



City of Rochester

Inner Loop North (ILN) Transformation Planning Study

Public Meeting #1

March 24, 2021 • 12:00pm – 2:00pm

Recording: <https://youtu.be/0TPZowqoIVQ>

ATTACHMENTS

- List of attendees
- PowerPoint presentation
- Zoom Chat Questions/Comments

SUMMARY OF MEETING

Erik Frisch (City) opened the virtual meeting via Zoom, introduced DES Commissioner Norman Jones to make opening remarks. Commissioner Jones shared a scan of a 1961 report from the City of Rochester, the start of construction on the Inner Loop's North section. Commissioner Jones discussed how the Inner Loop cut through communities and created a moat between Downtown and different neighborhoods. He briefly discussed the history of the Inner Loop and Phase I of the Inner Loop revitalization (Inner Loop East). The City of Rochester secured \$1 million in State funding through the late Assemblyman David Gantt for Phase 2 of the project, the Inner Loop North Transformation Study. Commissioner Jones introduced the City's DES Transportation team, Erik Frisch (Project Manager) and Darin Ramsay (Deputy Project Manager). Erik introduced himself as the City's Project Manager for this project, and introduced Bergmann, the Technical Advisory Committee, and the Community Advisory Committee. Erik then turned the meeting over to Bergmann, where Kimberly Baptiste reviewed the meeting agenda and began the presentation.

A summary of key topics and discussion provided below:

Introducing the Team

Kimberly Baptiste (Bergmann) introduced herself and the rest of the project team:

- City of Rochester
- Community Advisory Committee: Representatives from 50 organizations within the City
- Technical Advisory Committee: Representatives from City, various departments, Monroe County, NYS, and other regional agencies (i.e. Genesee Transportation Council)
- Consultants
 - Bergmann – Project lead including project management
 - Trowbridge Wolf Michaels Landscape Architects (TWMLA)
 - Kimley Horn
 - Lu Engineers
 - Center for Urban Entrepreneurship
 - SAA|EVI



- Stakeholders: Neighborhood groups, business associations, small businesses, community-based groups, residents, property owners

Project Overview

Kimberly provided an overview of the project purpose, goals and process. The purpose of the Inner Loop North (ILN) Transformation Study is to evaluate alternatives for the northern section of the Inner Loop to improve connectivity, accessibility and community development. Kimberly emphasized that no alternatives have been identified at this point.

Kimberly discussed the project study area (see Slide 12 of the presentation for a map of the study area) and project goals. Project goals have been organized into three categories, each with a list of supporting goals: quality of life; neighborhood investment; and connectivity & accessibility. Kimberly also highlighted the alignment of the ILN Transformation Study with the City of Rochester’s *Rochester 2034* Comprehensive Plan, and the Planning Process. See below for the Planning Process schedule:

Existing Conditions	2020 – Spring 2021
Concept Alternatives	Spring 2021
Alternatives Analysis	Summer 2021
Preferred Alternative	Summer / Fall 2021
Implementation Plan	Fall 2021

What We’ve Learned: Existing Conditions

Demographic Characteristics | Kimberly gave an overview of the demographic and socioeconomic analysis. 7,360 live in the study area, representing 3.5% of the City’s total population. About a quarter of the population is aged 19 and under, and a quarter are aged 55+. These demographics are important to keep in mind when designing the alternatives due to different programming needs for each age group. The median income within the Inner Loop North Area is \$15,406, compared to the City of Rochester (\$32,945) and Monroe County (\$57,352), which emphasized the importance of looking at the community beyond the transportation corridor. 79% of housing units within the study area are renter occupied, in comparison to 60% throughout the City. 8% are owner occupied, vs. 28% City-wide, and 13% are vacant. The monthly rental rate is approximately \$653, compared to \$831 City-wide. The project team is taking into consideration the neighborhood’s desire to see an increase in home ownership. Within the Study area, land use patterns south of the Inner Loop are largely commercial and business uses, while north of the Inner Loop has a diversity of residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

Kimberly then turned the presentation over to Mark McAnany (Bergmann) to discuss the traffic analysis.

Traffic Analysis | Mark discussed the traffic analysis, which included the collection of traffic data in October/November 2020 from 90 distinct collection points within the project corridor and study area. This process was initially delayed due to COVID-19 – the impact of COVID on traffic patterns has been taken into consideration. The team is working closely with local review agencies and reviewing historical data to set realistic adjustments to the collected data.



Mark reviewed the current traffic volumes throughout the corridor. The Genesee River crossing sees approximately 47,000 cars per day. The portion of the Inner Loop between the Genesee River and North Street sees up to 35,000 cars per day, and the remainder of the Inner Loop to Main Street/Union sees between 20,000 and 30,000. He also discussed traffic volumes on the North/South roads.

When the pandemic hit, the traffic dropped off dramatically nationwide but has since restored to about 85%-90% of where it was pre-Covid.

Multimodal Analysis | Mark discussed the multimodal analysis and its process, which includes inventorying the network, analyzing the network, and addressing challenges and opportunities. The document is available on the project website: www.innerloopnorth.com. The analysis looks at the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks as well as urban design and parking & curbside, measures accessibility for bikes and pedestrians, and helps develop evaluation metrics to test the alternatives. The team is integrating equity into the decision-making process. The available data gives good breakdowns of race, income levels, travel trends, etc. which will be used to make sure all levels of income and ability are able to have mobility and access across the study area. The study has isochrone analyses of the bicycle/pedestrian network, which shows where you can get to, and in how long, from a certain point. Mark also mentioned that the evaluation metrics include qualitative and quantitative metrics looking to strengthen connections throughout the corridor.

Mark discussed some of the findings from the study, including areas of limited or narrow sidewalks, long crossing points, gaps in the presence of sidewalks, the quality of the sidewalks, and limited ADA accessibility. The study highlights areas of high stress for cyclists, existing gaps in dedicated bike facilities, especially along the North-South routes, and the limited connectivity to the Genesee Riverway Trail. The transit study shows the frequent-service corridors, the Reimagine RTS initiative, and RTS's Transit Center, and the difficulties outlying areas may have accessing downtown.

Mark handed the presentation over to Jessica Rossi (Kimley Horn) to discuss the Market Analysis.

Market Analysis | Jessica Rossi (Kimley Horn) presented findings of the market analysis. The Market Analysis is used to create a baseline of demographic, economic and real estate information, looking at larger trends as well as localized trends to better understand the Study Area and forecast real estate demand. The study shows the amount of land required to support future development of different types such as open space, city services, and private development. The market analysis feeds into the development of the alternatives.

Jessica discussed some residential highlights. The study area hosts more than 4,300 housing units, up 107% since 2010, more than 85% of the existing supply is multi-family (compared to 26.1% for the MSA). Residential For-sale price points in the City limits are notably lower than the County-wide median; rental lease rates are comparable and multi-family apartments have a healthy vacancy rate of ~7%. Jessica also emphasized the importance of affordable housing and discouraging gentrification in the neighborhood. The study looks into supporting existing residents by understanding household dynamics; connecting people to jobs, shopping, and recreation and providing multi-modal transportation options; encouraging neighborhood stabilization and discouraging gentrification; identifying sites for new construction and



protecting naturally occurring affordable housing; and, focusing on partnerships and leveraging public investments to create opportunity.

Jessica next talked about retail conditions. The study area has about 3.0 million square feet of retail, including food and beverage restaurants, consumer services and grocers and food sales. In the study area, stores sold \$46,981,045 in goods and services, while consumers spent \$111,007,753, equating to a leakage of \$64,026,708. This leakage analysis shows that consumers are spending far more than what stores in the area are selling, indicating residents are going outside of the study area to buy goods and services.

Jessica then discussed existing office conditions. About one-third of regional jobs that commonly occupy office space are located in the project study area. Multi-tenant office space has experienced an increasing vacancy rate in the last five years, reaching 25.0% (which excludes Kodak Tower), averaging lease rates have remained static at ~\$17.50 per square foot.

Jessica discussed some industrial highlights. The study area contains approximately 2.5 million square feet of light industrial space, including rental and owner-occupied buildings, no new space has been completed in recent years. Industrial vacancy rates have remained steady at approximately 12% and leasing rates near the study area lag the larger market.

Jessica talked about breaking the study area into different subarea opportunities: North Central, Northeast, South, and Northwest, due to the varying income levels, demographics and employment throughout the study area. The study looks at different how different opportunities (residential, retail, office and light industrial) would perform in the different subareas.

Jessica passed the presentation back to Kimberly (Bergmann) to discuss Community Engagement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Kimberly talked about how Outreach at the community level has been a priority since Day One of the project. She discussed the elements of the project's community engagement strategy which include:

- Stakeholder meetings
- Neighborhood meetings (neighborhood groups)
- Monthly pop-up events, which have been put on hold due to COVID-19
- Public workshops
- School / Student engagement
- Online platforms
- Racial Equity Subcommittee

The public engagement strategy had to be reimaged due to the impact of the COVID pandemic. The team relied heavily on online platforms such as the project website, an online survey, online contact forms, and social media.

Kimberly stated from a community engagement perspective, things have slowed down from our original plan due to the pandemic and our inability to execute some of the original elements of our strategy. She mentioned we have increased our presence online and asked members to follow and share our social media platform. We will be posting additional information moving forward, looking for ways to reach



community residents and stakeholders. Project website and online survey is active, we are looking for more response from the survey, especially from individuals who live and work in project area.

Kimberly reviewed some key points from the survey responses so far:

- 88% of participants do not live within the corridor
- 79% spend most time at the Public Market
- 95% travel the corridor by car
- 75% of drivers feel that beautification efforts (lighting, greenspace) are the most beneficial corridor improvement
- 50% of participants who ride or walk within the corridor feel dedicated bicycle facilities would be the most beneficial corridor improvement

The survey is still live, and the team would love to get additional feedback from residents who live within the study area.

Kimberly then discussed the Racial Equity Subcommittee, which seeks to center racial equity throughout the planning process by looking at the history of racial trauma caused by past municipal planning decisions. The subcommittee aspires to redefine the city building process as a vehicle for reparations that provides for the economic, social, and emotional well being of Black and Brown residents. The subcommittee came up with a Racial Equity Analysis Tool that includes various metrics to consider when evaluating alternatives, and how the alternatives reinforce quality of life for residents within the study area.

Kimberly discussed other outreach activities that the project team has participated in, including student outreach at the World of Inquiry, going on Poder 97.1 to discuss the project, and zoom outreach via informational and listening sessions with a number of neighborhood groups.

Kimberly highlighted some emerging themes from the public engagement so far:

- Accessibility (ADA)
- Home ownership
- Condition of bike/ped network
- Traffic impacts on local streets
- Greening of the corridor and neighborhood
- Acknowledge "local economy"
- Gentrification / displacement

Kimberly then discussed the next steps which include developing a series of concept alternatives. These alternatives will incorporate racial equity by supporting mobility and connectivity, the character of the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods, potential redevelopment and supporting existing businesses, and access to green space and natural resources. Kimberly also highlighted additional topics that the team will be taking into consideration throughout the next steps of the project, including but not limited to: historical context, home ownership strategies, a comprehensive transportation network, etc.



COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

The team posed a few questions:

- 1) Thinking about your experience when you are walking in the study area, what improvements would you like to see?

Answers: Safer experience, benches, wider sidewalks, four-way stops, more foot traffic. Walking over the inner loop is intimidating.

- 2) In your opinion, what are community development priorities within the study area?

Answers: Grocery store, open areas for playing, mixed use and mixed income housing, reparations, laundromat. More first-time homebuyers. More street trees in Marketview Heights and by the Post Office.

- 3) What else should we know or be thinking about as it related to the Inner Loop and surrounding neighborhoods?

Answers: Trash receptacles. More places for walking like a track similar to East High and Franklin – multi use for sports. Human scale, comfort level, green spaces.

A series of questions were presented to the project team during the meeting. Questions and responses are identified below:

1. *Can you share the attendance for this session once we start? It would be good to see if my neighborhood association (GPA) needs to do more to spread the word about these sessions to our members*

City Response: We will have a list of attendees that can be provided after the meeting.

2. *Can you speak to the potential sources of funding for the project, including funding under the COVID Recovery Act? Can someone address lessons learned from the ILE project?*

City Response: We are currently in the discovery phase of what the COVID Recovery Act can provide. Those funds have a shelf life that need to be spent by 2024. There are funds that can be used for the design portion. We are meeting with GTC, NYSDOT and our local representatives to develop a plan for how we will go after funds.

Inner Loop East was the first project of its kind in the nation. We learned that we need to collaborate with ALL stakeholders, not just residents and businesses but also utilities. This was a total investment of \$25 million, which resulted in a total of \$300 million worth of investment/development in the corridor so far. We have to make sure we coordinate with the County and other transportation agencies.



We really are a national leader in this. We have talked to other cities across the country and have been featured in national conferences, webinars, and publications.

3. *How did you adjust the traffic study for lack of school traffic around World of Inquiry? Includes buses and parent drop off. Especially parking on sides of road for loading time and the safety*

Consultant Response: We have historical data and have percentages of activity for various vehicle types. But without activities currently occurring, it is hard to measure in further detail. Our first brushes with alternatives and how they might function will be at a higher level – we are currently developing these broader concepts. In later phases, we will address site specific needs and operations to that higher level of detail.

4. *Do the traffic or multimodal analyses include crashes?*

Consultant Response: The traffic and multimodal analyses do not, but we have a database and analysis of the corridor crash history for the most recent five years (2014–2019). We can post that summary document on the project web site.

5. *How about expanding Schiller Park back to the way it was before the inner loop? Back to being Franklin Square. <https://heckeranddecker.wordpress.com/2010/03/09/another-story/> This might be an opportune time to unite Schiller and Goethe in that expanded park.*

Consultant Response: Absolutely. That is a stated goal we are seeking to accomplish with this project, if feasible, as identified in the City's *Rochester 2034* Comprehensive Plan.

City Response: Likewise is the other historic park that was bisected: Anderson Park at East Main Street and University Avenue.

6. *Per Bergmann's ILN website the last CAC meeting was held on 29OCT20. Why haven't there been more follow on meetings. Where is the schedule for CAC meetings? Why does the reporting of meeting minutes need to be so tardy?*

Consultant Response: We did have a 4th CAC meeting in February and we will make sure to get those summaries posted. We do not have a set schedule for future meetings – we base that on where we are in the project process. CAC meeting #5 is likely to happen in May-June and we will get those items posted on the website as quickly as possible.

7. *Is there a plan for rerouting ILN traffic if it is abandoned?*



Consultant Response: Every alternative that is developed will address the issue of where the traffic would be going and what accommodations would need to be made. The word “abandoned” is broad – the corridor may continue to serve traffic but there may be less capacity than the existing highway.

8. *Residential development on the east and south of inner loop.*

City Response: Land development scenarios will be considered after a preferred alternative for the future of the corridor is identified. Residential development will be prioritized where it is best suited in the context of existing land use.

9. *Will not infilling the ILN be considered as an Alternative??*

Consultant Response: Not infilling the Inner Loop (No Build) is an alternative to be assessed; however, the goal of this project is to rethink and transform the corridor.

10. *Is anyone thinking about “urban heat zones”? i.e. blacktop absorbs heat, and in general densely built up areas experience much higher temperatures in summer; often correlated with environmental justice and lower income neighborhoods and racial disparities. Seems highly relevant to ILN neighborhoods and an opportunity to address this important issue of quality of life and equity.*

City Response: As a Climate Smart Community, the City recognizes the importance of green spaces and how we serve traffic flow. This is a key consideration for ILN and will allow us to make sure we are providing the best possible environment for the neighbors.

Questions that were presented in the Zoom Video Chat are reflected below:

- *Just before joining in this presentation, I attended a webcast by NYSERDA on the state's targets under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. Rapid reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is critical to meeting these goals, and the Inner Loop North plan could be a marvelous opportunity to show how this could be done.*

City Response: The City of Rochester is a Climate Smart Community – the first in the state designated outside of New York City. By providing green spaces, bicycle facilities, and walking areas, we improve health of residents and work toward meeting our own climate objectives. As we talk about climate and how we confront climate change, it is important that we implement those principles in the planning process.

- *Inner Loop East did not meet stated project goals. Why should we believe the goals for the North will be met?*



City Response: Inner Loop East has been widely recognized as a success but there are certainly things we can learn from that project that will benefit Inner Loop North. The form of the buildings that are being built along Union Street are consistent with the Market Study. There are over 500 new housing units being built, and there are considerably more people bicycling and walking about. A benefit-cost analysis was conducted for Inner Loop East, which demonstrated a roughly 2:1 score on that. A similar benefit-cost analysis will be conducted for the preferred Inner Loop North alternative to ensure that the benefit outweigh the project costs.

Consultant Response: Bergmann did not work on Inner Loop East project, but it was very successful. Moving forward, we can seek further improvements to the future implementation of development parcels. We can assess and offer additional design guidelines so the development can be further refined. Our team is talking about this and we are aware of this concern.

- *I know of two alternative that have been submitted but you say none have been identified.*

City Response: The formal process of evaluating and presenting alternatives has not begun at this point but we have received multiple suggestions from the public and any suggestions we receive will be looked at as part of that formal process.

- *Is there a budget for this project that the selected Alternative must fit into?*

City Response: There is no defined budget at this time. Once the preferred alternative is selected, a cost estimate will be developed.

- *Has or Will a study be done to quantify the economic impact of abandoning the inner loop north?*

City Response: Jessica's portion of the presentation talked about the market study. The benefit-cost analysis will consider the life cycle costs and other benefits and costs associated with the project.

Consultant Response: We prefer the word "transforming" versus the word "abandoning" when discussing the future of the ILN corridor.

- *Will there be an opportunity to comment on the Bergmann ILN website?*

Consultant Response: There is a Contact form on the project website. We tabulate all comments we receive.

- *Are there Pre-covid traffic counts?*

City Response: Yes, counts were taken and estimated by the State in the years preceding Covid.

- *Are there design elements to help with snow removal?*



City Response: As we develop a preferred alternative, we will consider snow storage and removal and are open to any suggestions.