

# Neighbors weigh in *Spotlight* on Walgreens, flyover 8-22-08

By MARY LANNON

The proposed Walgreens in the Guilderland hamlet and the Thruway flyover proposed in McKownville recently drew the attention of their respective neighborhood associations.

At an informal working session on Sept. 9, the Guilderland Hamlet Neighborhood Association (GHNA) debated the merits of the Walgreens proposed for routes 155 and 20.

The Guilderland planning board on Aug. 11 did not recommend Walgreens' site plan. It now goes to the town's zoning board of appeals where it will need a supermajority (5-2) to go forward.

According to minutes of the meeting, GHNA members disagreed about whether to support a Walgreens application that met 17 of their 18 suggestions for the building or to concur with the planning board.

The one suggestion Walgreens cannot take is to move its building closer to the roadway. The group will meet again Oct. 7 at either the Normanskill Room of Guilderland Public Library or Hamilton Union Church.

For information, call Carolyn Williams at 356-3121.

On Aug. 23, the McKownville Neighborhood Improvement Association put forward a proposal for revamping Thruway Exit 24.

For more than a year, the New York state Thruway Authority has been studying that exit — and all the exits in the Albany Corridor — which is slated for a major overhaul in the coming years.

The association's proposal, issued Aug. 23, is well past the Thruway's public comment deadline of June 2.

Thruway Authority spokeswoman Casey Cannistraei said that it will still be considered as part of the study due this fall.

The Thruway Authority held five public hearings, the latest in May, to get public feedback on

potential proposals.

At each of the meetings, members of the association have loudly and repeatedly opposed a flyover — or overpass — concept for Exit 24. That concept was in two of the six put forward at the public hearings.

The association's new design combines two of the Thruway proposals, incorporating the mainline barrier concept and the one-way toll collections.

It took a while to absorb all the information and come up with a win-win solution for both the people of McKownville and those in the Capital District, said Don Reeb, president of the McKownville Neighborhood Association.

Mainline barriers are not barriers but rather structures built over the highway that would record autos with E-Z Pass.

The Thruway Authority proposed either two or four of these between exits 21A and 25A. The association favors the two-barrier proposal but does not like the design for that proposal, which includes the Western Avenue flyover.

Instead, the association's concept would eliminate the flyover and the truck lot now proposed for Exit 24. It would construct a flyover further away from Western Avenue and closer to Crossgates Mall.

It would also add two other exits—one to the existing I-90 east entrance ramp and the other to the Fuller Road Bypass.

Under the barrier system, cars without E-Z Pass exit the Thruway to pay their tolls.

Reeb said the association would also like to see the Thruway Authority's concept for one-way tolls be implemented along with the two-barrier system.

The McKownville Neighborhood Improvement Association will meet Thursday, Sept. 23, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Express on Western Avenue.

For information, call Don Reeb at 489-3909.