Village of Solvay
Vision Planning Process

Process Notebook

SUNY ESF Center for Community Design Research
Syracuse, New York
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Solvay, a small village on the northwestern edge of the city of Syracuse, is home to 7,000 residents. In January of 2001, the Village of Solvay approached the Center for Community Design Research at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, requesting assistance in formulating a master plan. Solvay has endured many significant changes over the last few decades, and the village felt that it was time for a plan to help guide future change.

For many years, Solvay was home to Allied Chemical Company, and before that, Solvay Process, the company around which the village was essentially founded. Allied Chemical ceased operations in the mid-1980’s, and as a result, virtually halved the tax base for the village. Several new industries now occupy the former Allied site, and the relationship between neighborhood and industry continues to be an important facet of Solvay’s image and identity.

The CCDR conducted a bootstrapping session with village representatives in April 2002. This session was a forum for several community leaders from Solvay to freely brainstorm with experienced professionals from the CCDR about ways to identify and address the issues and concerns facing their community. Based on this dialogue, it was decided that a Vision Planning Process would be an appropriate first step.

The issues and concerns that were identified in the bootstrapping session were more fully discussed in the vision planning process that occurred throughout the fall of 2002. Vision planning is an interactive participatory process that is open to all community members and stakeholders. The intent is to establish dialogue and collaboration among participants in order to discover common values upon which to base a vision plan. Three vision planning workshops were organized by the CCDR and held at Solvay High School in September, October and November. Over 100 Solvay residents and stakeholders attended these workshops.

The outcome of the Solvay Vision Planning Process is the Solvay Vision Plan, which includes a Vision Statement, Goals and Action Steps. The Vision Plan will serve as a foundation to guide future action in the village. A fourth workshop was held in January to review and celebrate the hard work that occurred in the fall vision planning workshops, and to discuss plans to move the vision forward.

The first several pages of this notebook are devoted to a brief description of each workshop and a summary of workshop findings and results. Following the summary, the notebook is divided into sections for each of the four workshops. Each workshop section contains more detailed information on workshop methods, data from participant responses, graphic representations of workshop results and print versions of the powerpoint presentations.
Solvay Vision Planning Process

Summary of Workshop Results

Workshop One
At the first Solvay Vision Planning Workshop, approximately sixty people attended and participated in the workshop activities from 7 to 9 pm on September 17, 2002. When the participants arrived, they were asked to complete a short survey prior to their departure. The survey questions were: 1. Age? 2. How long have you lived (or worked) in Solvay? 3. How do you describe Solvay to people who have never been here before? and 4. How did you find out about the vision planning process (this workshop)?

Thirty-eight out of approximately sixty participants responded to the survey. The participants in the first workshop ranged in age from 30 to 84. The distribution of age was spread fairly evenly throughout the respondents, but the youngest part of Solvay’s population (0-30) was not represented at all. The length of time that surveyed participants have lived in Solvay ranged from 6 months to 79 years. Many participants have lived in the village 5 years or less, but the majority (63%) of surveyed participants have lived in Solvay for 20 years or more. Surveyed participants most frequently heard about the workshop from a Steering Committee member, from the flier in the Solvay Electric bill, or from the newspaper. People also heard about the workshop via word of mouth or from a mailed invitation.

Mapping Activity. During the first mapping activity, participants worked together to locate landmarks and their homes. They also delineated large image areas that they perceived in the village. The outcome of this activity varied from group to group. Some groups were very organized about locating landmarks, color coding them by type of land use (commercial, parks, civic/government, etc) and were detailed and fairly precise in the outlining and naming of different image areas in the village. Other groups identified just a few landmarks and outlined general areas by dominant land use. The activity was primarily designed to help the participants orient themselves to the aerial view, to become comfortable with the group dynamics and to share information with each other and the facilitators on how they define and describe different areas in the village. (The summary map of image areas is included in the Workshop One section.)

Sacred Places and Places of Concern. During the second mapping activity, participants were asked to identify “sacred places” that are of value and importance to the community, and “places of concern”. The sacred places that were most frequently identified are: the Solvay Public Library, St. Cecilia’s Church, the Solvay-Geddes Youth Center and the Solvay High School. Other places that were frequently identified were the Village Hall, Solvay Bank, Woods Road Park, and village churches, in general. Areas that were identified as places of concern were grouped into 10 areas: Milton Avenue, the Industrial Area, Village Gateways, Charles Avenue, 1st, 2nd & 3rd Streets, Woods Road Area, Williams, Freeman & Caroline Avenue Area, Gertrude, Center & Cogswell Avenue Area, Specific Places and General Concerns. In these areas, the main concerns were: the Milton Avenue & Bridge Street gateway intersection, Charles Avenue, 1st & 2nd Streets, and Hall & Williams Streets. (For a complete listing of participant responses,
and for summary maps of sacred places and places of concern, please see the Workshop One section.)

**Brainstorming.** A brainstorming activity allowed people to work individually for a few minutes before working as a group to list the strengths, desired changes and under-utilized resources and places that the participants perceived for Solvay. After listing the possibilities, the participants could then vote on what they felt were the most important ideas in each category. For Solvay’s strengths, the participants most frequently identified: Solvay Electric, the Solvay School District, Solvay’s location and accessibility to many resources, the people in the community, the recreational areas, the tight-knit nature of the community and the Solvay Public Library.

When asked, “What would you change about Solvay if you could?”, participants most frequent responses were: beautify Milton Avenue, have better code enforcement and stricter codes, hold absentee landlords accountable for property appearance and care, and improve the gateways/entrances into Solvay. When asked about under-utilized resources or places in Solvay, people most frequently mentioned the Community/Youth Center, the parks, the Milton Avenue Corridor, the proximity to the NYS Fairgrounds and the resources of the youth (energy and community service). (For a complete listing of participant responses, please look to the Workshop One section for detailed spreadsheets and summary charts of strengths, changes and opportunities.)

**Images of the Village.** In the final activity, participants were asked to analyze old and contemporary views of village scenes, and to note changes for the better and changes for the worse that they could see in each view. Participants most frequently noted the change in appearance as a change for the better for most views. They noted the deterioration in some scenes as a change for the worse, and in some cases, noted the change in appearance as a change for the worse. (Again, please look in the Workshop One section for a complete listing of participant responses.)
Workshop Two
The second vision planning workshop, held from 7 to 9 pm on October 15, 2002, attracted a similar distribution of new and old Solvay residents as could be seen at the first workshop. Many participants had attended the previous workshop, but there were also several new faces. The workshop started with a presentation that summarized the main ideas that had emerged at the first workshop and a draft set of Vision Goals. The presentation led into several activities that were designed to help clarify and expand upon the information already gathered.

Milton Avenue. In this activity, the Milton Avenue corridor was divided into six general “character areas”. This definition of areas allowed the discussion to expand beyond general comments to identify specific areas of concern along the corridor. Using sequential images and aerial photos, participants mapped their concerns and potential opportunities along this important roadway. Concerns ranged from traffic circulation and visibility issues, to deterioration of surrounding buildings and lands. Many concerns were related to the overall image of the corridor and its misrepresentation of the broader village. Key entrances, commercial nodes, and landmarks were identified and priority areas for further study were discussed.

Photo Survey. In the second activity, workshop participants were asked to inspect photos and images. Using photographs that were taken by Workshop One participants in a photo survey, the first portion of the activity asked the participants to agree or disagree with the survey responses in order to clarify and expand upon existing responses. Participants agreed with the photo survey results for historic character, the favorite residential street, the least attractive entrance and the most attractive entrance. In general, participants agreed with three of the five responses for places not to change: St. Cecilia’s Church, Solvay Library and Gertrude Park. Participants were strongly divided over the idea of whether Ascioti’s Meat Market should change. In general, participants agreed with the responses for favorite gathering place, but were able to find many other places to list. However, the participants were divided about designation of the Solvay Diner as a favorite gathering place. When asked about their image of Solvay, participants most frequently listed the Veteran’s Memorial and the Village Hall as good images of Solvay.

Village Residential Image. The participants were asked to look at posters of various dwellings from around the village, in various states of repair and disrepair. After inspecting the images, participants evaluated the photos for what was attractive and unattractive about the home and yard. Participant responses were overwhelmingly (47%) about maintenance and care of the dwelling, rather than about such things as architecture (11%) or site planning (8%). Participants also made comments about landscaping (21%), but maintenance and care were the key issues.

Vision Statement and Goals. The participants were asked to review a draft version of the vision statement and vision goals, and note any changes that they would like to be made. After allowing time for the participants to make notations, the group listed the changes on a flip chart. In general, the vision statement was accepted as worded, but there was some disagreement about the vision goals. This led to lengthy discussion regarding the nature of the goals, as well as the wording of each goal. Despite attempts to move things along, none of the groups were able to move on to the second portion of the activity, which was intended to be an exercise linking the vision goals with Solvay’s under-utilized resources to come up with action steps for implementing the vision.
Workshop Three
The third vision planning workshop, held from 7 to 9 pm on November 19, 2002, attracted a similar distribution of new and old residents. The attendance was slightly lower, possibly due to weather and approaching holidays. Again, many of the participants had attended previous workshops, but there were a few new people. The workshop started with a presentation of the ideas that had developed as a result of the previous workshop. The vision goals had been re-worked and re-organized, based on feedback from workshop participants and a better understanding of the image of Solvay.

The image of Solvay that is held by residents and visitors is significantly different. To residents, the image is not about industry, nor about Milton Avenue, but instead about daily life. Industry is still important financially, but physical connections are not as obvious or necessary. However, to visitors, Solvay is about industry, Milton Avenue and Bridge Street. Participant comments implied the presence of a village center. Residents know and feel that it is there, but this place is not physically clear. The places that people value are all interior to the village and not readily visible to outsiders traveling along Milton Avenue. It became clear that the center of Solvay to those who live there is not Milton Avenue, although Milton Avenue retains an important role.

This concept of center is important in the village, as a place of identity, gathering, and focus of activity. As a result of this improved understanding of Solvay’s needs and resources, a new vision goal was formulated to address this idea of a village center. The goal focuses on strengthening this area of the community that contains the resources and facilities that already support the village center role. One of the activities in the workshops was designed to consider different approaches for supporting and strengthening the village center.

Strategies for Improving Residential Areas. Participants were asked to review a list of potential action steps to improve the condition of Solvay’s houses and neighborhoods, and select the five that seemed most appropriate to the Village of Solvay. On an activity sheet, the participants listed these five action steps, as well as the resources necessary and resources available to accomplish each action. The action step that was most frequently identified (85% of respondents) was “Encourage landlords to join neighborhood improvement programs and clean up their properties”. The next two most frequently selected action steps were “Review zoning codes and ordinances to determine if existing requirements cover concerns” (69%) and “Research the availability of grants and programs for housing rehabilitation” (54%). (For a complete listing of action steps selected by participants, look in the Workshop Three section).

Strategies for Strengthening the Village Center. Three different approaches for strengthening the Village Center were presented to the workshop participants. The session followed a slightly different format than was intended in the workshop outline, and the participants engaged in a discussion that helped them to understand the concepts and point out the pros and cons for each. When asked directly, participants agreed that the goal of strengthening the existing village center was an important part of the vision. However, the activity did not yield a favored approach to strengthening the village center.

The Beautiful Streets and Spaces concept elicited the highest number of positive responses and the lowest number of negative responses. Improving Pedestrian Connections received somewhat
Civic Opportunities and Historic Resources. Participants were asked to discuss the potential action steps, available resources and necessary resources for Vision Goals 5 and 6. This brainstorming session resulted in a number of potential action steps for Goal 5, and a few action steps for Goal 6. The suggestions for Goal 5, “Strengthen and increase civic opportunities for community members of all ages”, were focused primarily on coordinating with other existing groups and communicating opportunities more fully. Participants suggested such things as: tie into other existing events; engage schools, churches, surrounding communities. Participants suggested that opportunities could be communicated through: newspaper articles, web sites, an announcement board, posters and displays. The suggestions for Goal 6, “Identify and celebrate historic resources”, were: form group to organize resources, consider strategies for funding, save existing resources, relate stories through storytelling, public art and sculpture, and maintain heritage. (For a complete listing of participant responses, please see Workshop Three section.)

Overlay Graphics. Please see the following pages for graphic analysis of the Milton Avenue Corridor, as well as Gateways, Residential Areas and Village Center. The graphic images were first produced as overlay diagrams for the third workshop. The Milton Avenue graphic displays the four image areas in yellow, green, aqua and blue, and the key entrances to Milton Avenue in red. The Gateways overlay displays the main gateway entrances to the Village of Solvay in red, and show the highly visible views from the gateways in yellow. An overlay of the village residential areas shows the stable residential areas in blue and the residential areas that were listed as places of concern in yellow. The Village Center overlay shows some key sacred places in red, orange, yellow and blue, and sacred parks in green. This concentration of sacred places in the interior of the village led to the village center concept.
Workshop Four
The fourth workshop was designed to summarize and celebrate all the work that had been done in the first three workshops, as well as begin discussion about how to move forward. Community representatives Mary Valerio and Jim Quick presented a review of the visioning process, the newly developed vision plan and some organizational aspects to moving forward. SUNY-ESF graduate student Rob Mooney presented an overview of the Milton Avenue study and workshop series. CCDR representative Maren King presented some keys to success that should be considered in moving this vision forward: encourage broad participation, foster dialogue, promote effective communication, and develop local leadership.

Brainstorm Activity. Following the presentation of this material, the participants were asked to brainstorm about benefits and difficulties of working in a group as well as strategies to overcome difficulties. The benefits of working in a group that were discussed are:

- different perspectives and expertise that result from diverse ages, backgrounds, and opinions;
- the synergistic process of building on each other’s knowledge and ideas to trigger new ideas;
- the ability to have people in varied roles with different levels of involvement and a distributed workload; and
- the psychological benefits of encouragement (from other group members) and ownership (from participating in the decision-making/visioning/etc. process).

The participants listed the following possible difficulties with group work:

- conflict resulting from different perspectives, personalities and agendas;
- communication problems resulting from miscommunication, different communication styles, squeaky wheels and intimidation;
- wasting time by getting distracted, stuck in the details, and losing focus on the goal;
- lack of action resulting from inconsistent follow-through, lack of commitment, and confusion over responsibilities; and
- the loss of people’s interest as a result of these other problems.

The strategies that were discussed to overcome possible difficulties are:

- focus by knowing what you are trying to accomplish;
- consider organizational logistics such as effective facilitators, reasonable group sizes, good agendas, and a timekeeper;
- encourage communication by setting ground rules, giving people equal footing, and creating a forum that welcomes ideas;
- promote/model a good attitude that is open to new ideas, willing to discuss and eager to find common ground; and
- focus on compromise, consensus and majority rule.

Working Group Basic Organization. The participants discussed briefly the organization of the working groups with the working group coordinators. The meeting concluded with a reminder to attend the Milton Avenue workshops, the first project for the Design and Planning Working Group.
Solvay Vision Planning Process

Workshop One
Solvay Vision Workshop 1
September 17, 2002 (7-9 pm)

Greeted at the door
Needed: Sign-in sheets, pencils, nametags, colored dots, blank surveys, agendas
Greeters: Steve and Ellen
Process: Have participants sign in, get a survey, agenda and pencil. Put their name and a colored
dot on their nametag to assign them to a group, and ask them to find that group.

Introductory Survey
Process: Done individually, while waiting for the workshop to begin. Give to facilitator when
finished, or hand to them before you leave.
Needed: Copy of survey, pencil
Survey: Age?
   How long have you lived (or worked) in Solvay?
   How do you describe Solvay to people who have not ever been here before?
   How did you find out about the vision planning process (this workshop)?

Welcome/Introductory Remarks (7:05-7:15)
Process: Solvay representative (Mary) welcomes the residents of Solvay to the meeting and
introduces a CCDR representative (Maren) who explains the process that the workshop
will follow, and breaks people into small groups (by dots on nametags).
Needed: Solvay rep, CCDR rep, agenda, microphone/sound system?

Exercise 1: Map Orientation (7:15-7:30)
Process: On a large aerial photo, each group works together to locate three things: participant’s
residence locations, familiar landmarks, and “image areas”/sub-areas.
Needed for each group: One large aerial photo, stickers, one red sharpie, markers, roll of trace,
tape
Locate: Each participant’s residence location – mark with sharpie marker
   Familiar landmarks: High School, Solvay Paperboard, Milton Avenue, library – stickers
Discuss what different areas of the village exist. On a trace overlay on the aerial photo, locate
these “image areas”. Record reasons for area delineation in margins on the aerial photo.

Exercise 2: Mapping Sacred Places & Places of Concern (7:30-7:50)
Process: Facilitator defines “sacred places” and “places of concern”. Participants work in pairs
to locate sacred places on a small map, then to locate places of concern on another small
map. They should number and list the places in the margin, and number and locate on
each map.
Needed: 2 small maps per pair, colored pencils
Locate Sacred Places: (10 minutes +/-)
   Special locations and significant landmarks
   Locations related to important traditions or local history
   Places that should be preserved, kept or restored
Locate Places of Concern: (10 minutes +/-)
   Places that are unsightly, unsafe, etc.
Exercise 3: Brainstorming (7:50-8:30)
Facilitator: You will need to ask questions to clarify the content of the responses, and should recruit a volunteer from the group to assist with the recording. Be sure to explain to the volunteer recorder that they need to confirm what the person is actually saying before they just write the responses down.

Process: Participants are given a sheet of paper with the three questions on it, and 2 minutes to record their ideas to the first question. Then, as a group, the participants go around the circle, and take turns, each one reading one of their answers for the first question. As the ideas are mentioned, the recorder creates a list on the flip chart, leaving room for voting. Do not list the same idea more than once.
Tape finished lists to wall with drafting dots
Repeat this process two more times, for the next two questions, creating two more separate lists.
After listing all ideas, each participant will receive an envelope with 15 dots: 5 to vote for the most important strengths (blue), 5 to vote for the most important changes to make (green), and 5 for the most important under-utilized resources to consider (red).

However, voting should not occur until after the final activity!!
Needed: Question sheets, pencils, flip chart, markers, drafting dots, envelopes with 15 stickers (3 each color)
Timing: 12 to 15 minutes for each question

Discussion Questions:
What are Solvay’s strengths?
What would you change about Solvay if you could?
What are under-utilized resources or places in Solvay?
   Note: Consider vacant or underutilized buildings, existing open space, natural resources, quality of life, historic resources, as well as issues preventing or blocking opportunities

Exercise 4: Images of Solvay (8:30-8:50)
Process: As individuals or pairs, members of the group will examine 6 sets of pictures. They will be asked to compare the old and contemporary images of the village, and list the changes that they see, both for better and for worse. They should also list any other comments they may have about what the photos represent.
Needed: Boards with the 6 pairs of photos, comment sheets, pencils
Questions: What changes do you see, for better and for worse?
   Please mention any other comments you have about what the photos represent.
If it looks like people in your group are done early with this exercise, open it up to discussion, recording responses on a flip chart sheet

Closing (8:50-9:00)
Maren will make some closing remarks
   She will explain the photo survey
   Tentative dates for second and third workshops
Facilitators will ask for volunteers to do the photo survey, then will hand out the survey and cameras, and answer questions.
Welcome to the first Solvay Vision Planning Workshop! Please answer the following questions. When you are finished, please hand your survey to your group facilitator.

Age: ___________ How long have you lived (or worked) in Solvay? ________________

How do you describe Solvay to people who have never been here before?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

How did you find out about the vision planning process (this workshop)?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

September 2002
Solvay Vision Planning Workshop
Brainstorming Session
September 2002

Please answer only one question at a time. We will do a group brainstorming after each question, then you can go on to the next question. Thanks!

1) What are the village of Solvay’s strengths?

2) What would you change about the village of Solvay if you could?

3) What are under-utilized resources or places in the village of Solvay?
Images of the Village: Past and Present

On the board, there are six pairs of photographs. Each pair of photographs depicts a place along Milton Avenue in the Village of Solvay as it appeared at some point in the past and as it appears today. Working on your own or with a partner, consider and answer the following questions for each pair of photographs.

1. Location/Content: ________________________________
   What has changed for the better?
   What has changed for the worse?
   Other comments

2. Location/Content: ________________________________
   What has changed for the better?
   What has changed for the worse?
   Other comments

3. Location/Content: ________________________________
   What has changed for the better?
   What has changed for the worse?
Other comments

4. Location/Content: ___________________________________________________

What has changed for the better?

What has changed for the worse?

Other comments

5. Location/Content: ___________________________________________________

What has changed for the better?

What has changed for the worse?

Other comments

6. Location/Content: __________________________________

What has changed for the better?

What has changed for the worse?
Photo Survey for Solvay, NY

Name (optional) __________________________________________________________
Age___________ How long have you lived in Solvay? _________________________
Camera # __________________

This survey is to help us get acquainted with the visual aspects of your village for the next
workshop. You can work individually or in groups. Please return this complete form and the
camera to the Village Hall by Friday, September 27th so we can prepare for Workshop Two.
If you have a digital camera and would like to participate, please take a CD-R and copy the
photos onto the disk. Drop off the disk to the Village Hall by the date indicated above
Thank you for participating!

Instructions: Please respond to the survey questions below by taking photographs that illustrate
each of the questions. The photographs do not need to be taken in the order that they are listed
on the survey sheet. To complete the survey please do the following:

1. Write the frame # of each photo under the question to which it responds
2. Describe the location
3. Explain why you chose each photograph

Example:
Photograph of your favorite natural area in the community.
Photo: ____6____ Location: The bend in East Reading Creek
Why did you select this site? It has a really nice beach with good fishing spots near by. The
rapids below the beach are very scenic and there are neat places to explore.

Survey Questions:

1. Take a photograph of your favorite view in Solvay.
   Photo #__________ Location:_____________________________________________
   Why is this your favorite view?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

2. Take a photograph of a place, setting, or building that you feel represents the historic
   character of the village.
   Photo #__________ Location:_____________________________________________
   Why is it significant?
   ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
3. Take a photograph of your favorite residential street in the village.
   Photo # Location:
   Why did you choose this street?

4. Take a photograph of your favorite gathering area or place you like to get together with friends. This can be a café, restaurant, bar, or an outdoor area.
   Photo# Location:
   Why is this a good gathering place?

5. Take a photograph of your favorite natural area.
   Photo # Location:
   Why do you like this place?

6. Take a photograph of a place that you never want to see changed.
   Photo # Location:
   Why don’t you want to see change?

7. Take a photograph of an area in the community that you would like to see improved.
   Photo # Location:
   Why do you want to see this improved and how do you think it might be accomplished?

8. Take a photograph of a structure that is presently under-used that could be adapted for new activities.
   Photo # Location:
   What activities could this building be used for?
9. Take a photograph of the most heavily used entrance into the village of Solvay.
Photo #__________ Location:_____________________________________________
Why is this place used the most?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

10. Take a photograph of the most attractive entrance into the village of Solvay.
Photo #__________ Location:_____________________________________________
Why is this the most attractive entrance?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

11. Take a photograph of the least attractive entrance into the village of Solvay.
Photo #__________ Location:_____________________________________________
Why is this the least attractive entrance?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

12. Take a photograph of a site or condition that detracts from the village.
Photo #__________ Location:_____________________________________________
In what way does it detract?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

13. Take a photograph of an outdoor area that could be developed to accommodate new activities.
Photo #__________ Location:_____________________________________________
How might it be developed for that new use?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

14. Take a photograph that best represents your image of Solvay.
Photo #__________ Location:_____________________________________________
Why did you choose this image?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Solvay Vision Planning Process

Workshop Two
Village of Solvay  
Workshop 2 – October 15, 2002  
Outline of Workshop

**Welcome table** – Ellen and Rob  
Sign in sheet (Call Mary and ask her to print out list from first workshop so that previous attendees can check name, add email address and move on. Full sign in for new participants only)

Name tags – prepare 60 in advance, divided into groups of 20 each with a red, green or blue dot. Allow participants to select the color they want. (Take big color dot table placards to place on table where each group should be)

New participants should add residence location to aerial hanging near sign up table, *mark with medium green dot* (previous participants should not add dots unless they can’t find their dot on the aerial) – Steve help with this

**1. Introduction** – Maren – 5 minutes  
7:05 – 7:10

**2. Share findings and summary of workshop one** –  
7:10 – 7:25  
Powerpoint presentation with hard copies posted nearby – Maren and Ellen

   Review Vision Planning process –  
   Definitions of terms – Vision, Goals, Action Steps or Strategies

   **Image** – areas as defined by community members  
   How community members describe village to outsiders

   **Sacred places** - places of particular value to community as landmarks, gathering places, places for events, traditions. Sacred places should be treated with care and respect and their meaning to the community must be understood and acknowledged if changes are going to be made. These are places that the community wants to pass on to future generations. Relative importance of places, based on listing by participants, is indicated by the size of the circle. Read primary sacred places.

   **Solvay's Strengths** – These are the characteristics and qualities that already make Solvay a great place to live. The strengths form the foundation for the Vision Statement - these are things that are going to be built on. Existing strengths may represent resources and opportunities that can be tapped to develop action steps. For Solvay, strengths include the people in the community and the services.

   **Places of concern** - Places, areas or buildings that community feels are problems and may need to be addressed in some way. It is usually necessary to delve more deeply into areas of concern to help community members explain in more detail what their concerns are so that solutions can be directed to the real issue.
Concerns generally form the basis for the vision goals – what do we want to improve and change? Review major areas of concern.

Changes participants would make if they could – this is very similar concept to Areas of concern, except the changes can go beyond physical places and can include people, relationships, services. List –

Underutilized resources – Underutilized resources are places, people and services in the community that are not being used to their potential; these are things that should be viewed as opportunities. Underutilized resources may provide ideas for strategies to implement goals.

Historical vs. contemporary

Draft Vision Statement and Goals
How vision emerges from workshop one findings
What areas have been chosen to focus on

3. Instructions about organization of Workshop Two - Maren
   A. The three main sets of activities occur concurrently. Each pair of facilitators stays with one activity for the entire workshop.

4. Activities – Start at 7:30, and move at 8:00 and 8:30
   A. Milton Avenue – 30 minutes each group (repeat 3 times) – Rob and Steve
      1. Purpose – to clarify and explore the importance and potential ways of improving Milton Avenue to enhance its image and viability as a community asset, gateway and connection
      2. Materials and Set-up
         a. Aerial photos of Milton avenue divided into 5 character areas
         b. Character areas further illustrated with photos keyed to aerials
         c. These sheets mounted on cafeteria wall, in adequate area to provide space for group of 20 +/- participants
         d. Index cards/sheets of paper – diff. colors – blue, pink, white
         e. Masking tape
         f. Pencils, markers
      3. Procedure
         a. Character areas – Facilitator explain character areas and reasons for dividing street corridor as we did:
            1. long stretch of road; can’t all be the same; different physical, structural conditions, scale, adjacent land uses, history –
            2. improvements will require understanding of differences, opportunities
            3. look at each area as distinct, then look at relationship to whole street; decide vision for each area, then overall; set priorities
            4. community participants may decide that character areas are different – that’s okay – just make sure to record. 5 minutes
b. First activity: **Concerns/issues** – for each character area, participants should think about and record specific concerns or issues (that is, tied to places, locations on the street) – can be physical, visual, economic – not trying to find solutions, focus on concerns – these should be written on BLUE paper or index cards, and taped to bottom of aerials, and keyed as necessary to the aerials and photos. (may want to use different color markers for each group)

5 minutes plus 1–2 minutes to look over what others have written

c. Second Activity: **Opportunities/resources** for each character area – physical characteristics, places, spaces, buildings, activities, people, programs, special characteristics of an area – what are the characteristics of each section of the street that might give some clues or direction to what it is best suited to be in the future – these should be written on PINK paper or index cards and taped to bottom of aerials.

5 minutes plus 1–2 minutes to look over what others have written

d. Third activity: **Vision** for each character area – participants write brief vision for each area; “what could it be in the best circumstance” – what would be appropriate land uses, activities, image - based on location, physical characteristics, existing structures–essentially the concerns that people think need to be addressed plus the opportunities or special characteristics that exist or potentially exist should begin to direct towards some ideas for future use and appearance - these should be written on WHITE paper or index cards and taped to bottom of aerials

5 minutes plus 1–2 minutes to look over what others have written

e. Discussion; Facilitators review visions for each area; are there similarities, overlaps or very distinct visions based on individual areas? It is not feasible for entire stretch of Milton to have same type of land uses and character – if this is coming out in activity, must ask participants to discuss and prioritize where improvements should occur. If participants have come up with a number of different visions for each area, must try to sort and have participants prioritize.

**B. Photos and images** (30 minutes/group, repeat 3 times) – Amanda and Maren

**B.1. Photo Survey Clarification and expansion** – 10 minutes

1. Purpose: Using photos from 5 or 6 selected questions in photo survey try to gain an in-depth understanding of degree of agreement or common ground about certain places, traditions, activities, relationships and the reasons participants have for their choices.

2. Materials and set-up
a. 11x17 b/w composite photo sheets mounted on foam core – prepare 2 or 3 for use in workshop
b. Photosurvey form (1 page front and back)
c. Pencils

3. Procedure
d. Explain that 6 participants from workshop one had returned completed photo-surveys. We had selected certain questions from that survey to explore with the larger group
e. Participants fill out survey, referring to b/w photo boards

B.2. Village Residential Image – 20 minutes
1. Purpose: Using series of photos from residential areas of concern, try to determine what participants perceive as the real issues, problems in the traditional village residential areas
2. Materials and set-up
   a. 11x17 color composite photo sheets mounted on foam core – prepare 2 or 3 for use in workshop
   b. Residential Photo survey form (3 pages)
   c. Flip chart
   d. Pencils
3. Procedure
   a. Explain that the diverse residential areas are important to the village but some areas were identified as areas of concern by participants of workshop one. You are trying to get a better understanding of both the positive characteristics as well as those that participants find unattractive or of concern
   b. Stress the fact that this is not about finding fault or virtue with the individual houses pictured, but is about identifying characteristics that the community thinks should be encouraged and those that should not.
   c. Fill out survey form: 10 minutes - For each image, participants fill out survey form of characteristics they find attractive and those that are unattractive. Stress the fact that their comments should be specific and detailed, but not nit-picky (i.e. Don’t try to find something that’s unattractive if it’s not in photo).
   d. Group list: 10 minutes – Group will brainstorm responses to two questions: In the traditional residential neighborhoods in the village, which include the houses shown in the survey, what are the positive and attractive characteristics? (can include items from their survey responses as well as general comments). What are the unattractive characteristics; things that participants would like to see fixed or corrected?
   e. Record responses on flip chart
C. Vision Draft discussion, confirmation, expansion -30 minutes each group (repeat 3 times) Ellen and Michael

1. Purpose: To review, discuss and revise draft vision statement and goals and to identify possible opportunities and action steps to begin to accomplish goals.

2. Materials and set-up
   a. Draft vision statement, 8 ½ x 11, for each participant
   b. For Matrix: Vision and goals individually printed on 11 x 17 sheets (3 copies each) and Major categories of opportunities printed on 11 x 17 sheets, and blank 11 x 17 sheets. Set up matrix on wall with goals on the left side and opportunities along the top
   c. Posters (11x17) of summaries of Strengths, Changes and Underutilized resources for reference
   d. White index cards (or post-it notes)
   e. Pencils
   f. Tape or drafting dots

3. Procedure:

4. Review the concept of a vision statement, goals and action steps (see Vision planning poster). Explain that we have come up with a draft vision statement and goals. During this activity participants will be reviewing and revising vision and goals, and beginning to identify possible actions or strategies to achieve the goals.

5. First activity - Review and revise draft vision statement and goals. Each participant read vision and goals, marks revisions, additions, comments on individual copy. Facilitator asks if there are any proposed changes to Vision statement. Write proposed changes on flip chart. Do the same for each goal. If there are major changes, rewrite goals on clean 11 x17 and replace on matrix.
   15 minutes

6. Second activity – matrix of goals and opportunities. Not enough time, was not done with the group.
   a. Explain concept of matrix – that we are trying to match existing strengths and opportunities (underutilized resources) (many identified in first workshop, but there may be others), with the goals of the vision statement, as the basis for defining action steps and strategies for achieving the goals
   b. Focus on goals other than Milton Ave and residential areas, as these will be covered in depth in the other activities
   c. Participants write specific ideas on index cards and tape to appropriate place on matrix – facilitators will need to give a couple of examples, so have several ready.
   15 minutes

5. Wrap-up: Maren - 9:00
Several of your fellow Solvay residents participated in the photo survey described at the first vision workshop. Their photographs are shown on the posters and their responses are listed below. Please answer the following questions to let us know what YOU think about Solvay.

1. When asked about a place, setting, or building that they feel represents the historic character of the village, the participants listed the Solvay Public Library and the Solvay Village Hall. Do you agree with these responses?  
   Y  N  Why?

   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

   Are there other places that represent Solvay’s historic character?  
   Y  N
   If yes, what are they? ________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

2. When asked about their favorite gathering places, participants selected the places shown on the poster. With which do you most agree? Place or # ____________
   Why is this a favorite gathering place?

   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

   Are there other gathering places in the Village?  
   Y  N
   If yes, what are they? ________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________

3. When asked about their favorite residential street, the participants the areas of Orchard Road, Piercefield Drive and Wynthrop Road. Do you agree with these responses?  
   Y  N
   Why?

   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
   ___________________________________________
4. When asked about places they would not like to see changed, participants identified the places shown on the poster. Which of these do you most agree with? ________________________________

Why is this place significant to the village? ________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

Are there other places in the Village that should not be changed?  Y   N

If yes, what are they? ________________________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

5. When asked to separately identify the most heavily used entrance into Solvay and the least attractive entrance, participants chose the intersection of Bridge Street and Milton Avenue as the answer to both questions. Do you agree that it is the least attractive entrance?  Y   N

Why?________________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

6. When asked to identify the most attractive entrance into Solvay, all participants photographed the intersection of North Orchard Road and West Genesee Street. Do you agree with this response?   Y   N

Why?________________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

7. When asked to identify a place that represents the image of Solvay, participants photographed the places shown on the poster. Which of these do you most agree with? ________________________________

Why?________________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________
Carefully look at the photographs on the residential image posters. For each photograph, you will answer two questions. First, “What do you find attractive and positive in the scene?” Second, “What do you find unattractive or of concern?” In answering, please be as specific as possible.

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DRAFT Village of Solvay Vision Statement

(October 15, 2002)

The Village of Solvay celebrates its close-knit social and physical structure and diverse population, values strong local public services and convenient connections to outside resources, and strives to balance the image of industrial past, present and future with a rich variety of village-based residential and commercial opportunities.

Goals

• Encourage reinvestment in Milton Avenue, to improve its appearance and viability, acknowledging its role in defining the image of the village and its importance as a community connector.

• Restore and protect the broad range of residential areas and housing opportunities that exist in the village.

• Strengthen and increase civic opportunities for all age community members to come together for recreation, education and community service.

• Identify and celebrate the historic resources that represent the rich industrial and civic foundation upon which the village was developed and which continues to be valued.

• Improve connections and associated gateways to outside resources, such as the NYS Fairgrounds and adjacent communities, to reflect the pride that residents hold for the village.

• Attract new residents to settle in the village and encourage young people to stay or return to maintain a diverse and vibrant residential population.
Village of Solvay Vision Planning Process
Workshop 3 (November 19, 2002)

Sign in – Ask attendees to select and sign up for two of the three activities
Residence/business location map
Hand out revised vision statement, goals and possible actions steps
Hand out participation survey

Introduction - Mary Valerio and Maren King

Summary of workshop 2 results – 20 minutes
Maren – Intro to summary, review of activities/ findings; fact that objectives have changed based on what we heard from participants as well as new information that emerged or became clear from workshop two
Review of photo-survey responses – particularly image related

Ellen – Review of residential photo-survey responses, what it means, why we are continuing to examine in greater detail (important issue in community, important to turn around physical decline before it gets too far; there are things that the community can do)

Rob – Review of Milton Avenue activity; what it means, why we need to go further

Maren – other objectives that are not being focused on in this workshop – participants should review revised objectives and action steps developed from info shared in past workshops.

Activities

Station One – Strategies for Improving Residential Areas
Purpose: Discuss improvement and maintenance of traditional village residential areas to attract new homeowners and to help existing homeowners.

Method: Ellen provide list of potential action steps for community initiatives to improve conditions of houses and neighborhoods. Intention is to provide some alternative methods of neighborhood improvement beyond just looking at code enforcement. Ellen should review the list with the group and explain where appropriate.

Participants are given a worksheet and are asked to select the five action steps that they think might be most appropriate for Solvay. For each action step, they should consider: the resources necessary to accomplish the action, what resources are already available and whether this is an immediate or long-term priority item. The group will then discuss their answers.

Timing: 40 minutes total, repeat a second time
People: Presenter/facilitator
Facilitator/note taker
Station Two – Strategies for Strengthening the Village Center

Purpose: Introduce concept of strengthening village center, illustrating the possible approaches with conceptual diagrams, and encouraging community members to ask questions, consider pros and cons of each strategy, and discuss ideas related to village center.

Method: Maren present base of existing conditions – trace overlay on aerial photo or print of trace, point out major landmarks identified previously as important resources, sacred places, opportunities, image makers
- Present each of the three approaches, one by one
- During presentation of each approach, community jot down notes, ideas, and characteristics. Ask if there are questions or comments.
- Participants make list of advantages and disadvantages on pre-printed sheets; can work in pairs or singly
- For each strategy, create public list of advantages and disadvantages by asking for contributions from participants’ lists. Clarify and discuss responses.
- After all strategies have been presented and discussed, participants rank strategies on pre-printed sheets.

Timing: 40 minutes total – 4 minutes intro, 12 minutes each strategy.
People: Presenter/facilitator
Flip chart writer
Note taker

Station Three – Civic Opportunities and Historic Resources

Purpose: To discuss action steps and the necessary implementation resources for vision goals 5 (“Strengthen and increase civic opportunities for community members of all ages...”) and 6 (“Identify and celebrate historic resources...”).

Method: Each goal was written on a flip chart sheet, with 3 or 4 potential action steps listed beneath. Space was left for two columns: necessary resources, and available resources. Cheryl facilitated a discussion about appropriate resources for each action step, and where the participants might locate such resources.

Timing: 40 minutes, repeat a second time
People: Facilitator
Flip chart writer
Village of Solvay Vision Planning Process
Revised Vision and Goals, Introduction of Action Steps
November 19, 2002

Vision Statement
The Village of Solvay celebrates its close-knit social structure, physical layout, and diverse population; values strong local services as well as convenient connections to regional resources; and strives to balance its industrial past, present and future with a rich variety of village based residential neighborhoods and commercial opportunities.

Goal 1
Strengthen the existing village center and establish strong and visible internal connections between this center and the wider community.

• Goal will be discussed in more detail in this workshop.

Goal 2
Develop a new vision for Milton Avenue, rethinking its traditional role and image in light of societal and village changes. Encourage reinvestment in the Milton Avenue corridor, improve its appearance and viability, and present a positive and progressive image of the village.

Possible Action Steps:
• Explore the relationship between the industrial land uses that line the north side of Milton Avenue and the commercial/public service/residential uses on the side, through the preparation of alternative illustrative design strategies. Use these alternative strategies as the basis for community discussion and education regarding the changing relationship with industry.
• Form a working group that focuses on advancing and promoting the future of Milton Avenue and the Village Center, with representation from private citizens, business, civic and government organizations.

Goal 3
Encourage and support a range of housing choices and residential neighborhoods that are well maintained and stable, reflecting the pride of home ownership and a long-term commitment to the neighborhood and the community.

Possible action steps will be discussed and reviewed at this workshop
Goal 4
Improve the major gateway corridors along Bridge Street, West Genesee Street and Milton Avenue to promote a positive introduction to the village, to stimulate economic development by attracting people into the village, and to reinforce the convenience of connections to resources in downtown Syracuse and greater Onondaga County.

Possible Action Steps:
- *Once a new vision for Milton Avenue has been developed, form a task force in association with adjacent municipalities to develop collaborative planning approaches that encourage appropriate land use, character, density, and structure, at the transition areas between communities.*
- *Develop alternative design strategies that illustrate possible approaches to village gateways for review and discussion with community members.*

Goal 5
Strengthen and increase civic opportunities for community members of all ages to gather and participate in recreation, education and community service activities for both individual benefit and for the betterment of the community.

Possible Action Steps:
- *The Vision Committee should develop strategies to organize and promote citizen working groups to advance and begin to implement the Vision Plan. Encourage broad community participation in the vision committee by providing a range of participation options and activities that allow for different levels of time commitment, interests and contributions.*
- *Develop methods to communicate with all community members the results of the vision process to date and the continuing future progress.*
- *Initiate a community based study to determine the role that existing recreation and open space land and facilities play in the community and whether such facilities should be changed or improved, or additional facilities proposed, in response to community needs and vision.*

Goal 6
Identify and celebrate the historic resources that represent the rich industrial and civic foundations upon which the village was developed and which continue to be valued.

Possible Action Steps:
- *Establish an historic resources committee that includes members from a range of ages and backgrounds.*
- *Inventory and document existing historic resources. Use methods that help promote understanding and appreciation of these resources within the context of this village and its wider context.*
Solvay Visioning Workshop
Residential Action Steps

Organization
1. Organize a village-wide neighborhood committee to assist individual neighborhood groups
2. Organize individual neighborhood groups
3. Create a neighborhood resource center

Project Ideas
4. Conduct neighborhood/block clean-up projects
5. Clean up and plant abandoned lots
6. Encourage local businesses or organizations to adopt a street or neighborhood
7. Conduct a “beautiful front porch/yard” contest
8. Encourage landlords to join neighborhood improvement programs
9. Encourage landlords to clean up their properties
10. Promote Solvay as a nice place to live and own a home

Services
11. Help residents improve appearance of home and yard
12. Create program with high school and college students for community service credit
13. Develop and provide resource workshops about:
   a) yard and exterior house maintenance
   b) home restoration & preservation techniques
   c) local historic architectural styles
   d) various opportunities and programs in the neighborhood
   e) re-use of large older homes (as bed & breakfasts, etc.)

Investigation/Research
14. Review zoning codes and ordinances to determine if existing requirements cover concerns
15. Assess buildings in residential problem areas
16. Inventory problem streets for width and existing street amenities (street trees, street lights)
17. Survey sidewalk improvements and additions
18. Conduct home-ownership inventory (landlord/owner-occupied), consider maintenance, care
19. Determine whether there is a need for increased senior housing
20. Research the availability of grants and programs for housing rehabilitation
21. Research programs used in other communities that encourage and support home ownership
22. Research programs used in other communities to create a more uniform character
Solvay Visioning Workshop  
Residential Action Steps

Working in pairs, please select what you consider to be the five most appropriate action steps. If you have other ideas that are even better, please use them! For each action step, consider what resources are necessary to get this idea moving. Also list the existing resources (people, financial support, places, etc.) already in the community (please be specific). Consider priority; how soon should this happen, do other actions need to occur first?

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1. **Create Beautiful Streets and Spaces**
   - Streets are significant public space - not typically thought of in that way
   - Use as public space in own right
   - Woods Road already recognized as area of concern, also means area of importance
   - Also use to link important buildings, spaces and places –
   - Many important places located within this central area – village hall, town hall, parks, library, schools
   - Instill pride of care and ownership to these places -
   - Existing Public spaces around buildings somewhat haphazard.
     - Accentuate street frontages and entrances from major streets to public buildings
   - Think about beautiful streets in other communities: what are their characteristics?
     - Participants brainstorm list?
       - Trees, planting
       - Well maintained buildings
       - Well maintained sidewalks
       - Gardens, flowers, colors
       - Front porches
   - Strategic investment – improve public streets and places in order to encourage private investment; in this case it might be homes – accentuating the care of public buildings and common spaces can be a way of attracting new residents
   - Potential actions steps/strategies:
     - Adopt-a-public building – coordinated landscape program accomplished through volunteer efforts and donations of materials, money

2. **Improve Pedestrian Connections**
   - Center of Solvay is fairly compact and much lies within a comfortable ¼ - ½ mile walking distance – commonly agreed upon standard for neighborhood dimensions
   - Many communities are struggling with how to provide this structure; Solvay already possesses it
   - Can connect open spaces, desired destinations (parks, schools, village/town services, youth center, church, Milton Ave. commercial district)
   - Most current site planning is oriented toward the car – parking lots in front of buildings – concern for number of parking spaces, bland architecture, less detail in design
   - Characteristics of pedestrian orientation:
     - Safe routes (primarily safety from conflict with vehicles) – separation from vehicular traffic and fast move traffic – sidewalks, crosswalks
     - Direct, convenient routes - For functional routes (destination oriented)
     - Interconnected routes - For exercise/recreation
     - Interesting, detail oriented landscape (unlike car travel)
- Destinations – places to walk to – coffee shops, restaurants convenience stores, library, schools, parks
- Comfort – maintained walking surface (clear snow, shade, lighting)
- Create trails and paths through open space – short cuts
- Improve existing sidewalks
- Identify common and desired destinations and design these to be pedestrian and bicycle oriented

---
- Reasonable Walking distance becoming a standard in livable quality communities
- What are benefits of a walk-able community?
  - Exercise/recreation
  - Eyes on the street
  - Independence for children
  - Reduce reliance on automobile

3. Add Structure to Reinforce Village Center
- Strategy adds structure and streets to existing development in village center, providing space for additional uses
- Not studied in detail with regards to property ownership and existing building location but want to give flavor of settlement pattern
- Potential for mixed use district that includes village oriented commercial, small office, residential and open/space recreation
- Possible location for variety of residential living opportunities – apartments above storefronts, condominiums/townhouses – for seniors, empty nesters, young people
- Traditional village form – no front yard setback (buildings close to sidewalks), on-street parking, parking internal to block (shared parking, not necessarily on individual lots
- Challenges suburban model of parking in front of buildings, which necessitates setting buildings far back from streets – no sense of enclosure or relationship to buildings and storefronts
- Critical to reinforce relationship to Milton Avenue commercial, especially that to the east
  - Scheme shows new diagonal street
Village of Solvay Vision Planning Process
November 19, 2002

As the Solvay Vision Plan moves forward, the Vision Committee would like future activities to maintain active citizen participation. Please help us organize the implementation and planning activities by filling out this survey.

1. Which workshops did you attend? _____Workshop 1   _____Workshop 2   ____Workshop 3

2. The three vision planning workshops are meant to be the start of a process of action to begin to implement the vision that you have helped create. How would you like to participate in further planning and implementation of the community vision? (check as many as apply)
   ___ Continue to attend planning and informational meetings
   ___ Participate on a focused working group
   ___ Play leadership role on a working group
   ___ Work on specific projects identified by the working groups
   ___ Other ideas __________________________________________________________

3. On which of the following would you be most interested in participating? (number choices if you are interested in more than one)
   ___ Village Center
   ___ Milton Ave Vision Plan
   ___ Neighborhood improvement
   ___ Gateways
   ___ Historic Solvay
   ___ Civic Participation
   ___ other ________________________________________________________________

4. What would be the best strategy to maintain communication and keep the village residents informed of the Vision planning and implementation activities?
   ___ Newspaper
   ___ Flier in the Electric Bill
   ___ Web site
   ___ Posters and exhibits in prominent buildings
   ___ other ________________________________________________________________

Please provide contact information if you are interested in continuing to participate in planning and implementation.

Name: ___________________________________ Telephone: ______________________
Address: ________________________________ E-Mail: ______________________

_________________________________________
Village of Solvay
Vision Planning Process
Summary Meeting   February 5, 2003

AGENDA

7:05 – 7:10   Welcome and introductory remarks   Mary Valerio
7:10 – 7:35   Review of Vision Plan and Process   Jim Quick
Milton Avenue Design Study – Overview   Rob Mooney
7:35 – 7:45   Moving forward – Keys to Success   Maren King
7:45 – 7:55   Break for Refreshments
7:55 – 8:05   Milton Avenue Design Study – Overview   Rob Mooney
8:05 – 8:30   Brainstorm Activity   Groups
8:30 – 8:45   Working group basic organization   Groups
8:45 – 9:00   Share brainstorming results   Groups
Please think about the following questions as they are posed during the course of the brainstorming activity. Take a few minutes to jot down some ideas that you can share with the other people in your group. We will collect these at the end of the brainstorming activity.

1. What are some potential benefits of working in a group or as part of a team?

2. What do you anticipate would be difficulties or problems of working in a group or on a team?

3. What are some possible strategies for overcoming these difficulties or problems?