

Study urges rezoning of Route 20

By PAMELA NEWKIRK
Knickerbocker News Reporter

GUILDERLAND — A preliminary study of future development along Route 20 calls the town's commercial zoning "haphazard" and the cause of poor traffic circulation and an unattractive commercial strip.

Prepared by development consultants Manuel S. Emanuel Associates Inc., the Oct. 26 study says the zoning pattern along Route 20 has encouraged strip commercial development and excessive retail growth, while diffusing Guilderland's hamlet centers.

"Zoning adequately stringent to control growth has been absent in the past," the report states. "The result is a haphazard strip development of poorly sited businesses without adequate traffic regulation" at Route 20 access points.

The 16-page report focuses on Route 20 from the town line on the east, to the Hartmans Corners area on the west, the Albany-Guilderland line on the north to about a mile inward to the south.

Emanuel presented some of the findings to the Town Board at a recent meeting.

The study attributes the avenue's "aesthetic problems" to poor zoning, site maintenance, traffic circulation, and the mixture of very large commercial centers with small businesses.

Commissioned by the town because of concern about

Route 20 traffic congestion and the town's rapid growth rate, the draft study also makes some preliminary recommendations to remedy the problems.

According to the study, an excessive amount of land zoned for local and community needs creates a surplus of unused land, while preventing residential development.

It says business zoning "intrudes" on residential areas, thereby causing a reduction in residential property values.

Scattered and excessive retail zoning has contributed to the loss of the town's hamlet characteristics, a problem the study says can be remedied by clustering business centers around major intersections and allowing residential areas to exist without encroachment by retail development.

Areas zoned for retail use should be rezoned for either residential or conference-office-research use, which would help limit Western Avenue traffic, the report says.

In addition, the study recommends an emphasis on small-scale, multifamily development. East of Willey Street and North of Ashford Drive are examples of suitable locations for that kind of development, the report says.

The report says a number of Western Avenue zoning problems have had the most negative impact in the Westmere and McKownville hamlets where traffic is heaviest.

Town Supervisor Kevin Moss said the Town Board will discuss the preliminary study at a special meeting Monday night and a final report is expected sometime in December.

Guilderland board eyes plan to ease traffic on Route 20

By PAMELA NEWKIRK

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GUILDERLAND — While agreeing with the general theme of a preliminary study of Route 20, the Town Board has revised recommendations for bypasses intended to ease traffic on the town's major commercial strip.

At a workshop session Monday with Manuel S. Emanuel, whose firm was commissioned to study and make recommendations for the town's future growth along Western Avenue, the board made easing Western Avenue traffic a priority and proposed ways to realize the goal.

The study, dated Oct. 26, attributes the unattractiveness and poor traffic circulation on Route 20 to "haphazard" zoning. The report also discussed the excessive retail growth in town and the loss of its hamlet qualities. It made general recommendations to remedy some of the growth problems.

"Pretty much, the town agreed with the basic assumptions he made," said board member John Smircich. "The message was to go forward with the basic assumptions and crystallize them with more specific recommendations."

The preliminary report proposed supplementary arterials north and south of Route 20 to ease Western Avenue traffic, including a primary northern bypass linking an extended Washington Avenue (proposed by the city of Albany) to Lydius Street.

However, Smircich said the board did not consider it an alternative because a similar proposal in the past had incited "tremendous vocal opposition." Some of the opposition came from environmentalists because the area is in the Pine Bush, he said.

Smircich said the board identified as

a primary goal the realignment of Johnston and Rapp roads, which he said "was looked upon as a good way to ease pressure."

Another priority, he said, is to look for another loop off of Rapp Road and Washington Avenue to which vehicles could connect, specifically from the Crossgates Mall, without using Western Avenue. Such a loop, he said, was first considered in the 1970s, when plans for the Crossgates Mall were in their infancy.

The board said the preliminary report's recommended alternate southern bypass, which would link Foundry Road with Nott, Veeder, Schoolhouse and Krumkill roads, would be likely to generate resident opposition.

Instead, the board asked Emanuel to consider a bypass that would extend Dr. Shaw Road to Johnston Road, said Smircich. He said a right of way already existed on Dr. Shaw Road.

Smircich said the board also had expressed concern about a collector road proposed in the study. The road would extend east from the Siver Road and Willow Street intersection, circle the developed area, and funnel north-south traffic away from Route 20.

He said Emanuel was asked to take a look at developing a collector road which would connect with Lydius Street and run parallel to Route 146, connecting to Route 20.

Smircich said Emanuel was also asked to check on any subdivision approvals granted since the preliminary report was prepared, which might interfere with the proposed bypasses.

The draft of a final report is expected after Thanksgiving, at which time another meeting will be conducted, he said.