

# SHERIDAN PARKSIDE VILLAGE COURTS

REDEVELOPMENT PLAN • FINAL REPORT



**SHERIDAN PARKSIDE VILLAGE COURTS REDEVELOPMENT PLAN  
FINAL REPORT**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction – Project Purpose:**

The Sheridan Parkside Village Courts neighborhood is located in the northwestern portion of the Town of Tonawanda and is bounded by Sheridan Drive, East Park Drive, Ensminger Road and the railroad corridor. This community was constructed as “temporary” wartime housing in the World War II era, and consists primarily of multi-family housing. Many of the attached units are deteriorated and in sub-standard condition. Achievable rents are low, and the area has become increasingly characterized by a concentration of low-income residents.

It has been a goal of the Town of Tonawanda Office of Community Development to transform the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood into a more diverse community, with a greater range of housing opportunities for varying income levels. Over the past four years, the Town has been allocating its Community Development program funds through the Home Ownership for Parkside’s Enrichment (HOPE) First-time Homeownership Program for the purchase and demolition of 65 substandard housing units. These units have been replaced with 24 new, single-family detached homes, which were marketed to qualified moderate-income residents. The Sheridan Parkside community was also included in a State-designated Empire Zone in 2001, which will result in incentives for development sponsors to encourage increased investment in this area.

The response to this redevelopment effort demonstrated that Sheridan Parkside was becoming a desirable location to reside. Therefore, in the spring of 2003, the Town determined that a more comprehensive approach for redeveloping the neighborhood was needed, and provided funding for the preparation of a concept plan to guide future redevelopment efforts in the community. The proposed Redevelopment or “Vision” Plan, illustrates new lot configurations, new internal circulation patterns, public greenways and parks, street lighting, landscaping and other public improvements that are designed to improve the image of the neighborhood and support the Town’s efforts to transform the neighborhood into a more diverse, home-ownership based community.

### **Planning and Design Process:**

The Town retained Wendel Duchscherer Architects and Engineers (WD) to prepare the Redevelopment Plan. The preparation of this plan for the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood was based on sound planning principles, and was achieved with significant public input. The planning and design process that was undertaken for this effort included the following components.

#### **1. Research Existing Conditions**

The project consultant researched existing conditions, including the physical condition of the neighborhood and its features, existing land uses in the area, existing circulation patterns (roadways and pedestrian access), and the demographic profile of the community. Existing plans, policies and applicable zoning and development regulations for the community were also examined. Meetings with certain Town department representatives were also instrumental in this process. Based on this research, WD created a base map of the neighborhood, showing the location of roadways, existing parcels and housing units, and other community features.

#### **2. Community Input**

WD solicited public input from neighborhood residents, landowners and other community stakeholders, Town officials, and the development community, in order to establish preliminary concepts and issues to drive the preparation of the Redevelopment Plan. Community input efforts for this project included the following.

**a. *Public Information Meeting***

A general information meeting was held at the beginning of the process to introduce the project and to enable neighborhood residents, property owners and other community stakeholders the opportunity to offer their comments and concerns on potential redevelopment efforts and where improvements were needed. Comments included a desire for additional amenities in the community (recreational facilities, improved library), public safety, improved traffic flow through the neighborhood, and a greater diversity of housing options, including traditional single-family homes and smaller homes. There was not strong support for the provision of additional commercial space in the community.

**b. *Developers Panel***

As a supplement to the Public Information Meeting, and to gain the perspective of those that would be making financial investments in the future of the area, representatives from the development and real estate communities were invited to provide their insights on potential redevelopment efforts in the Sheridan Parkside area. The consensus of this group was that redevelopment efforts should be at concentrated locations, not scattered sites, in order to maximize the impact on the character of the community. The most deteriorated units should be demolished quickly in order to minimize their negative impacts, while more valuable land should be developed at later stages, because achievable values will increase incrementally as more of the neighborhood is transformed. Detached housing was preferred, particularly in order to establish a new image, separate from existing housing types. It was felt that continued subsidies would be necessary in the near-term to assist private redevelopment actions.

**c. *Design Charrette***

As a follow-up to the initial meetings, a more hands-on public meeting was held to introduce preliminary concept plans and alternatives to the community and to get public responses and feedback on these designs and future “vision” for the area. This meeting was held once the project consultant had analyzed all the data (including input from the public information meeting and developers panel discussion), established goals and objectives for the project, and developed preliminary zoning and design ideas. Like the initial meeting, this meeting was well attended and the participants offered strong support for the proposed improved street patterns, pocket parks, sidewalks, landscaping and site improvements at the community center. Desires for increased homeownership and an improved library were reiterated.

**d. *Final Public Meeting***

The results of efforts to date were compiled in a Technical Memorandum to the Town, and direction was then provided for the preparation of the draft Redevelopment Plan, including finalizing the vision for the area. This included several meetings to solicit input from Town officials, including representatives from Office of Community Development, and Fire and Police Departments. Thereafter, a final Public Meeting was held to present the draft Redevelopment Plan to the community, answer questions and obtain feedback

on the Plan and proposed vision. There was general consensus for the community vision and support for the Plan.

### **3. Development of Goals**

The Town's initial goal, at the beginning of the project, was to "transform the Sheridan Parkside Village courts from a multi-family neighborhood to a diverse homeownership neighborhood". After analyzing the Information from the analysis of existing conditions, the comments offered at the public information meetings, and input from Town representatives, a list of issues and concerns was devised for the redevelopment of the Sheridan Parkside community. Based on an examination of these issues, and final input from the public, the following goal was established for the community:

**"Establish the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood as a vibrant, diverse, attractive and desirable place to live"**

### **4. Development of Site Concepts**

Several alternative site concepts were created and provided to the Town for review and comment. Alternative plans showed a number of options for roadway patterns, green space locations, and housing mix and location. In partnership with the Department of Community Development, and after gathering input from the public (as noted above), a preferred alternative was selected for the redevelopment of the Sheridan Parkside community.

### **5. Final Redevelopment Plan**

The final proposed Sheridan Parkside Village Courts Redevelopment Plan presents an exciting opportunity to transform this multi-family neighborhood into a diverse community offering a variety of housing options to local residents. The redeveloped neighborhood will contain a mix of housing types, tenures and price ranges, including traditional single-family homes, duplexes and patio homes. Other neighborhood amenities, such as public greenways, bike paths, sidewalks, landscaping, street lighting and gateway entrances are incorporated into the design. The plan will be used to provide guidance in terms of new capital improvements, and to attract private investment to the neighborhood, helping to make the concept plan become a reality.

### **6. Zoning Concepts**

Zoning regulations that currently govern development actions in the neighborhood were analyzed in order to determine where they supported or conflicted with the preferred redevelopment concept. As a result of this analysis, a proposed zoning "overlay" district was prepared. This overlay district does not replace the underlying zoning district, but provides additional standards that are applied on top of existing standards. The zoning overlay standards include guidelines for new development, including landscaping and architectural standards, and explicitly permit smaller homes and zero-lot line development. Proposed zoning overlay for the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood will guide development to be consistent with the intent of the Redevelopment Plan. Therefore, redevelopment proposals must demonstrate how they relate to that Plan so the Town will be able to assess consistency and achieve their goals and objectives.

## **7. Vision Poster**

A Vision Poster was created to illustrate the proposed Redevelopment Plan for Sheridan Parkside Village Courts community in an attractive, eye-catching visual. The poster adds life to the redevelopment plan to depict how the neighborhood would appear if the proposed improvements indicated on that concept plan were implemented. Several blowups around the perimeter highlight potential housing options and simulate internal views of the redeveloped site. It is the Town's intention to utilize the Vision Poster as a road map and marketing piece to prompt interest and enthusiasm in the development community. Providing this poster to prospective investors and developers will help them to understand what the Town is looking for right from the start. This poster clearly illustrates the vision for the area and will help the Town to generate renewed interest in the Sheridan Parkside Village Courts community.

## **I. Introduction**

The Sheridan Parkside community was constructed as temporary wartime housing in the World War II era, and consists primarily of multi-family housing. This neighborhood is located in the northwestern portion of the Town of Tonawanda and is bounded by Sheridan Drive, East Park Drive, Ensminger Road and the railroad corridor. Many of the attached housing units are deteriorated and in sub-standard condition. Achievable rents are low, and the area has become increasingly characterized by a concentration of low-income residents.

It has been a goal of the Town of Tonawanda Office of Community Development to transform the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood into a more diverse community, with a greater range of housing opportunities for varying income levels. Over the past four years, the Town has been allocating its Community Development program funds through the Home Ownership for Parkside's Enrichment (HOPE) First-time Homeownership Program for the purchase and demolition of 65 substandard housing units. These units have been replaced with 24 new, single-family detached homes, which were marketed to qualified moderate-income residents. The Sheridan Parkside community was also included in a State-designated Empire Zone in 2001, which will result in incentives for development sponsors to encourage increased investment in this area.

The response to this redevelopment effort demonstrated that Sheridan Parkside is becoming a desirable location to reside. Therefore, in the spring of 2003, the Town decided that a more comprehensive approach for redeveloping the neighborhood was required, and they provided funding for the preparation of a concept plan to guide future redevelopment efforts in the community. The proposed Redevelopment Plan and the "Vision" Plan, illustrate new lot configurations, new internal circulation patterns, public greenways and parks, street lighting, landscaping and other public improvements that are designed to improve the image of the neighborhood and support the Town's efforts for transforming the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood into a more diverse, home-ownership based community.

## **II. Data Summary**

The intent of the data summary portion of the project was to establish existing conditions and identify issues that need to be addressed through the design efforts in order to support the successful redevelopment of the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood. Sources included field investigations, census data, review of existing reports, research into existing programs and policies on the part of the Town, and base mapping.

### **1. Site Conditions**

#### **a. Existing Land Use**

Sheridan Parkside is a 137-acre residential community, predominately consisting of two-story, two to eight-family apartment units, with some single-family detached homes throughout (Figure 1). This community also includes a 3½ acre commercial strip fronting Sheridan Drive, between East Park Drive and Sheridan Parkside Drive. The apartment buildings were originally constructed as housing for factory workers during the Second World War. Most of these buildings are in poor condition and several have been demolished to make way for new housing. Several new single-family detached homes have been and are being constructed along Ensminger Road, Burns Street, Boswell Place and Commodore Avenue.

The Community Center (a former two-story elementary school) occupies a 6½-acre site in the center of the community, on Sheridan Parkside Drive (Figure 2). The site includes a wading pool, a small basketball court, two children's play areas, a gazebo and two paved parking lots.

In addition to the parkland around the community center, there are two small neighborhood parks: the Curwood play area, which is situated off Curwood Court; and the Friendship play area, located off Tarkington Court (Figure 2). The Friendship play area is linked by a walkway system to the housing along the seven loop streets (courts), north of Masefield Drive. Neither the Friendship play area or the walkways, which are located behind the apartments, are popular with the residents. This is because the play area and walks are not readily visible from the streets and residents are afraid to use the walks at night.

### **b. Existing Circulation**

The community is bounded on the south by Sheridan Drive, on the east by an active railroad line, on the north by Ensminger Road and on the west by East Park Drive (there is a designated bike lane along East Park Drive). Sheridan Parkside Drive, a local collector street, is the only north/south street within the community, linking Sheridan Drive and Ensminger Road. This roadway provides the primary points of entry into the community.

The Sheridan Parkside community includes a number of courts that are serviced by loop roads, which connect to local collector streets, including Masefield Drive, Commodore Avenue, Dumas Place, Dickens Avenue, Browning Avenue, and Cowper Avenue. Many of the loop streets/courts have no sidewalks and residents must walk in the streets.

The Interior residential streets on the east side of the community rely entirely on Sheridan Parkside Drive for ingress and egress. The main access point from the west is Masefield Drive, which connects East Park Drive with Sheridan Parkside Drive. Commodore Avenue, Dumas Place and Dickens Avenue also provide connections between East Park Drive and Sheridan Parkside Drive.

The four courtyard streets north of Masefield Drive connect to East Park Drive. This tends to isolate these courts from the rest of the community and requires all vehicular traffic to access Sheridan Parkside Drive via Ensminger Road or Commodore Avenue.

### **c. Existing Adjacent Land Uses**

Adjacent land uses have an impact on what is feasible for the redevelopment plans. To the south, Sheridan Drive is a major thoroughfare with high traffic counts, and serves as a barrier between the neighborhood and uses to the south. Uses along Sheridan are primarily commercial. Sheridan Park Golf Course bounds the western edge of the neighborhood, on the western side of East Park Drive. Views of the golf course are scenic in many areas, but are obscured by maintenance buildings toward the northern end of the neighborhood. Adjacent land uses are most diverse along the northern boundary, where a number of uses front the northern side of Ensminger Road. There are several community facilities along Ensminger, including athletic fields, St. Timothy's Church and the associated senior housing facility at Ensminger and East Park, the S.P.C.A. facility, and the Town's Senior Citizen Center at 291 Ensminger. Ensminger also has a mix of commercial uses, including retail, trucking and light industrial uses. In general, land uses toward the eastern end of the neighborhood, approaching Military Road, are more industrial in nature, while community facilities tend to be located toward the western end of the neighborhood, closer to the golf course.

An active railroad corridor defines the eastern boundary of the neighborhood. To the east of the railroad, land uses are predominately commercial and industrial along Military Road. Also on the eastern edge of the neighborhood, the 13-acre, inactive, AIs – Atochem industrial property extends into the neighborhood behind the community center (see Figure 2). This parcel creates a "notch" in the neighborhood. It is currently vacant and available for sale. Several structures associated with its former industrial use remain on the site.

## 2. Statistical Information

A brief summary of demographic and housing data was prepared using information from the 2000 Census, Census Bureau, Department of Commerce.

- A total of 2,864 persons lived in the Sheridan Parkside area in 2000. This represents approximately 4% of the Town's total population.
- The population of Sheridan Parkside is young. Median age is 28.3 years, and one-third of the population (32.4%) is age 19 or younger. Seniors aged 65 or older make up 10% of the population.
- The area is family-oriented. 61% of all households are families, and close to 40% are families with children. Single-person households made up 31% of all households. Roughly one-third of the one-person households are seniors.
- In contrast to the rest of the Town, the majority of residents are renters. About 79% of all occupied housing units are rented, and 21% are owner-occupied. Townwide, the proportions are reversed, with 73% of housing occupied by owners, and 27% of units renter-occupied.
- Most residents in Sheridan Parkside have modest incomes. Median household income in 1999 was \$17,490. Townwide, median household income is \$41,453.
- Turnover is high within the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood. According to 2000 Census data, over three-quarters of all residents had lived in their home less than 10 years.
- Approximately 35% of residents in Sheridan Parkside aged 5 and older had lived in the same house at least five years.
- For residents who had lived in their homes for less than five years, most had moved to Sheridan Parkside from somewhere else in Erie County. Of the remaining residents, most had lived in Niagara County. 84% of those residents who had lived in a different house lived in the Buffalo-Niagara region in 1995.
- Mobility is especially high with renters: 45% of renters had lived at their current address for less than one year, and another 35% had lived at the same address for one to five years. In contrast, over half (52.1%) of all owners had lived at the same address for over twenty years. Over one-third of owners had lived at the same address for thirty years or more.
- In 2000, there were 141 vacant housing units in the area, or 10.7%. This represents a very high vacancy rate. A rate of around 5% is considered normal to account for mobility (transitions due to new leases and house sales). Town-wide, housing vacancy is 3.9%.
- Vacancy in Sheridan-Parkside is highest in the multi-family units, particularly the 5- to 9-unit structures, where close to one-third of the apartments are unoccupied. Over half of all vacant units in the area are in 5- to 9-unit buildings.
- Patterns of vacancy have been changing. In 1990, vacancy was significantly lower (6.5%) and primarily located in single-family home. Vacancy among rental units was very low in 1990.
- The amount of vacancy has increased, increasing by 68% between 1990 and 2000.

These trends support the Town's decision to make redevelopment of the neighborhood a priority. It is clear that the existing housing stock is not meeting community needs, as evidenced by high and increasing vacancy rates, high mobility rates and other indicators of community problems.

### **III. Public Input**

Three public meetings have been held for this project to date. These include a general public input meeting for residents, landlords and other interested parties; an informal meeting with developers and realtors; and a public design charrette to present preliminary design concepts. In addition, Wendel Duchscherer met with Town Department heads to gain their input regarding the project. The comments gathered at the three public meetings are summarized below.

#### **1. Public Information meeting**

This meeting was held in the Auditorium at the Community Center in the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood. The meeting was commenced by Robert Cymerman, Administrator of the Office of Community Development, who provided introductions and an overview of the project. Mr. Cymerman discussed the policies and processes for housing acquisition and resident relocation. He also provided a brief history of new housing construction at Sheridan Parkside, and the desire to create a more diverse neighborhood with higher home ownership levels.

The Wendel Duchscherer project team was introduced. Mark Mistretta provided an explanation of the purpose of the meeting and reviewed the project schedule. Wendy Salvati offered a brief description of the planning and design process, as well as an overview of the program for public participation. Thereafter, the floor was opened to the public for questions and comments. The following was offered.

#### **Issues Highlights (as recorded):**

- Consider a full size swimming pool for community use.
- Public safety is an important issue, with emphasis on street lighting and visible public spaces.
- Do not locate sidewalks or public greenspace behind homes. Keep it out front, where it is visible and welcoming. Although front sidewalks are rarely used, people walk in the streets or across properties.
- Provide new, more attractive street lighting, designed at a more human scale (limit height), with shielding to minimize glare adjacent to residences.
- A reduction in the density of development was well supported by the audience. Fewer houses with more space in between and bigger lot frontages were favored.
- Consider the use of fencing and the fact that it can act to interrupt the community environment.
- Provide patio homes and other housing opportunities for seniors. Do not segregate.
- Avoid standard subdivision design; mix it up. Design for a diversity of housing styles for differing income levels and age groups.
- Maintain public greenspace areas (mowing and general upkeep).
- Consider more indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities. A full size basketball court and tennis courts were mentioned.
- There is a desire for more playgrounds and neighborhood tot lot facilities (pocket parks) distributed throughout the community.
- Lower the speed limits on internal streets, particularly courts. Concern regarding safety of children playing in streets.

- Ranch-style housing was suggested, along with patio homes. No apartments or high rises were favored. Duplexes were considered OK.
- Blend new housing with the old, in a sensitive manner.
- Improve the street pattern by connecting streets to brings areas together and improve flow through the community.
- The existing one-way courts are OK.
- There is a need for better quality, not more, neighborhood commercial and retail establishments around the area.
- Cover the ditch on Ensminger Road.
- Provide better signage throughout the community
- Consider improving the library; make it bigger and provide longer hours of operation (evenings and weekends).
- Provide more adult programs at the community center and allow for nighttime and weekend use by adults.
- There were no strong comments regarding the railroad.

In general, the public supported the redevelopment of the area and was eager for opportunities for homeownership, improved recreation and a revitalized community. There was no consensus on sidewalks or additional entryways to the community.

**Additional comments that were offered included:**

- Need more stringent code enforcement to ensure that private property is maintained to high standards.
- Homeowners are concerned that their property values are not eroded by poorly maintained adjacent properties.
- Residents on Ensminger noted that buses at the turn-around idle their engines for long periods late at night in defiance of the regulations, which are posted at the site.
- Property owners are concerned about property values and favor the plan. They see it as a vehicle to increase property values and rent.

**Meeting Conclusion:**

The meeting was closed with the anticipated date of the next meeting scheduled for early June. The audience was informed that they could submit additional comments, questions and considerations on the comment forms that were provided. These forms could be turned in to Robert Cymerman. Information from the Stakeholders' Meeting and about the project would also be provided in an interim newsletter from the Community Development office and on the Office's website. Those in attendance were encouraged to provide comments, attend the next meeting and to bring a friend.

**2. Developers Panel Discussion**

A meeting was held on June 6, 2003, with representatives from the development and realty community to present the project and gather their perspective on the redevelopment of the Sheridan Parkside community.

**Comments (as recorded):**

- Mr. Cymerman noted that local landowners were opposed to designating the area for "slum and blight", a designation that would enable the Department of Community Development to redevelop the area with no income limitations. Given this opposition, the approach has been to use slum and blight on a spot basis, which has stricter regulations

- Mr. Termini noted that it was possible to use HOME monies through a non-profit development corporation for construction financing. As the money is paid back, the non-profit can re-lend it. After the second re-lending, you are no longer required to adhere to income limitations. His company is using that approach in the City of Buffalo now.
  - It was noted that incentives (subsidies) would be necessary to attract buyers, at least for the near term.
  - The importance of having a mix of incomes was emphasized.
  - Senior Housing: one concept is "cottages"-- detached rental units. Each unit is about 900 square feet in size, with a one-story floor plan and porches, built in clusters to create a sense of community. Low-cost amenities can be provided in the common areas (e.g. bocce court, gazebo). This was proposed as a possibility for the interior, formerly industrial parcel.
  - Public investment to help write-down site costs is needed.
  - The rail line was not seen as a problem, particularly if adequately buffered (berm planted with trees). Housing design (insulation, etc.) also helps buffer noise level.
  - Senior housing should be close to community center to allow for day activities.
  - There was extensive discussion of financing options. Essential points: the 9 percent financing through the Low Income Housing Trust Fund (LIHTF) is not feasible. A better source is the 4 percent credits through the Housing Finance Authority (HFA). A non-profit "pass through" is needed for these funds, but the TTDC would qualify.
  - Any other source of public monies available to help buy down site development costs is also valuable. Mr. Termini stated that there is still some UDAG money available.
  - The Affordable Housing Corporation (AFC) is another potential source of funds. AFC's grants help to lower the cost to the buyer. The subsidy can be packaged with low-interest mortgage rates through the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB).
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- The prices of existing housing are very low. Community Development is buying a duplex at 152 Burns for \$22,000. In general, acquisition costs are about \$6,000 to 8,000 per unit. Asbestos abatement is approximately \$1,500 per unit, and demolition costs are averaging around \$16,000 for a 6-unit building. The buildings were built as temporary housing, and have reached the end of their useful life. Rehabilitation is not a feasible option.
  - Mr. Termini and Mr. Morgan agreed that the market is primarily for subsidized units in the near term. As the neighborhood transforms, market rate housing may be possible in the future.
  - Mr. Morgan noted that you need to develop a neighborhood in order to successfully turn the area around; in-fill redevelopment will not work because there is too much difference between what is there currently, and what is being developed. Community Development's policy of landbanking isolated lots until they have a sizeable parcel to develop is the appropriate approach.
  - Concentrate efforts on a particular court if possible, as housing comes available.
  - A priority should be to get the worst units demolished, and build upon existing momentum. Save the more valuable areas, such as the land along the golf course, for later phases to maximize potential values. Prices will increase incrementally. Higher values will not be feasible until more units are redeveloped.
  - Lot size: Mr. Morgan and Mr. Termini felt lot sizes of 4,500 to 5,000 square feet are appropriate. Burke has built houses on as small as 20-foot frontages, although that is not recommended here. New building lots in the Village of Hamburg are 60 by 85 feet, and are selling at \$35,000. The consensus was that frontages in the range of 45 to 50 feet are adequate. Wider frontages would be needed to accommodate attached two-car garages, but in general, the attendees felt that lots should not be overly large.
  - Amenities: there is flexibility in amenities. Buyers are generally more interested in the details of the house over area amenities. Walkways should generally be in front, and not through back yards. Fences to define private space are desirable. Input from residents

- Housing type: focus primarily on single-family and creative detached units. Stay away from condominiums, particularly in an area that was formerly lower-income. Attached housing is not popular, and buyers don't want to pay association fees.
- It was recognized that the golf course has the potential to add value to lots, and more expensive homes would be possible in that area. Suggested lot size was possibly 70-85 foot for frontages, with depths of about 150 feet. Houses on these lots would be in the range of 2200 square feet. The developers, again, agreed that this area be developed last to maximize potential values.
- It was noted that the largest landowner had been receiving subsidies through the 202 program, which have expired. He owns about 220 units, and is likely to be willing to sell. Although his units are scattered throughout the neighborhood, their redevelopment could create an area concentrated enough to have a major impact.
- It was noted that there are 10 people ready and willing to buy new homes, but they do not want to be on isolated lots.
- Financing acquisition is a challenge. Mr. Cymerman would prefer to use Community Development funds for site improvements.
- Councilman Shia would like to establish a regional library, possibly on Sheridan Drive in this area.
- Infrastructure (roadways, curbs, utilities) is relatively new; \$5.5 million was spent on these improvements in 1983.
- There are two separate tax abatement programs available in this area because it is in the Empire Zone. Homeowners can apply under the 485(e) program for abatements on Town, County and School taxes. The exemption is for 7 years and then phases in to full taxes over the next three years. Mr. Termini noted that housing is also eligible for the QEZE (Qualified Empire Zone Enterprises) tax credit if the company creates an increase in employment. His company qualified by adding one part-time employee to administer the program. This is a reimbursement program. (NOTE: the company creating the employment gets a refundable credit against their business taxes equal to a portion of their real property taxes paid if they increase employment. It would not be of assistance to homeowners, but would help reduce costs to developers).
- It was noted that Tax Increment Financing (TIF) can be piggybacked on the tax abatements to help pay for improvements. (NOTE: In Tax Increment Financing, the Town floats a bond to pay for the initial improvements. The bond is paid off through the higher tax revenues received as a result of increased assessments in the area that result from redevelopment.)
- It was urged that the Town aggressively seek out other financing sources, including the congressional delegation, NYS DHCR, and the NYS Affordable Housing Corporation.
- The 13-acre parcel in the center of the neighborhood was discussed. This is formerly industrial land, but the parcel has been delisted, with Phase 1 and Phase 2 Environmental Assessments indicating no on-site contamination.
- Mr. Cymerman noted that the site has been for sale for a while. Estimates prepared by the Town Technical Support Department suggest costs as high as \$200,000 to \$225,000 to demolish existing vacant buildings on the site. Additional infrastructure would also need to be extended to the site. These high site costs may limit the feasibility of redeveloping this site. While there was some enthusiasm for what could be built in that area, the projected site development costs may be too high to be feasible without some sort of public sector assistance.

### **3. Design Charrette**

This meeting was commenced in the Auditorium at the Community Center in the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood. Brief introductions were made by Robert Cymerman, Administrator of the Office of Community Development, who welcomed the public and acknowledged the

Town Board members in attendance. The meeting was then turned over to the project team members from Wendel Duchscherer.

Mark Mistretta provided an overview of the meeting agenda and the purpose of the meeting. Mark introduced the project team members and turned the discussion over to Wendy Salvati who discussed the progress of the public participation activities to date and provided a description of the meetings held so far. She also reviewed and discussed the information provided in the handouts. A brief discussion was also held concerning the situation with the Als-Atochem industrial property. The Town is currently in the process of establishing a dialogue with the property owner to discuss possible future land use scenarios and potential for acquisition of a portion of this land for public use. The meeting was turned back over to Mark Mistretta, who discussed the preliminary design concepts.

Upon completion of the project team's overview, the audience was divided into two "break out" groups for a more in depth review and commentary on the preliminary design schemes and redevelopment ideas. The follow comments were offered at the break out sessions.

### **Visioning Highlights (as recorded):**

To assist with the discussions, the project team stressed to the attendees in each break-out group the importance of viewing the area as newly developed, rather than as it exists today in order to effectively envision the concept schemes. In general, the public supports the redevelopment of the area and they are eager for opportunities for homeownership, improved recreation and a revitalized community. Those in attendance generally supported a new, well-designed sidewalk system. Additional vehicular access points for the community were also supported, but there was no consensus as to the most appropriate locations for such access.

- New access to Ensminger from the "B" section is generally a good idea.
- People have issues with property maintenance: clearing sidewalks during winter, mowing lawns, maintaining fences, etc.
- The majority feels it is a good idea to have multiple access points to all sections of the community.
- There is a strong desire for a new swimming pool at the community center.
- The majority considers a larger green space at the Community Center desirable.
- With a few notable exceptions, people generally agree with the concept of "pocket parks" in all sections and feel it could work well with an improved and larger central park area. They like the idea of having these parks located at highly visible intersections for safety purposes.
- There is some concern with the proposed road layout in the "aggressive" scheme. Some existing homes wouldn't have access to streets. Clarification was made to indicate that new lot sizes would have to be determined for the area.
- There are strong concerns with the existing parking situation along Ensminger Road, when there are activities at the sports fields. Some overflow parking is desired. This is more of a program/enforcement issue.
- A few people suggested having the NFTA bus stop relocated further east on Ensminger Road.
- Also, there are concerns about parking at the intersection of Ensminger Road and East Park Drive. It is considered very dangerous with Parks Department vehicles parking at the corner, and overflow parking for St. Timothy's church on Sundays and Wednesdays.
- A library is strongly encouraged. People like the location on Sheridan but feel it should also have an interior connection to the community. People also feel that a library will help draw people into the community and possibly help the commercial areas along Sheridan Drive.
- It was questioned why only two-family housing is shown along the railroad tracks. The group feels strongly that noise is an issue.

- Many feel that two-family housing should be intermingled with other housing types to help create some diversity in the community.
- People feel that the prime real estate in the area is situated along East Park Drive and the golf course.
- Larger single family areas are preferred, as well as minimized small house areas.
- It is felt that the small homes should have a minimum of two bedrooms; however, this will be determined by the market at the time of development.
- There is a desire to blend the new housing with the existing.
- No additional commercial development is desired. People would like to see the existing commercial properties improved.

The meeting was closed with the anticipated date of the next meeting scheduled for mid-July. The audience was informed that they could submit additional comments, questions and considerations on the comment form that was provided. These forms could be turned into Robert Cymerman. Information from the Stakeholders' Meeting and about the project will also be provided in an interim newsletter from the Community Development office and on the Office's website. Those in attendance were encouraged to provide comments, attend the next meeting and to bring a friend.

#### **4. Final Public Meeting**

This meeting was commenced in the Auditorium at the Community Center in the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood. Brief introductions were made by Robert Cymerman, Administrator of the Office of Community Development, who welcomed the public and acknowledged the Town Supervisor and Town Board members in attendance. Supervisor Moline welcomed the public, Board members Town staff and the consultant, and spoke briefly about the Sheridan Parkside community. The meeting was then turned over to the project team members from Wendel Duchscherer.

Mark Mistretta provided an overview of the meeting agenda and the purpose of the meeting. Mark introduced the project team members. Mr. Mistretta asked Bruce O'Hara to report on his meeting with the Town of Tonawanda Fire and Police Departments regarding the proposed road connections that provide two means of ingress and egress to all quadrants within Sheridan Parkside. Mr. O'Hara also commented on a meeting that was held with the Director of Strategic Planning and Acquisition for Atofina Chemicals, Inc., regarding the ALS – Atochem site and the company's desire to sell all or part of their industrial property, pending further environmental studies to be undertaken by Atofina Chemicals.

The meeting was turned back over to Mr. Mistretta, who discussed potential impacts on property values within the community as a result of the Sheridan Parkside Redevelopment Plan. Mark stressed that the Redevelopment Plan, in and of itself, would not affect property values. Property values would only be impacted by actual changes in land uses and the physical conditions of properties in the area, as market values are determined by actual market conditions.

Mr. Mistretta then reviewed the evolution of the Sheridan Parkside Redevelopment Plan as follows.

1. The roadway network including:
  - Elimination of some streets and street segments to avoid double frontage lots
  - New streets to provide two means of ingress and egress to all sectors of the community for the safety and security of the residents and to create a more efficient street network; AND

- The redevelopment of major east/west and north/south streets with an emphasis on street tree planting, detached sidewalks, on-street bike lanes, ornamental street lighting and attractive signage.

Mark pointed out that most of the proposed changes involved “tweaking” existing alignments to provide traditional city blocks, and improvements to create pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets.

As streets are redeveloped, it is recommended that the current Town standards for right-of-way and pavement widths be met (66-foot right-of-way and 28-foot minimum pavement width). The redeveloped streets would allow for detached sidewalks and ample space for tree lawns.

An option for using the westerly end of the industrial site for a north/south road to connect the northeast and southeast quadrants was reviewed. If part of the industrial site was acquired by the Town, and a north/south connector street was developed, this street would redefine the east side of the central park area.

## 2. Public Facilities for Sheridan Parkside:

- Mr. Mistretta discussed the public facilities shown on the draft Redevelopment Plan, including a library at the corner of Sheridan Drive and Sheridan Parkside Drive, an enlarged central park with new recreational facilities, pocket parks in each neighborhood quadrant, and landscaped buffer areas along the railroad and adjacent to the industrial site.

## 3. Typical Housing Types

- Greg Robinson was introduced to discuss the proposal for small, single-family and two-family housing types, as shown on the plan. It was noted that these designs are compatible with the new single-family housing along Burns Street and Ensminger Road.

Upon completion of the project team’s presentation the audience was invited to comment and ask questions. The follow comments were offered.

1. It was noted that the cross section for Sheridan Parkside Drive, as shown on the plans, appears too wide. (Answer) It was pointed out that the section could be revised if the right-of-way width is 60 feet rather than the 66 feet depicted on the plan.
2. Will the extension of Browning Avenue at its intersection with Ensminger Road, just west of the railroad crossing, create a dangerous intersection? No, the intersection will be west of the railroad crossing gates and sight distance will be good in both directions. The police and fire departments both reviewed this potential intersection in the field and indicated that it would be safe.
3. Will there be sidewalks provided along all streets? Yes, as the streets are improved, walkways and tree lawns will be provided.
4. Will abandoned streets revert back to adjacent property owners? Yes, in some cases that may occur. It will depend the particular location.
5. Where lots are designated as small or single-family, how can you change from small to large or large to small? The existing Town zoning code and any new zoning requirements identified in the proposed Overlay Zone District will govern building setbacks, maximum lot coverage and other site development restrictions.

6. What impact will the “Commercial” designation on the Redevelopment Plan have on my house on the corner of Dickens Avenue and Sheridan Parkside Drive? It was explained that this existing residential property would not be affected in any way by the Redevelopment Plan designation “Commercial”. Only the property that fronts along Sheridan Drive, which is currently zoned for commercial use, can be used in such a manner. The rear half of that block is, and will remain, zoned for residential use.

There were several questions regarding State and Federal aid to the Town for redevelopment of Sheridan Parkside Community; the number of houses to be built in 2003, 2004 and beyond; and how the Sheridan Parkside Redevelopment Plan may affect the building schedule. Bob Cymerman answered the questions giving project building schedules, aid sources, total annual budget for the Community Development Department and what the funds can and have been used to accomplish redevelopment to date. Bob offered to answer other questions regarding the Community Development Office’s role in the implementation and development process after the public meeting.

Supervisor Moline commented about the vision for Sheridan Parkside Community and stressed that citizen input will be important throughout the planning and zoning process and that Town officials are sensitive to what the electorate says. He also noted that a way would be found to maintain a reasonable level of new housing construction in the Sheridan Parkside Community.

Mark Mistretta continued the presentation by listing the next steps in the planning process including: the development of a vision poster to promote and build momentum for the project; asking area residential developers to review and comment on the work to date; finalizing the zoning overlay district; and implementing the SEQR environmental review process. Wendel Duchscherer plans to complete their work by mid September.

#### **IV. Preliminary Issues Summary**

Based on information compiled in earlier tasks, Wendel Duchscherer prepared a summary of the issues affecting the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood, which are presented in this section. These preliminary issues helped to guide the development of the draft concept plan for the neighborhood. They also formed the basis for the preparation of the Goals and Objectives summarized in the following section.

##### **Issues:**

##### **The neighborhood has a high proportion of rental units, which is leading to high vacancy rates, high levels of turnover and other indicators of instability:**

- The Sheridan Parkside neighborhood is dominated by older, multi-family units that are not popular with potential residents.
- As a result, vacancy is very high (nearly three times that of the overall Town).
- There is also a very high degree of turnover. Fully 80% of renters in the neighborhood have lived at their current address for less than five years; 45% had lived at the same address for less than one year.

##### **The characteristics of housing vacancy in the neighborhood have been changing.**

- Vacancy in the neighborhood has been increasing. In 1990, the vacancy rate was 6.5%, compared to 10.7% in 2000. The number of vacant units increased by 68%.

- Vacancy in 1990 was in the range of a "normal" vacancy rate. It is generally assumed that a normal housing market will have a vacancy rate of about 5% to account for units that are vacant due to mobility (apartments being renovated between tenants, houses being sold, etc.).
- The structure of vacancy is changing dramatically. In 1990, two-thirds of all vacant units were single-family homes. Vacancy among the apartment units was relatively low.
- In 2000, vacancy is particularly high at the larger multiple-unit buildings. Over half of all vacant units in the neighborhood are located in buildings with 5- or more apartments in them.

**Homeownership leads to a much more stable community, because homeowners have an investment in the area.**

- Over half of all homeowners in the area have lived in their homes for more than twenty years, and over a third had lived in their home for thirty years or more.
- Residents who attended the public input meeting support the transition to a greater proportion of homeownership in the neighborhood.
- Rents are extremely low, making it difficult to support a rental market. According to 2000 Census data, over half of rental units had gross rents in the range of \$300 to \$499 per month. Median gross rent was \$444. Gross rent figures include average monthly costs for utilities (gas, electricity, water and sewer service) in addition to the contract rent paid to the landlord.
- Many of the rental units were receiving federal subsidies at one point, helping to make them profitable for the owners. In many cases, these subsidies have expired, and the units are no longer economically viable, particularly at the achievable rents.

**Changing the image of the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood will be an incremental process.**

- Potential homebuyers and developers both prefer new homes built in a concentrated area, rather than in-fill development. Scattered new homes are more difficult to build and market.
- Based on feedback at the public meeting, residents in the new houses are generally satisfied with their homes, but they are frustrated at continued disinvestment at adjacent properties.
- As older homes are replaced, and an increasing percentage of the homes are new, achievable values will increase.

**The primary market for new housing in Sheridan Parkside is from Tonawanda, Kenmore and North Buffalo.**

- The first new homeowners in Sheridan-Parkside were predominately from one of the Tonawandas. Just over 80% of the families that are living in one of the HOPE houses previously lived in the 14150 zip code. The remainder previously lived in the Black Rock-Riverside neighborhood of Buffalo (14207).
- About two-fifths (44%) of the first homeowners were from within the Sheridan-Parkside neighborhood.
- The current prospective buyers follow a similar pattern, with all but one from either Tonawanda or Buffalo.

**As the project is more established, the market area is widening.**

- While four of the eight new buyers for this year's HOPE homes are from Buffalo, they are from a wider range of neighborhoods.
- The waiting list of persons signed up to take the Homeownership classes (HOP) represents potential future buyers. Thirty-two separate zip codes are represented, with

- The key market area remains Tonawanda, Kenmore and North Buffalo, with 59% of those signed up for the HOP classes from zip codes in these three areas (14150, 14207, 14217 and 14223).

**New housing should provide a diverse range of options, including smaller homes and different price ranges**

- Residents support smaller homes and patio-style homes for seniors or as starter homes.
- Residents also support a range of styles, including one-story homes.
- Residents support some rental units, but not in the same style as existing multi-family units.
- Developers indicated a strong preference for detached units. One concept was for "cottages", or detached rental units, targeted at the senior citizen market.
- Other than the cottage concept, there was not much enthusiasm for rental units among the developers. It is felt that existing rental types dominant the public image of the area, and higher-quality rental units would be difficult to make successful until the new image of the area is better established.
- Any apartment or multi-family units that are provided must be of a very high quality, and should be in a scale and style that is compatible with the other new housing in the area.
- For the near term, it is preferable to focus on one- and two-family detached units. Until the image of the area has been transformed, condominium and townhouse units should be avoided.

**For the near term, continued subsidies will be needed to support the redevelopment of the neighborhood.**

- The current market is for "affordable" homeownership units. Units are available for income-eligible homeowners (households with income levels up to 80% of area median income).
- Homes have been built with subsidies (\$15,000 per unit, plus down payment assistance).
- Developers indicated that continued subsidies were likely needed until a larger proportion of the neighborhood is successfully redeveloped.
- Creative financing approaches can be used to help lower development costs.

**Additional Comments:**

- Public safety is a major concern. Site and housing design should support a feeling of security. Open space should be visible from the street.
- Privacy is another concern. Site layout and fences can help support privacy. Walkways should be in front of the homes, not through the back yards. The common space at the interior of the courts has not been successful as community space. It is perceived of as a "no-man's land".
- Density is currently too high, but the area can support a certain level of density. In general, housing should be built on lots of 4,500 to 5,000 square feet, with frontages in the range of 50 feet wide. This scale is typical in Tonawanda, and supports a level of development that helps keep down costs. It also promotes walkability.
- The area along the golf course should be land-banked and developed as one of the last phases.
- The adjacent industrial parcel backing up to the community center represents both an opportunity and a constraint. It is an open area of about 13-acres. Its size and configuration makes more creative housing types and styles feasible. At the same time, there are several constraints, including the cost of acquisition, demolition and site improvements. There is also some concern over past industrial uses. It is estimated that

- Infrastructure in the neighborhood is relatively new. (1983)
- Reprogramming of the Community Center is recommended, including additional programming for adults. Other possible ideas include additional recreational facilities (better basketball courts, Boys and Girls Club, tennis). There was support for a full-sized pool, but this is probably not economically feasible.
- The library is not currently meeting neighborhood needs, with a major impediment being its limited hours of operation. It is also seen as too small.
- Commercial properties also need upgrades, improvements. Developers were supportive of potential additional retail, particularly along Sheridan. Residents were less convinced of the need.

## V. Goals and Objectives

At the beginning of the planning process for this project, the Town of Tonawanda Office of Community Development articulated the following goal for the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood:

***“The transformation of the neighborhood from a multi-family (predominately rental) neighborhood to a diverse, predominately homeownership-based neighborhood”.***

General support for this goal was demonstrated through our research and the comments we gathered from the public. To help guide the redevelopment efforts for the Sheridan Parkside community, we have refined the goal and developed the following objectives:

**“To establish the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood as a vibrant, diverse, attractive and desirable place to live”.**

- Encourage a greater level of private investment in the area, whether on the part of homeowners or landlords, in order to promote property improvements and continued upkeep and maintenance of existing buildings in the neighborhood.
- Develop a site layout and circulation pattern that supports a pedestrian-friendly environment, enhances the new image of the area, and supports a healthy, vital community.
- Improve and enhance the image for the area by designing and maintaining design and landscaping standards that in result in better development.
- Upgrade the quality of life for residents of the community by providing a design that addresses public safety, access and other internal needs of the community.
- Provide public improvements and amenities that support and encourage the new image of the area as an attractive, well-maintained neighborhood, including public greenspace, streetscape improvements, recreation facilities and reprogramming of the community center.
- Provide for a variety of housing options, focused primarily on homeownership.
- Revise land use regulations to ensure high quality design standards and support the type of development that is preferred in the community.

## VI. Site Concepts

Utilizing the issues summary and the input generated at the public meetings, in particular the design charrette, along with the other information assembled under Phase I of the project, preliminary concept designs were prepared for the project. The concept designs center on how the existing infrastructure and open space system can be reused or enhanced and integrated into the designs, and the placement of new residential land uses. The preliminary design schemes are as follows.

## **1. Conceptual Plan for Roads and Greenspace**

### **a. Scheme 1 – Conceptual Plan for Roads and Green Space**

Scheme 1 is very conservative in that there would be only minor changes recommended to the existing street pattern and green space areas (Figure 3). The recommendations under this scheme would require limited acquisition of existing housing to achieve the goals of providing safer and better vehicular and pedestrian circulation within the community. Because the housing in the northeast quadrant of the community (housing served by the “B” courts) is accessible only from Sheridan Parkside via Browning Avenue, it is recommended that a second point of access be provided to allow residents and emergency vehicles into the “B” courts area should Browning Avenue be blocked for any reason. Scheme 1 shows the extension of Lardner Court easterly to connect with Burns Street providing alternative access should the intersection of Burns Street and Browning Avenue ever become blocked. Similarly, Blackmore Street would be extended easterly to connect with Balzac Court.

The southeast quadrant of the community (housing served by the “C” courts) relies on Cowper Court as the only means of ingress and egress from Sheridan Parkside. Extending a new connector road east, from Sheridan Parkside Drive to Crane Place, would provide a second point of access. This road would tie the northern portions of Cromwell Court, Curwood Court and Crane Place together with Sheridan Parkside Drive. This recommendation provides an alternate means of access in the event Cowper Drive were to become blocked.

To provide better pedestrian connections to the community center and central park area from the northwest quadrant of the community, walkways are shown between Thackery and Pyle Courts and between Tarkington and Alcott Courts. To facilitate more direct pedestrian access to the community center and park from the northeast and southeast quadrants, walkways and expanded green space are shown connecting Blackmore Street and Cromwell Court with the central park. These changes would encourage both children and adults to use safe off-street pathways to get to and from the community center and the central park. In this and all other schemes, it is also proposed that detached sidewalks be provided along all the other courts and streets.

To encourage a better bicycle connection into the Sheridan Parkside Community, bike lane signage and striping could be included along Masefield Drive. This would provide access from the bike route that is located along East Park Drive to Sheridan Parkside Drive.

### **b. Scheme 1A – Conceptual Plan for Roads and Green Space**

Scheme 1A varies from Scheme 1 in that the Sheridan Parkside Drive right-of-way would be developed to include 5-foot to 6-foot wide sidewalks with tree lawns on both sides of the street. Additional tree planting, ornamental street lighting and possibly a bus shelter would be provided to enhance the streetscape (Figure 4). At the north and south intersections of Sheridan Parkside Drive with Ensminger Road and Sheridan Drive, additional green space and attractive entrance features would be provided to better identify the Sheridan Parkside Community. Masefield Drive would be treated in a similar fashion with wider walks, more tree planting and ornamental street lighting. With these improvements, the primary entrances and

major streets will present a very positive image for the community. As a further enhancement, decorative crosswalks could also be included at the intersection of Sheridan Parkside Drive with Masefield Drive, as well as Browning Avenue and Pyle Court, where the proposed greenway connections are planned. A landscaped berm is also proposed around the perimeter of the vacant industrial site to provide a more substantial buffer for the residential uses.

### **c. Scheme 2 – Conceptual Plan for Roads and Green Space**

Scheme 2 is more aggressive than the first schemes in that more vehicular connections, pedestrian corridors and additional parkland are proposed (Figure 5). The courts in the northwest quadrant would be linked in both north-south and east-west directions. A pocket park is recommended along the street that would connect Alcott and Tarkington Courts. This location would provide optimum visibility from the adjacent streets, for security purposes and would allow the children to play close to home. Vehicular connections are proposed from the south side of Masefield Drive to Commodore Avenue and Dumas Place. The connector street between Masefield and Dumas would replace Hale Court to eliminate double frontage lots along Sheridan Parkside Drive and Hale Court. A pocket park is proposed in the southwest quadrant in a highly visible location.

In the northeast quadrant, a new connector street is shown linking the “B” courts area and Ensminger Road. This is another option for a second point of access to the “B” courts. Burnett Place and Balzac Court are shown connected, as in Scheme 1. A pocket park is recommended along Browning Avenue between Balzac Court and Burnett Place to provide a visible play area for younger children. A new street is shown linking the northeast and southeast quadrants through the western end of the industrial site. This proposal would require that all or part of the 13-acre Als-Atochem parcel be acquired by the Town. The proposed east-west connection linking Sheridan Parkside Drive with Crane Place is the same configuration as in Scheme 1. A pocket park is also proposed for the southeast quadrant. This park, like the other proposed neighborhood parks, would have frontage on three streets.

A landscaped area is shown along the railroad and along Sheridan Drive to help buffer the residential uses from railroad and vehicular traffic noise.

Scheme 2 proposes a large expansion to the central park by incorporating existing residential and industrial land adjacent to the existing park. A larger central park would permit additional facilities, such as a swimming pool, tennis courts and basketball half courts.

### **d. Scheme 2A – Conceptual Plan for Roads and Green Space**

Scheme 2A is similar to Scheme 2 with the following exceptions (Figure 6):

- A second point of access connects Ensminger Road to the “B” courts area at the Browning Avenue circle.
- The courts on the west side of Sheridan Parkside Drive are not connected.
- The central park area does not extend to Browning Avenue.
- There are no pocket parks shown.
- A future public library is proposed on the northeast corner of Sheridan Drive and Sheridan Parkside Drive.

## **2. Conceptual Land Use Plans**

Based on existing land uses, both within and adjacent to the community, existing and proposed vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and the input gathered from community residents, developers and City of Tonawanda officials and staff, two conceptual land use plans have been developed for Sheridan Parkside Community.

### **a. Land Use Plan 1**

Land Use Plan 1 depicts the majority of the community as single-family detached housing (Figure 7). Single-family homes are shown along Ensminger Road, East Park Drive, Sheridan Drive (east of Sheridan Parkside Drive) and along Sheridan Parkside Drive, except across from the community center. By planning and constructing single-family detached homes along the perimeter and main internal streets of the community, a precedent for quality homes will be established. The trend for single-family detached housing is already strong, with several new houses along Ensminger Road, Burns Street, Boswell Place, Bellah Place and Commodore Avenue. Several more single-family detached homes are planned for the “B” courts area. New single-family detached houses could be two-story or single-story ranch style, depending on lot size and consumer demand.

A category identified as small homes makes up the second largest residential type. Small homes would include patio homes, cottages, bungalows and other similar housing styles. The primary reason for this type of housing is to provide smaller homes for “empty nesters” (families whose children have left home), seniors, and young people without children or who might be initiating home ownership. Groups of small homes are shown intermingled with the single-family detached homes to provide variety and interest. Two groups of small homes are also shown close to the community center, which would provide convenience for older residents to walk to the community center.

Two-family homes are also being offered as a land use option, but to a lesser extent. This type of housing is shown in the eastern portion of the community. It is anticipated that there will still be a need for limited rental housing in the area; however, this type of housing would no longer be the predominant choice.

Commercial land uses are shown on Sheridan Drive and on Ensminger Road where there currently is existing commercial development. The community center and central park area are basically unchanged in size and configuration under this scheme.

### **b. Land Use Plan 2**

Land Use Plan 2 is similar to Plan 1 in terms of housing categories and the mix of single-family detached and small homes (Figure 8). The two-family housing has been expanded to the north and south of the industrial site and the central park area has been enlarged in keeping with the Conceptual Plans for Roads and Green Space (Schemes 2 and 2A). In addition, a category called “public” has been shown on the corner of Sheridan Drive and Sheridan Parkside Drive. This would accommodate the public library mentioned above.

## **VII. Zoning Concepts**

It is important to ensure that the zoning provisions for the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood are supportive of the vision articulated in the goals and objectives and concept redevelopment plans. Ideally, the zoning classification for the study area will not only allow the desired type of development, but also provide adequate guidance to help implement it. It was necessary, therefore, to look at the existing zoning for the neighborhood and assess its appropriateness for the achieving the desired redevelopment schemes. This section summarizes the preliminary zoning analysis.

### **1. Existing Zoning**

- The Sheridan Parkside Village neighborhood is presently zoned B- Second Residential, which allows the following permitted uses:

- One and two-family dwellings
  - Rooming, if owner-occupied
  - Churches
  - Schools
  - Municipal buildings
  - Libraries
  - Recreational, community centers
  - Public museums
  - Memorial buildings
  - Public parks
  - Public buildings and grounds
  - Philanthropic institution
- Multi-family dwellings and resident professional offices are allowed in a B-Second Residential district with a Special Use Permit.
  - The code contains very explicit standards for swimming pools, garages, and the placement of accessory structures, which pertain primarily to setbacks.
  - There are no specified frontage or depth requirements for permitted uses in this district, and no minimum lot size is specified for single-family dwellings.
  - Bulk Standards for permitted uses are as follows:
    - Maximum height: 35 feet
    - Front yard: minimum 25 feet or established building line
    - Side yards: minimum 6 feet on one side, 5 feet on other- may be reduced to minimum of 2 feet if in conformance with NYS Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code distance separation requirements
    - Additional regulations regarding side yards apply- see code.
    - Rear yards: minimum 25 feet.
    - Maximum lot coverage: dwellings: 40%; all structures: 50%; non-residential: 60%
    - Minimum lot size for two-family dwellings: 4,000 square feet.
    - Minimum floor area is specified by one-family/two-family; one-story/two-story; attached/detached garage.
  - Uses allows by Special Use Permit in the B-Second Residential district include the following:
    - any use permitted in a C-1 Residential Business district
    - Hospital or sanatorium (with some restrictions)
    - Non-profit institutions
    - Clubs, lodges, fraternal or religious association
    - Multi-family dwellings (with area requirements per Section 215-35 of the Code)
    - Banks, brokerage, financial institutions
    - Medical buildings or clinic s
    - Mortuary
    - Convalescent home, nursing home
    - General office uses of any type
    - Computer services
    - Insurance and real estate offices
    - Accessory structures
  - All Special permit uses must submit site and development plan for approval.

- There are no landscaping or design standards required for standard residential districts; there are some requirements for the multi-family residential district.

## **2. Zoning Conclusions**

- Most of the recommendations for preliminary site redevelopment are allowable under the existing zoning classification regulations. One- and two-family dwellings are permitted as of right.
- One zoning option for the Sheridan Parkside neighborhood would be to create an overlay district that could be applied on top of the existing zoning classification to establish specific design standards for the area. This overlay district could also allow additional uses. Under this option, the existing zoning designation for the area would not need to be changed.
- The overlay district could set forth revised or desired bulk regulations for achieving the draft redevelopment plan, landscaping and signage standards, guidelines for architectural design style and scale, and support the circulation patterns that are being recommended.
- As an alternative, a new zoning district could be created that would enable planned unit development (PUD). Since the Town's Zoning Ordinance does not include PUD or planned residential development regulations, this unique district classification would be developed that would be applied as a "floating zone". Under this option, the proposed site plan becomes the basis for the zoning.
- An advantage of planned unit development is that it allows maximum flexibility for using the overall site and for architectural design and site layout. This cannot be achieved under traditional zoning regulations. It also provides for greater control over new development through the application and scrutiny of the site plan.
- The disadvantage of developing a planned unit development zoning classification for the site is that it would involve a rezoning action for the property, and would require that the site be redeveloped by a single development interest or partnership.
- Currently, some of the proposed dwelling unit types (e.g. senior detached apartments) are allowed under the existing zoning by special use permit. As proposed (in concept), and supported by the public, the redevelopment plan recommends one- and two-family dwellings. To simplify future development efforts, we recommend that an overlay district be developed with provisions that would eliminate the need for a special use permit for the residential uses being proposed.
- Public facilities, such as libraries, are allowed under the B-Second Residential classification as of right and, therefore, no revisions to the existing zoning would be required to support a new library location.
- Some of the alternatives recommend commercial development at certain locations within the neighborhood. If the final selected concept includes commercial use, the overlay could allow commercial development as a permitted use at those specified locations without the need to revise the underlying zoning.
- Once a final design concept is established, the zoning overlay district can be developed to support the recommendations of the redevelopment plan, including pre-approval of site plan design.

- If it is decided to incorporate the industrially zoned parcel into the concept design, rezoning of this parcel is strongly recommended to preclude any potential future industrial use.

## **VIII. Future Vision – Redevelopment Plan**

The future vision for the Sheridan Parkside community has evolved over a period of months with considerable input from Sheridan Parkside residents, the Tonawanda Community Development Office, other Town officials, the Town of Tonawanda Fire and Police Departments, area developers and others. The final Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan incorporates the short and long range goals and objectives of the community and has been fine tuned to reflect the ideas and preferences of the citizens, government officials and others who have been active in helping to formulate the vision for Sheridan Parkside. The following describes the elements of the Vision Plan for Sheridan Parkside Village Courts community.

### **1. Gateways to the Community**

The Vision proposes creating special gateway treatments to identify and highlight the major points of entry to Sheridan Parkside from the north, south and west. These gateways will include monument signage and landscape planting beds to give an attractive, welcoming identity to the community. The gateways will be located at the following intersections:

- Sheridan Parkside Drive and Ensminger Road
- Sheridan Parkside Drive and Sheridan Drive
- East Park Drive and Masefield Drive.

### **2. Streetscape Improvements**

The gateway treatments will be enhanced through the development of attractive streetscaping along streets that have been designated as major boulevards through the neighborhood. These streets include Sheridan Parkside Drive, Masefield Drive, and the improved east/west routes created by connecting Browning Avenue to Alcott Court, and Dumas Place to Cowper Avenue. Streetscape elements along these boulevards will include sidewalks, double rows of trees along both sides of the streets, ornamental street lighting, special pedestrian paving at major crosswalks and attractive street furniture (such as benches) in selected locations.

The amenities proposed for the major boulevards, including the dramatic double row of trees, are more extensive in order to coordinate with the gateways. However, as Sheridan Parkside is redeveloped, the Vision Plan proposes that all streets in the neighborhood have improved streetscape amenities, including sidewalks, street trees, and ornamental street lighting.

### **3. Vehicular Circulation within Sheridan Parkside**

Early in the planning process, potentially dangerous and undesirable existing street patterns were identified. These included neighborhoods served by only one point of access, courts that only have access to East Park Drive and streets so close together that the properties have double frontages. To remedy these deficiencies in the circulation system, the following changes have been recommended:

- New connector streets have been provided in the northeast and southeast quadrants to ensure that all areas of the neighborhood have two points of access;
- Streets have been extended in the northwest quadrant linking isolated courts to Sheridan Parkside Drive and the interior of the community;

- Streets have been realigned and in some cases, removed to eliminate double fronting lots and to provide safe access to all neighborhoods.

As existing streets are redeveloped or extended and as new streets are developed, current Town of Tonawanda street standards will be met or exceeded, including right-of-way and pavement widths.

#### **4. Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation**

With the exceptions of Sheridan Parkside Drive and Masefield Drive, the existing interior streets and courts lack sidewalks. This forces pedestrians to walk in the streets and makes for a hazardous situation, especially for children. The absence of sidewalks discourages foot traffic and limits pedestrian interaction, so valued in other communities. The Vision Plan proposes detached sidewalks on all neighborhood streets, allowing children and adults to walk in safety to neighborhood parks, and the community center with its expanded central park. Sidewalks will also make it easier for residents to visit nearby neighbors without resorting to the automobile. Masefield Drive and Sheridan Parkside Drive will also include designated bicycle lanes. These lanes will connect with the existing bike lane on East Park Drive.

#### **5. Parks and Community Facilities**

The desire of the majority of Sheridan Parkside residents, as recorded at community meetings, was for the inclusion of a large central park and several neighborhood parks to serve the community. The redevelopment plan shows an 8.4-acre central park adjacent to the community center and one small neighborhood park in each quadrant of the Sheridan Parkside community. The expanded central park will be able to accommodate a wider range of recreational amenities, such as a swimming pool, wading pool, tennis courts, basketball court, children's play area, gazebo, picnic tables and ample landscaped area. Pedestrian walkways provide easy off-street access to the central park and community center, which are within easy walking distance from all neighborhoods in Sheridan Parkside.

The neighborhood parks are intended attractively landscaped, small pocket parks, designed to provide a more informal setting for residents to relax and socialize. Amenities to be provided at the neighborhood parks include children's play equipment, benches and landscaping. These parks are located at street intersections and will be easily accessible to all residents. There will also be highly visible from adjacent streets, to insure the safety of park users and near-by residents.

The vision redevelopment plan shows a community library at the northeast corner of Sheridan Drive and Sheridan Parkside Drive. This location is very visible and accessible for residents from throughout the Town of Tonawanda, and the proposed new library would serve not only Sheridan Parkside, but also residents of surrounding areas. An improved library at this location would be a vast improvement over the existing satellite library, which is located in the community center and provides limited service to the community. Having a new library at this location will also be a positive statement at one of the gateways to Sheridan Parkside, and will help to reinforce the new image for the community.

#### **6. Landscaped Buffers**

The Vision Plan recommends landscaped berms along the eastern boundary line of the neighborhood in order to help buffer the Sheridan Parkside residents from the noise and visual impacts of the railroad line that runs parallel to Military Road. The landscaped berm will provide a more attractive setting for the residential housing in this area. A 25- to 30-foot landscaped berm is also proposed to screen the industrial site situated adjacent to the community center/central park and residential properties in this area. These berms would

extend along the perimeter of the industrial site and along the entire length of the railroad line. This berm will also be extended behind the residential units that back up to Sheridan Drive, in the southeastern portion of the community. The berm along the roadway will shield these properties from the high traffic and noise along Sheridan Drive and provide greater privacy for local residents. This berm could be attractively landscaped, in order to present a more positive image for the neighborhood as viewed from Sheridan Drive.

## **7. Residential Housing**

The vision for Sheridan Parkside is to transform a neighborhood characterized predominately by multi-family rental housing into community with a greater proportion of owner occupied housing. It was clear through the public input process that residents expressed a desire for a diverse neighborhood, with a greater range of housing choices. The Vision Plan proposes a mix of housing types, including small homes for seniors and families without children and larger single-family detached homes for families. The Vision Plan also shows some two-family homes, which would be located along the east and southeast edges of the community. In order to accommodate a mix of housing throughout the neighborhood, the redevelopment plan provides groups of small lots interspersed with larger lots in all four quadrants of Sheridan Parkside. The largest lots are located along East Park Drive, fronting the golf course. It is anticipated that, as the neighborhood redevelops and is successfully transformed into a homeownership community, there will be a future demand for some larger, more well appointed homes facing the golf course.

## **IX. Vision Poster**

A Vision Poster was created to illustrate the proposed Redevelopment Plan for Sheridan Parkside Village Courts community in an attractive, eye-catching visual (Figure 10). The poster adds life to the redevelopment plan to depict how the neighborhood would appear if the proposed improvements indicated on that concept plan were implemented. Several blowups around the perimeter highlight potential housing options and simulate internal views of the redeveloped site. It is the Town's intention to utilize the Vision Poster as a road map and marketing piece to prompt interest and enthusiasm in the development community. Providing this poster to prospective investors and developers will help them to understand what the Town is looking for right from the start. This poster clearly illustrates the vision for the area and will help the Town to generate renewed interest in the Sheridan Parkside Village Courts community.

**EXISTING CONDITIONS**



Existing Site Plan



**SHERIDAN PARKSIDE VILLAGE - "the VISION"**



**LEGEND**

- 1. Community Center
- 2. Expanded Central Park
- 3. Proposed New Library
- 4. Pocket Parks
- 5. Commercial Area
- Gateway / Entrance

**HOUSING**



**CONTACT**



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FIGURE 10