Elevating Erie: Reconnecting to the Erie Canalway

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ABSTRACT

Elevating Erie: Reconnecting the Canalway will cover the innovative engagement process that the Town of DeWitt and City of Syracuse have utilized to both identify and evaluate alternatives for the redesign of the historical Erie Canal corridor between the two municipalities. The communities that the original Erie Canal fostered represent a significant contribution to New York State's and the Nation's heritage. The historical corridor extends through neighborhoods of Central New York that have experienced extreme disinvestment and concentrated poverty. Investment in the corridor will assist with the ultimate revitalization of these adjacent neighborhoods. Once complete, the 350 mile Canalway trail will become the longest continuous bicycle and pedestrian trail in the United States. The CNY segment of this trail is considered to be one of the most difficult gaps to complete, due to the fact that the 14 mile segment, from Camillus in the west to DeWitt in the east, traverses land that is the most urbanized along the entire state route. Elevating Erie aims to reconnect to our region's heritage through investments in modern, multi-modal, efficient infrastructure improvements. Increasing bicycle and pedestrian connectivity in Central New York and across the state will help to support and encourage alternative commuting as well as support bicycle tourism as a growing market sector. Bicycling is the second most common form of outdoor recreation in the U.S., according to a study by the Outdoor Foundation, with 60 million Americans enjoying the activity. Between 2002 and 2008, based on data collected by the Outdoor Foundation, the number of bicycle trips of all kinds made by Americans grew by approximately 100 million.

BIOGRAPHIES

Samuel Gordon is the Director of Planning and Zoning for the Town of DeWitt (pop. approx. 25,000). Sam is responsible for the management of the development process within the Town, implementation of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, and coordination of Town Sustainability initiatives. Sam has over 15 years of experience in the Planning and Sustainability fields and has managed and/or provided consulting expertise on a variety of projects from greenway planning, energy conservation and renewable energy deployment, to neighborhood revitalization and alternative mobility projects. Sam developed and oversees Moving DeWitt, to improve the bicycle and pedestrian environment within the Town; and in 2015 launched Elevating Erie, an initiative to close the gap in the Erie Canalway Trail system within Central New York. Sam received a Fellowship in 2005 to work with the Center for Environmental Studies in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, which was selected as the European Green Capital for 2012.

Owen Kerney currently serves as an Assistant Director in the Syracuse – Onondaga County Planning Agency. He leads the City's Planning Division, which focuses on urban planning and design, historic preservation, public art, and sustainability initiatives to promote and enhance the livability and prosperity of the City of Syracuse. Owen develops and manages planning and capital projects for the City including the City's Comprehensive Plan 2040, the ReZone Syracuse project, the Syracuse Connective Corridor, the Elevating Erie initiative, brownfield redevelopment and multiple State and Federal grant projects.

Joe Sisko is the founding partner of LOCUS, a hybrid consultancy that uses design and storytelling to build support for ideas that have a positive social, cultural or ecological impact. LOCUS helps cities and organizations stand out and facilitate change by visually explaining their ideas with clarity and style. Previously, he was the Assistant Director of UPSTATE: at the Syracuse University School of Architecture where he initiated and managed public space, master planning and research projects from concept through public engagement and into implementation.