Plans for Transforming Skyview on the Ridge Continue to Take Form

Week of October 1, 2018

Over the past few months, many residents have inquired about the status of the proposed community center at the former Irondequoit Mall. Some residents actually apologize about their perceived impatience, to which I respond that the people of Irondequoit have every right to desire action at the former-Mall.

Some have offered that the massive construction of our new Department of Public Works facility has consumed too much time and energy of our team at Town Hall. While that project is substantial – the largest Town-funded construction project in our history – it has not prevented us from engaging in a thoughtful and complex process of determining how to put a community recreation center in a former shopping mall.

Earlier this year, we completed an extensive public engagement process, which allowed residents to share priorities with our Community Center Advisory Committee. From there, we worked with a consultant to develop an outline of what features a facility should include to best serve our residents’ needs, commonly known as the “Program.”

With a general idea of what our needs are as a community, we next engaged the owner and his engineering team to begin determining the most appropriate and cost-effective use of space. Much of this effort centered on determining the most efficient internal demolition plan to pave way for some of the larger components of the facility – the gymnasium, for instance.

After we completed demising the space, we then commenced lease negotiations with the property owner. As was the case when we first announced this initiative, the owner is not looking to derive a profit from leasing the space to the Town. Yet, as is always the case with commercial leases, there are variables such as common area maintenance (CAM) charges that need to be resolved. I am optimistic that the Town Board and community will have a draft lease to review in the next several weeks.

Just as the case has been with the new Department of Public Work’s facility, a lack of open green space complicates large construction projects in Irondequoit. I look to Henrietta and Chili, where large community centers have been constructed, or will be constructed, on open space. Our lack of any comparable open space reinforces the need to seize this opportunity at the former Mall, and be a part of its transformation.

At the other end of the Mall, the Town continues to work with Pathstone Development and our government partners to move forward the proposed redevelopment of the former-Sears into senior housing. We have much work left to do, but our largest potential barrier is a lack of optimism that the Mall can, indeed, become something different than what it once was two decades ago. I am confident we are moving in the right direction.