointment. Paintings by Peter Stephens, through Dec. 14. "Figuration," group exhibit of paintings and photographs, Dec. 6 to Jan. 14. Beverly Semmes, new work, Jan. 18 to Feb. 26. Kyle Butler, new paintings, Feb. 29 through April 7. For information call 882-5777.

Pausa Art House, 19 Wadsworth St., music and entertainment, café, 6 p.m. to midnight, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. For information, call 697-9069, see pauaarthouse.com.

Studio Hart, 65 Allen St. Tuesday through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. "Toy," a group exhibit, through Dec. 24. For information call 536-8337.

TGW@497 Gallery, 497 Franklin St., Wednesday to Friday, noon to 5 p.m., Saturday, noon to 3 p.m. Group exhibit in various media, through Dec. 27. Cindy O'Mara, paintings, Jan. 1 to 31. Deborah Stewart, ceramic sculpture, Feb. 6 to 28. For information call 949-6604.

Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site (Wilcox Mansion), 641 Delaware Ave. Hours, Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.; Holiday decorations and a well-stocked museum shop through December. Victorian Christmas, Dec. 5 to 13. For information, call 884-0095, see www.trsite.org.

The Calendar of Events is compiled by Pete Carroll. Email submissions to him at pbonjoura@gmail.com.

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New website is online but not quite complete

The Allentown Association’s new website is now up, but it’s still a work in progress.

The address is the same as the former site – www.allentown.org – but the design is new and beautiful, and its several enhancements will make it more functional and easier to update.

Photos and much information is still in process of being ported over from the old site. Ekua Mends-Aidoo, the Association director in charge of the project, expects the site to be complete by the end of January.

She sites these advantages to the new site:

- Viewing it from a tablet, phone or web browser is easy, without distortion on any device.
- People can join or renew memberships and pay dues online.
- Donations now can be made through the site.
- Opportunities to volunteer, sponsor, intern, or join a committee can now be done online.
- The executive director and officers can post updated information themselves, rather than having to go through a technician.
- First Fridays is now integrated throughout the site. Gallery owners can themselves list their events, a no-fuss way of keeping information up to date.
- Widgets make it easy to distribute media across multiple functions (web, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

The Association hired Cypress North, a web and media design firm in the Larkin District to design and set up the site. The cost was about \$11,000, taken from reserve funds.



The Association now owns and will maintain its own domain going forward. The site is hosted by GoDaddy, the world’s largest domain registrar.

Unfortunately, the new site is taking longer than planned to complete.

“We originally set a very eager and zealous timeframe in getting the site completed,” Mends-Aidoo said. “We quickly learned that much of the copy and information on the old site was out of date, so although it created a great structure in moving forward, there was much work to be done.”

“Coordinating the receiving and creation of information from a volunteer board took some time, but we are excited that by next month the website should be completely finished, a mere six months after it was originally intended to be in completion.”

The site has a “contact” tab that members can use to make suggestions or ask questions.

“Also, notice that we will be featuring a member business every few months to promote the wonderful things available to you and visitors,” Mends-Aidoo said.

The Allentown Association: *Serving Buffalo’s Great Historic Neighborhood for 50 years*

Incorporated in 1963 as a 501(c)3 charitable not-for profit community organization. Our Mission Statement:

The only purpose of The Allentown Association is to serve its community. It does that through efforts to beautify the

neighborhood; to encourage historic preservation and property maintenance; to promote appropriate business development; to fight crime, and to protect and enhance Allentown’s unique urban ambiance.

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The Allentown Neighbor

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There's no neighborhood consensus on redesign

Continued from Page One

"You would be jeopardizing our operations," he told the planners. "This is going to drive us out of the neighborhood."

Several people said eliminating so much parking would kill many businesses. Some feared that wider vehicle lanes, turning lanes, and loss of parking on one side would cause traffic speeds to increase and pedestrian and bicyclist safety to drop.

Brad and Beth Wales, an architect and a Pilates instructor who live and operate practices at 166 Allen, were adamantly opposed to reducing on-street parking. "The new curbs, the new paving – all this is great energy," Brad said. "But 8 years from now, if we're walking down the street and we see a bunch of boarded-up storefronts, we have no recourse to go back and add parking."

In an email later, he cited a book published last year, *Walkable City*, in which city planner Jeff Speck wrote: "What makes a sidewalk safe is not [just] its width, but whether it is protected by a line of parked cars that form a barrier of steel between the pedestrian and the roadway . . . On-street parking also slows traffic down, since drivers are wary of other cars potentially pulling into the roadway."

Wales said the proposed bollards, at 20-foot intervals, are an insufficient replacement for the traffic-calming, pedestrian-safety effects of the existing on-street parking.

Goldman urges long-term thinking

But the city's concept had some supporters in the audience, too.

Mark Goldman, developer, historian, urbanist and owner of the Hardware Café, urged people to consider the opportunities that the city's plan offers "in order to create the best plan for the next generation."

A 2010 Brookings Institution study estimated that 94 percent of recent college graduates want to live and work in a walkable place with authentic character.

"If we are going to create a really good place for the next 50 years, we are going to have to give up some of the things we are doing today," Goldman said. "To me, this is not about saving parking spaces. It's about creating the best-planned environment for the street."

Walkability is key for BNMC populace

Mark McGovern, a contract administrator at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and a former director of the Allentown Association, liked the city's plan for its enhanced street aesthetics and walkability.

"What people say is, 'Mark, you don't get any of your (BNMC) employees to Allen Street, they don't come over to shop.' But when you walk up the street, the curbs are broken, the sidewalk's broken, it smells like piss, it smells like puke."

The answer, he said, is to improve Allen Street. Driving over for lunch or shopping won't work for BNMC employees, he said, because daytime parking is scarce on the med-

ical campus and there'd be no place for them to park when they go back.

A Roswell Park employee also said a walkable, attractive Allen Street was essential for merchants to gain customers from the BNMC. He reminded the crowd that Allen could potentially get a lot of patronage from students, staff and visitors to the new UB Medical School and the new Children's Hospital now under construction.

Bars could lose cafes with narrower sidewalks

City planners also showed a second concept – let's call it "less than preferred" – that would keep nearly all the current parking, but narrow sidewalk widths by one foot to increase vehicle lanes to 11 feet wide from 10. However, narrower sidewalks might require elimination or reduction of outdoor cafés and decks in front of bars and restaurants to allow sufficient pedestrian space. They might also limit how many of the cool infrastructure features envisioned in the preferred plan could be accommodated. The result could be a diminished pedestrian experience.

Merlo said traffic lanes cannot be kept at 10 feet because that is too narrow for bicyclist safety. Besides, rules for reconstructed streets really require 12-foot vehicle lanes, he said, and he will have to get a waiver from the state Department of Transportation to go with 11-foot lanes.

Think out of the box on parking

A few people urged imaginative solutions to the parking dilemma. One suggested shuttles from Kleinhans Music Hall lots when they're free. Another suggested shuttles from BNMC lots at night when they are underutilized.

Merlo said the city "is looking at other surface-parking options."

Unstated was the opportunity presented for both Allentown and Elmwood Village by the ramp at the old Children's Hospital on Bryant Street when the hospital moves and its site is repurposed.

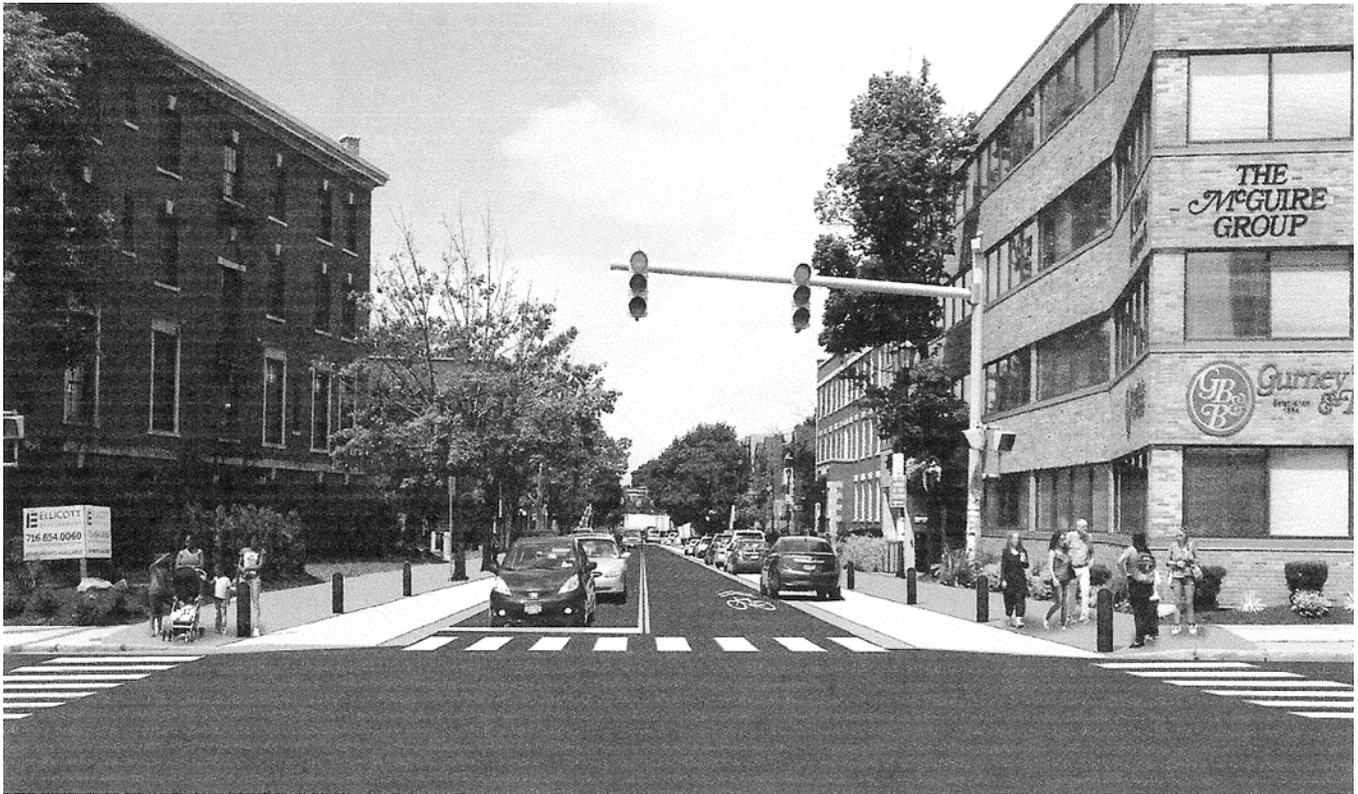
Allentowners need to agree on what's best

Merlo drew applause when he said: "I want to build what the community wants. The community is divided – let's not make any bones about it. I think the community needs to get together a little bit, stop yelling at me, and figure out what they want – and then we'll build what they want."

The meeting, which drew over 60 people, was the third – and was supposed to have been the last – public airing of alternatives before the city chooses a final plan to present at a formal Planning Board hearing.

But now, Merlo said, planners will go back and look at both options, the preferred one and the other less-than-preferred one.

"I think we have to come back with some other options, or at least some hybrids, to see what we can do," he said.



This is what the street would look like with parking on both sides, two-way 11-foot-wide traffic lanes and sidewalks that are one foot narrower than currently.

Let's not get too mired in neighborhood infighting

By RICHARD R. HAYNES

Allen Street's infrastructure looks worn and tired, and Allentowners want it spiffed up.

The city at this point has more than \$3 million in mostly federal funds – more will be needed – to make improvements, but the hard part is deciding what improvements to make.

The public right-of-way is only 62 feet wide, not enough to encompass everything that could be envisioned for an ideal streetscape deserving of this eclectic, artsy, historic and lively neighborhood.

The city and its Bergman Associates, Highland Planning and Halvorson Design consultants set these goals for the project:

- Improving aesthetics to promote opportunities for economic vitality.
- Improving safety and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists, including measures to calm traffic.

- Improving vehicular safety and operations.

- Correcting pavement deficiencies and improving rideability.

Before planners decide on specific improvements, they have to settle on an overall street design. They've been working on that for nearly a year. The Allentown Association has had a task force of neighborhood residents and business people keeping tabs on their progress and offering input.

In three successive public meetings in the Olmsted Center for Sight, 1170 Main St., planners showed alternative concepts, received public reaction to them, and asked people to stratify their concerns and preferences.

That process ruled out a one-way street, even though such a design could easily have incorporated bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks and two-sided parking.

The board of directors of the Association on Sept. 9 narrowly voted to recommend eliminating parking on the south side of Allen, about 43 metered spaces, to accommodate wider sidewalks on a two-way street.

There was some opposition to that in the neighborhood. The city's "preferred option" eliminates nearly twice as many parking spaces, so the commotion it raised isn't surprising.

Whatever plan the city comes up with next isn't going to please everyone, either. But we should assume that those involved in the agonized decision-making are acting in good faith on behalf of Allentown.

And let's not allow the debate to drag on endlessly so that the project is inordinately delayed or even scuttled. Remember all the different wonderful concepts for building a new Peace Bridge?



For Allen Street, let's think beyond parking

By ADAM SOKOL

THIS YEAR marked the conclusion of my six years of service on the board of the Allentown Association, the vast majority of that time having been spent on the Allen Street Design Task Force, which I proposed shortly after joining the board in 2008.

At that time, it was obvious that Allentown enjoyed a wealth of historic architecture and beautiful walkable streets constituting arguably the pre-eminent historic district in Western New York, much of it lovingly restored and in better shape than it had been in decades, thanks in no small part to ongoing advocacy by the Allentown Association.

And yet, Allen Street, the commercial core of the neighborhood, had not kept pace, plagued by underutilized or abandoned properties and storefronts, improperly maintained buildings and facades, and above all, public infrastructure that was both poorly designed and in an advanced state of decay.

Our task force began considering remedies to the situation, beginning with a study of successful cases from other cities in 2009, a successful grant application from the Oishei Foundation in 2010, and moving on to questionnaires and a town hall meeting later that year, ultimately culminating in the "Allen Street Re-imagined" report released in 2011. It was this report, supported by feedback from questionnaires and the town hall meeting, that set forth a vision for the street as a public space that would accommodate parking and vehicles, yet be focused on pedestrian space and activity, with a distinctive design that would complement the historic structures while also serving as the basis of a revitalized Allentown commercial district for the 21st century. That vision enabled us to rally support from the City of Buffalo, as well as from state and federal elected officials, eventually identifying millions of dollars in funding that has brought the project to the cusp of reality.

With a professional design team led by Bergmann Associates now in place, a new series of surveys and public meetings was undertaken this year, to better understand the preferences of the community in developing the design.

In many areas there has been a clear consensus: maintain a street open to two-way traffic, maintain on-street parking, improve bicycle and pedestrian access, and create opportunities for better pedestrian amenities such as sidewalk cafes. In general these preferences have been noted and respected by the design team.

Where the consensus has been less clear has been in how best to allocate the very limited width of the street. Due to new State DOT requirements, simply maintaining the existing traffic patterns and accommodating the shared bicycle lanes required by the city would have resulted in a narrowing of the sidewalks, an outcome that would have contradicted years of planning and outreach as well as the explicit goals of the project. It's for this reason that the

Build a great place and people will find a way to get there; build a parking lot and a highway, and it will never be a great place.

board of the Allentown Association voted to recommend a design option that would eliminate one lane of parking in favor of greater public space.

This project is a once-in-a-lifetime event – it will most likely be 50-100 years until Allen Street is rebuilt again. As such the project needs to respond not only to the current condition of the street, but also to its expected development in the future.

What is that expectation? The Allentown-Medical Campus area will consolidate its status as one of the top transit-oriented development areas in upstate New York, with the opening of the UB Medical School and further expansion of the medical campus leading to an influx of students and pedestrians and an expansion of retail.

It's not widely known in Buffalo but the NFTA Metro-Rail is already one of the busiest light rail systems in the country on a per-mile basis. Further, demographic changes throughout the U.S. are leading to increased urban residential densities and reduced vehicle miles travelled per person, and these trends will continue to accelerate. The paradigm of private automobiles as an exclusive mode of travel used to deliver people to the doorway of their destination will increasingly be only one of many means of travel.

Within greater Buffalo, Allentown, with its compact density and convenient metro station, is perhaps least suited to auto-centric travel and best suited to a more diverse urban environment. The professional planners and engineers at Bergmann Associates and the city who have worked on this project understand all these facts, and it is for this reason – not merely the recommendation of the Allentown Association – that the consensus in favor of reduced parking has been reached.

If you've been to any of the top cities in North America – Toronto, New York, Boston, San Francisco to name a few – or indeed anywhere in the world, they tend to have one thing in common: lots of traffic and inadequate parking.

If there is a conclusion to reach, it's this: Build a great place and people will find a way to get there; build a parking lot and a highway, and it will never be a great place. Allen Street is a shared public space with a very limited area. The storage of private vehicles is only one of its many functions. It's far too important as a community resource to be thought of as a mere parking lot.

A rare opportunity to make a significant investment in this community is near at hand. That opportunity may be lost if the community cannot reach a consensus. Let's take advantage of this chance to make Allen Street a great place for future generations. Let's not allow it to slip away with narrow-minded thinking.



Neighborhood news notes . . .



Children paint pumpkins at the Fall Festival.

Fall Festival earned \$7,000

The Allentown Fall Festival on Oct. 11 was great fun, attracted thousands, and earned about \$7,000 for the Association thanks to the hard work of event chairman Jim Nash and other volunteers.

There was live music on a stage at Allen and North Pearl streets, vendors offering arts and crafts, beer tents manned by volunteers – and a hugely popular family area at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site with a petting zoo and children’s games and activities.

Thanks go to: Buffalo Place, which loaned 10 tents and barricades; the city, for recycling bins; students of the University at Buffalo Recycling Rangers, who helped keep the streets clear of litter; Buffalo Spree magazine, which provided print and email advertising; the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, which supplied barricades and helped publicize the event.

Thanks also go to these additional corporate sponsors: First Niagara Bank, Try It Distributing, GoBike Buffalo, Labatt Blue, McKenzie’s Hard Cider, Alternative Buffalo 107.7 FM, Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site, Eric Mower+Associates and Pepsi-Cola.

Red Jacket, Buckingham upgrades set

The Red Jacket building at Main and Allen Streets, where the Association has its office, and the Buckingham on Mariner and Allen, are among 10 low-income apartment buildings in the city that new local owners plan to renovate.

Aaron Siegel and Brett Fitzpatrick have purchased the 10 buildings, which contain 295 apartments and several storefronts for \$16.6 million and plan to spend \$13.5 million on renovations, in addition to spending \$12 million in legal, bond and other fees and costs. The renovation portion works out to more than \$40,000 per apartment, and is supposed to be completed by the end of 2015.

Rents range from \$750 to \$1,275 per month, depending on location and size of the apartment, which varies from

studios to four-bedroom units. All will be rented to tenants at or below 60 percent of the area median income of about \$50,000.

Congregation exiting Ascension Church

The sanctuary of the 164-year-old Church of the Ascension, 16 Linwood Ave. at North Street, will be repurposed as community space and the adjacent parsonage and parish hall will be converted to 25 to 30 affordable senior apartments. The Episcopal congregation will move to but not merge with the Church of the Good Shepherd at 96 Jewett Parkway.

Ascension had 338 active members in 1975, but membership plunged to just 39 in 2013, and is lower now.

The senior housing will be developed by Episcopal Church Home & Affiliates, which runs the high-end continuing care community Canterbury Woods in Amherst and is constructing a similar development on the site of the former Millard Fillmore Hospital on Gates Circle.

Diocesan officials said neighborhood organizations would be consulted on best uses for the sanctuary space.

People of the neighborhood are invited to attend a closing service at 7 p.m. Jan. 6.

Rain garden installed on Hudson Street

The Kleinhans Community Association and Elmwood Village Charter School on Oct. 1 unveiled a rain garden to catch run-off from the school’s parking lot on Hudson Street. The garden was funded by FreshWater Futures, a non-profit organization committed to ensuring the healthy future of our Great Lakes, and from a Garden Walk Buffalo Beautification Grant.

KCA and the school hired PUSH Blue, a division of PUSH Buffalo dedicated to promoting green infrastructure and green jobs, to design and install the garden.

Rain gardens use native plant species with deep roots, along with permeable materials such as crushed stone and gravel, to collect and direct storm water into the soil. EVCS plans to use the garden as an outdoor classroom to educate the kids on green infrastructure and will continue to use gardening as part of their curriculum.



PUSH Blue workers and children from Elmwood Village Charter School celebrate completion of the school’s rain garden.



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Optional activities/committees you'd like to help with:

- Beautification
- Housing/Historic Preservation
- Business development
- Nomination to the board of directors
- Allen West Festival (adjacent to Allentown Art Festival)
- Hot dog stand at Allentown Art Festival
- Secrets of Allentown (annual tour of homes)
- Special events/50th anniversary events
- Crime prevention
- Membership/PR
- First Fridays

*All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make a check payable to: The Allentown Association, Inc.
Mail to: Allentown Association, 14 Allen Street, Buffalo, NY 14202.*

Please feel free to enclose a note with any ideas you have for improving the neighborhood, or suggestions for strategies you think the Association should be pursuing or additional activities you think it should engage in.