

The Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway

Volume Two: Corridor Management Plan



Section VII. Public Participation

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A. Introduction

The public input and support plan for the Western New York Southtowns Scenic Byway is based on an ongoing, inclusive, and adaptive process to take the byway from the vision of a few to a reality for many. Moreover, the process for nominating the byway recognizes that this initiative does not exist in a vacuum. It recognizes that designation and management of the scenic byway complements, builds upon, and often serves to implement other current or recent public planning efforts. The public input and support plan represents a framework for bringing a broad cross-section of stakeholders to the table: local residents and businesses, elected officials and government agencies, visitors and tour operators, Bikers, walkers and drivers. This open and iterative process of developing the byway will lay the foundation for a community-driven initiative that is championed by a number of groups which mutually benefit from the scenic byway program.

The section below describes in detail the following steps, some overlapping, in the public input and support plan for the byway.

B. Establishment of the Steering Committee

In November 2002, led by Robert J. Lennartz of Orchard Park, a group of residents and municipal officials from the Towns of Orchard Park, Boston and Concord met with representatives of the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to inquire about nominating the US Route 219 to the New York State Scenic Byways program. In addition, students from Erie Community College produced and presented a video that was filmed along the route, featuring scenic views. After encouraging words from the NYSDOT, the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Steering Committee was formed, with Lennartz serving as Chair. The group's creative initiatives have received a great amount of support from interested residents, businesses and officials of the region.

In the fall of 2004, the Urban Design Project (UDP), a center at the School of Architecture and Planning at the University at Buffalo (UB) was engaged by the Steering Committee to prepare the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Nomination proposal. Since this time, the Steering Committee and the UDP have been working together on the project. Initially, the prime purpose of the Steering Committee was to direct the preparation of the Nomination Study. Once the data-gathering effort was well underway, the Committee's main purpose was to encourage and facilitate public participation in the nomination process.

WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Nomination Study

C. Community Planning Efforts Supportive of Scenic Byway Goals

It is important that the plans for the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway work be consistent with comprehensive and master plans of the individual communities, parks and organizations. The vision of a WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway is in many ways an implementation of the overall region’s long-term goals, especially in the subjects of environmental conservation, preserving heritage, and enhancing community character. Thus, the scenic byway can be used as a gathering mechanism – for the towns, villages, hamlets, parks and organizations – to ensure the success of their individual objectives.

Comprehensive Plans have been recently adopted or are under review in all the byway communities except the Town of Colden. The *Erie County Parks System Master Plan 2020* includes a number of proposals for park and trail system improvements within the designated byway area. In addition, the goals for the only other scenic byway that traverses Western New York, the Seaway Trail are included. In each of these individual plans there are overlapping themes that are supported and exemplified in the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Nomination Study. In addition, all these efforts involved extensive public participation. The byway project builds on and reinforces these goals.

Comprehensive Plans

The community goals and objectives of residents of the byway towns and villages, often correspond closely with those of the proposed byway project. Tables VI-1 and VII-2 below, provide examples of comprehensive plan goals by community and how they relate to the special resources that byway designation would help to identify, protect, and promote. Ultimately, the goal is to have each community adopt the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Nomination Study as an amendment to the comprehensive plan. This step would give favored status to byway grant applications.

<i>Table VI-1. Comprehensive Plan: Village and Town of Orchard Park</i>	
Goals	Related Byway Resources
Preserve “small town” community character	Historic, cultural, environmental, educational
Preserve open space and prime farmlands	Visual quality and rural nature of the town
Protect significant environmental resources	Greenways, watersheds and wildlife habitats
Enhance recreational opportunities	
Improve opportunities for developing new commercial enterprise	
Promote major attractions to the region	Chestnut Ridge Park, Ralph Wilson Stadium
<i>Town of Boston Comprehensive Plan</i>	
Promote economic development	Agri-business tours, appropriate commercial development in hamlets

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Goals	Related Byway Resources
Preserve prime and active farmland	
Advocate the environmental protection and enhancement of the Zoar Valley	
Develop the tourism potential of recreational and historic resources	Promote Scoby Dam Park, improve access to Cattaraugus Creek for fishing and recreation
Preserve and enhance Fiddler's Green as a historic green space	

Erie County Parks System Master Plan

The Erie County Departments of Parks, Recreation & Forestry and Environment & Planning, have given specific recommendations for renewal to a number of Erie County parks – four of which are located within the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway region. The following recommendations from the *Erie County Parks System Master Plan 2020* that correspond with the recommendations and objectives of the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway project.

Erie County Parks System Master Plan Recommendations:

Chestnut Ridge Park

- Preserve and enhance original Heritage Areas and restore historic structures
- Promote seasonal use and cultural enjoyment
- Promote awareness of the unique park features
- Establish a not-for-profit park conservancy

Sprague Brook Park

- Promote and enhance the various nature trail systems
- Establish a more dominant gateway on the Route 240 entrance
- Enhance creek viewing opportunities

Boston Forest Park

- Develop a small informal parking area as an appropriate trailhead (rest area)
- Establish a multi-use trail network

Scoby Dam Park

- Promote the heritage aspects of the park (historic dam and hydroelectric building)
- Promote the linear strip of land along the Cattaraugus Creek as a prime fishing destination
- Establish a seasonal canoe launch ramp

Trail Linkages/Rails to Trails:

The Erie County Parks System Master Plan includes a section on the proposed trail linkages between the different parks, some of which are located within the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway region. For example, a rails to trails initiative for the unused Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad line which runs parallel to Route 240, connecting Sprague Brook Park and the center of Colden.

WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Nomination Study

D. Coordination with Other Scenic Byways

The Seaway Trail

The basic theme of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail is closely related to that of the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway. For this reason, as well as its proximity, the Seaway Trail should be seen as a neighboring component of a greater regional network. A beneficial relationship should be formed between the two scenic byways in order to promote and incorporate each other's unique byway experiences.

Goals of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail:

- Pursue an increased growth of the tourism industry throughout the region.
- Protect and enhance the scenic, natural and cultural resources of the region.
- Develop the region as a high quality recreation and vacation spot

E. Public Outreach Efforts

Interviews

The goals of the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway Steering Committee include creating a network of public and private organizations that are interested in the creation of a scenic byway. A series of interviews should be conducted with key groups of the region – such as chambers of commerce and historical societies –in order to establish their roles in the byway plan and nomination process. Some of these groups are:

- The Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce
- The Toy Town Museum
- The Millard Fillmore House
- The Elbert Hubbard Museum
- The Orchard Park Chamber of Commerce
- The Orchard Park Historical Society
- Orchard Park Economic Development Committee
- Peddler's Museum
- WNY Historic Rails Society
- Springville Area Chamber of Commerce
- Warner Historical Museum
- Boston Historical Society

Byway Web Site

Establishing a quality website is a very effective tool for broadcasting byway information to the general public. An effective website not only provides the viewer with the appropriate information, but intrigues him/her to partake in the byway experience. A WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway website, designed by staff at the Urban Design Project of the University at Buffalo offers basic information, pictures, a schedule of events, maps, an updated news page, a public involvement survey, as well as a number of other interesting features.

VII. Public Participation

Special Events

There are a number of public events that can be organized in order to promote the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway initiative. These should correspond with the byway uses in order to give a better understanding of the project's overall theme. For example, the Steering Committee should have a major presence at the Quaker Days Festival in Orchard Park. Many of those who attend this type of community festival would most likely be interested in the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway. By not only adhering to preexisting events, but creating new ones (i.e. festivals, concerts, bicycle race or bike-a-thon, walk-a-thon, historic tours) that are byway specific, the committee can promote and introduce the new byway experience.

Newsletters and Mailings

The dissemination of information to the communities involved in the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway is important in keeping them refreshed and informed. Creating a mailing list for the distribution of promotional materials and establishing a byway press-column in some of the local papers are both effective measures for this task.

Fundraising

While the scenic byway program would be administered by the state government, there is a need for other public and private financial support. A comprehensive fundraising campaign should be developed and followed that targets corporate and foundations sources, major individual donors, and government sources. Both capital and operating support should be sought. In-kind sources of support (e.g., local department of public works assistance for corridor-related projects) should not be overlooked.

Contributions from smaller donors (members) should also be sought to build grassroots support and commitment. The key here is to organize creative and attractive ways of fundraising that simultaneously promote the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway ("friend raisers"). For example, walk-a-thons or bike-a-thons could showcase the project while raising funds and enhancing community character.

Project Headquarters

A headquarters for the WNY Southtowns Scenic Byway nomination project would give the project a tangible physical presence on the byway itself. The goal here is to acquire a street level, publicly accessible headquarters in one of the involved village centers. The building would serve as Steering Committee offices and volunteer headquarters, as well as a center for visitor information and public input.

Meetings

An important aspect of any public project is conducting open-forum meetings and educational workshops for the involved citizens. The public should remain informed of these events through print and electronic media, such as the Southtowns Citizen newspaper. It is crucial that community and business leaders of the region are involved in these proceedings. An effective way of attracting folks to the scheduled meetings is by inviting special guests, heads of public departments or established organizations to present their own experiences or specialized knowledge in the subject of corridor management.