

CITY OF ITHACA — WEST END URBAN DESIGN PLAN

DECEMBER 1999

SUMMARY

At the meeting held on September 1, 1999, the City of Ithaca Common Council, acting on the recommendation of the West End Client Committee, adopted the *West End Urban Design Plan 1999*. This summary describes the boundaries of the affected area, outlines the plan's overall vision and includes the basic design concepts and standards. These design standards will be implemented as new development occurs – through the Planning & Development Board's Site Development Plan Review process and through the adoption of a new zoning classification, anticipated sometime in the first quarter of year 2000 next year.

District Map (attached)

Planning Vision

The principal aims of the study include:

- redevelopment that results in a visually appealing urban mixed-use district, including retail,
- office and residential uses
- protection of the traditional residential neighborhoods east of Meadow Street
- easing the impacts of the anticipated transition west of Meadow Street from single-family houses to denser mixed uses, which may include residential uses, without diminishing the overall potential for redevelopment
- creation of an attractive and safe pedestrian environment coexisting with high volume traffic

Designs Standards

The street wall

The plan calls for creation of a strong street wall, to be created by requiring a uniform 15-20 foot set back from the curb. The depth of the setback will accommodate a required 8' minimum tree lawn, a five foot wide sidewalk and an additional two-foot *shy distance* between the sidewalk and the building. On site parking must be located at the rear of the building where possible. Where lot depth is not sufficient for rear parking, parking can be located between buildings. In such cases, the street wall shall be continued with a low wall or hedge planting at the same setback as adjacent buildings. The required set back, including the tree lawn and sidewalk configuration, applies to the development of parking lots in addition to buildings.

The plan contains a "fall back" for circumstances where the standard fifteen foot set back is not feasible. In such cases an eleven foot wide sidewalk from curb to building edge will be permitted to allow at least an increased distance between cars and pedestrians.

Curb cuts should be minimized and sidewalks should continue over the area of the curb cut. Design standards stipulate that curb cuts serving commercial developments on the east side of Meadow Street should be located on Meadow Street rather than on the respective side streets.

Parcels at block corners are especially important to visual character. Wherever possible, buildings should be located on these sites. Where this is not possible, planting of tall trees can serve to anchor the corners.

Building Heights

A two-story height minimum will be required in the new zone. In order to meet this requirement, the two stories must be habitable. Although this requirement may slow redevelopment on the smaller parcels fronting the east side of Meadow Street, it will increase the City's ability to control proliferation of "one story, strip mall type, 24 hour businesses" that are likely to be developed without a minimum height requirement. In the interest of promoting good architectural design, a building with a second story that covers at least 75% of the first floor footprint should be considered to have met the two story minimum requirement. Beyond two stories there is no further coverage requirement. The maximum building heights are five stories on parcels west of Meadow Street and two stories for parcels on the east side.

Exception

On the east side of Meadow Street between Cleveland Avenue and Buffalo Street, parcels will be zoned for a four story height maximum and a two story height minimum. Site conditions will allow for taller buildings on these blocks to strengthen the visual link between the West End and the Commons and central business district.

Separation between commercial and residential east of Meadow

On the east side of Meadow Street, where the new zone abuts the residential zone, the plan requires a solid six foot tall fence. In addition, tree pits the size of one parking space, (9' x 20') are required at every fourth parking space or, where there is no rear parking, the linear equivalent, (every 27'). Bollards or wheel stops will be required to deter damage to the wall caused by automobiles. The plan specifies a tall tree species that will grow to form a canopy.

Waterfront development

Requirements to strengthen design guidelines for parcels on the north bank of Six Mile Creek and the east bank of the Inlet not treated by the Inlet Island Urban Design Plan include the following:

- a set back requirement from the water's edge to reserve a right of way for pedestrian and bicycle paths. The plan acknowledges that the path may widen or narrow to as little as five feet or even less where site conditions dictate, particularly along Six Mile Creek.
- special site plan criteria for garbage disposal and recycling, lighting and building service functions, including building mechanicals and air handling units.

Other elements

All proposals for alteration and new construction of buildings and sites will require Site Development Plan Review. In some cases, where changes are minor, planning staff will have approval authority and full review by the Planning & Development Board will not be required.

The plan supports the private development of a system of interior, mid block pedestrian pathways and small landscaped seating areas. This suggestion is in keeping with the planning vision of a pedestrian friendly zone, and is seen as an incentive for residential development. Mid-block street crossings, however, will not be permitted and paths must return pedestrians to corner crossings.

The plan acknowledges the importance of bicycles to transportation within the city and by reference will reinforce the guidelines of the Ithaca Bicycle Plan.

Gas stations will not be a permitted use in the new zone.

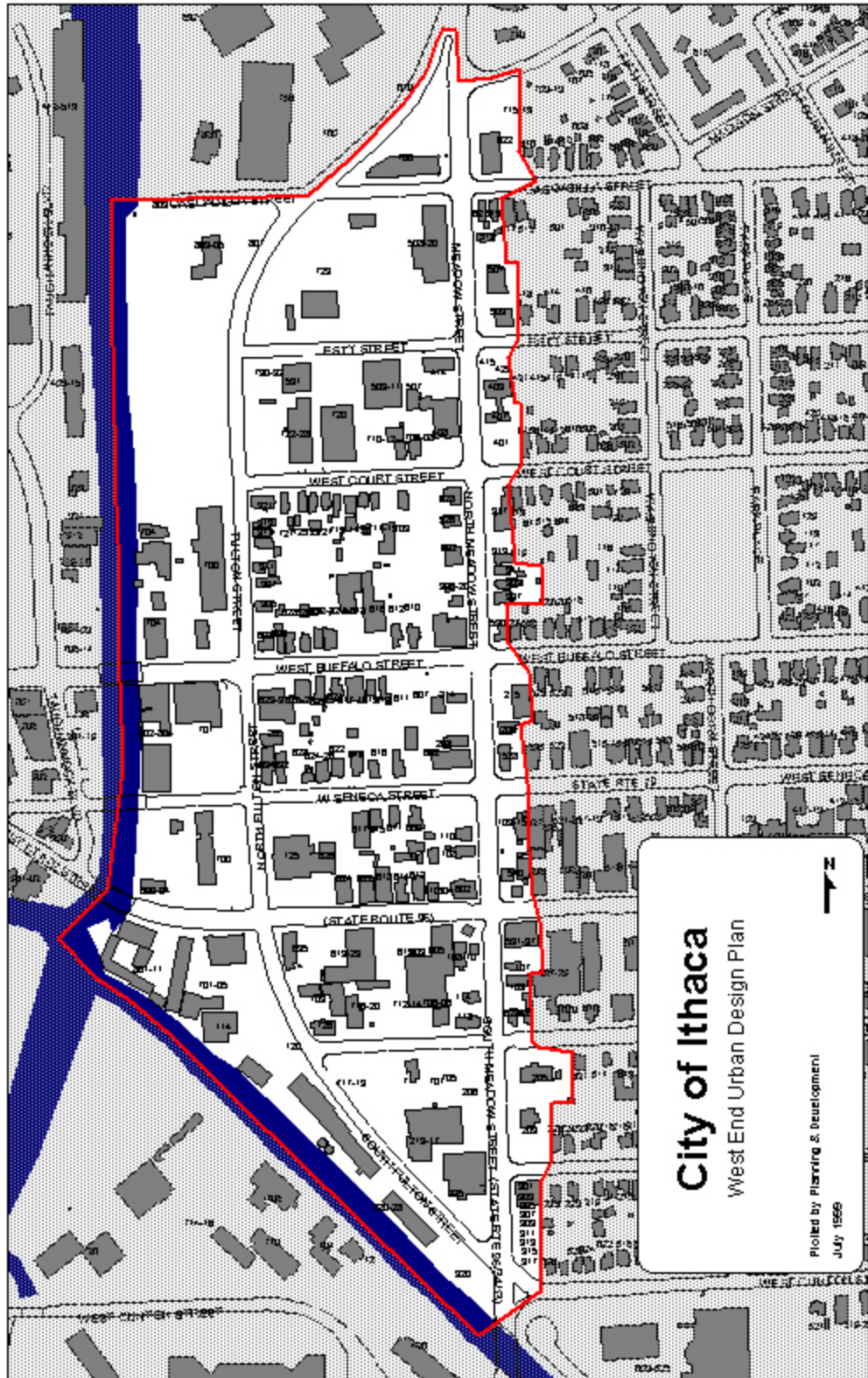
There is no on site parking required in the area between Meadow and Fulton Streets. The plan does encourage shared parking and acknowledges that when demand dictates, the City will look into funding mechanisms such as public/private partnerships or special tax districts, for financing construction of larger parking facilities.

The plan calls for preservation of views to West Hill from locations on the west side of Fulton Street and suggests the city consider developing paths and walkways through these view corridors, connecting pedestrians and cyclists with the Cayuga Inlet Trail.

The plan includes a requirement and standard for planting trees in large parking lots constructed in the area.

The Planning & Development Board has become concerned about spillage of light from commercial establishments such as gas stations. The City is currently developing standards for commercial lighting including location, color, brightness height and consideration of the overall ambience of the surroundings. New development will be expected to conform to the lighting standards once they are in place.

The plan recommends establishment of a shuttle bus service linking Inlet Island, the West End, the Commons and Collegetown.



City of Ithaca

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Plotted by Planning & Development
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