

**McKownville Zoning Committee:  
A Report on the Western Avenue Corridor  
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# **McKownville Zoning Committee:**

## **A Report on the Western Avenue Corridor**

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## **I. OVERVIEW**

The Town of Guilderland established this local Zoning Committee to review the existing zoning in McKownville and to offer constructive recommendations for improvement. Much to their credit, Town leaders recognize that increasing development pressures are negatively affecting the residential character and quality of life in this neighborhood, especially on the south side of Western Avenue. The present conditions along Western Avenue bear all the hallmarks of an earlier period in Guilderland when concerns for neighborhood enhancement and residential preservation were not as prevalent as they are today.

Consequently, in conjunction with the McKownville Improvement Association, the Committee began its task by holding several public meetings to discuss zoning and development issues and to solicit community input. The following recommendations reflect the results of that process as well as the collaborative efforts of the Committee with both Town officials and other outside parties.

The Committee found that widespread concerns exist throughout the community that the present zoning process does not effectively protect the interests of McKownville residents. It is a generally held perception among residents that development interests too often override those of the community as a whole, and that Town regulatory bodies are not sensitive to the impact development projects have on the quality of life in McKownville neighborhoods. This fact was recently reinforced by a series of controversial requests to, and decisions by, the Town of Guilderland's Planning and Zoning Boards from local businesses for exemptions under the Town's zoning laws (Chapter 280) – exemptions that would have had a significant negative impact on local neighborhoods.

Although development pressures confronting McKownville are of serious concern, they are by no means unique to communities bordering on commercial metropolitan areas. Urban sprawl, "crazy quilt" development, inefficient land use and "de facto" spot zoning are often visible by-products of inadequate comprehensive planning, inconsistent rulings on variance requests and ineffective enforcement of permit conditions and town codes. Consequently, when development pressures inevitably collide with residential interests, the impact can be particularly hostile and derisive. The end result is often bitter and disruptive, pitting businesses, residents,

neighborhood organizations and town officials against one another in protracted conflict.

What is to be done? First, it is important to acknowledge that addressing these disputes by preventing them from erupting in the first place requires that local government leaders search for the proper balance between commercial development and neighborhood preservation. At the core of this objective is the need for fair, transparent and politically acceptable rules under which the planning and zoning processes operate. These rules must be clear, unambiguous, uniformly applied and rigorously enforced if public support and belief in the integrity of these processes is to be sustained.

These recommendations are not intended to be critical of any particular individual, agency or institution. Rather, they are presented with the belief that constructive input will lead to solutions that address issues of serious concern to McKownville residents.

## **II. VISION**

The Committee's vision for McKownville preserves the residential character of Western Avenue as the gateway to the Town of Guilderland. Rigorous, consistent enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance must govern this area on both sides of Western Avenue. Furthermore, in order to preserve the residential character and attractiveness of the area and to ensure that commercial development is compatible with community needs, growth must be managed by encouraging human scale development. Human scale refers to the use of human-proportioned architectural features, site design elements and modes of transportation clearly oriented to human activity.

The main street qualities of Western Avenue should be enhanced through preservation of residential property uses along both its north and south sides. Return to residential property use should occur whenever possible. Western Avenue is a prime commuter road and important commercial corridor. But it is also a hazardous and divisive community barrier that pedestrians must cross at considerable personal risk. Improvement of pedestrian safety and opportunities for crossing Western Avenue must be a priority.

Existing commercial development on Western Avenue in McKownville should be closely governed by strict administration of the Zoning Ordinance. Judicious and informed issuance of Special Use Permits and Variances will foster human scale development in the neighborhood. The Town should encourage improvement of the appearance of existing properties with special

attention given to concerns of residents and seek to mitigate traffic pressures on the corridor. In addition, the Town should work continually to improve access and amenities for pedestrian traffic to foster the development of McKownville as a “walkable” community.

By implementing the recommendations of the completed McKownville Corridor Study and Comprehensive Plan for Guilderland, McKownville can both preserve its special character as a neighborhood and serve as an attractive gateway to Guilderland. This approach requires partnerships of many kinds with many different groups and concerns. The outcome of this approach is a livable, walkable, safe place to reside and do business.

### **III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

There are three principles that have guided recent planning studies in McKownville:

#### **A. Preserve Current Boundaries of Western Avenue**

Western Avenue as a roadway should not be widened. This principle guided the development of the McKownville Corridor Study completed and accepted by the Town of Guilderland in 2003. In fact, according to that plan the roadway will be narrower in width in order to accommodate sidewalks and green buffers. Construction of the wider buffers and sidewalks is set to begin in 2006. Buffers, sidewalks and additional streetscaping must be added to calm traffic in this problematic area of Western Avenue.

#### **B. Preservation of Residential Properties**

The number of residential properties along Western Avenue should be preserved and, when applicable, a return to residential zoning should occur. There are several residences along Western Avenue that are used as homes but zoned for business. The zoning for these properties should be changed to reflect their present use, which must govern all McKownville as well. Additionally, there is potential to develop several Western Avenue parcels currently zoned for business to multi-family residences. This principle of conserving the residential character of Western Avenue in McKownville has guided the work done by this Committee.

#### **C. Improve Attractiveness of McKownville Gateways**

McKownville, as a Gateway to Guilderland, requires that Western Avenue properties be

attractive. Selective use of an architectural consultant to review proposals for development and design guidelines fostering human scale construction will assure that new development enhances the appearance of this area. The areas near the Town of Guilderland and City of Albany boundary on Western Avenue and near the Fuller Road Alternate/Northway entrance require special consideration. The gateway principle will become increasingly important as McKownville develops its Master Plan, as required by the Town Comprehensive Plan, completed in 2000. Rigorous enforcement of the zoning ordinance also requires that existing properties be encouraged to maintain their attractiveness and, if deteriorating, to improve their appearance.

#### **IV. WESTERN AVENUE ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to protect the existing neighborhood and prevent the further encroachment of inappropriate commercial development, the Committee recommends that the following properties be rezoned:

<b>Tax Map</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Present Zoning</b>	<b>Proposed Zoning</b>
52.19-2-4	28-30 Schoolhouse RD	Charter One	LB	R15
52.20-4-41	1422 Western Ave.	Esmay, Richard E.	LB	R10
52.20-4-42	1420 Western Ave.	VandeWal, Victor	LB	R10
63.08-3-3	105 Arcadia Ave.	Fiato, Kale M.	GB	R10
52.20-4-4	8 McKown Road	Blendell, Mary Ellen	LB	R10
52.20-4-1	1450 Western Ave.	Delta Properties	LB	BNRP
52.20-4-2.2	1444 Western Ave.	Western Ave. Assocs.	LB	BNRP
52.20-4-2.1	1440 Western Ave.	Turf Western Ave. Inc.	LB	BNRP
63.00-2-1.2	10 McKown Road	Ten McKown, LLC	LB	BNRP
52.20-4-40	1424 Western Ave.	Esmay, Richard E.	LB	BNRP

The ten listed properties are those where the present use diverges from its zoned use. For example, first a house is used as a residence but is zoned as a business or; secondly, a building is used for various non-retail, service-oriented businesses (BNRP) but is zoned for convenient shopping (LB). There are five homes south of Western Avenue where the first example is relevant.

There are also five buildings where the second example applies. Three or four of these houses are used as homes and are not businesses, and there is no indication that they will ever be (or can be) used for anything other than residences. The other is used as a beauty shop which presently shares parking with an adjacent restaurant. The restaurant is under "sale/lease" which may present a parking problem for the beauty shop (or other business which may locate there in the future). In short, all five of these properties are simple, attractive bungalows which resemble single family residences.

The following analysis discusses each property in more detail.

**1. Tax Map Number 52.19-2-4**

**28 and 30 Schoolhouse Road      presently zoned LB      New zone, R15**

These two Schoolhouse Road properties are near the Citizen Bank property. Except for two office buildings along Schoolhouse and the bank, there are no other non-residential properties along Schoolhouse Road while there are eighteen additional homes along this road. It is primarily a residential street. This structure is being used as a residence. Conversion of this property to a commercial use would damage the residential character of this portion of the road.

This property is not currently used for Local Business purposes and it does not fulfill the required lot size of 20,000-sq. ft. cited in the Town Zoning Ordinance for LB. Both lots together total 20,812 sq. ft. Moreover, it is desirable that no additional commercial properties be located along Schoolhouse Road due to heavy through traffic and difficulty of ingress/egress.

Like Western Avenue, each of the four major highways in McKownville (Western Avenue, Schoolhouse Road, Fuller Road, and McKown Road) is in danger of becoming a venue for more non-residential property uses.

This house is presently occupied and in reasonable condition. It does not display any sign of being difficult to rent or sell and nearby homes on Schoolhouse Road have been sold recently



as homes without apparent difficulty.

**2. Tax Map Number 52.20-4-41**

**1422 Western Avenue      presently zoned LB    New zone, R10**

This structure also resembles a residence and is being used as a residence. It is not currently used for Local Business purposes and it does not fulfill the required lot size of 20,000 sq. ft. cited in the Town Zoning Ordinance to be zoned LB. Present lot size is 13,350 sq. ft.

The younger Dr. Esmay, who has his dental practice on Western Avenue near the Harriman campus, occupies this residence. The lot does not lend itself to commercial development since it has a small front yard, a very narrow side yard to the east and a western side yard that might be able to physically accommodate a driveway and a small backyard. It would have inadequate parking for any commercial use.

There had been much discussion several years ago by the elder Dr. Esmay to merge the parking area at the rear of his building (1424 Western) to that at the rear of the neighboring house (1422 Western). Neighbors strongly objected, citing traffic, noise and loss of the residential character of Westlyn Court. The home is well maintained and there is no sign that the property will attract any non-residential use.

**3. Tax Map Number 52.20-4-42**

**1420 Western Avenue      presently zoned LB    New zone, R10**

This structure also resembles a residence. It does not fulfill the required lot size of 20,000 sq. ft. cited in the Town Zoning Ordinance to be zoned LB. The present lot size is 10,164 sq. ft.

This brick home, with its circular drive, has a very small front yard and no side yards permitting access to the back for additional parking. Like the other homes discussed in this report, it could not accommodate the required parking for the square footage of the building if it were used as a business. The house, from time to time, seems to have contained a package and letter mailing service in conjunction with a residence. Its current use is as a residence.

**4. Tax Map Number 63.08-3-3**

**105 Arcadia Avenue      presently zoned LB      New zone, R10**

This structure resembles a residence. This property does not fulfill the required lot size of 20,000 sq. ft. cited in the Town Zoning Ordinance to be zoned LB. It is a very small lot, 7200 sq. ft. which does not meet the required minimum for R10 but there is no lower residential zoning in the ordinance, so it is recommended to be zoned R10.

This frame home has an unusual nexus. It contains a beauty shop and shares a parking lot with an adjacent restaurant (currently vacant and for sale/lease). This property is located on the west side of Arcadia Avenue (a hilly street that is decidedly residential), which does not permit on street parking at any time. The beauty shop lot is small and probably cannot accommodate the vehicles necessary for the beauty shop operation.

**5. Tax Map Number 52.20-4-4**

**8 McKown Road                      presently    zoned    LB                      New    zone,    R10**

This structure also resembles a residence and is being used as a residence. It is not currently used for Local Business. Intensified use at this site would create further traffic problems in this very busy section of a feeder road to Western Avenue. It should be rezoned to its current residential use.

This home has long been occupied by the present owner and is located across from another residential property between Williams Court and Westlyn Place, both residential streets. It is in good condition and is buffered from the neighboring Pinnacle Place medical building by a wide lawn while on the north side a sizable vacant lot buffers it from Passonno Paint. A high buffer shields the home from the Holiday Inn Express to the west.

Other than Pinnacle Place and the two businesses on the Western Avenue corners of McKown Road, there are no other nonresidential property uses along McKown Road. The unique layout of this road makes it most unsuitable for nonresidential use since it would not support additional commercial traffic.

## **6. Tax Map 52.20-4-1**

### **1450 Western Avenue presently zoned LB New zone, BNRP**

This large office building has recently undergone renovation and is usually referred to as the Picotte Building. It is unlikely to ever be used as anything other than an office/professional building. Retail stores are a most unlikely present or future use. Although an office building is a permitted use under LB, this building does not serve the local population but instead those of businesses and employees from a large area not restricted to Guilderland.

Thus, this property does not deserve the designation of LB but should be more correctly zoned BNRP for its current use as professional offices. This will avoid an intensified use under the LB zoning designation in the event that the building changes ownership.

It is urgently recommended that the Town seek to immediately engage in negotiations with the owners of properties at 1440-1444 Western Avenue and 1450 Western Avenue to remedy a very dangerous ingress/egress traffic problem. on Western Avenue. Remedying this problem may involve the granting of an easement by the owners of 1450 Western Avenue to the owners of 1444 Western Avenue, allowing 1444 clients access the traffic light at 1450 and thereby permitting controlled and safe access to Western Avenue. Failing a negotiated settlement, when the owner of the 1450 property comes before the Town to request a Variance or SUP, an agreement should be negotiated to allow a traffic easement to the traffic light in order to alleviate the dangerous ingress/egress for the adjacent properties at 1440 and 1444 Western Avenue.

## **7. Tax Map Number 52.20-4-2.2**

### **1444 Western Avenue presently zoned, LB New zone, BNRP**

This professional building is used for medical and doctor's offices, a permitted use in the ordinance for BNRP. It is well used as such and it is highly unlikely that it will ever be used for "convenient shopping" under LB zoning designation.

Like its neighbors, nearby shopping is so well established that any attempt to create a new convenient shopping site would be very difficult, economically. In order to change zoning to

its current use, a BNRP zoning designation is recommended.

Significant traffic dangers of ingress and egress exist at this property that must be managed proactively by working with NYSDOT. Agreements should be created with adjacent property owners for access to the traffic light at 1450 Western Avenue whenever the owner of this property requests a SUP or Variance before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**8. Tax Map Number 52.20-4-2.1**

**1440 Western Avenue      presently zoned, LB    New zone, BNRP**

This professional building is used for medical and doctor's offices, a permitted use in the ordinance for BNRP. It is well used as such and it is highly unlikely that it will ever be used for "convenient shopping" under LB zoning designation.

Like its neighbors, nearby shopping is so well established that any attempt to create a new convenient shopping site would be very difficult, economically. In order to change zoning to its current use, a BNRP zoning designation is recommended.

Significant traffic dangers of ingress and egress exist at this property that must be managed proactively by working with NYSDOT. Agreements should be created with adjacent property owners for access to the traffic light at 1450 Western Avenue whenever the owner of this property requests a SUP or Variance before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**9. Tax Map Number 63.00-2-1.2**

**10 McKown Road      presently zoned, LB    New zone, BNRP**

This is a vacant lot between the Passonno Paints and 8 McKown Road. Neighborhood lore holds that it once housed an ice cream store for persons visiting the nearby McKown's Grove. It has long been vacant.

The road is unsuitable for a retail store, which would generate a substantial increase in traffic intensity for the neighborhood. There are homes across the street and to the south. It is recommended that this property be zoned BNRP rather than LB in order to prevent more intense development in the neighborhood. The goal of lower intensity development should be followed.

## **10. Tax Map Number 52.20-4-40**

**1424 Western Avenue presently zoned, LB New zone, BNRP**

This structure resembles a residence. This property is not currently used for Local Business purposes but instead for professional offices. It should be zoned BNRP.

This is Dr. Esmay's dental practice housing two or three dentists and several dental assistants and office workers. It was built as a single-family residence and was a home occupation/dental office for many years for the elder Dr. Esmay. It has been a very successful practice though Dr. Esmay is retired and resides in Florida. The building still resembles a residence, although it has a paved front yard that is inadequate for the number of patients the practice draws. The paved backyard also serves as a parking area for employees, but Westlyn Court is also used for patient parking. The residence should never have been zoned for such an intensive use. It is not obvious that the building's future will be a dental office and its present zoning designation allows many varied intensive uses. For the neighbors, it should be returned to less intensive use.

## **V. Policy Recommendations**

In order to allow for a more functional review of applications and to facilitate the best public input possible, the Committee recommends the following policies be incorporated into the Zoning and Planning Board procedures.

### **A. Improved Notification to Neighbors**

The Committee recognizes that as a matter of standard operating procedure, the Town notifies neighbors of pending SUP and Variance applications coming before the Zoning or Planning Boards for action. However, too often these notifications do not provide sufficient lead-time for neighbors to study the applications, obtain additional information from the Town, and prepare meaningful comments for consideration by the regulatory boards. Furthermore, the notices themselves are often cursory and do not fully explain the nature of the proposed project. The Committee recommends that the Town adopt official, written policies regarding neighborhood notifications incorporating, at a minimum, the following suggestions:

1. That all neighbors within a 500-foot radius of the project are notified;
2. That such notification include the legal notice along with a plain English version, which would more fully describe the project;
3. That continual notification to neighbors is given when applications are tabled or otherwise delayed or suspended, no matter how long or short the continuance may be;
4. That neighbors be notified by mail of hearings by the Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals at the same time they are sent to the media for official publication;
5. That neighborhood associations (officially registered with the Town) be informed of these hearings;
6. That notice of these hearings be posted on the Town's Internet website.

#### **B. Rigorous Enforcement of Existing Zoning Regulations**

The Committee recognizes that staff limitations may inhibit the Town's ability to more aggressively pursue zoning violators. Nonetheless, it is apparent that many business and residential properties operate outside of existing zoning regulations. In some instances, property neglect has created health problems or dangerous structural conditions, which threaten public safety. Such situations should be dealt with swiftly and aggressively. Other situations may be simply cosmetic but if left unattended contribute to neighborhood blight. A property should not be permitted to deteriorate to the point where the only economic solution is demolition. While this has happened, it should not be permitted to occur.

Beyond a verbal warning by the Zoning Enforcement Officer, it often appears that the Town rarely pursues more vigorous punitive action against persistent violators. It is recommended:

1. That should a violator fail to take remedial action within a reasonable period of time, an expedited enforcement process be established for seeking injunctive action through the courts. Such actions should be published in local papers and the status of enforcement actions be made available at Town Hall for public

viewing;

2. That the Town seek to recapture any costs resulting from such enforcement and related regulatory actions directly from the violator by direct billing, a local tax assessment or, if necessary, by the imposition of liens on the offending property.

3. That the Town investigate ways to encourage or in some instances, require property owners to maintain their property up to an established code.

4. That the Town improve coordination of its enforcement effort with existing police and investigative agencies. For example, if an issue arises regarding a property owner's legal address, the Town's police department could easily check the correct address through the NYSDMV licensing systems and then notify the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

### **C. Judicious and Informed Issuance of Variances**

The Committee believes the issuance of Variances, especially for non-residences, has become too commonplace, and is issued as a matter of routine rather than addressing only exceptional or extraordinary circumstances.

This problem is particularly evident concerning parking spaces for non-residences. Perhaps no where has this problem been more publicly visible than with a recent expansion request in the neighborhood, which sought a 100% variance from the existing parking standard on a lot that had almost non-existent zoning ordinance required green space. This request was subsequently defeated by a narrow margin of the Zoning Board. But, had it been approved, the resultant negative impact on the neighborhood in the form of street congestion, late night noise and litter would have had serious consequences.

The Committee also believes that the liberal issuance of variances undercuts the principle objective of the zoning ordinance itself, which is to minimize the negative impact of commercial activities on adjoining neighborhoods by confining such activities to the commercial property itself.

Adjacent neighborhoods should not bear the burden and suffer the consequences of intensive use brought on by inadequate parking, overly bright lighting, inappropriate customer behavior or any other offensive and intrusive activity conducted on commercial premises.

However, many in McKownville believe the prevailing regulatory mindset to be overly accommodative to requests for variances, which often lead to these types of negative community impact. Regarding the issuance of Special Use Permits and Variances, the Committee recommends:

1. That the Town's existing zoning standards be strictly upheld.
2. That variances for parking and green space be severely limited.
3. That the burden of proof for such requests be overwhelmingly placed on the applicant to demonstrate why the project cannot be designed to conform to existing zoning regulations.
4. That the applicant submit a neighborhood impact statement clearly demonstrating the impact on neighboring properties.
5. That the Zoning and Planning Boards be provided with the historical record of prior Special Use Permits/Variances approvals and conditions for any parcel before them for review.
6. That a standardized reporting system be developed so that the Planning and Zoning Boards are continually apprised of the progress of applicants in meeting all the conditions of their SUP/Variance stipulations.
7. That the Chairperson of the Planning Board co-sign decisions by the Building Inspector when an SUP/Variance is continued (as opposed to amended). Since the zoning ordinance provides (in Chapter 280-38) that appeals from the decisions of the Building Inspector can be made only to the Zoning Board of Appeals, it would seem prudent that the Planning Board chair be the person required to co-sign these SUP/Variance decisions by the building inspector. The Zoning Board chair should be kept informed of these actions.
8. That the meaning of "substantial" be defined more fully. The zoning ordinance provides that the SUP/Variance be continued rather than amended when there is no "substantial" change in use of the property. At present the determination places too much responsibility on the building permit officer to define the term.
9. That neighbors be notified when an SUP is transferred to a new owner or use.



A timely challenge to the decision on allowing a SUP, rather than amending it, cannot be made unless the county knows about the decision.

#### **D. Notification of Building Permit Issuance**

Because the issuance of a building permit often has important impact for the neighbors and surrounding neighborhood and businesses, a public notification of permits issued to properties along the McKownville Corridor of Western Avenue will keep both the public and other businesses apprised of renovation and construction in this area of the Town.

This Committee recommends:

1. That all building permits on properties along Western Avenue in the McKownville Corridor granted by the Town should be posted on the Town's web site.
2. That decisions made by the Zoning Enforcement Officer about whether a building permit carries with it the requirement of a hearing on a SUP, Variance or an amended SUP should also be posted.
3. That there needs to be a clear statement about the procedure to be used in challenging the Zoning Enforcement Officer's decision available to the public on the Town website.

#### **E. Architectural Review**

In order to support human-scale development as well as attractiveness of the neighborhood and blending of commercial and residential construction styles, the Committee recommends:

1. That architectural reviews be performed when requested by any member of the Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Town Board or by petition from Town residents on project applications coming before the Planning and Zoning Boards
2. That the Town retain a consultant to conduct such reviews, and that such costs be included as part of the application fee/permit paid by the applicant as per Zoning Ordinance Chapter 280-57A.

## **F. Zoning Language Changes**

The Town should consider an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to better define and control lot coverage in residential areas in order to preserve front yard green space. Additionally, as residences become occupied by multiple unrelated individuals, the competition for off street parking space leads to the paving over of front lots, creating a commercial appearance for what is generally single family housing on residential streets.

This problem is increasing in importance in McKownville. At present, the zoning definition for lot coverage includes only the area covered by buildings. In commercial districts only, the definition is further defined and includes paved areas. In residential districts, paved areas need to be limited or the residences could take on the appearance of a commercial zone. The front lot paved area needs to be limited to a width that accommodates access to the garage, but prohibits additional paved areas on the lot.

A related problem, which is growing in importance, is that churches, schools and other non-residential uses are allowed in residential zones. The Town is receiving applications that are proposing parking areas that cover the majority of the lot and are often paved adjacent to a neighbor's backyard. In the future, the Town will need to address this problem more fully.

## **V. LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to facilitate the vision for McKownville, the Committee recommends the following long-term recommendations:

### **A. Design Guidelines**

That design guidelines be developed that will provide a blueprint for human scale development and for making commercial establishments blend with residential. The Rural Guilderland Plan/Country Hamlet designation could act as a basis for such guidelines. Design guidelines as well as architectural review will support the McKownville neighborhood vision

### **B. Gateway Design**

That an ordinance be developed that would allow for mixed-use development, consistent

with the McKownville vision statement to encourage premiere design and appropriate development at the gateways of the neighborhood. McKownville contains two gateways, one at the Fuller Road Alternate entrance onto Western Avenue and another at the entrance to the University at Albany on Western Avenue. The McKownville Corridor Study contains a thorough review of gateway potential and a plan for implementation.

### **C. Traffic Calming Measures**

That the Town continue to pursue traffic calming measures for Route 20, to both slow traffic and alleviate the pedestrian barrier that separates the McKownville neighborhood. The McKownville Corridor Study details methods for calming traffic on this section of highway including lowering the speed limit to 30 mph. In the near future, NYS DOT will begin planned improvements to Western Avenue in McKownville and this will be an ideal opportunity for green space to be incorporated into the roadway to act as a traffic-calming feature.

### **D. Citizen's Guide**

That a citizen's guide be developed that would help residents understand the development process and how they can best participate in it. The Town (in conjunction with the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce) produced a brochure for the business community entitled a Roadmap for Business in Guilderland. The residential community would benefit from a similar document from the homeowner point of view with the goal of showing how a homeowner can participate effectively in the process of development and contribute actively to the process of review by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

### **E. Economic Development**

That the Town identify key properties for redevelopment. Initially, such developments should be highly targeted to gateway projects affecting the general appearance and public perception of the Town, or where conditions of "slum or blight", as defined under existing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines, would have deleterious impact. As a public benefit corporation, the Town's IDA has unique development powers which are not available to "regular" town departments.

### **F. Update the Zoning Ordinance**

The McKownville Corridor on Western Avenue and McKownville in general is already

subject to intense pressure of commercial development. The hamlet qualities of this neighborhood of Guilderland should be preserved as business continues in the area. New development can be encouraged using principles of smart growth and human scale construction if the Zoning Code is modernized. More progressive code would assure alignment with principles that allow mixed-use and encourage a sense of place, pedestrian access and greenscaping. The McKownville Corridor Study (2003) suggested the use of an overlay district and the Rural Guilderland Plan created a new zone called Country Hamlet. Both of these ideas lead in the right direction: to allow commercial and residential to co-exist without completely disregarding the rights and desires of resident homeowners.

The Committee recommends that the Town take steps to update the existing Zoning Ordinance with a commitment to the resident's vision of their neighborhood and with smart growth principles in mind.

#### **G. McKownville Neighborhood Master Plan**

The final long-term recommendation of this Committee is to begin the process of creating a Master Plan for McKownville as noted in the Guilderland Comprehensive Plan (2000). In this plan, primary recommendations of the consultant would be followed through. The Plan states on page ES-9:

*“Reinvestment in the area is recommended to renew infrastructure and deal with drainage issues.”*

*“Buffer existing residential areas from commercial and other intensive non-residential uses but provide pedestrian linkages to the commercial areas and improve pedestrian environment along major roads.”*

*“Conduct neighborhood meetings in anticipation of a future neighborhood master plan.”*

The McKownville Corridor Study is the solid foundation on which this work can be continued and implemented. Plans already exist for many of the concepts and priorities discussed in this report, and residents have shown their eagerness to see the Town act on implementing and seeking grant funding for the recommended improvements.